

Projections Based Coaching

using Premier Mentor

1. Being the Best

Jim Collins' bestseller 'Good to Great' makes the point about honesty - if you want to be the best, you can't hide behind blind spots.

Using the book's metaphor, one of the greatest challenges leaders face is maintaining the "right people in the right seats at the right time". In addition, there is then the added challenge of ensuring that every member of the organization, not to mention the entire supply chain, maintains an optimal mindset.

In times of change it is necessary to increase the frequency of reassessments, and, alongside "replacement", "training & coaching" lies amongst the various options available to the leader. However, most coaching models are unable to overcome the wall of resistance that occurs when there is no core motivation to be coached. Often the greater the stature of the individual, the harder it becomes to convince that individual to re-programme their view of the world.

Such a re-programming of mindsets is a pre-requisite to achieving lasting behavioural change. The anchor is the individual's core motivator which determines the degree to which s/he is willing to act in the best interest of the organization. Examples might include issues of trust, such as whether to share a valuable piece of information, or whether to trust making a short term sacrifice - ie whether it will one day be reciprocated.

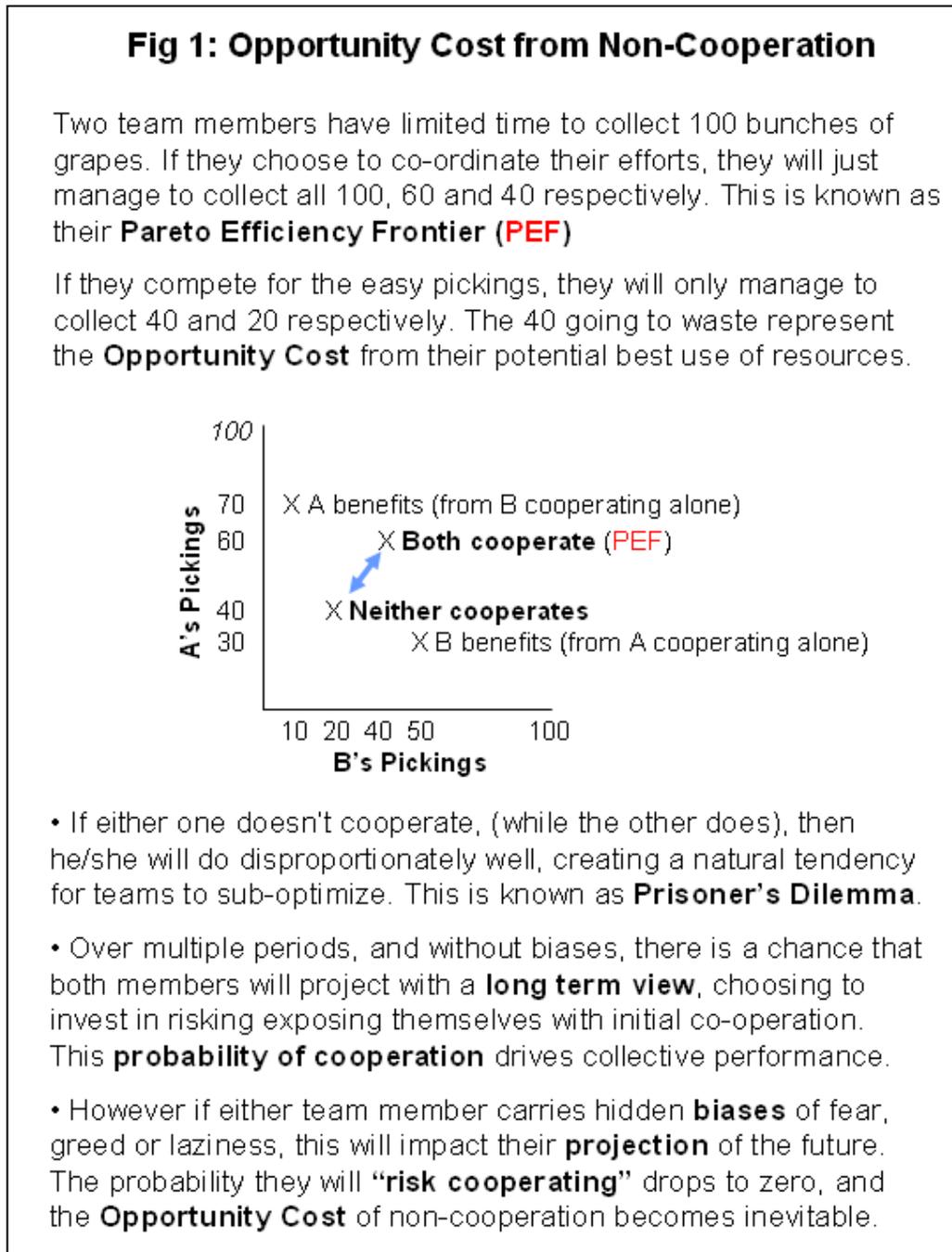
If we define the optimal mindset as "being in the Zone", then barriers to reaching this Zone come with any combination of three underlying hurdles, which are Fear, Greed and Laziness, with any of these three biases being capable of skewing motivations.



As soon as any member of the team, organization or supply chain, deviates from his/her Zone, then this invariably creates an inefficiency, or sub-optimal use of available resources, which economists call "*an opportunity cost*".

2. The Challenge Posed by Biases

The hidden biases skew the way team members both interpret, and project into the future, all “reasonably available information”, when making their choices on investment and cooperation. *Figure 1* explores how this occurs in a simple scenario where two co-workers have the option to co-operate or not.



Choosing “co-operation” means exposing oneself to the risk of doing much worse. Hence at the heart of whether value is created or destroyed lies the probability that each team member will choose to co-operate, or not, and naturally this is heavily impacted by the “skew” from any potential underlying bias, with the greater the biases, the greater the opportunity cost is likely to be.

These biases are deeply embedded in our constructs, a “construct” being the mesh of conscious and sub-conscious beliefs that together give our “unique slant” with which we see life, meaning that any bias that reduces a team member’s willingness to cooperate is likely to be deeply embedded and therefore extremely hard to shift or “*un-programme*”.

In addition, like an onion, these biases often tend to be nestled under layers of other issues, making them difficult to access. In the debates of the Greek Philosophers, the “Unspeakable Core Issue” (**UCI**) is the quintessential heart of the matter, which if, like a skilful surgeon, can be subtly teased out, can unlock the barrier to a successful outcome.

3. The Principles of Projections Based Coaching

Projections Based Coaching is a method to help bring a team to peak performance by

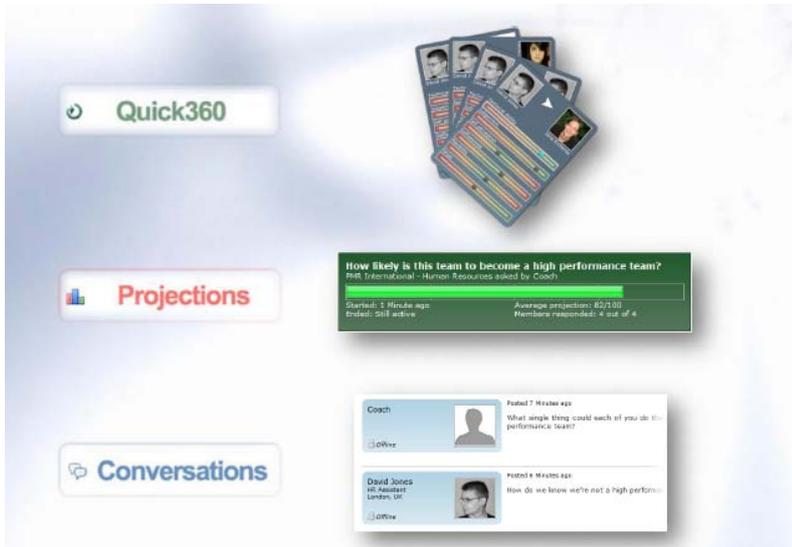
- a) Gauging the health of the team
- b) Identifying hidden barriers or biases
- c) Mapping a solution path of least resistance
- d) Securing quick wins
- e) Continually adapting strategy in response to actual events
- f) Putting in place counter-programming initiatives for harder challenges
- g) Periodic gauges of progress
- h) Aim to achieve and maintain the highest levels of peak performance

The benefits of achieving peak performance include:

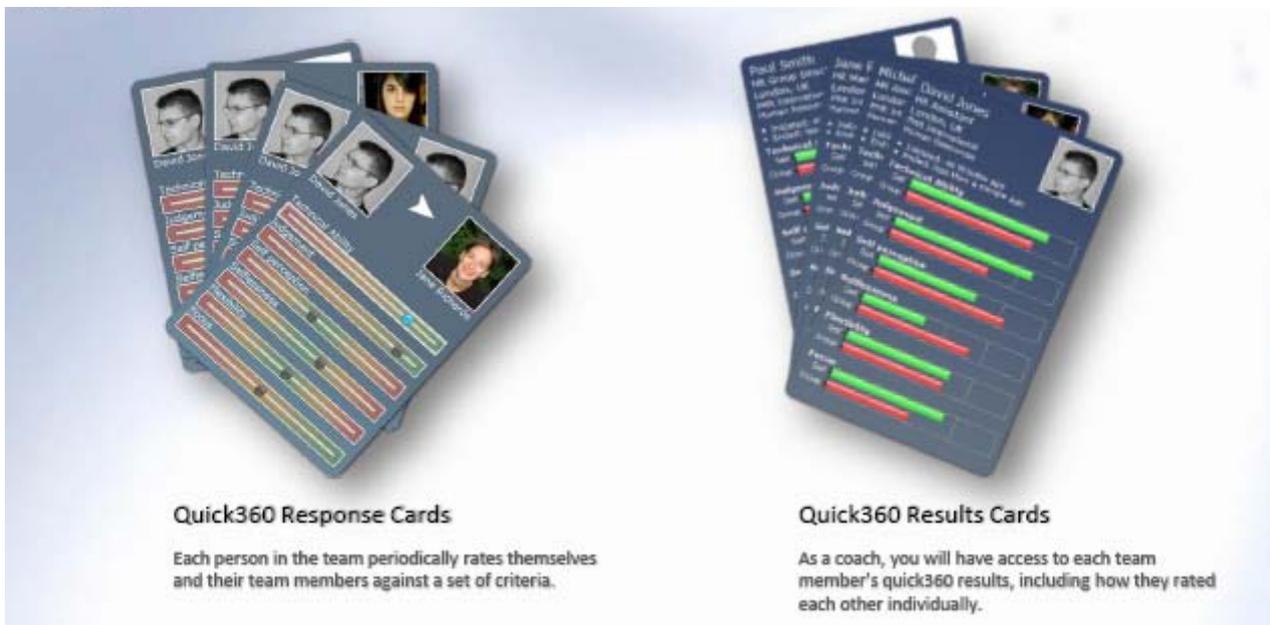
- Superior Business Results – for the team and indirectly the entire supply chain
- Superior Quality of Life – for the team and indirectly the entire supply chain
- Superior Personal Development of each Team Member
- Superior Ability to Adapt to External Change

4. Tools Available to Coach with Premier Mentor

Premier Mentor consists of three tools through which the coach can interact with all or some of the team remotely through a PC or PDA. Like a multi-player long-term game of chess, all “moves” are secure, non-time pressured, and leaving a clear digital record which the coach can review publicly or privately at a later date. (For more information, click to [view full brochure](#)).



Quick 360



The **quick360** provides a quick, accurate snapshot of how the team perceive each other against six set criteria (technical ability, judgement, self perception, selflessness, flexibility, focus).

The coach has access to all individual data, making it easier to determine, for example, if one member of the team consistently scores all members low, or if there are particular issues between two or more members.

The **Projections** tool allows the coach to test out each individual team member's view of present and future events. For example the coach may ask the team to project, on a 1-100 scale, how likely the team is to realise its stated goals, or check out how far they believe that a particular project will be successful, or even whether this is the right team to succeed.

While the coach will be able to see all the scores, team members will be able to only see their own. This allows the coach to start forming hypotheses on those that might be pessimistic, highly optimistic, non-committal, etc.

Using the **Conversations** tool the coach can constantly and consistently interact with the team as; individuals, smaller groups, or the team as a whole.

Equally team members can be proactive asking questions and initiating discussions.

Only those involved in a specific conversation will see the conversation unfold and be able to take part, while the coach on the other hand has visibility over all conversations

Thus the coach can initiate discussions with either the whole group, or selected individuals, and also provide support, advice and guidance to team members who need it.

The image displays several screenshots from the Premier Mentor software interface. The top section shows a 'Team Member Projection Form' for David Jones, HR Assistant, with a progress bar and a projection of 72/100. Below this is a 'Team Members' Projections' section showing an 'Average Team Projection' of 82/100. The bottom section shows a 'Conversations' thread with messages from the Coach and team members like David Jones and Jane Richards, discussing the definition of a 'high performance' team.

5. Gauging the health of the team

The coach can start off with a quick360 in order to gauge the health of the team



The table below illustrates the optimal results which would suggest a very healthy team:

Metric	Peak Performance Target Attributes
Technical Ability	“100%” = technical ability being manifested cannot be faulted
Judgement	“100%” = is manifesting flawless judgement/experience for role
Self Perception	“50%” = nicely balanced. Neither over nor under confident
Selflessness	“50%” = nicely balanced. Neither selfish nor “door mat”
Flexibility	“50%” = nicely balanced. Neither over nor under flexible for role
Focus	“100%” = focus for role cannot be faulted
Accuracy	How close are self-perceptions to average of team (Result Card)
Consistency	Are team views consistent or do some “average each other out?”

6. Identifying hidden barriers or biases

As there is no set recipe, the coach must always be testing for new biases. An intuitive iterative process is recommended

- What are my first hypotheses?
- Which hypotheses are worth investigating first?
- Is a Projection, Conversation or Quick360 best suited to do this?
- Who in the team needs to be involved?
- How do I best word my next question to try to peel back the layers to the **UCI** (Unspeakable Core Issues)

Some possible starting interventions are outlined below

Possible Intervention	Possible Starting Point
Quick360	Initial understand of how colleagues understand each other
Projection	“Will this team hit its 12 month goal?”
Individual Conversation	Asking the leader for his her opinions and concerns
Targeted Conversation	If “recruiting” is a concern, glean view of other senior members
Group Conversation	Ice-breaking discussion on how team are finding new system

Now assume that the initial audit suggests that

1. Value destroying biases may exist and
2. There may be an element of co-influencing, where these are strengthened by shared perceptions

For example, in a team of 5 the coach holds the hypothesis that hidden bias in with the team leader is making it hard to integrate a new member.

Initial investigation would be with a quick360.

The coach would then follow this up with a specific projection, worded in such a way to try to encourage the bias to manifest itself (if it exists).

“Project 100% if new team member “E” with Fail (F) or Succeed (S) in 3 months?”

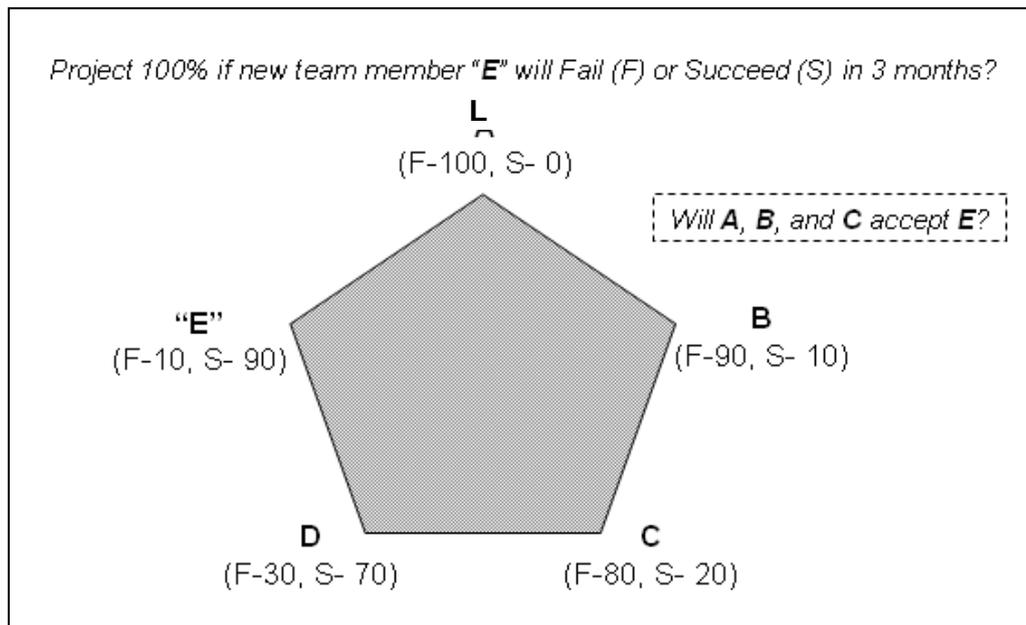
“F” vs “S”	L	B	C	D	E
@ Week 1	100-0	90-10	80-20	30-70	10-90

The results seem to confirm the initial hypothesis and quick360 data.

The projection, has surfaced a clear spread of opinions between the longest serving members of the team (L, B & C), and (D and E), and this flags the possibility of co-influencing, which can create “glass ceiling” that, as a collective self-sustaining bias, can present the coach with an extra challenge.

7. Mapping a solution path of least resistance

Figure 2 maps out the “state of play” facing the coach



Given a potential glass ceiling involving 75% of the rest of the team, and a seemingly extreme stance by the Leader towards “E”, the direct route of trying to rebuild trust between “L & E” does not appear to be an option.

Equally, the similarity of opinions of the “Old Guard” (L, B & C) means that trying to influence through colleagues (E → D → C → B → L) is unlikely to work, although it might work in the future if perceptions start to loosen up.

So initially the best strategy for the coach is probably to wait, not try to take on the “glass ceiling” and just work with E (and possibly D) to help increase E’s chances of success

8. Securing quick wins

Assume that after 6 weeks E reaches a milestone of initial success. The coach could then repeat the projection, but this time for only L, B, C and D.

“Re-project 100% if new team member “E” with Fail (F) or Succeed (S) in 3 months?”

“F” vs “S”	L	B	C	D	E
@ Week 1	100-0	90-10	80-20	30-70	10-90
@ Week 6	100-0	90-10	80-20	15-85	N/A

At this point the coach has some interesting data to work on. Why did L, B & C not factor in this new information in their revised projection?

At this point the coach would probably start a conversation. Depending on the role D would have, the coach would either have a more focused discussion with L, B & C, or

one that included D, in order to understand why, (with the exception of E), D seemed to be the only one to project a revised outlook?

9. Continually adapting strategy in response to actual events

Now assume that after 10 weeks E reaches yet another milestone. Opportunistically the coach can again repeat the exercise.

“Re-project 100% if new team member “E” with Fail (F) or Succeed (S) in 3 months?”

“F” vs “S”	L	B	C	D	E
@ Week 1	100-0	90-10	80-20	30-70	10-90
@ Week 6	100-0	90-10	80-20	15-85	N/A
@ Week 10	80-20	50-50	40-60	10-90	N/A

At this point the coach can see that B & C are starting to open up, and while the Leader has opened up a little, but continues to show pretty strong bias against E.

The coach can try again through any combination of the following possible interventions,

Possible Intervention	Possible Example
Quick360	Maybe L is now seen as less in touch by B, C, D (& E)?
Projection	“Will this team, with these members, hit its 12 month goal?”
Individual Conversation	Asking L to comment on the above data
Targeted Conversation	Asking L, B & C why their respective changes in projections
Group Conversation	Starting a discussion about how the group might improve

However some social biases, such as xenophobia, sexism, and ageism, are often subconscious, taboo and emotively explosive. In other words, they are “Unspeakable Core Issues” (UCIs) that are truly difficult to tease out.

To use a light-heated extreme example, if in 1492 a European sceptic was taken to America, s/he might still choose to cling on to the counter-belief, firmly anchored in a logical blind spot, that the “World’s End is simply further West”, that the “Ship had sneakily done a loop” or whichever hypothesis defended the ingrained construct about the world being flat. In the end, repeated introduction of new construct-challenging information can never fully guarantee that there will be a willingness to change the original construct. In the extreme, this can be referred to as Dogma, or “above the facts”.

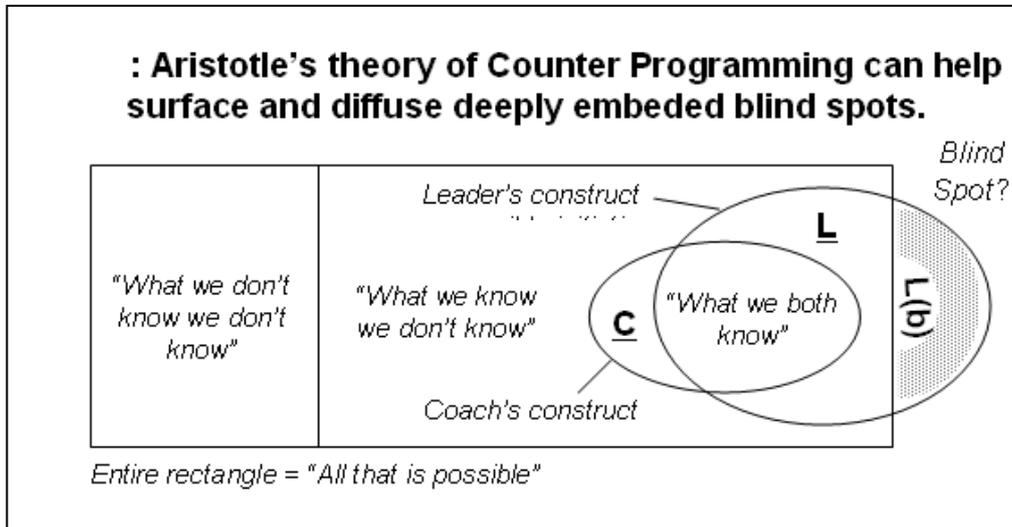
Therefore soft landing a change in construct is by no means easy, but if feedback is delivered correctly by a trusted mentor, and linked to direct self-interest, such that sharing in the short term may yield more in the long term, over time any change is possible.

10. Putting in place counter-programming initiatives for harder challenges

Counter Programming is requires to tackle the deepest UCI’s and Dogma. If the coach (C) asks the Leader: *“Given the increasingly positive hard data on E, are you sure you are seeing all of E’s strengths?”*

And the Leader (L) replies curtly, making it clear that no further discussion would be accepted: "Of course I am. I'm the most experienced in this group and I know what each of the group is like"

Then in the Venn Diagram of *Figure 3a* shows the difference of opinion whereby



The Leader sees the truth as "L", which only s/he can see, and the less experienced coach cannot see.

The Coach believes that the leader's belief "L" is biased and should instead be re-plotted in a biased blind spot "L(b)", whereas, if the Leader correctly processed available information, horizons would synchronize, and they would both agree on a perspective closer to "C"

If the Leader truly is dogmatic, and all the obvious interventions have not worked, what can the coach try next?

Throughout history, big invincible armies looking for other armies on whom to prove their superiority have sometimes struggled when they have not found one.

The Sophists of 700BC, the first Greek Philosopher-Lawyers, were famed for winning any argument, even against the odds, by

- a) Avoiding direct conflict of ideas
- b) Breaking down the elements of their counter-argument into morsels
- c) Delivering these morsels non-sequentially, making it hard to understand the whole from the component parts
- d) Waiting for the right moment to challenge the politically stronger opposition
- e) Linking together the component parts in a logically flawless counter-argument capable of surfacing and diffuse the UCI (Unspeakable Core Issue)

Five Greek Philosophers are blended together to enable counter-programming.

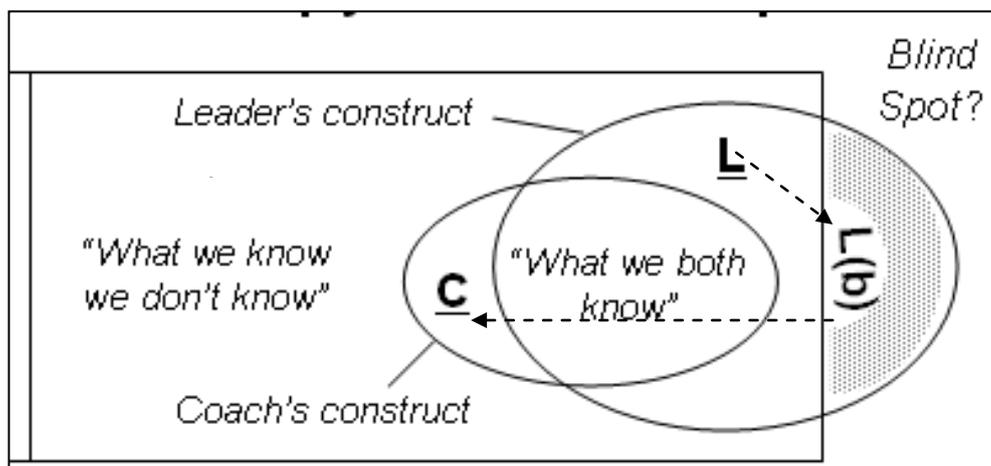
Origin	Contribution
Aristotle	Fearless long term projection against a more powerful blind spot
Sophists	Winning arguments by de-segmenting then reframing logic
Archimedes	Principles of leverage, as offered by technology
Plato	Platonic (vs Machiavellian) values based moral authority
Socrates	Socratic (indirect) reasoning to reach agreement without conflict

Another useful more modern technique, which draws upon both the military smart bomb, and a therapy developed by Victor Frankl to help holocaust survivors, is Paradoxical Intentions (or “tactical shock therapy” softened by humour)

Now these are delicate techniques, but so long as the coach is cautious not to move too fast, the normal mantra for biases is “*Better out than in*”, and the quotation from Shrek is deliberate because as Frankl emphasized, humour plays a crucial role in “helping to oil” the mental change process.

So returning to *Figure 3b*, the coach’s challenge, WITHOUT losing the Leader’s trust, is to help the Leader:

1. acknowledge the possible blind spot ($\underline{L} \rightarrow L(b)$)
2. explore new horizons such as a more balanced alternatives ($L(b) \rightarrow \underline{C}$)



Now if the coach is too aggressive in trying to facilitate this, chances are that s/he will fail miserably.

The suggestion is to taken an opportunistic approach, responding to real events as they happen (again, like in sports), because the pathway from \underline{L} to $L(b)$ and $L(b)$ to \underline{C} does not have to be defined in a linear way.

As in the parables of the New Testament, which in turn were based on the techniques of the Sophists of 700BC, the principle is:

“Gently plant the seeds of doubt/confusion → and when the foundations of change are in place → reframe”

The potentially slightly controversial reference to the New Testament above is an example. The Greek philosophers, (known to the first Christian coaches), had already been referenced earlier in this paper, giving a sound logical platform to a potentially construct challenging secondary reference, to be unexpectedly dropped in, as a technique to increase leverage (Archimedes).

As in sport, the coach should allow the natural unfolding of events to offer opportunities for planting the next seed of change or “curveball”

- A passing joke here
- A lightning paradoxical observation/reference there

These are all “**investments**” intended not to trigger active debate. In fact the Leader should be left thinking:

“Was that for real?” “Did he/she mean that?” “That can’t really be what was meant?”

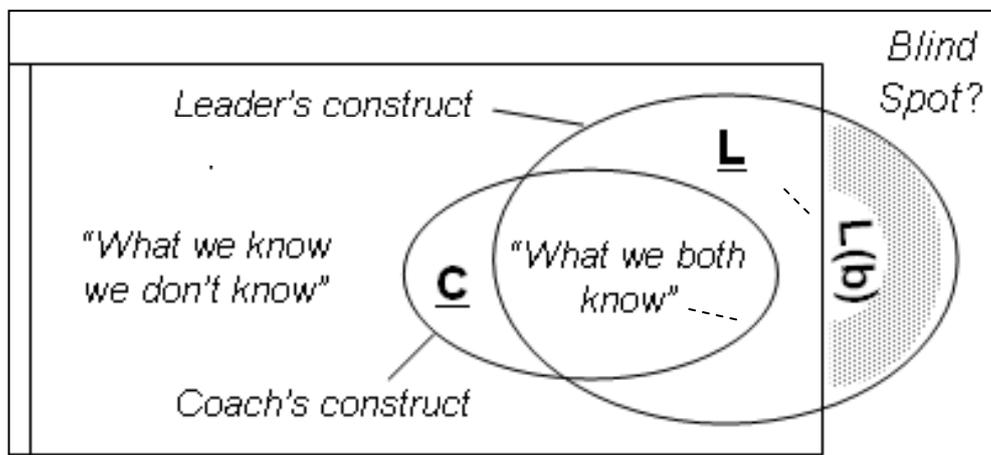
A modest mistake is another technique. A well intentioned but acceptably provocative error can, once everything has calmed down and straightened out, help spotlight potential differences of perspectives.

For example, each of the diagrams in this paper has at least one slight visual imperfection, which in turn might trigger different responses such as:

“This paper is not worth considering” to “Logical content and aesthetics merit independent assessment”

There is no magic formula here. The coach’s skill lies in opportunistically planting the seeds of change while maintaining the trust of all the team, and coaching them forward in other, less dogmatic areas.

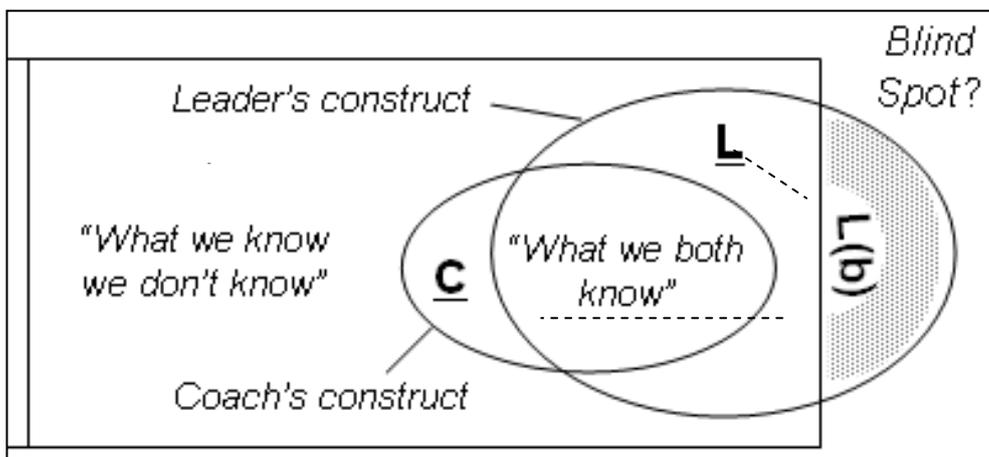
For example, after a further 3 months only a few seeds (curveballs) have been planted, and *Figure 3c* reflects this slow progress, with only “3 + 4” seeds depicted:



So the coach must stay on the look-out for every opportunity to gently sway the “flow of the game”

Possible Intervention	Possible Example of “Seeds/Curveballs” Planted
Quick360	“bizarre – what’s up with E’s latest score?”
Projection	(just to L) “bet you that E won’t win that account”
Individual Conversation	(to L) “if you could change one thing about this team.....?”
Targeted Conversation	(to D, C & L) “L, can we ask C to role play if s/he were you?”
Group Conversation	“what positive feedback can we give L?”

Over the next 6 months, more and more “Seeds of Change (Curveballs)” are planted, so that *Figure 3d* shows that by month 9 most of the component parts of the two counter-arguments have been dropped in:



By this time it is not inconceivable that doubts might be starting to creep in on the Leader’s deeply held view on E (“L”), and while it is impossible to predict when the “flipping of constructs” from L to L(b) to C will happen, the Coach needs to be ready to help the Leader through this confusing “re-programming” of how the Leader constructs reality.

As the coach senses that the Leader may be getting closer to the “construct re-programming” point, the coach may wish to increase testing.

Possible Intervention	Preparing the Leader for the Flip in Construct
Quick360	Test if any useful new stories come out of the data
Projection	“Has this team become stronger in the last year?”
Individual Conversation	Share data with L that things are going well
Targeted Conversation	Invite both L and E to a sub-group discussion
Group Conversation	“Does anyone have concerns about group’s development?”

While the core challenge (UCI) will all be confidential, at the appropriate moment, the coach may choose to involve some of the other team members, such as B, C or D in helping the Leader synchronize his/her horizons.

These mechanics for re-programming beliefs, described in terms of coaching the Leader, are the same for any team member or individual. Indeed this approach is more powerful

when carried out simultaneously on the entire team, as it is designed to rapidly surface differences of opinions in response to real time events.

This in turn means the coach needs to be able to continuously develop and implement both individual and overall team coaching strategies in parallel, with a dynamic which is, as mentioned, not dissimilar to real-time sports team coaching.

11. Periodic gauges of progress

Even in periods of relative stability, when the team appears to be functioning at high levels of functionality, it is important that the coach periodically tests.

As the only certainty in Life is often defined as “change”, teams that become too rigid in their behavioural patterns, implicitly risk sewing the seeds of future challenges.

12. Aim to achieve and maintain the highest levels of peak performance

Coaching is about re-programming. It's about “*how to bring every detail into logical focus if you really want to maximize your odds of winning Gold at the next Olympics*”. When it comes to potentially limiting sub-conscious beliefs, re-programming is about challenging people's horizons to give them the option to modify them for their own benefit.

The strength of Projections Based Coaching is that, practiced correctly, by an experienced top tier coach, it is a very powerful technique. It can surface and diffuse deeply anchored biases, and in the extreme, help unlock seemingly dogmatic constructs. In addition it can easily work in tandem with any existing form of team coaching, for example by filling the voids between key events.

While the base principles date back to Antiquity, the technique is only becoming viable again in modern business culture thanks to technology, though the technique will always require time to bear fruits. Full results are unlikely to surface in short term assignments. The team should have performance markers in accordance to its raison d'être, and a review panel should assess changes in the team's functionality and performance at the end of the allotted 6, 12 or 18 month assignment.

In Summary

Projections Based Coaching is a unique performance coaching and mentoring approach that offers all teams unprecedented interaction with a world class coach in a highly cost and time efficient manner. The coach can interact consistently with both individuals and the whole team to surface difficult issues, change mindsets and modify behaviour, thereby building winning teams. Technology enables a highly convenient end-user experience that seamlessly fits around busy business schedules. This enables coaching to be about outputs, not inputs, navigating teams towards their true economic potential in their step change from “Good to Great”.

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