

## Coaching Capability

The Second Australian Conference on Evidenced-Based Coaching “Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives” was held at the University of Sydney, on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005. The speakers presented evidence based research on the process and impact of coaching in a range of educational, workplace and sporting contexts. Here are some highlights of the conference presentations.

The conference was opened by Dr Anthony Grant (Coaching Psychologist, academic at the University of Sydney) who in his key-note session outlined the growing academic interest in coaching.

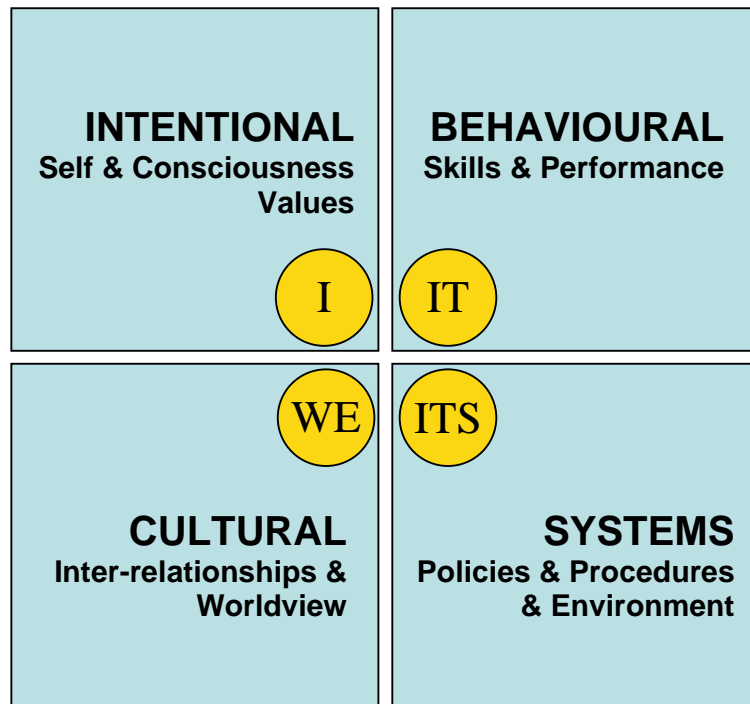
At least four Australian Universities offer post –graduate courses,, these are University of Sydney (Psych), Curtin University (Psych), Macquarie University (Psych) and Deakin University (Health). Seven Universities in the United Kingdom and nine in the USA offer courses in coaching, although overseas Universities tend to be more business school focused.

A number of the speakers described the evidence of coaching on performance within medical settings. The challenges that this sector faces with rapid technology development, increasing demands for integrated services and skill shortages makes coaching an invaluable element in the development process. Grant encouraged researchers to be aware of research being conducted in the areas of medicine business and psychology and to learn from each of these areas when developing research on evidence based coaching. He made the following points about the rigour and the quantity of the research reviewed :

- ◆ Psychology research is more focused on technical behavioural. science
- ◆ There is a large amount of business literature available but it is not very rigorous
- ◆ The medical research available has “best” studies and is a growing area

While many of the presentations were on recently completed or emerging doctorates, consulting groups provided a few practical sessions

Dr Hilary Armstrong and John Matthews provided a short and very practical overview of the coaching methods they use at the Institute of Executive Coaching. They referred to the Wilber Integrative model (Wilber 1996; 2003 ©[www.integralinstitute.com](http://www.integralinstitute.com)) that informs the coaching conversations through a focus on the internal-self, and collective culture and the external behaviours and systems that interact to form the reality and the opportunity for growth.



Gordon Spence, a lecturer in Coaching Psychology is currently completing a PhD on the role that attention plays in creating & maintaining non-clinical behaviour change in coaching.

Spence's presentation focused on mindfulness and self-coaching. He compared three different methods of developing mindfulness as outlined below:

<b>Attention Training</b>	<b>Mindfulness Meditation</b>	<b>Mindfulness Training</b>
Wells & Matthews (1994)	Kabat-Zinn (1990)	Langer (1989)
Aims to reduce self-focused attention (& attentional capture) assisting individuals to direct attention in a particular way	Paying attention on purpose and non-judgementally to internal and external experience	Schematic information reconfigured by paying attention to difference & novelty. Perceptions of reality regularly refreshed
Seeks to modify thinking by changing processing routines, rather than the content of cognitions	Involves paying wholehearted attention to what is happening in the present moment, but from a position of detachment	Aims to break down habitual & automatic forms of behaviour
Individuals complete a series of selective, rapid switching and open attentional tasks to an auditory soundscape of increasing complexity	One simple strategy: Sitting quietly & observing experience	Model offers strategies for greater mindfulness – creating new categories, awareness of context, taking multiple perspectives

Spence's study aimed to identify if any method for training had an impact on mindfulness. He measured impact through the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (15-items), Goal Attainment Scaling, Subjective & Psychological Well-Being, Psychopathology (Depression, stress & anxiety)

The preliminary results indicated that all groups improved in mindfulness, with the meditation group making the largest improvement. Spence's research noted that;

mindfulness training decreases levels of depression, stress and anxiety, and would appear to be useful in preparing individuals for change

Coaching could be usefully delivered as a sequential intervention, which includes some element of mindfulness training.

The Coaching Capability training series developed and delivered by Interdependent integrates many aspects of the theory and practice covered at the conference. The peer based coaching workshop in the series focuses on the intentional internal world and then builds key behaviours such as assertiveness, questioning and listening. The later workshops emphasise coaching for cultural change with the need to manage the interaction of systems and behaviours. As part of the course we encourage keeping a journal between workshops to develop mindfulness practice, the importance of which has been researched by Gordon Spence. The Coaching Capability DVD provides short role plays that demonstrate the key coaching skills required by managers, team leaders and staff for every day interaction in the workplace.

You can access the power points from the conference proceedings at:  
[http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach/Conf2005/acebc\\_home-2005.htm](http://www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach/Conf2005/acebc_home-2005.htm)