

Supporting the Learning Journey of Individuals towards Personnel Fulfilment

"No organisation can succeed unless the individuals within it have the freedom to be themselves."

Kathy Kolbe, The Conative Connection

The commitment of individuals to some sort of formal management development provides the opportunity and often the discipline to take time to reflect on aspects of business and management. Whether young graduates at the start of their career, or more mature and experienced managers, one of the critical aspects of this reflection is self-actualisation.

As Howard Gardner, the renowned writer on the human mind and intelligences proclaims, self-understanding should be considered as one of these key intelligences. People who have the responsibility of coaching individuals through this personal reflection and learning journey must be able to achieve a balance between the realisation of the truth for individuals, which on occasions might be challenging for them, and the important retention of some positivity to promote the confidence and personal development of each learner.

My own experiences both as a mature student navigating my own way through a range of business and learning programmes including company secretarial and MBA syllabuses, and more recently as a tutor and learning facilitator for others on this journey, firmly registers the critical importance of the self-actualisation evaluation. Learners have for many decades been encouraged to follow in the steps of successful people and to often act in a way they would perceive would be the responses and actions of their role-model.

Whilst this strategy towards helping the building of personal confidence does have its value, I have more recently started to question whether this approach does actually truly provide a sound basis for longer term competence and success.

Every one will have experienced at least one event when they have made a decision or completed some actions that may have not been totally conducive to the range of information and advice, but more driven by an internal persuasion that is sometimes described as a 'gut decision'. But have we fully understood where this driving energy to follow a particular route has originated?

Thanks to the work of Phoenix based Kathy Kolbe, we now have a system that has been able to capture elements of this instinctive force. Based on research of over 20 years, The Kolbe Concept provides a profile of an individual's Striving Talents, the energies that are our innate necessities that stem from the Conative domain of the mind.

Conation may be a new word and description for many of us, but it forms the third and often ignored area (at least in the past) of the Tripartite Mind theory. We are all familiar with the other two dimensions; being the Cognitive domain, where we develop our education and experiences that help us to reason; and the Affective domain which houses all our emotions, desires and values and generate our approach to feelings.

We also know that over time, and as we pass through our life, our learned knowledge and our emotional structure develop and the resulting reasoning and emotional outcomes become based on these life developments. However, the Conative domain which determines how we have to (out of necessity) apply our mental energies and influence the way we make decisions and even solve problems is more related to our mental DNA and is therefore relatively unchanging. This has been endorsed by the experiences of test and retest application of the Kolbe System, which has experienced an average outcome of less than 5% variances.

But the real value of understanding our innate talents that stems from this Conative domain is that we can then focus more of our day to day actions towards that which is more natural to us.

This is the basis of many recent business writers who intimate that people's personal effectiveness and productivity is more based on our innate talents and capabilities than that which we may learn. Jim Collins² for example in his most prolific book "Good to Great" talks about the "right person" being more to do with character traits and innate capabilities than with specific knowledge, background and skills.

The ambition is therefore to match the ways we work and even the talents needed to undertake a job we do to that which is natural to us - "working in our grain". When we achieve this, not only will our performance be exceptionally high, but our knowledge in our success endorses a much happier frame of mind and minimises stresses.

The philosophy is not about what we can and cannot do, but more about what we will do and will try to avoid doing. Often in true life, we will need to undertake tasks that are not natural to us - the benefits of knowing our Kolbe Modus Operandi (MO) is that we can then shape the task in a way that achieves a result in the best way - accepting that we will have to invest far greater mental energy than normal.

At no such time is such new self-knowledge of benefit than when individuals are at the start of their careers, or during the processes of a management development programme.

Since working with the Kolbe System, I have had people respond in an amazing way when they have received their resulting personal profile - often the term used is 'being liberated'. When asked their meaning, individuals say that they now understand why they have done things in the past the way they have. They feel now permitted to follow their own instinctive nature as Kathy Kolbe's profiling approach has confirmed for them who they thought they were but had been unable to understand and capture its implications.

We hence have a responsibility to provide this opportunity to those we are coaching through their learning.

Success in any business must stem from our own individual capability to be successful and true to ourselves - and through this understanding I believe we can apply leadership and management styles that will surpass anything that we may have tried before.

The Kolbe approach has similar potential when looking at the working activities of teams and groups of people who are reliant on the make-up of the membership to achieve the outcomes. Kolbe now allows us to bring together Conative opposites to promote the true synergistic potential of the team.

The good news is that after some 16 years of experience of the Kolbe System and potentials being available to businesses in North America, the approach is now available to Europe and beyond. Kolbe Corp are now working in partnership with MBF International to promote the full range of Kolbe services and coaching capabilities across Europe.

Kolbe have already initiated the translation of their data capture questionnaires into French, Spanish and German and are currently in the process of going through the validation of Slovenian and Lithuanian versions in response to the interest being shown in these cultures. European business and post-graduate schools now have the opportunity to extend their learning capability for their students by introducing them to the Conative implications of behaviour and attitudes, and to complete an evaluation of the innate striving talents of their individuals. If we can jointly promote the philosophy of more people working in their most natural way, we will impact on the overall effectiveness of businesses and also aid their ambition towards personal fulfilment in life.

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February 2003

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References:

1. Gardner, Howard (1997), "Extraordinary Minds" Weidebfield & Nicolson
2. Collins, Jim (2001) "Good to Great" Random House Business Books.

3. Kolbe, Kathy (1990) "The Conative Connection) Addison-Wesley
4. Kolbe, Kathy (1993) "Pure Instinct" Random House Times Books