



# VOICE

stand out from the crowd



## The Power of Help in Complex Times

I was recently referred by a friend to Ed Schein's book, *Helping: How to Offer, Give and Receive Help*. I think that his thoughts in this area offer us an interesting challenge as leaders.

Schein points out that the leadership role is getting more and more complex which he bases on four key realities of leading in today's global economy:

**Technological complexity** . as leaders we simply cannot know it all these days and we are totally reliant on the knowledge and skills of experts in our team and businesses. In short we need their help in order to be successful in our chosen markets.

**Information technology advances** . technology allows teams to be virtual, separated by time and space. So as leaders we need to create an environment in which relationships can flourish in a virtual setting.

**Leading multi-cultural teams** . the majority of the team coaching that I do with VBL's clients is with multi-cultural teams with all the opportunities that such diversity brings. Leaders now need to understand how to engage team members with a variety of different cultural expectations and norms.

**Social responsibility** . there are new stakeholders to consider and new requirements for what will be accepted by communities. In a connected world, the speed with which good and bad news travels is ever increasing. So, as leaders, it is more important than ever to make sure that we have really explored all our options.

So what does this complexity mean for leaders? In short, to be effective we need to receive and give effective help. And this process starts with ourselves.

To get help we need to be humble and not assume that we have all the answers. That means asking for help from those around us. For some of us that can be a real challenge particularly if our belief is that asking for help makes us vulnerable. So, in the first place it is critical for us to see asking for help as a strength and a positive and engaging thing to do.

Of course in order to get help it is critical that we create an environment where help can take place. This means an environment in which people not only feel free to give help but also offer it unprompted. What does that mean in reality?

Schein himself has done a lot of work in the safety industry and states that you cannot be safe without good communication. *Continued...*

**The Power of Help in Complex Times:** John Frost explores the potential power of asking for help.

**Thought Leaders:** Karen Frost reviews *Windmill Networking* by Neal Schaffer.

**Top Videos:** We list the best videos we've seen since the last issue.

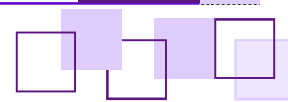
**Maternity Coaching:** Karen Frost case studies her experience of coaching a mother to be pre and post maternity.

**Thought Leaders:** Karen Frost reviews 'How Remarkable Women Lead' by Joanna Barsh and Susie Cranston

**On the Couch:** Karen Frost responds to a divisional Director about how to best help an invaluable team member going on maternity leave

**Final Thoughts:** Lessons we can learn from inspirational leaders.

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What he means by this is that open and honest communication in a supportive environment means that people feel free to speak about the real safety issues.

We could perhaps extend his phrase to this – *you cannot perform effectively* (as an individual, a team or an organisation) *without good communication*. Good communication of course depends on trust. When people trust each other the quality and authenticity of their communication improves. Open communication is a key part of effective helping and helping each other builds trust. When there is trust, decision making and organisational effectiveness and performance improves dramatically.

Of course one of the best ways to encourage an environment of help is to give it yourself. So, it is important to understand how to be able to offer help in the right way. For this Schein has coined the phrase, *humble inquiry*. By this he means avoiding the tendency to jump in and solve problems. Instead, open questions it is much more powerful (and valuable to the person that you are helping) to build awareness and help them to explore the issue for themselves take responsibility for the outcomes that they want.

So, in this respect, it is helpful if we resist the temptation to set ourselves up (in our own minds at least!) as the expert. The expert is more likely to offer solutions and sort the problem. A humble inquiry mindset means that we are far more likely to ask questions and listen so that we can understand what is actually going on for the person that we want to help.

It could be said that what Schein has pointed out is obvious. He himself admits that there is nothing new in what he is saying. So perhaps,



to coin an old phrase, the real challenge for us as leaders is to make common sense common practice!

**John Frost, Managing Director  
Values Based Leadership Ltd**

## Thought Leaders

### Windmill Networking: Understanding, Leveraging and Maximising LinkedIn by Neal Schaffer.

I have had the opportunity to do plenty of career coaching over the past two years and have learnt about the advantages of using LinkedIn as a way of developing your networks. LinkedIn is a very powerful way of networking and is even more powerful if you can learn how to use the opportunities it offers to the maximum - hence my recommendation of this book.



Windmill Networking is a term developed by Neal Schaffer and is based on the concept of digging your well before you are thirsty. In this book you will:

- Learn fundamental social networking concepts and how to apply them
- Create and confirm your objective for using LinkedIn as well as your Brand
- Discover how Windmill Networking can enrich your social media presence for long-term success
- Engage with others through Windmill Networking and expand your network globally
- Leverage & maximize your presence through thoroughly utilizing Applications, Groups & Answers
- Find the best company and most fulfilling job!

I would strongly recommend this book if you are evaluating your career, looking for a new role or feel like you need to expand your network. It is however a little expensive at £36 for the book. The e-book versions are half the price, so if you have a Kindle, then why not go this route?

*Reviewed by Karen Frost*

**Published by** Booksurge Publishing Sep 2009

## Top Videos

Margaret Wheatley talking about Fearless Leadership for these times <http://www.lcc.edu/tv/videos/speakers/cqi-wheatley.aspx>

Shift Happens . 2011 version UK based information [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfDObt30\\_Jw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfDObt30_Jw)

Edgar Schein . Helping. Edgar Schein talking about the power of asking for help [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bkngdA\\_xdw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bkngdA_xdw)

# Maternity Coaching: Case Study

## The Company

The client is a division of a larger global brand and contributes to the growth, profitability and efficiency of the parent company, through the development and application of relevant information and information-related services. In so doing they ensure that the global company is using efficient and effective IT solutions.

The company uses technology to streamline manufacturing processes to make products and to satisfy consumer wants faster and more cost effectively. Indeed, they aim to use the best technological solutions to support all their business processes. The use of IT stretches beyond their own businesses to support their customers and suppliers, from optimizing shelf utilization for retailers to allowing internet-based sales data transfer to enable continuous replenishment planning.

The company works as an international team and are the epitome of global networking. Worldwide standards and processes are their goal, and anyone joining the company will have

*“...seek individuals who want to be involved in the bigger picture and are keen to develop new skills...”*

some international contact, whether it is travelling, exchanging ideas or sourcing information. Because the company believe in developing a pipeline of talent for the global business they have high standards and actively seek individuals who want to be involved in the bigger picture and are keen to develop new skills and experiences. All learn through doing, as well as through formal training and the company culture focuses firmly on the individual.

## The Situation

The individual needing support is a member of the division based in Slough, UK and has a long standing and well established career with the company. She was pregnant with her first child and talked to her line manager about how she could continue to develop herself against her personal and professional objectives and at the same time start a family. This was a challenging task in an environment where the company had just successfully negotiated the purchase of another large global brand and were guaranteed to require re-organisation of

people in the division. The client's male line manager, was very supportive of her in her ambitions both for her career and in starting a family. The company is also mindful of gender diversity and actively encourages women into leadership positions in a sector that has a predominance of male managers.

## The Solution

For women to take successful career breaks and return to work in an environment that enables them to balance all their responsibilities is still a challenge. Women need support and encouragement during this period in their careers so that they can continue to be engaged and active members of their working community post having a family. The company felt that providing the individual with a coach before, during and post maternity leave would offer the right sort of support.

## Objectives

At the start of the coaching the individual shared her objectives with her coach. These were agreed with her line manager who sponsored the coaching throughout. The objectives were based around the outcomes of her review, feedback she had received and in light of imminent maternity leave. They were:

1. Having Impact. Using my coaching to assist in understanding how I can be much more impactful, having the confidence to form and share opinions and to drive actions based on those opinions in such a way that contributes to the success of the team.
2. Relationship building. To develop stronger relationships with key individuals who determine/shape my development and career within the company. Once back from maternity leave, to extend this focus to cover a higher level of visibility on subjects beyond my functional area/scope.
3. Developing Style. Through my coaching, develop a more assertive approach to dealing with peers. Confident use of body language and effective use of voice and speech and knowing how to be more impactful in business situations (and need to review/remind/add more post baby).

## Approach

Through initial conversations with the individual and her line manager, Karen Frost recommended maternity coaching.

*Continued...*

This approach provides support to women who are aspirational for their careers and want to have a family. The structure is to agree coaching objectives that are fit for purpose ahead of maternity level and relevant for post maternity level. So once the objectives were agreed, the individual and Karen had three coaching sessions followed by a review with her line manager. The client then went on her maternity leave. On her return to work, Karen and the individual re-instated the coaching and had three more sessions, again with a review with her line manager.

### The Outcomes

**From an individual perspective:** The individual felt supported and respected during her time on maternity leave. She felt engaged with her employers even though her primary role was learning to be a mum and looking after her little girl. Through the coaching she was able to understand how she encouraged her line manager to be her advocate whilst she was not in the business. Out of sight out of mind can have a negative impact on people's careers if they need to take extended periods of leave such as maternity or sabbaticals. Her line manager was able to remind people of her place in the company and her ambitions on her return. Plenty of work was done by the individual on her three objectives ahead of her maternity leave. These objectives were again focused on when she returned so that her confidence grew, she continued to build relationships and she developed her style. She has successfully negotiated a part-time contract with the company and has taken on a new position within the business which she is enjoying and where she can add value. She has also been able to successfully travel to other sites in North America for periods of time and still manage being a working mum. She is happy.

**From a business perspective:** The company has an engaged member of staff who feels as though she has successfully negotiated the conflict between career and family. This has had positive outcomes for recruitment and retention because they still have the knowledge, experience and energy of a valued member of their staff.

### Quote from the client:

*'The coaching sessions I received from Karen were invaluable, both in terms of addressing my*

*development needs but also in helping my transition back into work after a year out on maternity leave. By having the split of sessions, before and after maternity leave was extremely beneficial. It allowed me to develop tools and techniques which I could use immediately and, then when I returned to work. On my return I was able to refresh and develop further the techniques that we had worked on before and work on specific areas that I needed to develop after a year out. The continuity of having the same coach allowed us to continue the second set of sessions where we left off from the first.*

*A coach of Karen's calibre, who also is very familiar with the company's culture, was a significant enabler in helping me transition back to work effectively and confidently.'*

**Karen Frost, Director of Coaching  
Values Based Leadership**



## Thought Leaders

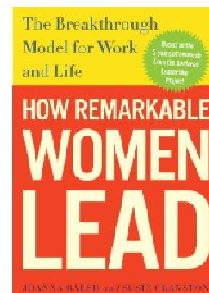
### How Remarkable Women Lead: The breakthrough Model for Work and Life by Joanna Barsh and Susie Cranston

Barsh and Cranston both work for McKinsey & Co as consultants and have spent many years developing what they call the 5 Dimensions of Centered Leadership. The book holds together well with the Centered Leadership model which I think, is an excellent approach to leadership fit for many purposes, regardless of whether you are male or female. It certainly resonated with me and I have shared the approach with groups of leaders who also valued this approach.

What I love about this book, is that it helps us move on from the concept of a work life balance proclaiming that it is a myth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This book shares with us a number of stories about how remarkable women have managed their energy and found a way to be successful without being hung up on how they juggle many balls or spin several plates. There are practical suggestions and recommended actions that work, and I would recommend this book to anyone who is aspirational and wants to make a difference to their style of leadership.

**Reviewed by Karen Frost**

**Published by Crown Business Dec 2010**



# On the Couch

With Karen Frost

*I am a Divisional Director of a manufacturing business and have a female member of my team who I regard as invaluable. This Senior Manager is married with two young children under the age of five. Since returning to work following maternity leave, the Manager is currently part time but like many part-timers she works many more hours than her contract requires. My concern is that she is struggling to 'spin all the plates' in her life and her personal standards expect. What can I do to help her?*

There are some interesting stories, along with facts and figures, for the number of women who try very hard to return to employment following the birth of one or two children but, for a variety of reasons, don't manage to make the transition back. Even if they do return, they often can't come back on a contract with terms and conditions that give them the time and support to transition into their careers with children. Likewise, I think businesses often don't take enough time and thought into how best to manage the changing circumstances.

So my advice to any manager or director with an invaluable member of staff who also wants to have a family, is give them the support prior to them going on maternity.

Work with them ahead of their baby being born around expectations during their maternity leave and when they return to work. This can be in the form of maternity coaching, such as three coaching sessions before maternity leave and three on return, or it can be a monthly meeting with their line manager in the same structure that I am recommending with a coach.

Having missed the opportunity to set this support up prior to your senior manager having children, can I suggest you take the time to listen to her, help her manage her own expectations. They may not be realistic now. Work with

*“ ... I suggest you take the time to listen to her, help her manage her own expectations... ”*

her to find a way that is a solution for her and for you going forward. Doing nothing will, I think, result in her wotting with her feet because women returners don't think they have choices. So either they leave and find themselves applying for a new position in a different business where they can negotiate the employment contract at the start, or, if they are really entrepreneurial, they often start their own business where they can have a little more say in their future.

*Karen Frost, Director of Coaching  
Values Based Leadership Ltd*



## Final Thoughts

*In a week when we have seen two inspirational leaders visit the 'Emerald Isle,' The Queen and Barak Obama—we can reflect on two very different styles—both effective in 2011.*

*Lessons we can learn from them:*

- 1. Adopt a 'yes, you can' mindset.*
- 2. Articulate a clear, consistent leadership vision—and make it big!*
- 3. Passionately embrace technology and new ideas!*
- 4. Engage all and lead inclusively.*
- 5. Inspire confidence in others.*

Comments and/or contributions are welcome. Please address them to the Editor at the address to the left, or email: [emma@valuesbasedleadership.co.uk](mailto:emma@valuesbasedleadership.co.uk). All items © Values Based Leadership Ltd 2009

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