



Book review

## **Coaching Across Cultures - New Tools for Leveraging National, Corporate & Professional Differences**

***Rosinski, P. (2003), NB Publishing London***

Review by Seamus Barry \*

Not since Hofstede (1991) and Trompenaars (1993) wrote their pioneer works, has a book so inspired my imagination as Phillippe Rosinski's book on Coaching Across Cultures. In the preface to the book, the author states his goal "to build bridges between coaching and inter-culturalism to the benefit of both professions", and furthermore he states in the introduction that the book is "not solely written for those of you who work across cultures in an international sense, but also for everyone who works with people from different organisations and backgrounds".

Rosinski's book is divided into three parts. Part 1 gives an overview of "Coaching and Culture" (p. 1-45), Part 2 focuses on "Leveraging Cultural Differences" (p.49-191) and Part 3 turns the tables somewhat by inviting "you the coach, or the aspiring coach, to be the coachee by means of Facilitating the High-Performance and High-Fulfilment Journey" (p.194-252). For me personally, the highlight of the book was Part 2 where Rosinski (with a background of software engineering and a post graduate business degree as well as holding the distinction of being the first person from continental Europe to be granted the Master Certified Coach designation from the International Coaching Federation), brings his wealth of experience as an executive coach from his corporate client base (which includes Baxter healthcare, Chubb Insurance, IBM and Unilever) to bear on the main issues involved in "leveraging cultural differences".

In Part 2, Rosinski masterfully outlines his integrative vision and framework which he terms the "Cultural orientation Framework (COF)". The COF helps the coach to map the cultural territory and includes the following key features: "Assess cultures", "Discover new cultural choices". "Assess cultural differences", "Bridge different cultures", "Envision a desired culture" and "Leverage cultural diversity". Rosinski the outlines "important cultural dimensions" gleaned from the literature of inter-cultural studies, "that

correspond to critical challenges people undoubtedly face, regardless of their culture of work, but that are especially important for the coaching arena” (p.51). These cultural dimensions are divided into seven categories and each culture will put its own emphasis on these categories:

1. Sense of power and responsibility
2. Time management approaches
3. Identity and purpose
4. Organisational arrangements
5. Territory
6. Communication patterns
7. Modes of thinking

These seven categories outlines above form chapters 4-10 and by using each, a “cultural profile” is formed so that a coachee can assess where s/he is on each dimension, and reflect on the implications for their work. Rosinski points out that profiling is not a new innovation but that cultural profiling is.

Rosinski’s book is an indispensable read in facilitating the coaching practitioner in making the transition from ethnocentric coaching to ethnorelative coaching.

- Ethnocentric coaching would include
  - Ignoring of difference
  - Recognising difference but evaluate them negative
  - Recognising difference but minimise their importance
- Ethnorelative coaching would include
  - recognise and accept difference
  - adapt to differences
  - integrate differences
  - leverage differences

This book is a real treasure trove of stimulating ideas, interspersed with much practical insight to assist the busy coaching practitioner in both leveraging and understanding cultural difference. It is also a book, which changed both my thinking and doing, will it have the same affect on you?

### **References**

Hofstede, G. (1991) *Cultures and Organisations, software of the mind*, London McGraw Hill

Trompenaars, F. & Hampden-Turner, C. (1993) *Riding the waves of culture: understanding diversity in global business*, New York McGraw Hill

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