



Introducing PersonPuzzle: Why a New Approach to Coaching is Needed

Coaching Industry Re-Examines the Effectiveness of Its Methods.

The coaching industry is nearing a unique inflection point. As employers increasingly tap coaches to launch leadership programs, and individuals seek to work with coaches themselves, there's a significant discussion about the effectiveness of different coaching methods. According to HR software provider Chronus in its report *Modernizing Employee Development for Today's Workforce*, there is an urgent need for stronger innovation in leadership development. The recent criticism can be summarized by the problem or challenge of focusing the client's "attention towards and retention of high leverage and meaningful learning."

Before coaches and organizations can innovate their coaching methods; however, they need to understand what specifically to improve. In surveying the leadership development space last year, Harvard University researchers concluded that Millennials and Gen Z workers were discouraged by traditional coaching programs that focus on cumbersome competency frameworks. Instead, these demographics preferred agile and intuitive coaching methods, the researchers found.

McKinsey & Company, the global business consultancy recommends that programs run over a period of time, rather than point-in-time retreats, in order to achieve meaningful outcomes for participants. And reporting further, McKinsey researchers write: "adults typically retain just 10 percent of what they hear, versus nearly two-thirds when they learn by doing."

New Pathway to Maximizing Coaching Outcomes

So, with this context in mind, we turn our attention to the PersonPuzzle. It's a distinct method that creates the *attention* and promotes the *retention* and integration of meaningful insight and change within individuals.

The PersonPuzzle method integrates with most every other coaching discipline and leadership development model that a coach may use. Using their particular coaching methodology, coaches guide clients/leaders to "discover pieces of themselves." These parts either promote or detract from a client's personal development, leadership presence and overall effectiveness. The PersonPuzzle method creates a specific time during the coaching conversation or session for focused reflection and the "crystallization" of meaningful, self-insight. Clients capture their insight by **writing on** one of 30 pieces of their own PersonPuzzle. *This PersonPuzzle exercise, which is threaded through the entire program, creates a memorable, visual, multi-sensory and retained component to the discovery and growth process.* And through the next section of this report, we will get an intimate overview of how this dynamic, multi-sensory method can play out in the real world.





The PersonPuzzle Experience

For construction executive Bill Bialek, the year 2017 was poised to be a time for professional and personal growth. Indeed, the opportunities presented themselves on all fronts for the 19-year industry veteran.

At work, Bialek's employer, Saunders Construction, was helping to drive the major construction boom in Denver amid the region's robust economic expansion. Winning contracts with institutions such as the University of Denver and the Denver Art Museum, the 47-year-old company was advancing greatly. Through Saunders's rise, it has worked hard to cultivate a positive workplace culture. Indeed, the Denver Post honored it with multiple Top Work Place awards, with mentions of the company's leadership development efforts.

And as Saunders maximized its growth potential as a company, it needed Bialek to develop as a leader, taking on ever more complex projects and leading larger teams.

Without question, Bialek had to prepare for change. He had always felt like the quarterback of the job site, "having his hands on the ball every play." Now he was being asked to be a company leader. As a result, he now would need to "call the plays and watch from the sidelines (or a meeting room that might be available), having set up his players for success. At the time, "it was about deciding to stop doing it all and start leading others in their positions" so they can grow professionally, Bialek remarks.

Life was evolving outside of work too. On the home front, his family was growing with a third child on the way, soon to join the family's six-year-old and nine-year-old children in the family. The need to balance work and life together was increasingly important. Bialek had a bigger role to play at home as a husband and father as his focused time there mattered immensely.

But change, letting go and "growing up" as a leader is not easy. As earlier stated, Saunders is proud to invest in its people. It has a positive reputation for training and learning programs that put workers on upwardly mobile career paths.

Bialek was excited to have been nominated for one of eight spots in the 2017 Saunders Leadership Development Program (LDP). Led by two veteran executive coaches, the program runs for 10 months each year for selected high-potential leaders at Saunders. During the 10 months, the participants journey through rich, personalized and ultimately life changing experiences. A centerpiece of the program is the PersonPuzzle. As part of the program pre-work, Bialek was asked to take a picture of himself someplace particularly meaningful for him. At the beginning of



the first session of the program, Bill was handed a white box containing the pieces of his own 30-piece PersonPuzzle.



Putting the Pieces Together

Created by veteran executive coach Ellen Robinson, the PersonPuzzle promotes “discovering pieces of yourself” through a multi-sensory method. Ellen and her colleague integrated the PersonPuzzle process with the other leadership development models and learnings designed into the overall program.

As sessions neared their end each month, Bialek and others would pull out from their PersonPuzzle box individual puzzle pieces of themselves and they would then *write words on the pieces* capturing the insight and self-discovery they were feeling from that session’s work and coaching. The PersonPuzzle evolved throughout the course of the year, helping the participants gain and retain stronger awareness of who they were and how they were developing professionally and personally.

The method also helped them gain insights into how peers perceived them as well. During the last session of the nearly yearlong program, the PersonPuzzle method was used to share appreciations about each other. Each member of the group reflected on the unique things they discovered about each other. Bialek was moved when Doris handed



him a puzzle piece where she had written how she viewed him as a colleague and as a human being. Through the experience, Bialek learned "what she sees in me that I didn't see for myself...I remember what Dolores wrote", he chuckled. "I remember it because it was on my hard hat of the puzzle," a smiling Bialek says.

For Bialek, the PersonPuzzle method embedded in the LDP produced a meaningfully positive impact - one that he could "take home" too.

Indeed, nothing quite compares to the experience of "putting yourself together" and viewing the full PersonPuzzle, reflecting back the insight gained from the beginning to the end of the program.

"I did not realize how cool it would be at the end. I remember it being a fairly simple assignment" in the beginning, but as the PersonPuzzle process continued, its impact became clearer, Bialek says. "You have the most important takeaways from the year program on the PersonPuzzle. That was really the value that I got out of it," he says. "We were able to see the most impactful work of that day in order to remember the importance of it."

Bialek says of the PersonPuzzle experience that, "While it's hard to capture an insight in just a few words, the process of doing so deepened my understanding of the strength, intention or commitment to myself that I was creating." In some cases, Bialek took to writing on the back of the puzzle pieces to convey more of what generated his views during a given day. "While I used my journal too, I think the PersonPuzzle was more fun!"

For Bialek's family, there was joy in sharing the experience with his family. "My wife got to see it too. She saw all the things that I wrote about regarding our family and our kids and all these things that are important to us. It was important for her see how she and our family shows up for me at work."

The Full Picture Realized

Without question, the transformation from the process is still affecting Bialek in crucial ways, even up until this day.

Today Bialek is an accomplished general superintendent and his family is thriving, with his new young child getting plenty of love from he, his wife and two older children.

"When you put it all together and stand back and look at the completed puzzle, you see the person you want to be." Bialek says.