

Create the Atmosphere

“The earth's atmosphere is 20 percent oxygen and 80 percent nitrogen from sea level to about 75 miles up, where space begins.

At 18,000 feet, the atmosphere is half as dense as it is on the ground, and at altitudes above 40,000 feet, air is so thin and the amount of oxygen so small that pressure oxygen masks no longer do the job. Above the 63,000-foot threshold, humans must wear space suits that supply oxygen for breathing and that maintain a pressure around the body to keep body fluids in the liquid state. At this altitude the total air pressure is no longer sufficient to keep body fluids from boiling.”



Well, if I am going into space, I do not want my body fluids boiling, and will happily step into a well-designed spacesuit.

As executive coaches, a portion of our role lies in **creating an atmosphere** that allows individuals and teams to realize their full potential and reach their goals. In a sense, we are to intentionally and purposefully create a “well-designed spacesuit,” allowing the client(s) the ‘oxygen necessary to breathe’, consider options, and take actions, all within a safe space of interaction.

We are **spacesuit engineers!**

In his book, *10 Leadership Virtues for Disruptive Times*², Tom Ziglar, discusses three steps to create a coaching atmosphere.

I and Me, or We and Us

True executive coaches serve as servant leaders, with a continual focus on nurturing an individual's innate potential from within. For those that choose this path, “the task of being a servant leader becomes our life's work and the hardest thing we'll ever do. Make no mistake, servant leadership is not easy, but it is what our world needs – the commitment to come together for the greater good, in a world in which we help others succeed.”³ To so many, it is counter-cultural. In a culture that so often screams for individuals to succeed regardless of the costs, focuses on self-entitlement, and is obsessed with self-obsession, it is truly a “breath of oxygen” to experience an interaction by a servant leader, focused on the betterment of another.

Executive coaches seek to create an atmosphere that allows others to thrive.

As a “spacesuit engineer,” what if our coaching purpose was to accomplish the mission by developing, inspiring, and drawing out the more capable person inside each client, **while** developing ourselves so that this becomes our automatic way of thinking, leading, coaching, and living? You have likely heard the airplane safety instruction many times: “Secure your own oxygen mask first before helping others with theirs.”

Life is a series of conversations. Handle each one with the appropriate spacesuit.

Connections with People

Personal connections matter. Coaches “realize the importance of the ‘atmosphere connection,’ so they focus on knowing what their people want to feel and to accomplish, and coach accordingly.”²

So, what do people want to feel? What do they want to experience and then be able to provide for others?

“Everyone wants to feel:

- Respected
- Heard
- Safe
- Valued
- Connected
- Appreciated
- Loved
- Led
- Included”²

If success for a client or the client’s organization is dependent solely on the most recent result, the journey will be fraught with continual cracks in the face shield of the spacesuit, sucking in for oxygen, but not finding a consistent flow. But, if the focus becomes continual growth and learning, all parties are moving toward success. As a strategic challenger, we have the responsibility to create the atmosphere that forces oxygen to our clients, while ensuring they are poised to navigate the challenges that will come.

Choose the atmosphere you want to create, with personal connections made relevant, and you will **create** the atmosphere in which others can thrive.

The Power of the Personality

Let's revisit the face shield on a spacesuit. This visor not only protects the astronaut but also allows them to see clearly and navigate effectively. Similarly, **understanding the personalities of clients** acts as a protective shield for executive coaches, guarding against potential misunderstandings and conflicts, while also providing the clarity needed to recognize the strengths, motivations, and potential of those they coach. Without this critical piece, the mission could easily be jeopardized, as clarity and connection are compromised.

This happens more than we'd like to believe.

How well do you understand the personality of your client? "Knowing the personality styles of clients is a game changer, because now you can intentionally communicate with them in ways that have the highest chance of being effective."²

- Does your client prefer a direct approach or subtle communication, detailed explanations or concise summaries?
- Is your client more comfortable with a structured plan or a flexible approach?
- Does your client thrive in collaborative environments or prefer working independently?
- Is your client more motivated by praise or constructive feedback?

These are just a few possible considerations as we assess the personalities of clients in order to more successfully coach them toward goals. The visor, the understanding of the power of personalities, allows coaches to filter and regulate what they see, responding in such a way that focuses on the mission.

We are spacesuit engineers, creating environments to develop, inspire, and draw out the best and highest within people from the inside out!

What atmosphere are YOU creating today?

Citations:

1. https://www.pbs.org/spacestation/station/living_spacesuit.
2. Ziglar, T., & Blanchard, K. H. (2021a). 10 leadership virtues for disruptive times: Coaching your team through immense change and challenge. Nelson Books an imprint of Thomas Nelson.
3. Barter, A. (2018a). The art of servant leadership II: How you get results is more important than the results themselves. Wheatmark.