

Sara Corcoran – Coaching Profile

Coaching practice and philosophy

A driving force in my career has been the belief that work and workplaces should be developmental and supportive and I believe strongly in the transformative power of coaching to improve professional and personal lives and realise potential. I adopted an approach of 'doing serious work with a lightness of touch' from an early mentor and find that building trusting relationships, taking a pragmatic approach and, when appropriate, adding a little laughter, make work much more enjoyable. I am energised by working to make things better and have a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. I am known for my approachability, my listening and my follow through on commitments.

I specialise in coaching executive directors and senior managers, although I take great pleasure in working with those who are in career transition. This might include leadership development coaching for those preparing for the next significant step on the career ladder, supporting those returning after a long absence or those reviewing their career options.

I bring my energy and interest to give active support and challenge to my clients, as we jointly work through a process of exploration and learning. Whilst clients hold responsibility for their choices and actions, I work with them collaboratively, through a range of approaches, tools and techniques, to help them realise new insights and progress towards their goals. Often these include bringing clarity to their decision making; developing greater self-knowledge; understanding the organisational context and culture; and improving team dynamics.

With the onset of the pandemic, much of my practice was to support individuals – and through them, their teams - in adjusting to sudden change and maintaining wellbeing. The focus of work has shifted now towards reviewing the resilience and sustainability of new working arrangements, effective virtual team management and developing plans for a 'new normal'.

Since March 2020, the majority of work has been conducted virtually. However, working outside enabled me to continue to meet some coachees for socially-distanced face-to-face meetings and provided the opportunity for some fresh air and gentle exercise as we walk and talk. I found the external environment to be a rich resource to support our work. This led me to the growing body of research which demonstrates the benefits for our thinking when working outdoors. Increasingly I incorporate the external environment into my practice.

In addition to 1-2-1 coaching and mentoring, I offer team coaching, Action Learning Set facilitation and facilitation of leadership and management workshops.

Professional background

I have a public sector background, with 20 years senior experience in Higher Education (including 11 years at Director of HR and OD level) and more than a decade in the NHS. In addition to contributing to the strategic leadership and development of the organisation, my roles have included supporting line managers and their staff through restructurings, relocations and mergers,

as well as the more day-to-day issues arising in employment and career development.

means I have a good understanding of leading and managing in complex, unionised environments. I have been privileged to be involved in some hugely exciting projects, including playing a leading role in the launch of the University of Suffolk, supporting the merger between University College Falmouth and Dartington College of Art (now the University of Falmouth) and the rationalisation of hospital services in the Medway towns,

Constants throughout my career have been the need to understand the wider stakeholder system, the need to support staff through change and the need to attend to team effectiveness, with a focus on interpersonal skills and communications. A career in Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) has kept me connected to people at all levels of the organisation, from the most junior to the Board, striving to make the work experience as good as it can be. I have built great working relationships with colleagues and helped them build teams to deliver excellent performance. Coaching and mentoring have been central to all my roles, whether generalist HR, learning and development or OD.

Qualifications and affiliations

- MSc in Strategic Training & Development, University of Surrey
- MA in Educational Research, University of Sussex
- EMCC accredited Senior Coach Practitioner
- Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD)
- Fellow (and Board Trustee) of the Association of University Administrators
- Co-Chair of the Organisational Development in Higher Education network.



Testimonials

- It's been a pleasure to work with Sara – I have found the process really useful. I've learnt a lot about myself and taken away a number of actions and ways of working to put back into my day-to-day role which have helped me have more impact.

Education Programme Director, Higher Education Sector

- I really appreciated how quickly Sara established an open, trusting and respectful relationship. I found myself opening up very early in our sessions, which is not something I tend to do. Sara is good at listening and framing questions which made me think about things in a different way. She helped me understand my feelings about certain matters and how these were impacting as well supporting me in changing behaviours to achieve better outcomes.

Finance Director, Local Government

- Sara listens well and quickly establishes a good rapport. She has helped me bring my thoughts together into a coherent picture and identify and implement a number of actions to take my team and my own performance forward.

Marketing Director, Charitable Sector

- I am genuinely given space for reflection and contemplation in sessions which I find extremely rewarding, and I feel safe doing,

Director of Academic Practice, HE

- The coaching, advice and techniques you gave me were a big part of being able to get the confidence to make a change in my life; and a new job is what I needed to move on, move up and be happier. I couldn't be more excited and I must thank you so much for the time and dedication you provided whilst coaching me. I am so grateful.

Administration Manager, HE

- I feel empowered – this is the best I've felt about my career potential in many years!

CEO, Students' Union