



CRITICAL ALIGNMENT MODEL

ULTIMATE COACH
PROGRAM

CRITICAL ALIGNMENT MODEL FOR COACHING

One of the challenges of coaching is knowing what a great outcome is. Whilst it's up to the client, there is still the opportunity to add value to their decision, commitment or action by pointing out an obvious but unseen flaw in their thinking, or by bringing to their attention something they hadn't considered.

The coach is not there simply to listen to the client make a commitment that will hurt them, champion them as if it's not flawed and then hope it all works out.

The coach needs to be educated on what best practice is for things such as decision making and deciding on strategies for moving forward.

We can't be the 'blind leading the blind', relying on coaching questions and never assisting the client in seeing obvious stretches or strengths they aren't seeing.

The Meta Dynamics™ Critical Thinking Model is designed as a guide for a coach, facilitator, trainer, mentor, leader or consultant to have so they can 'see' with ease what to consider when working with a client.

There are, in any situation, four dimensions to consider. How well we know these dimensions, and their subtleties, determines how behaviourally flexible we can be when coaching.

Coaches sometimes share how they seem to be stuck asking similar questions in every coaching session, regardless of the issue. Or that they don't know what question to ask the client.

The Critical Alignment Model allows us to explore our world, our client's world and the possibilities with a greater sense of certainty.

Once the coach becomes more experienced, it is the ultimate coaching tool in terms of advanced coaching, strategic coaching, business coaching, and leadership development.

For now, let's start with the foundations of the Critical Thinking Model. (There is a Meta Dynamics™ Critical Alignment Quiz for clients here in this manual for you to use and adjust as you want.)

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF ALL EXPERIENCE

Regardless of what experience we are having, what we are observing, what is happening or where we are, all of it can be 'coded' into four dimensions.

We coach with ease when we are familiar with these dimensions, because it helps us:

- ✓ Code all experience
- ✓ Direct where to take the conversation
- ✓ Recognise where someone is at with their thinking
- ✓ Recognise where someone is at with their choices
- ✓ Recognise where someone is at with their strategies
- ✓ Recognise where someone is at with their relationships
- ✓ Recognise strengths and stretches
- ✓ Develop new strategies with the client
- ✓ Have a model for best practice
- ✓ Get everyone involved on the same page and talking the same language
- ✓ Give all participants one common, united focus
- ✓ Know where we are in our observation of a client or a team member
- ✓ Know where we need to focus
- ✓ Know best practice so we know how to help close the gaps
- ✓ Have a model for feedback and growth

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS ARE:

QUALITATIVE

Ideal Best Practice

QUANTITATIVE

Ideal Best Practice



E - ENVIRONMENT

S - STRUCTURE

I - IMPLEMENTATION

P - PEOPLE

ONE: ENVIRONMENT

THIS IS WHERE TO START ALL THINKING AND CONVERSATIONS.

It's concerned with:

Purpose – What is the higher purpose of this person? What

1. Goals and outcomes – What does this person want to achieve? What are their planned goals?
2. Values – What does this person value and want to experience? Love? Certainty? Significance? Wisdom? Health? Freedom? Does this person live congruently with these values? Are others expected to do something (or mind read) what has to happen for this value to be met? Are these values traded or sacrificed when its inconvenient to live them?
3. Beliefs – What does this person believe to be true about the world? What does this person believe to be true about themselves? What does this person believe to be true about what's possible?
4. Attitude – What is this person's attitude towards life? Towards themselves? Towards their family? Towards friends? Towards commitments?
5. Ideas – What ideas does this person have? Are they about people? Are they about problems? Are they about solving problems? Are they about causing problems?
6. Standards for ourselves – What are this person's standards for themselves? What is non-negotiable in their world? What do they easily and effortlessly maintain without prompting? What are their routines, rituals and habits? What aren't? Does this person expect a high standard of themselves when it comes to self-care? Care of others? Commitments? Does this person make excuses about what they can't do and why they don't follow through on commitments? Are they quick to excuse their own shortcomings and quick to judge others?
7. Expectations of each other – What are this person's expectations of others? Or their world? Of people they know? Of people they don't know?

The Environment is the qualitative dimension of thinking, believing, imagining, valuing and expecting.

It is vital to consider when coaching, as all actions are first shaped as a thought or an idea. All that is visible first begins as the invisible.

Anything we express, say, do or have is first formulated in our mind. Even an impulse decision which harms us can be traced back to poor impulse control because of lack of building the habit of discipline.

Whatever we want to create, the limits of that creation are determined by our thinking. The more we can expand our thinking, challenge our thinking, upgrade our thinking, and consider new thinking, the more we can consider for creation. And this includes when creating our own ideal life.

We can only aspire to become that which we can conceive. That which we do not know, we cannot experience.

If we only know thinking negatively, and gossiping, and dragging people down, we can't simply dream up a world where people are trusting and good and kind to one another. We've been so busy guarding ourselves against hurt, that those around us know to be wary and distant, which perpetuates our beliefs, which continues the cycle.

The coach can't simply ask the client to imagine a better world. The questions must 'flesh out' the possibilities of an alternative reality.

With this dimension, we can begin to see the possible questions we can ask.

TWO: STRUCTURE

NEXT WE MOVE TO THE QUANTITATIVE CONSTRUCTS OF THE SITUATION, THE REALITY WE'RE EXAMINING, THE CONVERSATION WE'RE HAVING.

It's concerned with:

1. Categories of performance – What is available to us to help us achieve our goals? What different resources are available? What's missing? What categories can we group them into?
2. Dimensions of experience – Within the categories, what are the different aspects of each category we have to consider?
3. Benchmarks of excellence – What is 'excellence' in each of these categories and dimensions? How is this evidenced? How is this determined? How is this measured? How often is it measured? By whom? How accurately?
4. Limits of experience – What is not available to this person? What is missing? What resource is lacking?
5. Planning and organisation – What planning needs to be done to bring this to life? What has to be documented? What has to be project planned? What has to be specified in advance? What can just be allowed to unfold?
6. Strategies – What are the ideal strategies, steps and processes involved in the attainment of this goal or the achievement of this transformation?

This dimension seems too often to be the weak link in coaching (and for coaches themselves).

It's as if 'living in the moment' is suitable for all occasions. And it's not. Success at Wimbledon takes years of sacrifice, planning, scheduling, and development of skills and resilience. Anything that is 'epic' in scale is not experienced by the person content to live in the here and now and let tomorrow take care of itself.

That isn't to say anyone can't live that way. It's just at odds with the attainment of financial independence, or planning for children, or seeking a new career, or planning a wedding, or going to the gym, or meeting someone at a specific time, or...

Living in the moment is a luxury for our downtime. When we're at work, in a meeting and being asked questions about what we've accomplished, letting go and just 'being' is inappropriate and disrespectful.

I realise there are exceptions to this.

More likely for people with bills and commitments and responsibilities, the exceptions are moments. Then the kids want to get to the soccer practice or have friends over and want snacks and you've run out of lemonade...

The other huge piece of this puzzle is knowledge. We can want something and wish for something and hope for something. But if we don't know all the pieces involved in the achievement of that something, how can we achieve it?

For example, we may want to bake a cake. We really want a cake. We want chocolate cake.

The categories are:

- The ingredients
- The cooking utensils
- The mixer
- The oven

The dimensions of experience are the details of the categories:

- The ingredients – chocolate, flour, and I have no idea what else...
- The cooking utensils – a bowl, a spoon, a measuring thingie... (yup, you can tell how I'd go baking a cake ☺)
- The mixer – the engine bit and the bit that mixes stuff, and probably power
- The oven

The benchmarks of excellence are what measures must be achieved for success:

- The ingredients – 2 cups of chocolate, 2 cups of flour, and I have no idea what else...
- The cooking utensils – a large bowl, a large spoon, a measuring thingie... (yup, you can tell how I'd go baking a cake ☺)
- The mixer – the engine bit and the bit that mixes stuff, and probably power
- The oven – pre heated to 220 degrees Celsius, and then the cake mix placed in the tray in the middle for 30 minutes

I am completely making this up, but you can see how the facts are filling in and we're getting more and more detail on what is required to achieve this goal of making a chocolate cake.

At this stage, the limits to my experience are fairly obvious.

Then there's the planning – the exact recipe, laid out for us.

Then finally, the strategy – the sequence in which we do everything to successfully make a cake.

If any of the details are left out, or if they're done in a different order, will we still produce a chocolate cake?

Let's leave out the chocolate.

Or put the chocolate in the cake once it's been in the oven.

Or not realise we needed an oven.

Any of these deletions will impact our outcome significantly.

Each category must be in place. All the dimensions within each category must be in place. What we're measuring (benchmarks) must be in place. What the plan is, the sequence is and the timing is all must happen a certain way.

What happens too often when goals are not achieved is the person is inspired (Environment), but doesn't have the pieces of the puzzle to achieve what they want.

If we move from baking to career progression, we can see all the ingredients must be in our awareness, or we're not going to make a good impression in the job interview.

Let's say we want to move from administration to sales. We have no experience in sales and haven't studied sales. We have a rough idea of what's involved and don't plan to learn or prepare, because 'it's something I've always wanted', even without having a thorough understanding of it.

Maybe they'll get through the interview on their charm and personality and seeming complete determination.

And then they're in the role and discover the level of commitment, discipline and focus required to succeed at sales.

It's now not what they want. It's not what they expected.

How could it be?

THREE: IMPLEMENTATION

ONCE WE HAVE ESTABLISHED WHAT IS ABOVE THE LINE, WE MOVE BELOW THE LINE AND LOOK AT 'REALITY' – GIVEN THE ABOVE THE LINE PARAMETERS, WHAT ACTUALLY OCCURS.

It's concerned with:

1. Actions – What does this person actually do in terms of their stated outcomes and purpose? Do they behave consistently with what they have established is required in the first two dimensions? Are they following through on their commitments?
2. Actual KPI's achieved – We talked previously about Benchmarks – KPI's – Key Performance Indicators – are what actually occurs. Is this person achieving what they set out to achieve? Is this person making progress along the way? Is there evidence of progress? Or is it simply action and busyness?
3. How we actually do something – Is this person seeking to improve, or are they going through the motions? Are they doing the steps with ease and grace? Or is it clunky and out of step with the rest of their life? When they act, is it action that is congruent with their values and the rest of their life? What areas, if any, are affected by these actions? Are these actions a true reflection of their ideal self? Are these actions a true reflection of who they're wanting to become?
4. Habits – What rituals does this person have that help them attain their full potential? What rituals are needed?

What we actually do speaks volumes about what we care about and what we are simply saying matters. We can't behave in a way that is contrary to our true nature for any sustainable length of time. We must revert to our true selves.

If we're behaving in a way that is not suiting who we want to become, then we must go back to the Environment and reassess our values, our beliefs and our standards. We can't just hack away at the task hoping it will suddenly go away or get easier.

We must be aligned with and feel congruent with that which we must repeat over and over.

We can't go jogging every day if we don't value health. (The army would be an exception to this, everyone else who loathes it finds a way to get out of it.) We can jog if it's aligned with our values, and is ecological with the rest of our lives – our family commitments, our profession, our personal time etc.

FOUR: PEOPLE

ONLY ONCE WE HAVE PUT IN PLACE THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS TO SUCCESS DO WE MOVE BELOW THE LINE AND START THE 'DOING ' – AND ONCE WE'RE DOING, WE CAN NOW, FINALLY, LOOK AT HOW PEOPLE ARE PERFORMING IN THIS ENVIRONMENT.

It's concerned with:

1. Quality of relationships – who is in their life? What are the relationships? What is the quality of the relationships?
2. Discussions – What are the quality of conversation this person has? What do they focus on? What do they seem to care about?
3. Guidance – How do they serve others? How do they inspire others?
4. Feedback – Do they give feedback? To whom? How? Is it appreciated? Is it offensive to others? Do they include social sensitivity when giving feedback? Or is it all about being heard?
5. Response to feedback – Does this person receive feedback? Is their ego preventing them learning?
6. Capability of an individual – How capable is this person? Can they be counted on?

This is a great area for exploration when it comes to relationships, with themselves and with others.



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CRITICAL ALIGNMENT MODEL
Ultimate Coach

Edition 1 | Version 1 | November 2017
Published by Global Success Institute

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