

HOW EXECUTIVE COACHING LEFT ME MORE RESILIENT, CENTRED AND SELF-AWARE

Challenger Weeks are run by Relume for leaders that are ready to challenge the status quo in themselves, their organisations and their communities. It provides a place of connection with others, where personal stories of change leadership are told, worked with and transformed.

We caught up with Clive Nathan, to find out about his experience of one of the Relume Challenger Weeks; where he came face-to-face with his emotions, fears and anxieties and as a result, became better connected to his leadership ambition.



TELL US ABOUT HOW YOU FIRST HEARD ABOUT RELUME?

At the time, I was Director at Towergate Insurance, leading the underwriting business. We were going through a period of significant change, where a new Group CEO and Executive Board had been appointed. The CEO had worked with Relume before. He felt it would be useful to engage Relume to provide external facilitation of how the Executive Team could become even more effective at a time when that new team was just starting to get to know each other.

Relume worked as a coach and observer to the Executive Team (as a group). They would attend our regular monthly meetings, and would interject if they felt that things were not being said. They created an environment to allow difficult things to be said, and enable us to have good debates as a group.

They also worked with each team member individually, as mentor and coach. I quickly saw the benefit of working with Relume. A lot of the work we did with them was at a personal level, for example challenging us why we might think or feel a certain way and how we could improve it. They made us take a long hard look at ourselves in terms of what we wanted to be doing (both personally and in a business context).

For the Challenger Week Relume identified people that they have worked with who had no knowledge of each other's sectors. They wanted to explore the outcomes from bringing these 'strangers' together in an intense experience outside the workspace to share and challenge their change leadership experiences. I was lucky enough to be invited to one of these Challenger Weeks.

“Relume are not a typical consultancy – they do not come into your business to fix all the problems – what they do is work with you so that you are better equipped to solve those problems”.

SO WHAT DID YOU EXPECT TO GET OUT OF THE CHALLENGER WEEK?

This was a chance for a disparate group of people to come together for a week. The brief was very loose and I actually went along without any specific expectations. I did not really know what I was going to be doing during the week.

I simply went along on the trust and empathy that I had built up with Relume, and just turned up with no knowledge of what was to be expected.



WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE DID YOU JOIN DURING THE WEEK?

The people attending had been identified by Relume – they were people that they had worked with in different businesses.

They chose people who did not have knowledge of the sector in which others worked. Some people in the group were working in the commercial sector and others in non-profit; some were between roles and some were thinking about what their next career move would be.

There was a difference in the age of people – some were in their 50s, some were in their 30s. Some were more senior in their roles and some were more junior. It was really interesting to see how the group quickly bonded, and we took care of each other during the week.

When we all arrived, we sat around a farmhouse kitchen table. The first questions were around ‘What do you do?’ To start with, there was a lot of bravado, for example ‘I have 1000 people reporting to me’. By the end of the week, a lot of that had been broken down and people were not trying so hard to show how clever or successful they were. This just shows the difference of what can happen in four to five days.

“I went along on the trust and empathy that I had built up with Relume... with no knowledge of what was expected”.

WHAT SORT OF THINGS DID YOU DO?

The whole week was quite remarkable. We learnt about things like meditation, exercise and nutrition.

We also learnt a lot about resilience, about the need to be open and to share some of yourself.

We had very simple, but effective exercises. For example, we met a choir – a choral group – we observed these four people and listened to them sing. They talked to us about how they created sounds and harmonies and in doing so we learnt about the teamwork that goes into it.

A lot of this was analogous with business. One of the exercises that springs to mind is one which involved a labyrinth in which we have to imagine our life’s journey. This was such an intense experience that I do not think anyone left the room without tears. It stripped people down but in a really good way – in a way that left you a bit raw but feeling very positive about it.

“Relume wanted to see what the outcome would be when they brought together a group with no knowledge of your particular sector, to participate in an intense experience outside the workplace”.



SO, DID THE EXPERIENCE HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOU?

Through the series of exercises and inputs from the Relume team, they managed to create an unbelievable camaraderie between the 10 people that went along. This has continued since the Challenger Week, we talk as a virtual group and update each other on our progress. We are looking to meet up again in person for a reunion soon.

For myself, Challenger Week enabled me to look more deeply than I have ever done – thinking about myself as a person, how my behavior affects others – not just at work – but my family also. It was unbelievably beneficial.

I have been able to bring some of the techniques I learnt into the business and also to myself. It has enabled me to think more clearly about myself, about my journey, about my behavior, about how I may influence others and how I can have an influence in lots of different ways. I am much more aware of what my behavior and how my words have an impact on people around me.

Relume encouraged us to think more broadly than just about ‘us and the business,’ but more about life and what you want from it and this is invaluable.

“I find my time with Relume just leaves me feeling refreshed and centred and much more able to cope with things that happen in life”.

“At the end of Challenger Week the feeling of well-being that I had on the Friday night driving home, and over the following weekend, is something that I have never felt before or again”.

“It stripped people down but in a really good way – in a way that left you a bit raw but feeling very positive about it”.