

Coaching at Work

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People
management

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MANAGER AS COACH

EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE –
THE MODEL THAT GETS RESULTS

SEWN UP THINKING

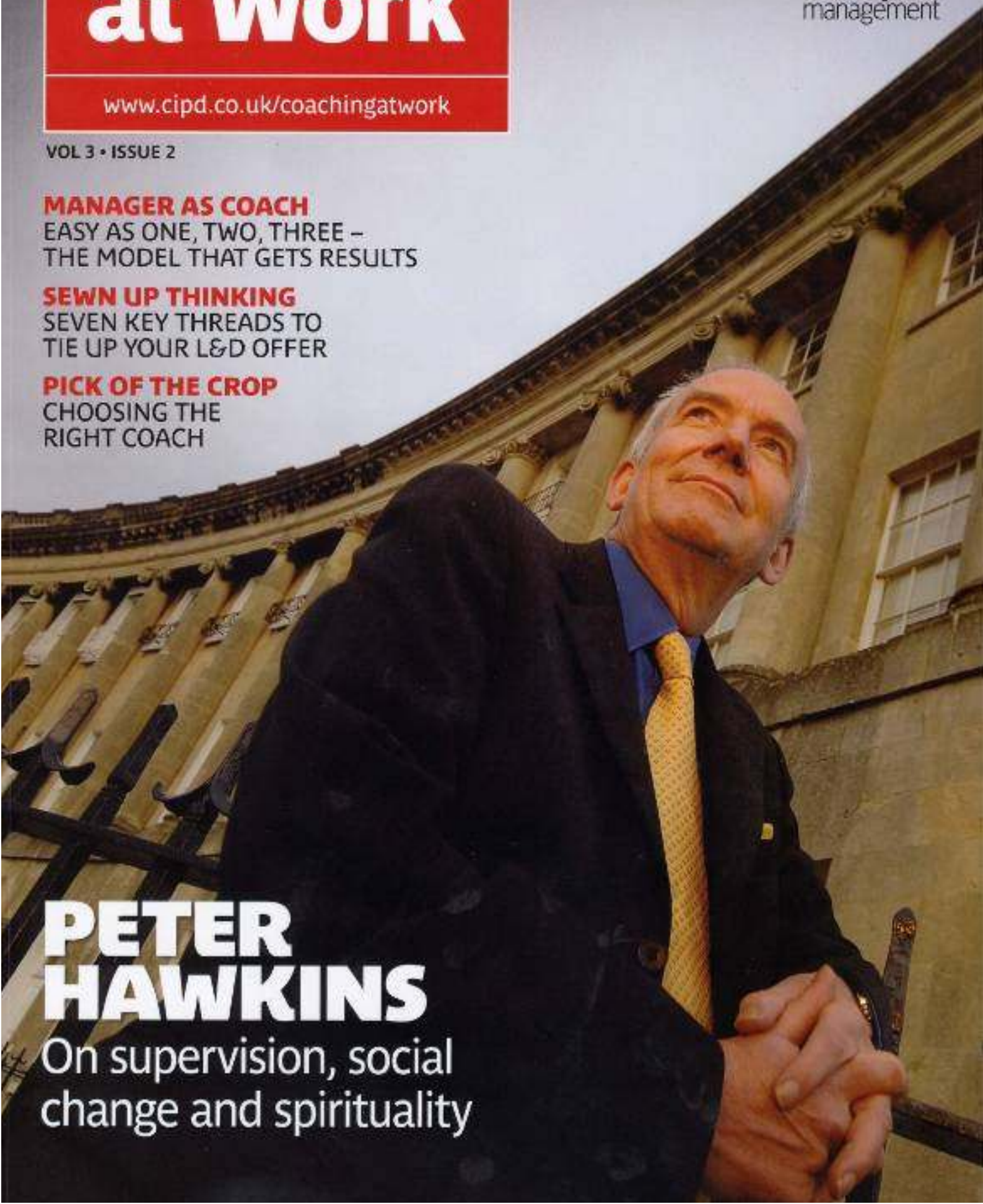
SEVEN KEY THREADS TO
TIE UP YOUR L&D OFFER

PICK OF THE CROP

CHOOSING THE
RIGHT COACH

PETER HAWKINS

On supervision, social
change and spirituality



RIPE FOR CHANGE

Peter Hawkins is just as happy guiding global mergers as creating 'felt shifts' in individuals. Coaches must simply think systematically, says the chairman of Bath Consultancy Group, for their work to bear fruit. He talks to **Liz Hall**

Imagine that the livelihoods of 2.5 million people and the future of a nation's political and social change programme depend, in part, on your ability to coach and spearhead cultural change.

This was the scenario facing Peter Hawkins, chairman of Bath Consultancy Group, when he helped South African fruit exporter Capespan to shift from a parochial to a global culture as part of its merger with Unifruco.

The merger took place against a backdrop of far-reaching political change, including black empowerment in South Africa, and most of the big international supermarket chains slashing the number of fruit suppliers from hundreds to three or four.

"The economic sustainability of the fruit industry, the second largest industry in South Africa, was at stake if we messed up. The social consequences would be enormous... but Afrikaaner farmers are not known for being fast-changing, radical people and a fruit company like that rarely holds on to a third of the market," says Hawkins, recently appointed the first president of the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (Apecs).

Capespan, however, did remain the number-one fruit exporter in South Africa and Hawkins is incorporating the case study in a book he is



“You’re there to hold up the mirror to those you coach about how realistic their agenda is, given the context”

Peter Hawkins: CV

2006 Co-authored *Coaching, Mentoring and Organizational Consultancy; Supervision and Development* (McGraw-Hill/Oxford University Press)

Also involved in the CIPD change agenda *Coaching Supervision*

2005 *The Wise Fool's Guide to Leadership* (O Books)

1989 Co-authored *Supervision in the Helping Professions* (Oxford University Press)

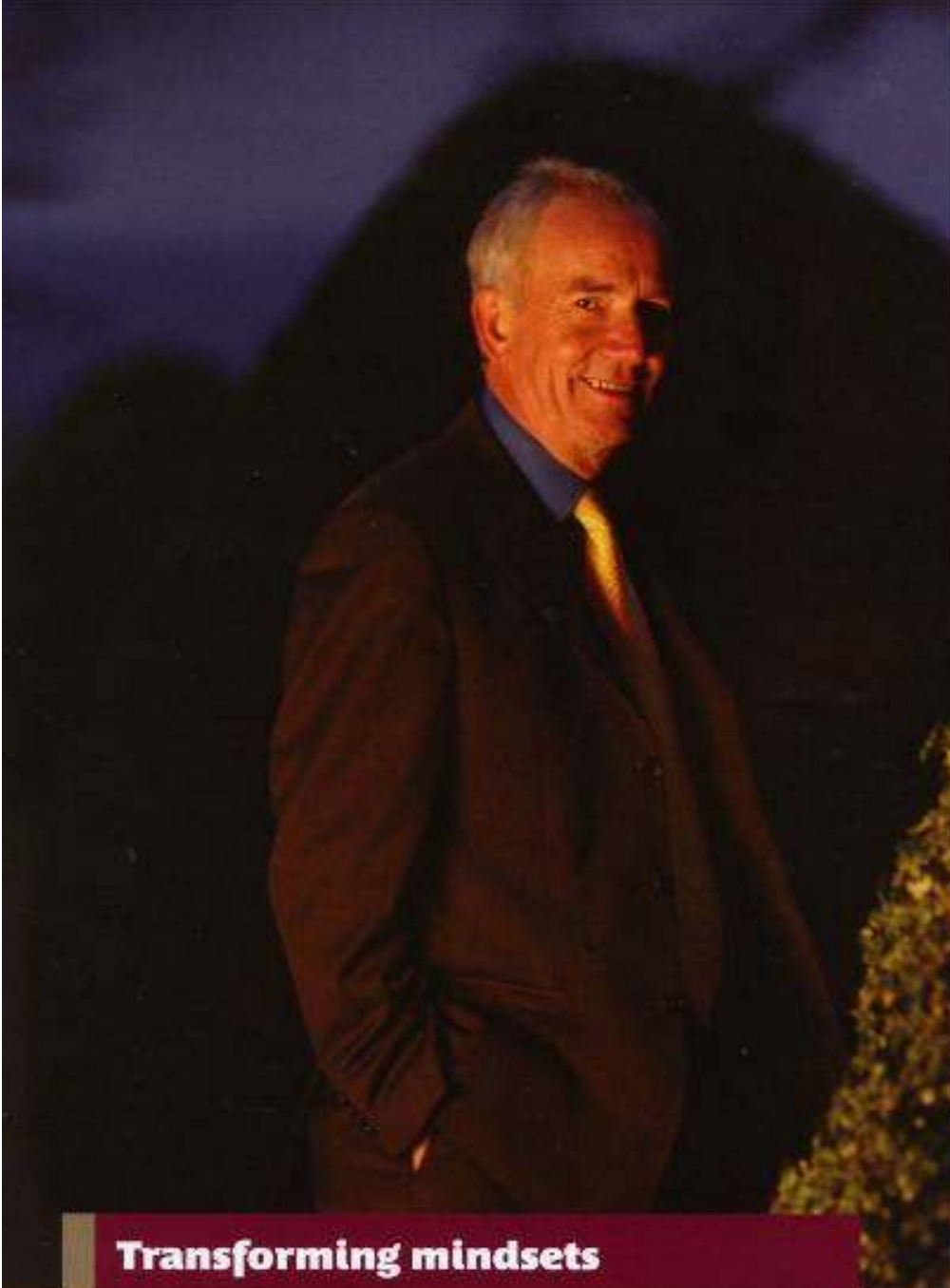
1986 Jointly founded Bath Consultancy Group www.bathconsultancygroup.com

1984 Set up Bath Centre for Psychotherapy and Counselling

1982 Moved to Bath to research organisational learning

1980 Began supervising, teaching psychodrama and drama theory at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster)

1979 Established the Centre for Supervision and Team Development



Transforming mindsets

My approach to transformational coaching focuses not just on the client achieving insight and agreeing good intentions to new action but, importantly, on the client making a "felt shift" in their mindset, emotions and motivations, which creates embodied learning and commitment.

Unless the change starts live in the coaching encounter, it is less likely to have the required impact beyond the coaching session. The work also focuses not only on the performance of the client but on transforming their capacity as a leader to a new level. This requires high levels of challenge and compassion to realise the potential of the individual executive and their organisation.

I have discovered that it was often difficult to create sustained transformational impact with a chief executive in two hours in the middle of a busy day. Over the past two years a number of my senior-level clients have opted for a quarterly day retreat at our centre in Bath. This provides space for transformation as well as immediate action, such as reducing the to-do list. The difficult strategy event gets designed, the challenging call gets made and there is time to stand back from the everyday and take stock at a deeper level.

I coach a number of chairpeople, chief executives and managing partners, on both their own and their organisation's transformational journey. This, however, is only one part of my work in coaching. As chairman of Bath Consultancy Group, I am also a team coach of several executive teams, working alongside to help them become a high-performing team, and to develop the collective leadership they provide, not only to their organisation but to their key stakeholders as well.

Peter Hawkins

writing on "cultures that add value". The experience underscored for him the need for an appreciation of context in coaching, for systematic thinking and juggling a number of agendas, if coaches and coaching supervisors are to be truly effective.

"When you're coaching with that degree of pressure for change, it's very clear that you're in the service not just of the individual client or Capespan as a firm but of the need for South Africa's fruit industry to reframe itself at speed because the livelihoods of 2.5 million people and South Africa's political and social change project are in jeopardy. What it has given me is that sort of context as a coach.

"Something I constantly hammer on about is that coaches must serve both the organisation and the individual. We need more coaches who can think systematically. You're not there just in the service of the client but to challenge the individual on how they're meeting the wider need. This doesn't mean you should try to know better than them, but you're there to hold up the mirror to them about how realistic their agenda is, given the context. As a profession, we over-support and under-challenge."

He adds: "Supervision has a key role to play in helping coaches to look at how they can hold the needs of the organisation and the individual together in their minds."

'Learning lungs'

Many look to Hawkins for guidance and advice on coaching supervision – as well they might. Hawkins' highly influential *Supervision in the Helping Professions* is Europe's best-selling supervision book, with 35,000 copies sold. The seven-eyed supervision model he developed with co-author Robin Shohet (see also "Snow wander", page 42) is widely adopted across many fields, including coaching.

Hawkins, who was also involved in the CIPD's research report, *Coaching Supervision*, believes supervision needs

to become the "learning lungs" of organisations. It should not simply be about quality control and elders shaping the practice of newcomers. He sees supervision as one of the major means of raising the quality of coaching, prompting efforts to set up a round table of coach supervision training providers: Bath Consultancy Group, the Centre for Supervision Training, Oxford Brookes University and, potentially, Henley Management College.

Hawkins leads Bath Consultancy Group's certificate programme in coaching supervision, and more than 120 highly experienced coaches from the UK and abroad have taken part since its launch in 2003. As a result, the consultancy provides in-house development and supervision for a number of coaching houses, including the School of Coaching, Praesta, YSC and OPM.

Through the consultancy, Hawkins also helps private- and public-sector organisations to develop their coaching strategies and cultures, including the BBC, Canon, the Department of Work and Pensions, Ernst & Young and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Team effort

Hawkins highlights team coaching as a massive growth area. "We are seeing so many organisations with senior people who have done lots to develop themselves, but that have top teams performing to less than the sum of their parts," he says. "One of my passions is helping to create joined-up transformational leadership."

For Hawkins, team coaching needs to attend not only to internal personal and interpersonal dynamics but also to improving key relationships with stakeholders. He urges coach trainers to meld individual psychology with an understanding of team and organisational psychology and systematic thinking.

He draws inspiration from many fields. "I'm an integrationist – this is one

“Supervision has a key role to play in helping coaches to look at how they can hold the needs of the organisation and the individual together”

of the reasons I've ended up where I am," he says. "I've always been interested in how you connect theory to practice."

A contemporary of Greg Dyke and Harriet Harman at the University of York, Hawkins read English literature and history and became interested in drama and performance as tools for social change. By the time he was 26, he was running a therapeutic community for 24 people who had recently come out of psychiatric prison. Most of the staff and patients were older than him.

"I learnt about group dynamics in leadership and therapy," he says. "The feedback from the client group was immediate and direct and it was a great privilege to have that."

Having trained as a counsellor and therapist, Hawkins became interested in organisational pathology. He worked for mental healthcare provider Richmond Fellowship and did analytic group work with the Tavistock Clinic. He also did plenty of humanistic psychological training, including Gestalt, becoming a member of the UK Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners.

Hawkins set up the Centre for Supervision and Team Development in 1979 to train practitioners from many fields. By 1980 he was supervising, teaching psychodrama and drama theory at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster), all while writing a book and raising two children.

"Peter Reason from the University of Bath School of Management said I was crazy – and he was probably right. He asked if I wanted to go to Bath to do some research and teach a humanistic diploma on facilitation."

But having moved to Bath in 1982 (partly to slow down), he found that he

was one of the few qualified psychotherapists there and people flocked to him for supervision. Over the next few years he set up psychotherapy training body the Bath Centre for Psychotherapy and Counselling and Bath Consultancy Group with two colleagues from the University of Bath.

Hawkins was interested in how to connect strategy, leadership development and organisational change. He realised the usefulness of coaching while working with large companies on major change processes.

Spirit levels

While he shuns religious labels and evangelism, Hawkins believes coaches can be more effective if they are open to their own spiritual practice.

"Ultimately, people are using coaches and therapists in the way they would have used shamans," he says. "It's about energy, what your own wellspring is and how you maintain that. This is even more the case with supervisors. If you're helping senior leaders to grow their leadership capacity, the spiritual dimension is part of that capacity in a wider sense."

Hawkins recently suggested using a variation of a meditation from Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh to a chief executive who needed to work on his presentations, encouraging him to look into the eyes of people as they arrived and think of them as his brothers or sisters.

"He was really excited to say that this created a shift," Hawkins recalls.

Hawkins likes to practise this meditation as he rides the escalator on the London Underground. Next time you're battling with crowds and you spot someone smiling serenely at you, smile back. It could be him. ■