

Optimising Time, Attention and Energy

Modern school life is complex.

At one time it was simple then it became complicated and now it is complex. Humans handle complexity well, when they are equipped to do so.

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Background

Things we are seeing:

- Schools handle a wider range of society's concerns than ever before
 - Accountability has become more uncertain – who is exactly accountable for what?
 - Personal and professional flare-ups are a common symptom of complexity
 - There is often an 'us and them' divide within the staff, leaders often being classified as 'them'
- State compulsory schooling at its inception in the early 19th century used harsh discipline and rote learning for the bulk of the population. This was a **simple** time. Teachers instructed, students obeyed instructions (or else). The three R's dominated.
 - Post the second world war instruction became teaching and subjects taught began to expand both in scope and number. Education became increasingly **complicated** that, in principle, could be handled by more rules and procedures.
 - Since the 1970's a move towards the development of the whole student has emerged with social and emotional wellbeing becoming increasingly prominent as an outcome for students. The widespread popularity of Mindfulness is a recent example. In parallel, learning has become as important as teaching and a focus on differentiation has added yet another layer to what has now become a **complex** environment.
 - Gradually, a system of education is emerging that develops young people to be confident, collaborative, creative and intrinsically ethical – ready to face up to a complex future.

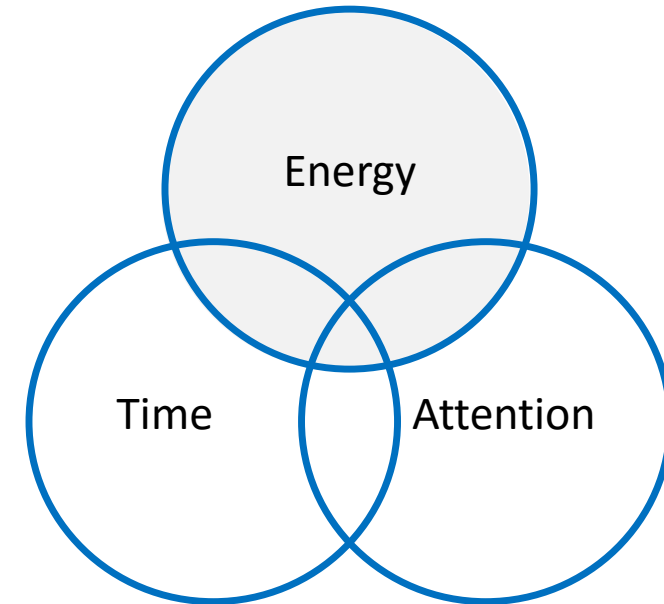
Three Challenges

The natural order of human brain development is for the right hemisphere to lead (i.e. respond first to new events or stimuli) ably assisted by the left hemisphere with its ability to act in the world.

Starting in the early 19th century, our schooling systems have reversed the order of hemisphere dominance.

Paradoxically, the use of 'focused attention' to trigger the left hemisphere within the classroom has left adults with noticeably unfocused attention in the work place.

1. Focus attention on to what really matters (and off what doesn't)
2. Develop the energy to focus on what matters
3. Organise time so that what matters gets done



In this complex workspace a new type of coaching is necessary, one that focuses on optimising attention, time and energy and that is scalable from the individual, via the team and up to the level of the organisation.

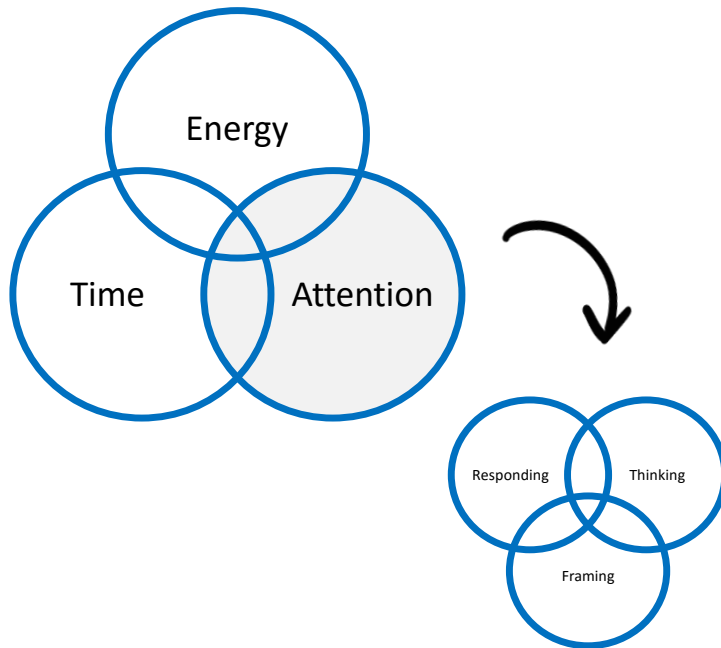
A Scalable Model

What to look for in an effective coaching model:

- it will put you on the path to greater effectiveness
- it will guide you through the process of becoming more effective at each level of responsibility
- it can provide on-the-spot training where skills are seen to be missing or under-developed
- it can provide frameworks and processes (e.g. meeting protocols, coaching frameworks) to scaffold each area of development

	Attention	Time	Energy
Self	Goals, actions	Individual effectiveness	Motivation
Others	Team Goals, projects	Team effectiveness	Engagement
School	School Goals, strategy	School effectiveness	Morale

Attention

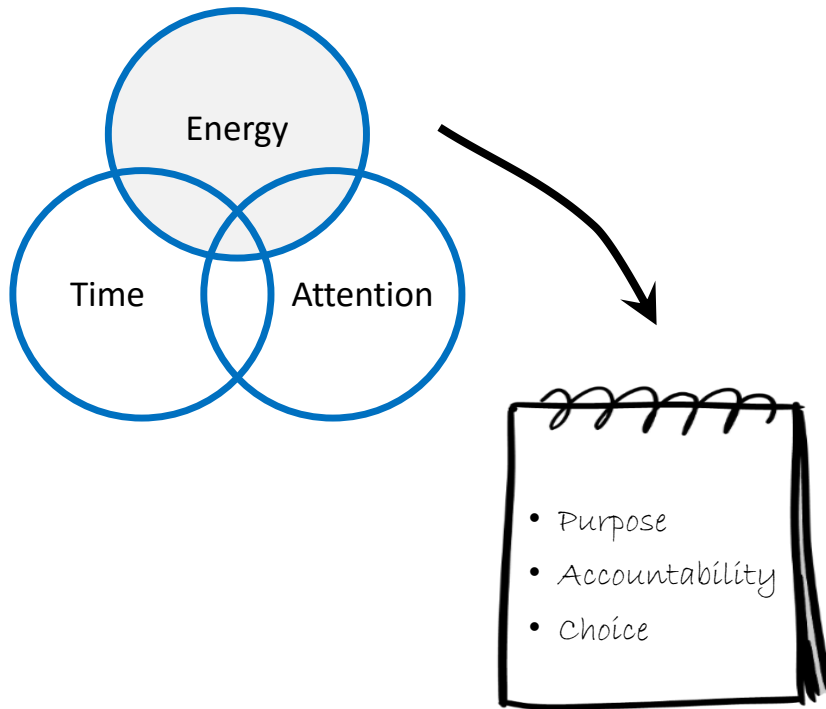


Using attention wisely is one of the key ways to become more effective

1. To be able to use attention effectively on a day-to-day basis means learning to stop paying attention to what we should NOT be paying attention to. How we respond to ideas, people and events is a key first step to managing our attention. We can learn to accept things as they are allowing us to quieten down blame, assumptions and judgements that external things and events, ideas or people may trigger in us.
2. Framing our response involves taking a growth, rather than a fixed mindset approach. No matter where someone is they can always move ahead to a better place.
3. Once we have accepted things as they are, framed how we proceed within a growth mindset then we can direct our attention to how we think. We want solutions- or opportunity focused thinking rather than problem-focused thinking.

Understanding and putting these processes in place is key to becoming individually more effective

Energy

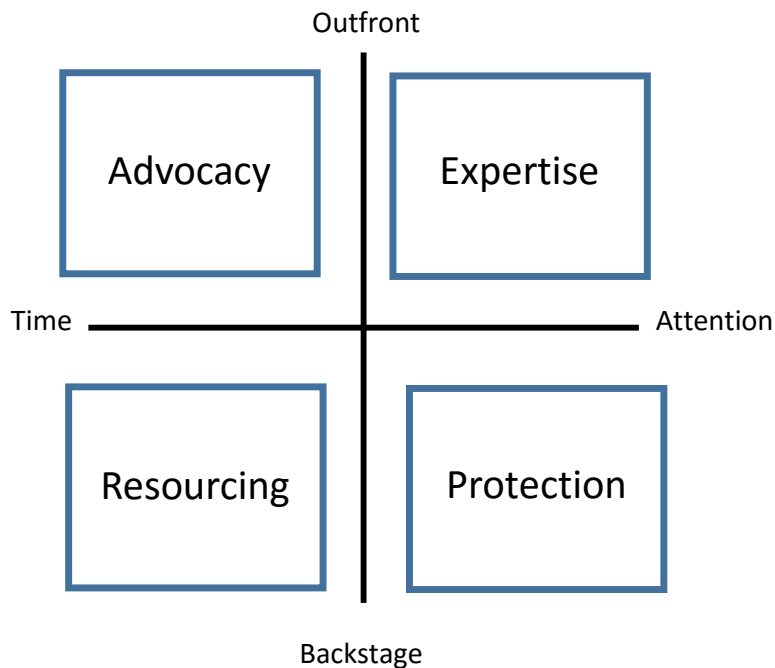


One of the key ways to ensure that a team has dynamism and energy is to focus on what the team is there to do and how it will do it. There are three key areas:

1. **Purpose:** the team has a purpose that all members buy into. A team-based goal setting process will achieve this – the team is doing what it ought to be doing, given its mix of skills and abilities
2. **Accountability:** each team member feels accountable for their contribution to the team successfully achieving their goal
3. **Choice:** to be effective individuals need some measure of control over the work they do

Understanding and putting in place each of these processes is key to improving the effectiveness of your teams

Energy



Peter Cook – The New Rules of Management

Leading an organisation effectively requires that we keep up our energy levels and one of the key ways to do this is to surround ourselves with the right level and type of support

1. **Expertise:** we need access to expertise. Some of that will be in-house but some will also need to come externally (consultants, lawyers, etc.)
2. **Protection:** we need people who can bat for us and protect us from some of the more egregious demands of the outside world
3. **Resourcing:** we need the right level of resourcing – people, time, money – to be able to lead the organisation successfully
4. **Advocacy:** at times we need people who will advocate for us and our organisation to open or pave the way forward

Understanding and putting in place each of these types of support is key to improving leading a successful organisation

Where is your organisation?

Some recent comments:

- Coaching sessions have provided time to reflect on and specifically think about and review strategies and new ideas along with professional dialogue to create optimum learning for students.
- Having coaching has made for really good professional dialogue when observing and learning from each other.
- The questioning techniques and deep listening we have worked on in coaching have been invaluable to me. I find it has helped me greatly in my learning.
- Through the coaching framework I have taken on the opportunity to see how the role of coach really works.
- The highlight of my professional learning has been coaching. It has really enabled me to reflect on my teaching and has allowed me to pinpoint areas that need extra focus.

Harmony	Zen!	100	"This is so good"
	Mastery	70	"I really know what I am doing"
Traction	Competent	50	"I think I know what I'm doing now"
	Coping	30	"Let's just take things a day at a time"
Disarray	Anxious	10	"Something is going to go wrong!"
	Overwhelm	-10	"Completely lost!"

A Coaching Program

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Developing leaders so that they are increasingly effective in their use of attention, time and their own energy levels can make a real difference to an organisation's success.

1. Real clarity and focus at senior levels sets the agenda for the whole organisation
2. Leaders interact with those around them and set the tone for 'how things are done around here' – they shape the culture
3. Leaders lead teams and their projects – the right projects – and creatively move the organisation forward
4. The right processes purposefully put in place streamline the organisation's operations

An effective coaching program spread – 10 sessions over a year - can support leaders in using their attention, time and energy for the benefit of the organisation and their own individual wellbeing and productivity.

About the Author

John Corrigan works with school leaders who are committed to increasing confidence, collaboration and creativity amongst their staff and students.

John is an expert in helping individuals to bring their whole of mind to their daily life and increase their effectiveness and the effectiveness of those around them. This expertise scales from the individual to the team to the organisation. Developed from the premise that education does NOT prepare us to live well in the modern world, so how DO we live well? First, shift our attention to trigger our right hemisphere. Second, focus on the wellbeing of others.

John's first degree is in Mathematics and he has an MBA from INSEAD. He has been an officer in the Parachute Regiment and a wireline logging engineer (taking measurements in drilled oil and gas wells) in various parts of the world, before entering the corporate sector via strategy consulting and corporate planning.

John's interest evolved into change management in organisations where the employee-client relationship forms a major part of the value produced.

John has had a full-time interest in education since 2001 and set up Group 8 Education in 2003 to help in the transformation of our education systems.

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