

You Might Be Coachworthy If ...

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This month begins my tenth year of writing newspaper articles for the Houston Home Journal. I remember vividly when I was in Julie Evans' office and I suggested, "Why don't you let me write a column on leadership?"

I had only recently accepted an early retirement from my "real job," a salaried management position (with Procter & Gamble for 23 years and with Weyerhaeuser for 7 years). I'd been independently consulting for two years and had just begun my certification training as an executive coach.

Based on my experiences with a few clients, I knew I could prepare perhaps twenty articles on topics that would benefit leaders. Julie said, "Well, write a couple of articles and let me take a look." I expected maybe I'd write for six months. I never expected it to become such a source of discipline for helping my clients.

I now have over 450 articles in my inventory, many of which I share with clients. In addition, I send my articles to hundreds of interested readers. If you'd like to receive my articles each week by electronic mail, just send a note to me at the address at the end of the column.

Now, let's move along to this week's topic. Have you ever heard of a guy named Jeff Foxworthy? He attended Georgia Tech and worked for IBM before he publicly tried his hand at comedy. He was quite successful quickly, but people kept making fun of his southern accent. So he built his comedy routine around his southern roots.

You may have heard Jeff's "You Might Be a Redneck if..." jokes back in the 1980's. His early ones were captured in his 1989 book of the same name.

If you've been paying attention for the past year, you may have noticed a change in my weekly advertisement on this page in the newspaper. It springboards off Jeff's name and book title. The ad reads, "You might be coachworthy if..." The content changes based on the article topic for that particular week.

I started the ads to stimulate individuals to consider the potential of coaching. Sure, coaching is a relatively new service. But interview anyone who has used a good coach, and you'll learn that the support was extremely valuable. It's like having a good friend who's had some beneficial training.

Coaching is very different from therapy, mentoring, and consulting. To explore these differences, go to my website, click on "Article Archives," and scroll down to the article "Outsider Help."

A year ago, when I considered starting the new "coachworthy" ad, I generated a long list of possibilities for completing the phrase. Unfortunately, most were longer than the space available in the ad. However, many are thought-provoking. So, take a look at these possibilities and think about their relevance for you.

You might be coachworthy if:

- your organization has plateaued, and you want to kick it up a notch.
- your team members have functional or technical skills, but little leadership ability beyond that.
- you're thinking of "succession," but you don't see many qualified candidates.
- you have to frequently follow up on delegated items to see if they've been done.
- your employees repeatedly come to you to solve their problems.

You might be coachworthy if:

- your "to do" list seems to grow longer the more you accomplish.
- you like to think about "what could be," both for you personally and for your organization.
- you're ready to stop focusing on your weaknesses and start capitalizing on your strengths.
- you receive very little feedback from people in your organization.
- you'd like to be a better role model and mentor to other leaders.

You might be coachworthy if:

- your confidence level doesn't match your skill level (or vice versa).
- you have conflict in your organization that you need to resolve.
- you've heard about "servant leadership," but you don't have any idea how to deliver it.
- you seek improvement, but you're not sure how to prioritize your time and energy.
- you are so stuck in "current reality" that you cannot even imagine an inspiring vision.

Did you know that Jeff Foxworthy was rejected fourteen times before a publisher was willing to take a chance on *You Might Be a Redneck if...?* That's a fine example of persistence!

Maybe you're persistent, too. But think about this. A coach's agenda is to help you get from where you are to where you want to go more quickly, more elegantly, and with fewer setbacks.

Hey, you might just be coachworthy! Think about seeking a skilled ally who will focus energy on your agenda.

Want to receive Dennis Hooper's weekly article by e-mail? Send him a note at dhooper2@juno.com. Or call him at 478-988-0237. Dennis would love to hear your comments--and your suggestions for future articles.