

## Coaching & Social Responsibility

### Sir John Whitmore's perspective from Peru

I was recently invited to Lima, Peru to speak at their first major coaching conference. The conference theme was the remarkably forward looking **'Coaching & Social Responsibility'**. It was a three day event hosted brilliantly by the University of Lima and co-organised with the Association Peruana de Coaching (APCO), and attended by over 400 people from business and coaching. It is evidence of the speed with which coaching in developing economies is gaining ground, moving towards international standards and the blatant need to merge the fields of coaching and social responsibility for whole systems change; true development inside out. Indeed, APCO is very committed to contribute to the development of Peru and protecting Peruvian society and nature. Could it be that Peru is pointing the way?

Before the conference, however, I took two days to visit the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu high in the Andes Mountains, requiring a short local flight and a long and slow train ride. Despite it being the most visited tourist site in South America, it is beautifully maintained and managed. Reuben was my very knowledgeable and friendly personal guide from who I learned much of the fascinating Inca folklore. We also made two steep hour long climbs to gain a panoramic view of the site. If you are anywhere near the place, go see it and meet the warm and welcoming Peruvians with their haunting music and in their bright colours. It was not easy to go back to modern civilisation and traffic snarled Lima.

The next day I ran a Transpersonal Coaching taster workshop for 40 attendees, mainly coaches, introducing them briefly to a host of new techniques. They were very progressive in their thinking, and I was pleasantly surprised how well the transpersonal training fitted within the progressive conference theme and how they seemed to gain much from the experience. But here breaking the old paradigm was on everyone's mind.

Just listen to Fernando Gil Sanguinetti's, APCO President, opening: "After almost 10 years of executive and business coaching experience I realize I was coaching managers to be more productive in destroying the Earth. I was helping managers become better in doing the wrong thing.... We are one of the most affected countries by global warming and the mining industry is polluting our rivers and lakes and undermining our native communities... Peru's choice is to either change our culture and find a new equilibrium or we will have a destabilizing crisis. Coaching is the art of developing people's awareness of paradigms that make them unhappy, unproductive, ineffective in the long run. Coaching is the art of helping people develop new and better practices that make them more human and better people. That's why the Conferences Title is Coaching & Social Responsibility. We can use coaching as a way to help transform Peruvian society and culture and avoid a future crisis like other countries are currently facing around the World."

Carla Villacorta Torres, an Executive Coach and Vice President of APCO brought the transpersonal and corporate sustainability agenda to the point. "We think coaching is very much related to how we live in the world. While we build competencies in managers and leaders, we look at different ways of doing coaching. In the end, the human being should not just be taken as a productive entity but we foster understanding of what is going on inside of each person allowing them to become aware of their own self and the world. So they also see what they can do for the people. It is very serious to make people aware of what they can contribute to develop our country. Many companies take nature for granted and by law must take responsibility but don't have responsibility in their heart and culture yet."

Needless to say that this sentiment in words was backed by concrete commitments on social responsibility by participants.

The following morning I attended Richard Strossi-Heckler's excellent presentation which emphasised the neglected role of the body as a key component in our whole system of being. In the evening I gave my keynote on '*Coaching and Leadership in Changing Times*' which was much appreciated by an enthusiastic and sophisticated audience. A special thanks to my new friends Carla and Fernando whose vision we share, but also to so many others too numerous to name. I love you and your country.