

“The Teacher will arrive when the Student is ready to Learn...”

I read this quote after my competitive rowing career had finished. Maybe I would not have understood it had I seen it when I was rowing anyway. Today I look back on my days as an elite athlete and knowing what I know now, I think of how differently I would have approached many situations. Perhaps, hopefully that should be the case with all of us, as we become more experienced and knowledgeable we can make better choices in how we behave. Of the things I would change, none of them relate to how I applied myself in terms of the effort I put in. I can look at myself in the mirror and honestly say that, “I gave it everything I had to give.” Preparing for an Olympics demands nothing less than this.

What I would change is how I interacted with my crew mates. Whilst I considered myself a team player and effective leader in many ways, there were still occasions, where I struggled to ‘play and lead’ effectively. On a number of occasions I struggled with some of my crew mates who I would say at the time, I had a personality clash with. Often at these times, I thought I was ‘right’ which meant they of course, could only be ‘wrong’.

When I started studying personality profiling in particular the highly relevant and useful DISC model (of which I am accredited in and supply to corporate teams from this site) I began to see where I was making some vital errors in how I communicated to team mates, attempted to motivate them and generally associated *or not* with them. I really did think that ‘my way’, that is, my behavioural style, if not the best way, was certainly pretty close to it. I had a leadership style that was, as one team mate described to me via a 360 review I initiated for myself, of a ‘benevolent dictatorship type...’

In the season of 2000, we were training up to 16 times per week and spending more than 45 hours dedicated in some way to our rowing preparation. For most of that season, we felt great pressure to succeed at our home Olympics. It was a Gold Medal only and any other result would be devastating. When in stressful times such as this, understanding the unique styles and needs of your team members becomes critical. When one does not understand them, it adds to the stress in the environment to such a degree that high performance can become impossible to achieve. I did not realise, but a lot of what I and my crew mates did in our interpersonal styles and roles in the team, added to the stress enormously.

There were actually times, when I thought that the way my crew mates were behaving at critical times was specifically to infuriate me. This of course was never their intention. I know that now. But at the time, when we miss that vital understanding of one another, well, you can see how things can be misinterpreted.

When I studied DISC, I realised that there were some very obvious potential clashes that just needed awareness and understanding in order to completely dissolve them as issues. The teacher had finally turned up for me as I realised that what frustrated me in others in my team, were all the things that I

personally lacked or unconsciously wanted to be more like myself. Such things as, more detailed attention to the precise boat set up and a more free spirited attitude to live each moment at a time instead of constantly thinking about the future and what might happen. I missed a large part of the journey in 2000.

Today, I have developed in all of these areas as I have spent a great deal of time and money investing in knowledge about myself and as we all get older we can aspire to be more well rounded individuals by becoming more self aware of our core values, strengths and limiting behaviours. This is a journey and like all other journeys it takes commitment and courage to look at one's self and admit that there are areas for improvement and then to actually do something about it. If you are a leader (and we all are in some way), there are few things more inspiring for your people to see than you improving yourself.

The reality is though, that if we do not use tools such as the Team 8 DISC 360, then we are destined to continue to have clashes and misunderstandings with our team members and we as individuals never quite get there and even if we do get there eventually, what part of the journey have we missed along the way?

It doesn't have to be this way. Team 8 offers DISC 360 degree profiling that is cost effective and highly useful in creating higher performing and perhaps more importantly, more enjoyable and engaging workplaces.

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