



**Jim McCartney** explains why he has recently set up a new academy to develop former drug and alcohol drug users beyond drug treatment.

# Living beyond treatment

**The Russian Philosopher Leo Tolstoy gives a realistic depiction of humanity: 'Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.'**

One of the most motivating aspects of my work is to lead an organisation that involves trying to inspire people to examine and change what they are doing with their lives. The century may still be young but it has already spawned a sizeable brood of challenges for correctional services working with recovering drug and alcohol users. The criminal justice system has to marshal resources, lay out plans, programme work and ensure that offenders are contained, managed and treated humanely. The pace of change accelerates and human kind is re-evaluating its role and purpose in this digitised technological age.

Rather than sugarcoat the situation or put too much focus on the future, we need to nurture and coach people with the present and leave them in no doubt that there is need for further continual change in their lives beyond recovery. I have concerns that within drug treatment in general, we may be giving a false sense of security to people who can be described, rightly or wrongly, as productively bankrupt.

Many recovering addicts are often released back into a negative environment of hopelessness; such places can have a debilitating impact on growth and development. Life skills, budgeting and home economics are all fine and good and most certainly needed, but without the continuation of social and emotional development, the individual runs the risk of getting left behind in a fast moving globally connected world. Many of the people we work with would have been fine 30 years ago in an industrial era of manufacturing and the process work regime. However, in this service sector technological age, the importance of communication and individual talent has become paramount in the recruitment and selection of potential employees.

Most of our graduates want fulfilment in their future jobs. Some are taking the necessary steps, enrolling on college courses and making a commitment to

voluntary work. Others are still pondering on what to do. Nevertheless, almost all of them are still in the infancy of emotional and social intelligence. Although free from drugs and alcohol, this in itself will not get them to the market economy if they are not prepared to continue the process of changing themselves. At the same time we do not want to deflate or underestimate their tremendous achievement in living a life of total abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

The skill for us as workers is to balance the need for change in such a way that we can give them a feeling of optimism and excitement about the new opportunities this presents. Critical to achieving this success is identifying how individuals need to change going forward.

Seth Godin's most recent work *The dip* (2007) differentiates between a dip (which you can work your way out of) and a cul de sac (which you can't). I believe that what's a dip for some people is a cul de sac for others. There is no point in going round and round like a hamster on a wheel, getting nowhere with people who have reached a dead end. Although we do not close the door of hope, we need to be mindful of those who are in a dip and are motivated to change.

Working within this culture is no different from a blue chip company. The management guru Gary Hamel, in his book *The Future of Management* (2007), states: 'For the first time since the dawning of the industrial age, the only way to build a company fit for the future is to build one that's fit for human beings as well. This is your opportunity to build a management system that truly honours and cherishes human initiative, creativity and passion, essential ingredients for success in this new millennium.'

Recently I led a seminar for bank managers and directors from one of our leading high street banks. Sat around the boardroom were a group of men and women working within a culture of corporate banking. Some have an interest in working within our academy as coaches. The graduates of our programme, although they have had former histories of crime and

drugs, have a similarity with a high achieving manager: the component of motivation. This can provide the fertile soil for innovation.

Blue chip companies want leaders, not just managers. Hence our academy can become a learning experience for potential leaders emerging within our high achieving companies. These are the people who truly understand that 21st century management requires its leaders to cherish and honour human initiative and gain insight to how innovation can manifest itself in all its different forms. Being a coach in our academy, working with motivated people in recovery, can provide a tremendous amount of insight to take back into your company and help mould your leadership potential.

Executive management continues to explore the different dimensions of talent strategy as a crucial means of achieving competitive advantage. John Boudeaus' most recent work elevates the importance of managers being the custodians of human resource talent. Top companies are moving away from basing executive bonus payments purely on financial success and towards a broader range of activities such as the development of talent and demonstrating how human talent can benefit the company.

In the same way I want our graduates to feel part of our academy, giving them a sense of belonging to a company that can help develop their talents. They have to do the work, engage with college, work with their personal development and take responsibility for their future careers. We can provide the framework that keeps them connected to reality, trains them in emotional and social intelligence, building on their motivational and commitment energies of engagement. Hence we can become an agency of human capital, offering our graduates to a whole host of companies who want to give motivated people a second chance.

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