



Chuck Allen Interview

“Having the mindset is what is going to make a training effective”

Chuck Allen is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) and Certified Professional Co-Active Coach (COPAC). He is a leader and expert in the field of Professional Coaching, with more than 12 years of practical experience, teaching and ongoing training. Allen has a special focus on communication and relationship skills that empower relationships.

Chuck Allen is leading CTI programs for organizations that Augere is offering in Spain and Latin America.

You have spend more than 20 years as an entrepreneur and business owner in the field of Information Technology. How does this experience blend with coaching?

My work in Information Technology was primarily running a computer consulting company focused on the entertainment industry in Los Angeles area. I got to work with a lot very interesting people -sometimes very famous people-, different sizes of businesses and I got to watch how business gets done in a lot of different environments. And I get to participate in it in various ways. Also I got to witness some surprising things. When you are the computer guy and you're crawling around under desks and plugging in routers and printers and things like that, you become part of the furniture. So people would say and do things in front of me that were shocking sometimes. I feel that I got to see the best and the worst of how people can treat each other in a work environment.

So when I discovered the world of coaching and training, I knew that there were answers and solutions to some of what I'd seen. Because a lot of what happens in that industry is not ok: people can get hurt by each other, people can objectify each other... and I want to see something different. When I discovered coaching I saw a way to actually help people be more fulfilled in a work environment and be more committed to that. And what I really see in the work that we do is we show people how to actually increase engagement, increase people's commitment to their work, their enjoyment of their work and also improve the relationships that people have in the workplace. If you think about how much time people spend at work, it's a big part of their lives. So for that time to actually be satisfying is important. What's the point of being in a company that is successful and makes a lot of money if everybody is miserable? To be part of a solution where people can be happier producing good things is a winning combination.

Which is your focus on coaching?

I think one of the secrets of coaching and good coaching and training is that you can actually be fulfilled and have good relationships and be successful. This is one of the things that people sometimes have trouble understanding. Actually fulfilling professional relationships contribute to financial success. Companies that have more satisfied workers are more successful companies. This is a winning solution; we don't have to sacrifice one for the other.

You deliver coaching skills and leadership training throughout the world. Which are the basic skills that a business leader needs to be successful?

I think one of the main skills that I see wanting and needing to cultivate are deep listening and sincere curiosity. These are actually more difficult than people imagine. Because they don't just require learning a skill, they require a shifting of your mind. You actually have to change how you think about other people to listen effectively. And real sincere curiosity also means that you have to assume that you don't know everything. You have to assume that you'd be surprised sometimes. You have to assume that sometimes you might be incorrect about things. And that's difficult for people; we like to think... oh! I'm right and I'm good at reading situation and people. But the more committed we are to believing that we are good at something the less curious we are. So we miss things. So I think curiosity is huge.

And I think there is also a lot of a skill around creating positive regard. That's another one that a lot of leaders could learn to be better at.

You are one of the faculty members of The Coaches Training Institute and now you lead CTI programs for organizations. What are these programs about?

First of all, one of the things that is important to know about coaching skills is that, at their heart, they are really just relationship and communication skills. So there is a way that coaches are trained to communicate and be in relationship with their clients. These things actually happen to be the skills that make managers more effective and successful.

The training that we do for organizations bring the coaching skill set to people who have various roles within an organization and give them really useful and tangible ways to use those skills within a role in a company. For example, having managers be more tuned into how their direct reports are performing and what is going on with an employees' motivation. Where are the commitments? Where do managers need to focus more on training and where they need to focus more on actually having their direct reports do more self development and do more their own learning? Sometimes managers do too much "micromanaging". These are opportunities for people who do a lot of "micromanaging" to pull back and let their direct reports self develop better.

And the other is for anyone in an organization. Right now companies are going through a lot of changes. There are certain kinds of skills and ways of thinking that help anyone in a company deal better with change. Because change is inevitable, but suffering through change can be improved. So we get people ways to actually work with change more effectively, to stay resourceful and effective even when they are confused and scared. These are really helpful too.

One of the courses you are leading for Augere is "Talent champions". How does this course work?

"Talent champions" is really specifically for people in management roles. It actually gives them a way to be more coach like with their direct reports and really specifically focuses on development. How do you have a development conversation? What does that conversation sound like? How can you do it when you have the time for more lengthy conversation? But also how can you do it quickly when you don't have very much time. How can you be focused on having people involved in their own growth and development in the company when everybody is really busy? That's a big piece of it.

And also really understating where are the distinctions between problem solving - which sometimes has to happen- and coaching, which is something that I know a lot of companies want more of. How do you make those choices? Is this a problem solving moment? Is this a coaching moment? Maybe it is a mentoring moment, which is somewhere in between. So that's a big piece of "Talent champions".

Another topic of CTI programs for organizations is “relationship agility”. What does relationship agility mean?

Like the words, it is actually being more agile, more skilful in relationships. Relationships are constantly changing and we may not notice that. If we can actually notice when they are shifting, we can be more agile, more skilful and more effective in those relationships. I like the term agility because it means we are actually flexible and perceptive about what is happening.

Relationship agility is one of the CTI newest offerings, and what I’m really excited about is that it actually brings the same kind of skills, tools and mindsets that a coach would have to anyone in an organization. It is for managing yourself in a relationship better, whether you are talking somebody who is in a similar role to you, someone you are supervising or your own manager. Anywhere in a hierarchy you can be more effective in those relationships. So we get the skills there for that, but we also get the mindset that makes us more effective in those relationships. And one of the things that I think is really exciting about it is we start moving from having people move consciously from being reactive to being creative. From being like a victim of circumstance to actually being aware of their own resourcefulness and more present in a situation that might be challenging or difficult.

There are a lot of organizations that do training and there are a lot of skills that people learn in these trainings. And I think one of the things that make our trainings real unique is that you can learn about a skill or a way to do something, but actually having the mindset is what is going to make it effective. Having a way of actually see you in relationship with other people, that’s what makes these trainings really unique and really stand out.