

blog – the new bl@ck

Peter Black CA talks about the business of executive coaching and why it's so important to keep reinventing yourself.

Story Leigh Sujanto

"If you are not online these days, you don't exist!" Peter Black CA certainly practises what he preaches. Along with his business website, Black has profiles with social networking sites LinkedIn, Twitter, Skype and Blogger. He's inarguably out there. Black always possessed a keen business mind and he has his father and grandfather to thank for this. Both men, although not accountants, were business trained and Black believes that their Scottish blood also ensures a good grasp of money.

The decision to venture into accounting was made when he found himself enjoying economics and maths classes in high school and law subjects at the University of Western Australia. "I wanted to start as a graduate in tax but had to do the mandatory three years of audit first, it was a great grounding experience and I'm glad I did it," says Black.

In 1979, during a vacation role at Coopers & Lybrand in Perth, Black encountered many Chartered Accountants and liked what he saw, deeming the Chartered Accountants Program a more practical option than attaining an honours degree at uni. In 1980, Black commenced as a graduate at Price Waterhouse, where he also started the Chartered Accountants Program and completed his professional year in 1982.

GUIDE CAREERS

Black is now a business and executive coach, utilising 30 years of business experience to help guide other people in their careers. The highlights of his experience include:

- > being one of the first professional practice managers in Price Waterhouse in the early 1990s
- > working in corporate taxation at the time of Prime Minister Paul Keating's RATS legislation, which introduced CGT, FBT,

foreign tax credits and dividend imputation

- > advising on tax implications of redundancy payments during the 1990-91 recession
- > working on the Coopers & Lybrand/Price Waterhouse merger in 1998 including dealing with some of the change management, cultural and strategic positioning aspects
- > being mentored at PwC by prominent Chartered Accountants such as Margaret Gibson (Australia Post director), John Thorn (now Amcor, Caltex, NAB director), Rob Ward (past Institute President and global head of PwC audit) and current PwC CEO Mark Johnson.

coaching assignments with senior employees and clients of large listed companies".

"I particularly enjoy coaching senior business executives to be more effective and on-boarding executives into new roles or companies" he says. "This is where my Chartered Accountant brand and business experience is really valuable, using my strategic practice management consulting experience for the benefit of various accounting, engineering and legal professional services firms."

Other aspects that Black enjoys are the interaction with people, the flexibility, the

Recessions are the mother of reinvention... retrenchment can be an opportunity not the end of the world

- > being appointed by the Australian Computer Society as their preferred career and executive coach for members in 2009
- > being invited by the Executive Connection to be a nominee chair for groups of CEOs in 2010

"I first retired at age 46 after effectively restructuring myself out of a national operations director role at PwC. I then began rebranding and reinventing myself as a business and executive coach."

Through global career transition company DBM, Black has had the opportunity to work closely with hundreds of clients who were retrenched during the global financial downturn. His clients were from large global and listed companies in industries as diverse as financial services, IT, mining, consumer products, charities and large accounting and legal firms.

Black says what he enjoys most about coaching is "seeing the effects of executive

autonomy and the opportunity to use the other half of his accounting and management double major. "I help people to strategise about their personal and professional goals and success measures. I motivate clients to succeed by holding them accountable to their own goals and I assist clients to gain incredible self understanding through various personality, behavioural, emotional, intelligence, leadership, retirement and career assessments," he says.

CHALLENGES

Black admits that as rewarding as coaching is, it isn't without its challenges. "When a client needs professional, psychological or counselling assistance for which I am not trained to deal with and where deep personal issues exist, I can only help them seek other professional assistance from counsellors or psychologists. I must ensure that I stay professionally unattached but



appropriately engaged with my clients.”

In order to be the best at what he does, Black ensures he stays up to date across many areas of business, as diverse as people management, sustainability, technology, strategy, finance and accounting. A big part of this is staying on top of the most effective social networking applications for his business. “I can work anywhere in the globe. I have a number of clients who I use Skype video to coach and sometimes over a wireless broadband modem,” explains Black.

“The world has changed quickly and Web 2.0 has broken down many barriers. Social networking is an efficient and effective

communication tool, with employees, clients and other stakeholders and it’s fantastic in one’s own business, as I have found with my own website, Blog, LinkedIn and Twitter presence online.”

In his private time, Black is a representative women’s softball coach and the president of the Hornsby District Softball Association in Sydney, which has more than 700 female members. “I have never played either baseball or softball! But I love both the strategic side of the game and making a difference to females from ages 6 to 60+, helping to shape their social and confidence skills, just like a career and executive coach!” he says.

Married, with three daughters aged between 16 to 20, Black wants to travel the world with his wife once his daughters are settled in their own lives. Until then he hopes to continue to make a difference in the happiness and satisfaction of as many people as possible. “I now get paid for doing something I enjoy and am passionate about and I can coach anywhere, anytime using the technology.”

Being the business and executive coach that he is, when asked if he had any advice to share with fellow Chartered Accountants, he had plenty, “Recessions are the mother of reinvention, as I found in the early 1990s and again in 2009. You need to keep adapting and you can learn something from everyone. Retrenchment can be an opportunity, not the end of the world.

“Don’t forget to actively manage your own career from day one. You must take responsibility for you and build networks actively, internally as well as externally. You must know yourself, your personality, work behaviours and leadership style. Have a conscious online brand – with a clear strategy, personally, as to how you want to use Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Reinvent yourself every 3-5 years because your future job may not have been invented yet!”

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on Peter Black Coaching
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