

## **Growth Edge Coaching – my perspective**

I have increasingly noticed in my coaching work over the past two decades the extent to which senior leaders find themselves “in over their heads”, overwhelmed by the complexity of the situations they are called on to deal with. It has also become clear that Growth Edge coaching has a lot to offer these leaders. Focused on supporting their vertical development in many subtle ways, including expanding their capacity to gain and hold multiple perspectives, see themselves and the systems they work in new ways and grow into a bigger version of themselves, and step fully into their roles, this form of coaching helps equip leaders to navigate the complex challenges they face.

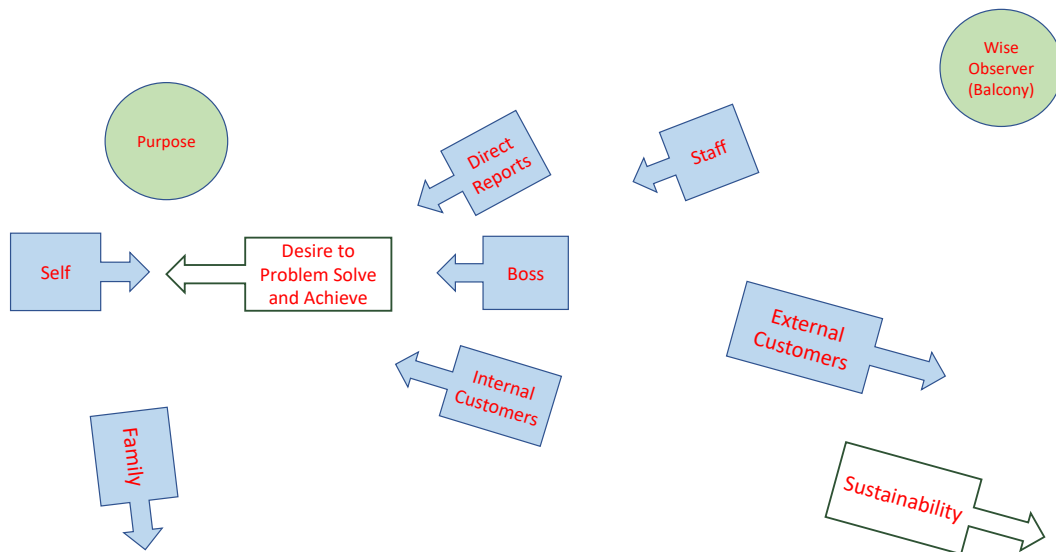
I am continually exploring the integration of models of adult development and growth edge coaching with other processes to increase the effectiveness of my coaching. Albeit shortened and simplified, my hope is the case study below illustrates this.

### **Case Study - James and his team**

James is a recently appointed senior leader in a large organisation with multiple business lines. He heads up the core enabling IT function with numerous internal and external clients. With 8 direct reports this role is a big step-up for him. When I first started coaching James, he had a growing awareness that the skills and experience which had served him well in the past were no longer enough. He felt very stretched, and at times torn, between the demands of his new role and supporting his young family.

In many ways James appeared very self-authored. He was very clear about his guiding values, and mostly able to operate out of them without fear or favour. In some ways he seemed drawn by a sense of purpose to contribute beyond achievement of work outcomes he was responsible for - to the whole organisation and beyond. Comfortable with paradox, James seemed very aware of the many interconnecting systems within the organisation, and the different, at times competing, internal and external perspectives people held.

In our work together we explored his biggest challenge - how to create sustainability of wellbeing for himself in his current situation. We did this drawing on a number of adult development and complexity lenses, together with a spatial mapping process using direction cards and “embodied sensing” to gather new information and generate fresh insights. The first mapping is depicted in the diagram below.



Through this mapping James realised that whilst he felt good about others looking to him to solve problems for them, and he personally got great satisfaction from the sense of achievement that came from this, the current situation was clearly unsustainable. Whilst self-authored in many ways, the “aha” moment came when he became consciously aware that his way of “knowing” he was adding value was externally referenced. At one level the dependence on him to solve problems met the needs of his boss, team and other stakeholders. At the same time this dependency, particularly with complex problems where there were no known ways forward, was supporting an unhealthy system characterised by bottlenecks, frustration, increased stress and customer dissatisfaction.

James’ insight lead to an exploration, again through spatial mapping, of what might happen if he worked on becoming more self-authored with respect to how he “knows” whether or not he adds value. The second map (depicted below) resulted in a number of safe-to-fail experiments, some of which are ongoing. As a result, there have been improvements in a number of key relationships and within the leadership team dynamics. James himself is calmer and finding a more sustainable balance between work and homelife.

