



SPOTLIGHT

Maya Gudka: Executive Coaching

Sunetra Senior

Maya is an Executive Coach who partners with London Business School, Acuity Coaching and Wonder Source. She also regularly blogs for Psychologies Magazine. She is known for her contemporary approach to improving personal productivity across a variety of top-end companies. Sensitive yet rigorous and utilising reach online, Maya offers her premium coaching service at both an individual and organisational level: clients range from Sony Music to Tata Consulting Services.

To describe some recent group coaching: "I ran a series of coaching workshops, helping the team move from being simply operational to trusted advisors. There was a beautiful collective shift as clients began to re-examine engrained habits." Indeed, Maya is a well-trained mix of corporate and mindful experience. She holds a First-Class degree in Economics from Cambridge University and an MSc in Positive Psychology from UEL. She began her career as an Economist, rising through the ranks at Goldman Sachs, PWC and KPMG before becoming interested in executive coaching as an independent consultant within the industry.



"Economics is the study of human behaviour - just on a larger scale. When at KPMG, I was able to help grow a team from 5 to 100+ and got my first taste of emotionally connected leading. I had the opportunity to access elite life-coaching and really loved it, going onto to develop more at LBS. I hadn't known it was possible to integrate mindfulness with a corporate lifestyle: there's this idea that they are separate and that positive self-discovery can only be found outside of it. Actually, the two go hand in hand." Indeed, Maya gave an example of a client whose world had been transformed: "learning how to work and prioritise it better meant he got back his weekends! His spouse was very happy!" The key to success goes beyond developing even the conventional professional qualities of organisation, robust performance and sincere commitment: Maya summarised "psychological well-being" as the beating heart of a thriving career. The ethos is central to the coach's brand.



Her methodology consists of four pillars: "the first is vision. I work on a 10-year dream scenario with clients; the second is time-management i.e., being fastidious about managing time so that you don't overwork yourself and burn out. Thirdly, I discuss growing and managing relationships on and offline. Many of my clients are good taskmasters, but have often not invested sufficiently in their relationships in the workplace. Connecting authentically with those around you makes it easier to do well. Finally, I discuss how to regulate emotions both individually and when interacting with others. This is especially important with male clients." Maya's heavyweight role then merges psychology and business strategy. "This was not the trodden career path growing up! It's been amazing to be able to forge an entirely original one!" Indeed, the executive coach lives what she preaches. "I do believe that anyone can have their dream-job but it takes work to access it."

Maya herself was optimistically cautious in transitioning from her former job to her calling today: "it was a long and gradual process. You also need to factor in what's financially viable. How do you get the most out of your work and keep moving in a steady direction, contributing to society, without turning your whole system upside down?" Here, the executive coach elaborated on one of several specialist concepts, which she dubs "deep work" with clients: time-boxing. "This is a lovely technique as it's something everybody can do easily. A lot of us think we're being efficient when we compile 'to do' lists. However, this isn't actually prioritising tasks, it's more about cursorily ticking things off. We never get the satisfaction. Instead, every time you have a task, book it into a slot in your diary: estimate how long it's going to take, what day you want to do it, and why it's important. Being specific not only allows you to complete the entry but gives you an overall sense of what you want and your hopes for the whole week. You become constructively aware of time and it starts to serve you."

Maya explores ideas such as 'time-boxing, positive



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social media' and more on her podcast, The Golden Hour, which you can access for free. "Often people don't make the space to ponder important questions. Hopefully the show can be a ray of light that helps them step up and reap the full potential of the day-to-day." Maya often hosts with exciting guests such as best-selling authors, experts and other coaches. Essentially, Maya's detailed depth not only helps one excel immediately, but also puts them profoundly in touch with who they are to create a strong long-term plan. When passion meets reason, this is the essence of true ambition. Being grounded yet attentive allows you to adeptly pursue your chosen goal. And so, doing well at work means to fundamentally grasp life.

What's been a highlight moment?

Working with inspiring female leaders doing meaningful work. Today many want to implement socially conscious practices such as environmental sustainability, or being role models for women of colour. It's great to play some part in enabling these great aspirations.

When was the moment you felt you'd become a success?

When I was selected to coach high-end clients at the top of their game from around the world. Before the

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Pandemic hit, I was travelling to places like Dubai and Amsterdam, now with virtual coaching, I often speak to multiple countries in one day.

How would you define desired traits such as productivity and professionalism?

By changing the meaning a little to keep the focus right e.g., productivity is often a by-product of the broader concept of time-management. This is about being thoughtful and intentional with the precious hours we have on earth and translating that into a disciplined way of working. Rather than the general idea of professionalism, it is better to think of an important facet of it such as what it means to perform well at work. This is about having a clear yet flexible strategy and working with the energy of the system you are in.

Finally, what advice would you give to people at the time of Covid-19 where motivation may be waning?

Firstly: acceptance. It is a sad time and one must make room for that. Also, acknowledgement. Low morale can be an indicator for how we're feeling and we can investigate why. It can actually be an opportunity to re-assess our situation and do better for ourselves so we grow. Finally: replenishment. Do not try to push through despite being worn down. Sometimes, carving out that time to re-energise is more empowering.

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