



News reporters and coaches have more in common than it seems. Both look at stories from a variety of angles...

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What can we learn from how others see the world? This new column peers through different lenses, exploring how ideas and perspectives might be woven into coaching and mentoring

## READY FOR YOUR CLOSE-UP?

### RACHEL ELLISON

**R**oll theme tune, camera swoop shot to presenter... run headlines, cut to pictures... cue first news package.

It's a typical opening to the BBC's *Six O'Clock News* television bulletin, bringing information, education and entertainment to living rooms across the nation.

My career as a news correspondent – first with the fiercely commercial Daily Mail Group & General Trust, then with the BBC, a public service broadcaster – might not appear to connect with the world of coaching. After all, news reporting is finding out and then telling the story.

However, coaching, according to my personal model and practice, is more about helping the client research their inner feelings, motivations, perspectives and impact. And then for them to decide how to tell the story or what actions to take.

Reflecting on my work with CEOs and international executive leaders, I believe my former job as a news reporter definitely informs how I coach.

Television reports are made up of different camera angles on the same subject. For example:

- A pensioner sips tea from a thermos flask as the camera takes a close-up of her woolly hat and wrinkled skin.
- Another shot takes in the muddy flood waters that lap at the pensioner's wellington boots.
- A wider shot shows views of the school hall that plays home to the many made homeless by the recent downpours.
- Next comes a top shot from a cherry picker crane showing trees waist-high in water, fields as lakes, bridges buckling under torrents of fresh rain.
- Then a reverse shot, maybe in a shop window or a wing mirror of a motorbike, gives another angle on the scene of the story.

● Finally, interviews with local people – men and women, black and white – as well as international experts, lend further perspectives.

As a BBC reporter I was responsible for maintaining – or at least consciously attempting to offer – balance and impartiality.

And so with coaching: I ask clients to tell me their story, from their perspective. I then have them look at their issue from the viewpoint of their boss, their child, their cleaner.

Occasionally we saunter up into the galaxy for a satellite view. It's amazing how simple the solution can look to the client from up there.

I coach for ethical awareness, values-led decision making, ownership and self-accountability. Just like a reporter, I ask: "Is that fact or assumption?" and "Is that true for everyone in your organisation, or just how you see it?"

Like the reflection of clouds on water, wobbly houses in a puddle or the emergency services operating through the night by torchlight, so it is for coaching: asking clients to reflect, flip a challenge on it and look at the reverse side of what they say they see.

I ask their permission to shine a torch beam into an area of discomfort, resistance or avoidance. Sometimes I ask them to draw the issue in pictures.

As with news camera work, we start off by establishing a wide-angle lens view, then narrow the focus before moving into extreme close-up.

I drill down with the client for the deeper meaning and nuances. The client resurfaces with new ideas and connections they hadn't noticed before.

The result? Maybe it's a bit like watching the news – clients achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their world. And I believe that this has the power and potential to make the world a better place. ■