



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Office of the Executive Director: Finance & Services

13 June 2014

Reference: Nadia Mason of Evolution Training Solutions - Coaching and Strategic Management Facilitation in a “Thinking Environment”.

To whom it may concern

The University of the Western Cape has a rich history of politics and days of struggle pre-1994 within the context of apartheid. This has shaped a complex discourse and work culture amongst its work force coupled with bankruptcy, continuous student and labour unrest. The University’s Executive leadership and the Council (its highest decision making body) has managed to turn the tides of bankruptcy to financial success, academic and research excellence and high impact relevant community engagement. However, the University’s biggest and most complex challenge was to get into the minds of its people and its stakeholders that the world has changed and it can no longer operate in the ways of old.

Nadia was given the task to liberate the leadership, management and staff of the Finance, Innovation, Operations and Infrastructure (FIOI) department and to empower them to stand their ground in the new world order as individuals and teams. She designed a program of working and facilitation in the “Thinking Environment, created by Nancy Kline” that intended to give expression to letting go of the past and transform into a high level of consciousness, wisdom, accountability, respect, trust, honesty, professional conduct and integrity.

This was no easy task as it includes all staff within the portfolio which has a diverse background with many years of service at UWC underpinned with resentment, anger and many myths or assumptions that continuously haunted individuals, which simply hampered performance. Many grudges were held for peers with a typically upward trend within the reporting line which is baseless but depicts the reality on the ground. This required soft sensitive hands as many individuals and teams are fragile. It was also quoted by University staff members that, “we the staff retaliate by not participating in work”. Another staff

member publically stated at a road show, “we do not want to be here but we have no choice”. A staff survey demonstrated that each one holds themselves accountable for their roles and performance. However, each staff member believes that most staff are not accountable and allowed to get away with it.

A further complexity is the inconsistency of remuneration practices that bedevilled staff and leadership with deep resentment for colleagues within the portfolio and outside the portfolio within the University. The leadership and staff suffered from hurt, pain, anger, resentment and neglect coupled with a country in transition with its own leadership problems within the state, made the FIOI a cocktail of negativity that ran through our veins. We are further complicated by the majority being highly unionised with struggle and war language.

Nadia Mason was asked to aid UWC in freeing itself from its demons. She accepted the task in humility and carefully crafted a program of coaching and facilitation based on “Time to Think” theories and processes. The program started with myself and then filtered through to the Directors, then Managers, then staff.

She has showed each of us to ourselves through sensitive dialogues which forced us to look deep into ourselves and acknowledge our weaknesses and remove the masks on display and reveal our true worth and potential. She has also adapted her program and time to suit the needs and developments that unfolded. We were confronted with difficult times in group dialogue sessions where sessions were highly emotional. Nadia diffused the emotions with ease and brought meetings on track in a respectful and professional manner.

Nadia has brought the Nancy Kline “Ten Components of a Thinking Environment” and Don Miguel Ruiz’s “Four Agreements” to UWC. She got everyone to accept this new style of principles that is being brought into practice in everything that we do. Her role has delivered through coaching and facilitation the following significant outcomes:

1. Acceptance and implementation of the Nancy Kline “Ten Components of a Thinking Environment” and Don Miguel Ruiz “Four Agreements”
2. Facilitation of the new FIOI strategy and the compilation of the strategic documents
3. Leadership and development initiative
4. Private and group dialogue/open discussion



5. Strategic road shows
6. Acceleration of leadership performance
7. Management tool kit
8. Breaking down the walls
9. Job clarification process

Nadia successfully implemented her role by ensuring leadership and staff own the process, content and implementation. She also assisted by sharing her thoughts on obtaining the most positive impact. She has fostered good relationships of trust and confidentiality with all participants. She has given us various tools in different settings and coached the leadership in developing the necessary skills in the mastery of leadership.

Nadia has business savvy, hears what is not being said, reads themes and dynamics of relationships and brings a good energy. She is authentic in her engagement. Nadia Mason has had a lifelong impact in our lives in the work place and home. I believe she is exceptionally talented and has successfully delivered to UWC. She has unlocked FIOI from its demons of the past and empowered us for the future.

UWC was blessed to have Nadia's expertise and mastery in coaching and facilitation and we express our gratitude for her coming to our aid on the University's path of success and greatness. We wish her well for the future.



Regards

Manie Regal CA (SA)

Executive Director: Finance and Services