

It takes two to tango

Coaches can only succeed if their charges are willing to put into practice what they have been taught, says Dr Brian Hemmings.

“Teachers open doors, but you must enter by yourself”

Some believe this ancient proverb originates from Confucius, a teacher, editor, politician and philosopher who lived from 551 to 479 BC.

Whatever its origin, it's a proverb I have always thought very much applies to PGA Professionals and the players they coach inasmuch that teaching pros can equip players to succeed but it is down to the player to take the initiative to apply what they are taught to be successful.

Teachers can only help players identify and develop the skills they need: the professional cannot practise for the player or hit the shots. Nevertheless, I have met many golfers who feel all they have to do is turn up for lessons and they will improve.

This means that golf professionals provide the coaching environment and instruction for players to learn and progress and can open up a world of knowledge and skills.

Teaching professionals cannot make players learn, however. So, while they offer the opportunities it is the player's responsibility to accept them and then put in the effort and practice to improve.

In fact I meet too many teaching professionals who take **too much** responsibility for their pupils' learning. So how can coaches impress on players what is needed for learning to take place?

Good to Great

In his best-selling book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins cites various reasons why certain companies and individuals make the step from just being good to achieving greatness.

In essence, many of the factors demonstrated that individuals took **responsibility** for their own development.

Last year in England men's national coaching, the coaching staff asked the players to do the same, to take responsibility for their own learning and performance.

In other words, the coaching staff would open the doors to learning but the players needed to decide if they were really going to take control of their attitude to it.

We challenged the players to think through individually what they needed to do to go from 'good to great' in the coaching environment.

The 10 factors above were what the players (who went on to become European men's team champions) cited as being critical to take more responsibility for in their development.



England team 'Good to Great' factors

- 1 Ask for what you need
- 2 Develop decision-making skills
- 3 Handle the pressure of different situations
- 4 Develop great time management
- 5 Develop great organisational skills
- 6 Preparation is everything
- 7 Adopt a great work ethic
- 8 Trust what you do
- 9 Have goals, plans and structure
- 10 Listen to people you trust

Of course, many PGA Professionals will not be working with national team or tour players, however, human behaviour is largely the same at all levels. While a beginner or a mid-handicapper might not be striving to go from 'good to great' they will want to improve through teaching and lessons and many of the 10 factors cited are about **habit**.

Considering some psychologists estimate that up to 90 per cent of all behaviours is habitual, this suggests that golf teachers and coaches need to stress the **learning habits** needed to improve at golf and, at the very least, emphasise in lessons the responsibility of the player in the learning process.

So if you want to see more of your players develop, challenge them to take responsibility for their learning habits!

Considering your 2014 Continued Professional Development?

Dr. Brian Hemmings has released a fully online Golf Psychology Coaching Certificate course that is approved by The PGA of Great Britain and Ireland and the PGAs of Europe. It carries 100 CPD points and has been completed with great reviews by more than 350 PGA pros and coaches worldwide. Go to www.golfpsychologycoaching.com for full details.

The course is full of practical activities and information on assessing mental skills, goals and motivation, attentional control, confidence building and anxiety reduction techniques for coaches to guide players through improving their mental game.

You can complete the course at home so you will have no travel costs or time away from your work. All you need is a player to work with and the time to complete the course activities. For a price reduction type in the promotional code **PGA** to reduce the price from £295 to £219. The course is also available in German and Spanish.