

## **Who are we? A history and a story**

### **A club of excellent trainers**

Born in 1982 as the brainchild of two promising young language trainers, Luc Deneulin and Michel Leclerc, LTC\*CIRCUIT has always been faithful to its fundamental creed: high-quality language trainers are the real capital of any “language school”. Believing in their own talent and professionalism, they just knew that the expertise, creativity, human insight, maturity, flexibility and determination of vocationally devoted language learning coaches is the “engine” of a really committed language learning institute.

Right from the outset however LTC\*CIRCUIT could also profit from the experience of sales and communication and management development trainers as well as organisation development consultants. We, the founders as well as the trainers, not only successfully attended related trainings and seminars (such as William Reddin's Managerial Effectiveness Seminar), we ourselves also carried out training and consulting assignments within those consultancy frameworks and inspired by those schools of thought.

Consequently LTC\*CIRCUIT injected the basic tenets of receiver- and audience-oriented communication into its own speaking and writing skills programmes, and the time-proven principles of situational management philosophy into its language coaching at executive levels.

Soon after our start-up however, a daunting operational task awaited us. Confronted with the dearth of good intermediate learning tools for Dutch, Luc Deneulin developed a sophisticated basic-to-intermediate Dutch course, based on word frequency and incremental grammatical complexity, Woord\*Vorm. This tool has since proven its effectiveness with more than 3,000 students. It is a no-frills, highly focused, learning-efficient primer, that targets acquisition of the basic vocabulary of the first 2,000 words of the language, as well as basic-to-intermediate-level grammar.

Later on we developed our own customisation of what, in the 80s, used to be called “Scientific Analysis of Ideas”, to customer relations communication in the world of banking, insurance and IT. Accustomed to a quite product- or technology- or even just “self”-centred approach to customers, these companies had to learn how to turn their communication around, rethinking and rewriting their entire correspondence as addressed to the point of view of the customer/reader. We still use these techniques in all our communication trainings, for instance when working on executive-level speeches, public statements, presentations etc.

Developing these tools has taught us that genuine language learning coaches need to be able at all time to develop new tools, suited to the needs of this particular student or

group of students. Excellent learning material can be bought off the shelf - and yet, every student needs that specific complementary tool that only the language coach can provide to her.

For its entire history then, LTC\*CIRCUIT has associated itself with highly expert trainers - so that, while continuing to be a 2-partner, 2-director, 2-manager company legally (to “keep it simple”), it can be considered practically as a network of expert language trainers and learning coaches.

## **Becoming coaches**

This last word, “coach”, is significant. Obviously, their experience increasing over time, LTC\*CIRCUIT's founders and core trainers have been able to take up ever more challenging training assignments: increasingly challenging because of duration (coaching students from rank beginners to advanced levels, spanning up to 3 years), scope (richness and complexity of professional content provided by executive levels) and flexibility (highly volatile availability and great scheduling uncertainty, again required by top-team players' demanding jobs).

But also our own pedagogical insight has led us to the conclusion that we should not so much be teachers and trainers in the technicalities of language (although that does play a part), as coaches of the student's own language learning adventure.

Learning tools abound. A professional coach can help the student selecting them - and steer their use. Yet they are only means to an end.

The real source and resource of the Learner's learning progress is however the learner himself.

As the saying goes - everything revolves around motivation.

For sure. Whereas the learner will be encouraged to seek out practising opportunity outside of the coaching framework as soon as he can or feels confident to, and as important parts of “teaching” will be usefully taken over by learning (instead of teaching!) tools; the Language learning coach will remain the person to turn to for explanation and guidance - but more important even: it is as a monitor, stretcher, enricher, re-focuser, encourager of that motivation that the coach plays his most authentic and irreplaceable role, his most necessary and vital part.

While facilitating the learning process, LTC\*CIRCUIT's coaches will help the Learner to remain on target.

While always remembering and reminding of the ultimate goal set, LTC\*CIRCUIT's coaches will flexibly ease the Learner towards it.

This kind of expertise is what is simply required by today's challenged organisations.

## **Becoming HR consultants**

As it developed into a full-fledged network of expert language learning coaches, LTC\*CIRCUIT has increasingly taken on full language learning project management responsibilities as an external consultant to whom Human resources or Human Potential development departments wholly or partially outsource this function.

The reason for this outsourcing may be that both the technicalities of language learning and training as well as the complexities of language learning coaching tend to be beyond the scope and/or the capabilities of HR training departments.

On behalf of our main customers we have thus co-managed programmes involving hundreds of students. For these programmes, LTC\*CIRCUIT has developed and successfully implemented state-of-the-art and proprietary tools such as • intake interview procedures, • streamlined oral testing protocols, • validated knowledge level tests, • needs analyses correlating professional performance needs to gradable language skills, • an exponential grading scale itself correlated to the European Common Reference Framework, • a programme designing method expertly combining various parameters of the learning process, • a method for adequately addressing level and learning skill variances within a learners' population, • a grading instrument for assessing multilingualism, • comprehensive programme assessment tools involving all relevant parameters of a 360° analysis etc.

As a consequence of this single-minded focus on “language learning coaching R&D”, we have helped these customers' learners to make individual and common efforts to achieve linguistic excellence sustained over many years, and thus contribute to a company-wide added capability.

## **Language learning: being up to complexities in job and life**

Lately, our own self-development has recognised kinship with complexity and capability thinking.

Climbing the leadership ladder, the proponents of this leadership improvement philosophy say, today's Executive is confronted with a growing complexity of challenges and contexts, and hence with the necessity of correlative processes of thought and imagination to address them.

As language coaches to those Executive and Leadership levels we can witness how these complexities provide us with both challenges and opportunities.

Obviously with them come complex fabrics of commitment and schedule, and hence the highest level of flexibility is required of the language learning coaches catering to such levels of responsibility.

At the same time however, it is as if language-learning coaching had finally reached its level of maximum effectiveness. Language learning in itself is an adventure of great complexity, or even, to put it more “sexily”, of great and rewarding riches. As soon as one reaches levels of proficiency, one realises “that one does not yet know anything”. And although this saying is not literally true, it is true to the extent that at those levels one suddenly discovers vistas and horizons where even greater proficiency yields unimagined rewards. Just to be able to function, as an international executive, in four, five, six languages with great success, and switching from one language to the other smoothly, always anew showing the greatest empathy one can show the other person, by speaking her language - this communicative virtuosity provides the organisation's leader, in the end, with a definite competitive edge.

And that is how, as coaches to Leaders and Executives, we are discovering once again how content and form match (excellent content and excellent form coming together): as in this case it is the complexity of professional challenges that is matched by the complexities of the language in which they incarnate.

The real boon is however this one: once one gets to those levels, one gets, as any aeroplane, “lift” - buoyancy. It is as if the Leader's mind geared to expressing a rich network of interrelations is by that very capability also up to the riches and intricacies of language called on to represent that complex fabric.

Also at those levels of responsibility, it is the richness of language(s) mastered that enables the Executive to acquire a clearer insight in his own thought and imagination processes leading to good decisions and actions. Conversely, once thoughts and concepts have become crystal-clear, they compel language to yield its most adequate representations, so that decisions made can be communicated swiftly and understood by all.

As coaches we are honoured, then, to both witness and reinforce the ways in which iterations of this process of reciprocal mirroring of language and thought yield ever better results: thoughts like diamonds, and jewellery in which they can glitter.

## **Coaching language learning: responding to the riches in people's lives**

Does that mean that we are now “only” able to cater to an organisation's highest-ranking managers and executives? Of course not.

Although learners may work at less demanding levels of responsibility and complexity in an organisation, we have always been aware that their language-learning process may not be less rich however.

During intake interviews potential “coachees” occasionally insist with us that the language learning requirement they are facing in their job “only” concerns a professional, or even a specific professional, use of the language. And although we remember their words, because they give us cues about how we may use specific job-related content to bring the learner to making the necessary efforts, we always point out to the learner that he needs to widen his interest base to achieve even this merely professional requirement. To put it slogan-like: only if you learn more than what is professionally required you will achieve a level that conforms to your professional specifications.

Helping the learner then to increase his or her mastery by this widening of motivation, interest, commitment, desire, we will weave many elements the learner's life, its challenges and goals, concerns, hopes and fears, reasons for sadness, pride, disappointment, joy and caring and love, into the process of acquiring the language level desired. And although professionally the goal may be quite specific and hence deceptively (!) simple, the road leading to it will, by involving the learner's full life, necessarily be intricate and complex, in one word: rich.

That is why it takes an expert and experienced language learning coach to do something so apparently simple as accompanying an accountant in his learning the accounting terminology - that is, to do it efficiently!

May we invite you to cast a glance on how our network's expert language learning coaches we are proud to work with formulate their own pedagogical insights?

Like the colours in a rich tapestry they show how they reinforce each other and why we can rightfully say that we all learn from each other, thereby building LTC\*Circuit's common expertise.

You will find them in the columns left and right on the pages of this site.