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SUMMER 2108

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### A Q&A with Executive and Leadership Ontological Coach Carl Godlove

#### How does an ontological coach help business leaders reach their full potential?

Your ontology is a powerful unconscious force. It drives your life and may be the most impactful part of yourself you've never heard of. Steve Jobs' ontology created Apple. Mohandas Gandhi's ontology freed India. Helen Keller's ontology made her one of the most influential people of the 20th century, despite being deaf and blind.

A leader's effectiveness is governed by their ability to achieve results through the agency of others within the dynamics of a stakeholder community. A leader's influence on the energy and attitude of their stakeholders is governed by their ontology, their way of being. It defines how they show up for everyone they touch. Their ontology can bring them closer or push them away. It can create buy-in or resistance. It can inspire passionate dedication. And it can crush spirit and kill motivation.

I help leaders permanently shift their ontology, their way of being, so they can show up more effectively for the people they influence. In turn, they get better results. This isn't a formula or a list of behavioral "dos" and "don'ts" to manipulate others. People can smell that a mile away. Behavioral approaches that ignore ontology usually fail because they go against the underlying unconscious beliefs of the person. Strictly force-of-will behavioral change can show up for a while, but the old self will typically re-emerge. In truth, this isn't the old self at all. It's the present self, the unchanged ontology, showing back up when the will is exhausted and too weak to resist it. Ask anyone who has dieted or made a New Year's resolution. But for the engaged client, ontological coaching results in permanent change because it works at the subconscious level of belief with reinforcing actions and practices to embody it. If the leader does the work, the change is real and they will develop into a more powerful, positive influence; generate better results; and advance further along their path, bringing others with them. The essence of leadership.

Going a little deeper for understanding, a key process in ontological coaching is called "breaking transparency." This is when a client arrives at an "aha" insight concerning themselves, their stakeholders or their circumstances. Carl Jung could have been talking about ontological transparency when he said, "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

If you ask the fish, "How's the water?" you'll hear in response, "Water? What water?" Their environment is transparent to them. They are conditioned to their world and react the same, day after day, to the push and pull of currents they can't see. And so it is with us, in our home life and work life, in our families and communities. Stephen Covey put it this way, borrowing the thought from Anaïs Nin, "We see the world, not as it is, but as we are — or, as we are conditioned to see it."

To change our world, we must first accept that there is more to see. Then we must update how we see it. We must break through our transparency, our unconscious conditioning, to see what is truly standing between where we are and where we want to be. This is why ontological coaching is the gold standard for creating permanent, desired change. The shifts in behavior and required actions emerge through the ontological coaching process. Updated, aligned beliefs are realized and embodied. Actions and behaviors reflect the new ontology. Desired outcomes follow.

I bring this ontological approach to team building as well. It's stakeholder-centered and aligns all team members through shared awareness and understanding. Combining team building with one-on-one coaching is a powerful approach. It creates extraordinary self and situational awareness, the hallmark of great leadership and high performing teams.

#### When did you decide to enter into the coaching field?

I'm not sure I decided. It feels more like it called me in 2015 toward the end of my 20 years as a CEO. I was being powerfully coached by a Newfield Network ontological coach. He knew me well and suggested I explore the Newfield Network ICF ACTP Ontological Coaching School in Boulder, Colorado. He helped me open my eyes to new possibilities for pursuing my passions, and it became abundantly clear this was my path. So I made the required year-long commitment to the intense, comprehensive training. My ontology most definitely shifted, and I began living into the new world and new life I envisioned. I love my work, travel often, and have daily contact now with my clients, cohorts and world-class mentors across the U.S. and around the world.

#### How has your prior experience helped you to become a thought leader in this regard?

That's a very flattering question and an inspiring aspiration. What I know to be true is that I am inspired

to learn and work very hard to bring all I know to leaders who want to get better. I came to coaching very well prepared, and I've surrounded myself with recognized global thought leaders in this field who make me better.

I came to professional executive and leadership coaching from nearly 40 years' experience. I spent 20 as CEO, and over a decade in senior leadership positions in the global tech and software industry. You can't buy the learning that occurs in these roles. And while it's great experience, it doesn't automatically make you a great coach. Nor does it teach all you need to know. That learning occurred in parallel over my lifetime, as did my awareness of my suitability for this work.

I'm a lifelong student of the human condition, which may be why, in addition to the good fortune of having amazing parents, I was tapped from my technical positions for leadership roles. I started, even before college, to devour the books and teachings of authorities on human growth, development and personal mastery. I've studied it from every imaginable perspective - psychological, philosophical, biological, neurological, perceptual, spiritual, metaphysical. If it ends in "-al," I've probably read about it and taken deep dives into it with Jung, Jacques, Russell, James, Frankl, Chodron, Whitehead, Fromm, Lipton, Newberg, Covey, Tolle, Brown, Ruiz, Hill, Peale, Chopra, Peck, Schwartz, Cope, Leonard, Campbell, Brothers, and many more. I also immerse myself in the thinking of contemporary human performance researchers and authorities like Tim Ferriss, Lewis Howes, Dave Asprey and Tom Bilyeu.

While CEO, I learned from the experience and wisdom of my mastermind groups and from the world-class resources of YPO and Vistage. I devoured business best sellers as fast as they were published, from organizational development and leadership, to sales brains and the brains of every generational nuance in the workplace. I explored every mainstream test, assessment and model framework that supposedly yields insight into personality, preference, compatibility or performance, from DiSC and Myers-Briggs, to EQi and StrengthsFinder 2.0.

I entered coaching with the same passion, discipline, and high bar for learning and mastery. So I researched the strongest global thought leaders in my industry who were also aligned with my philosophy, heart and mission. I then sought out, and established, personal and professional relationships with world-renowned experts including Julio Olalla, who co-founded the method and



art of ontological coaching; Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, who has coached more than 150 CEOs; Dr. Lance Secretan, a world-renowned author and leadership teaching authority; and Dr. Sean Stephenson, who is an international bestselling author, speaker and therapist and whose life mission is to rid the world of insecurity.

### **Are there any specific examples that stand out to you as a client who you helped transform their leadership experience?**

I love this question. It's the best way to understand how these unfamiliar terms and concepts work in real coaching engagements. Two examples immediately come to mind on opposite ends of the spectrum. My coaching is confidential, so I obscured specifics and obtained permission from these clients to publish their cases here. These show how leaders and their effectiveness can be impacted by transparent aspects of self.

The first example is an executive who engaged me personally, referred by another coach in the Midwest who knew my background. This client was facing a massive restructuring in their company. Every position was in jeopardy, and their stress had reached the breaking point.

Initially, confusion was all they could see, but clarity followed as we sorted through the issues. The final break in transparency came with the realization, through mental imagery, that they felt solely responsible for the fate of not only themselves, but their adult family members as well. They were everyone's lifeline in a raging storm. They saw themselves literally gripping a rope with white-knuckle fear. That's what was in their unconscious mind. When I suggested they let go to see what happens, they responded after reflection, "Nothing. Nothing happens. Everyone's fine. I don't have to hold onto this any longer." And with that, they mentally released their grip on that line and literally released their grip on their fear. They let it go. Everything was different from that moment forward. Their beliefs changed. Their ontology shifted. They were still a responsible person, but they didn't have to be responsible for everyone, all the time, regardless of the cost.

This brought enormous relief and an ability to focus more clearly on their own needs with renewed energy. No longer in survival mode, they could return to some long-neglected personal interests and passions. There, they discovered a connection between these interests and the gift of nurturing that they naturally bring to the workplace and their leadership role. This clarity also made it to their resume, a very empowering action. Other executives and staff noticed their positive change and new calm state in the midst of their common chaos and asked what happened. "I got a coach!" was my client's response. As a result, other job opportunities came their way, as did an offer to stay with their organization. Their decision to remain came easily because of the clarity they developed, and their team was very grateful for that. This client is now very clear about what they want in the most important aspects of their life, maintaining the confidence and clarity they found through coaching.

The second example is very different. I was engaged by a tech company to coach an executive on the West Coast who was not seeking this help. In fact, they viewed it as punitive. They were highly valued, but issues swirled around them. Their response, not surprisingly, was "Why me? What about everyone else I'm dealing with?" This was a classic example of someone who was promoted into a leadership role due to their extraordinary intelligence and domain expertise, but who lacked the practical experience and training required to lead a team and navigate the gnarly political waters of a large organization.

Their "aha" moment, their ontological break in transparency, came when they realized that their felt need to personally own and solve every problem they encountered stemmed from their position in their very large family. While growing up, taking responsibility was valued by their parents, and individual attention was in short supply. My client was very capable and seized every opportunity to be recognized and feel loved for their contributions to managing the household. They had unconsciously transferred this way of being to their work role, seeking appreciation and acknowledgement of their worth in the same way. It's unlikely that this connection would or could have been made without help. It was an unconscious story with supporting beliefs that were made conscious through the ontological coaching process.

With this new awareness, my client could honor their past without being a slave to it. During our first six months of working together, my client restructured their team and promoted staff from within, reflecting their new understanding of their own micromanaging tendencies, their impulse to retain control, and the reasons for it; they resolved personal relationships at home that significantly improved the quality of their personal life; they rebuilt relationships with peers at work to enhance their cross-functional effectiveness; they were promoted into an even more senior position; and they were sought out as a national speaker and contributing author in their field. This client quickly changed their view of coaching, being enormously grateful to their leadership for providing this support.

### **What other entrepreneurial avenues do you explore, and what do you do in your free time?**

Most recently, I have been working with AJ Willemsen, a friend and fellow coach and entrepreneur in The Netherlands. We are collaborating to bring to the U.S. a unique software solution, TrackingCoach™, that helps coaches and their clients track the changes desired through the coaching process. Based on Marshall Goldsmith's Stakeholder Centered Coaching methodology, and endorsed by Marshall himself, its effectiveness is time-tested by this world-class coach on top executives and leadership teams. And it doesn't only apply to the executive suite. We are making this tool available to coaches and their clients everywhere who want to keep track of their engagement progress. It is a first in the coaching industry and we expect to make it widely available later this year.

Always the tinkerer, I invented the TZ™ Tee Height Setter at GodloveGolf.com. I think it's cool that my

great, great grandchildren will be able to look me up in the patent filings! Everyone should patent something, if only for that reason. I draw from this experience to coach and mentor entrepreneurs at all stages. Serving on their advisory board, I mentor students at the Langan Launchbox, Penn State Berks Innovation Hub, while helping to establish their makerspace. I'm exploring a similar role with The University of California, Santa Barbara's Technology Management Program. Consistent with this theme, I'm also in the Solution Network for Ben Franklin Technology Partners' of Northeastern PA, but they haven't tapped me yet. I've been a maker for decades, hiding out in my well-equipped workshop that includes a laser engraver and cutter. It's the coolest machine! I've created dozens of devices, including golf product displays and tools to support my wife's burgeoning cookie art business at HeartBakedIn.com which sends me down the rabbit hole of the social media business and keeps me busy composing music for her Instagram videos.

I have a blog, BeYourselfBlog.com, which is a creative outlet for my writing, photography and music composition. I strive to live my tagline, "Fearlessly Living a Life of Your Making," filling my time with what's meaningful to me and, I hope, helpful to others. My service on the Habitat for Humanity of Berks County Board of Directors aligns well with my message and mission.

I visit the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies in Rhinebeck, NY for inspiration and an occasional "reboot." I've spent long, immersive weekends with some amazing souls, including poet and philosopher, Mark Nepo, and speaker, author and near death experiencer, Anita Moorjani. I really want to have her experience, just without the dying part.

All three of our children live in California, so we get to the West Coast often to spend time with family and develop friendships and business relationships throughout California and the western states. I enjoy time in Colorado and Arizona with my coaching cohorts and friends, adding side trips to the rejuvenating hot springs in New Mexico. My new role as grandfather inspired me to write and narrate a children's book, a fanciful diversion from two coaching-related books still very much in draft. When I'm not writing, I'm reading and researching a wide range of topics, from Agile and blockchain to Emanuel Swedenborg, the brilliant 18th century scientist, philosopher and theologian who led me to new friendships with the scholars and creative staff at Bryn Athyn College who are getting international recognition for their work centered on Swedenborg's 45,000 pages of insight. Long walks, meditation and sound sleep round out my days while the list of things I'd like to explore grows beyond my time available to play with them. ■