

Confessions of a Reformed Facilitator by Simon Bailey, Royal Bank of Scotland

My approach as a developer and facilitator was always tough, uncompromising, and ass-kicking: short bursts of input, high levels of challenge, and "straight down the throat" feedback. I had been very successful with this approach, even winning the Sales Trainer of the Year Award at the UK National Sales Awards in 2006.

Then, last year, some of my peers and I attended The Leadership Challenge® Workshop run by Madeleine and Richard of the Tom Peters Company - UK. During the workshop, we were encouraged to attempt abseiling (a climbing technique) and rafting, neither of which excited me—I can't swim, I'm not over-keen on heights, and I've got knees which will pop out of their joints without too much persuasion. But some of my colleagues in attendance, including David Buxton, reversed off the 80-foot cliff at the drop of a hat and whizzed down to the ground at a phenomenal rate. And it was then that David encouraged me, supported me, and challenged me to give it a go myself. He had already Modeled the Way by taking the leap himself. He also explained the set-up of the climbing rig, offered a few tips, took me by the arm, looked me in the eye, and told me I could do it. I completed the abseil (the rafting too) and I was very proud of myself for doing so. Later, back in the classroom environment, I found it was me who could support David with the tasks that he found more taxing, such as devising his own vision statement.

This event changed my professional life in one particular way. **I have learned that I can still offer a high level of challenge to my delegates, but that I should do so with a good sprinkling of support and compassion - which actually adds to the success and feelings of the participants.** As a result, I've changed the way I design and deliver learning events: now, instead of five minutes of in-your-face input followed by a twenty-minute challenge, I give people more time to reflect upon and discuss their own experiences. I let them go off to make sense of the teachings and how it will work when they return to the office. I actively encourage people to swap stories, successes, and concerns. I can't say it has been—or continues to be—easy for me to change my facilitation techniques, but it is certainly worth it!

Simon Bailey is a UK-based Learning Consultant for the Royal Bank of Scotland, the World's fifth largest bank. His career in learning and development in the financial services industry has spanned nearly 20 years, most of it in a sales environment.

Richard King and **Madeleine McGrath** from the **Tom Peters Company – UK** first met Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in 1990 and subsequently became co-facilitators of The Leadership Challenge® Workshop in the U.K. and Europe. Their next Public Workshop will be in Buxton, U.K., September 17-21, 2007. You can reach Richard at Richard@tompeters.co.uk and Madeleine at Madeleine@tompeters.co.uk.