



ERSHAD COACHING: INTEGRATES ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES



DR CHRISTIAN VAN NIEUWERBURGH

For more about Ershad coaching, [click here](#)

Back in 2013, Dr Christian van Nieuwerburgh was the keynote speaker at a conference in Kuwait. He used the opportunity to discuss the three keys components of effective coaching: skills, process and a coaching 'way of being'.

And while the subject of his talk proved to be fascinating to the audience, several delegates were especially intrigued by how his description of the 'way of being' aligned with traditional Islamic beliefs and concepts.

Many delegates argued that Western models of coaching were not appropriate for the culture of the Gulf region and that they tended to be too individualistic. Some shared stories of how Western approaches to coaching had actually caused internal conflict for Muslims wishing to achieve goals, while also remaining true to their faith.

At that event, Christian was approached by the conference organiser, Raja Al-Laho, who had been grappling with the challenges of integrating Islamic principles into coaching conversations, and, as a result, a new coaching

model based on the Islamic faith and principles was co-designed. This new methodology, named Ershad coaching, has recently been presented at the region's largest HR summit and has received very positive feedback.

According to Christian, there are a number of ways in which Ershad coaching is distinct.

'Fundamentally, it remains a very human conversation,' he says. 'But the Arabic word "Ershad" denotes guidance. This new framework is one in which the learner, in the presence of a facilitator, determines the best way of achieving his or her intentions in a way that is aligned with their values and beliefs. Therefore the Ershad coaching process is one of self-guidance in which the learner finds ways of pursuing the path that is right for them.'

'Importantly, we don't talk about goals in this model. It is all about positive intentions. Nor do we use the terms coach or coachee, because we want to be explicit about the roles. We use the terms facilitator and learner. This makes it clear that fundamentally, Ershad coaching is about learning.'

It is a learner-led conversation that is supported by a facilitator who is skilled at listening, asking questions and providing a safe and respectful environment for reflection.

'However, the core of the process is what we call the Alignment Wheel, which is used to check that the chosen pathways are aligned to the learner's faith and values. It asks the learner how their chosen pathway might reflect on their relationship with their beliefs and how it aligns with their own, individual principles. It challenges them to consider how their paths might sit with life, the universe and the important relationships in their lives. By looking at the contextual implications of their intentions, they can ensure that they are complementary to, and not in conflict with, their faith.'

Christian is currently undertaking further research in this area in collaboration with the University of Oxford, and a book on the subject: *The Principles and Practice of Coaching in Islamic Culture*, co-written by Christian and Raja, is due to be published in 2017.

'We are consulting with a number of UK and Gulf partners to exchange knowledge, ideas and best practice with a view to evaluating the effectiveness of Ershad coaching relative to traditional approaches.'

Dr Christian van Nieuwerburgh is Executive Director for the Centre for Coaching and Behavioural Change at Henley Business School.

For more information about the Centre, [click here](#).

