

## **COACHING LEADERS** by Rosanne Cole

Most of the people we coach are senior managers in organisations, so not surprisingly the area they are often most interested in is developing their leadership skills and style.

A recent assignment I handled involved working with the senior Finance team in a major retail organisation, to help them individually to identify their 'leadership' style and collectively to work more effectively together. It was important to gather some data about their predominant styles and I chose to use the Human Synergistics Lifestyles questionnaires. These identify 12 separate styles of management, four of which have been found to correlate highly with effective leadership. We wanted to see what the team style was as well as each person's individual style so that through coaching I could help them to identify behaviour changes that would enable them to work together more productively.

Lifestyles is effectively a multi-rater questionnaire and the team's results were very revealing. In this instance the most predominant positive characteristic of the team was Achievement ("an interest in and proficiency at attaining high-quality results on challenging projects"). However, this was modified by a marked tendency to display Dependent behaviour by each of the subordinates to the Finance Director ("a tendency to feel your efforts don't count and a need to rely on others for direction and guidance") which was inhibiting their ability to show initiative and work independently, while still working towards a common goal. This was also exacerbated by low scores in Affiliative ("forming meaningful, reciprocal relationships") and Humanistic Encouraging ("interest in assisting people's self improvement efforts") and so gave us some very clear data to work on in our coaching sessions.

As well as being coached the team set up an Action Learning set to help support one another in achieving their learning goals. They also worked individually on leadership skills such as creating a vision, motivating inexperienced staff and communicating with internal clients. Each of them now has a much clearer picture of what they need to work on to optimise their leadership skills and as a team they are showing much higher levels of enthusiasm and energy and are starting to win real admiration within the organisation.