

A Week in the Life of Rebecca George (Principal Consultant)



Monday –

5:00AM – my alarm goes off and I spend the time of a snooze cycle contemplating how I can negotiate another 30 minutes of sleep...then I remember I have to be out the door no later than 6:00am and still have to organise my workout gear for the week, so I get a move on...

Today I have several MBTI feedback and coaching sessions as a part of a Developing Managers programme, so I am on my way up to the Midlands.

The drive through the Cotswolds is beautiful and makes getting up with the sunrise absolutely worthwhile. I arrive to the venue for my first appointment at 8.30am. These sessions are always interesting to me, a balance of a practised way of finding peoples' best fit type in line with the qualification, and the individual and personalized discovery each person has with the instrument. I enjoy seeing what resonates with who and how...and today is no different.

After three sessions I head back to my car, as this is a very busy travel week. I will be away from home until Thursday night, so in order to ensure some time for myself within this, I have planned my work outs as well. I'm driving north to York today, so I treat myself to a stop off at the swimming pool in Leicester to work in a gentle 1600meter swim before I head up the M1...

I arrive in York about 7pm, which is a treat as I have enough time to explore the city (my first time here!) and take in some of the stunning historical architecture. After I grab a Panini for dinner I enjoy a stroll back to the hotel along the river. Once back in my hotel room I log on to my computer to take care of some general admin so I can start the week off ahead of the game. This mainly consists of organising my receipts and timesheet, and answering a range of emails. I have one highlight revealed for tomorrow – my colleague, Nicola, will be in Leeds at the same time as me, so we have coordinated to meet for lunch! It's always nice to be able to catch up with a familiar friendly face when away for the week, so this is a treat! I logoff the computer for the evening and then scan the television for some programme with Phil and Kirstie, but to no avail. I switch off the television, put Will Hoge on my iPod, and fall asleep.

Tuesday –

The alarm goes off at 6am today, how nice to sleep in a bit! It's a beautiful sunny summer day in York, so I jump into my running gear and head out to explore the river path and then follow another runner off-road through some paths for some good exploring time. A loop back into the city centre, taking in the sights at dawn and I think to myself that this is a pretty special way to start a day, I do love being a transplanted American!

I head into York to meet another client for another MBTI feedback and coaching session. This is a very straightforward session and the client has a lot of positive things to say for the programme so far and quickly links the learning to both work and personal situations, so it all feels both relaxed and purposeful, which matches well with the day's beginning.

Following this session I take the train into Leeds, where I meet my colleague Nicola. We go to lunch and we steal a bit of time for girl talk before we head over to the venue where we are both running Action Learning Sets as a part of the Leadership Development programme. My action learning group proves to start a more intensive tone to my week. Things are challenging in the public sector with the new government and initiatives which we know are coming and which are also still evolving. This means uncertainty for a lot of people, both in terms of their own career progression and in terms of managing the dynamics internally, for themselves and their teams. The issues brought in reflect that, and it's a good day for knowledge sharing around how to motivate themselves and others in these circumstances. One participant has a very difficult conversation coming up. Seeking guidance from

the group, a lot of ideas are offered and this person closes the session feeling ready to step into the challenge ahead and is very vocal with thanks to the group for helping to ground the preparation. It is nice to end on this encouraging shift, seeing results and knowing that the programme is taking hold and making a difference.

Following this session I head back to York to get my car, and then start the evening drive to Manchester where I will be spending tonight. I've never driven to Manchester before, so I'm a little apprehensive not knowing the city at all, so I dig out the satnav and rely on that help. Then I think to plug in another swimming pool so I can get in another swim. This turns out to be a bad idea, as when about 5 miles from the pool my satnav battery dies and I realise I don't have my charger with me. Argh, it's one of those afternoons...so I abort the swim idea and follow signs (very old school, and still fairly effective) into the city centre, in hopes of then willing myself to find the hotel. Oh joy, oh bliss, I see the hotel!!! Oh no, I also see every single road leading to it is closed for construction. Hmm...well, as I am feeling like a fairly bright individual, I make a few loops around the city convinced I can make magic happen. After 30 minutes I realize, sadly, that I cannot open closed roads, and I cave in and call the hotel, now desperate for help. The woman on the phone is amazing and not only gives great directions but also offers to stay on the phone until I get to their parking garage! I manage without taking advantage of that extra touch...though when I get to the hotel I want to hug her. Realising though that may be a bit much, even with my American accent, I opt instead for expressing a huge thank you and telling her manager what great service she has just given. I head to my room, and then the hotel restaurant, as I am knackered and not quite up to exploring anymore this evening.

Wednesday –

6:00am and I manage to drag myself out of bed to do a workout DVD...I know that with my dead satnav I won't be making my way to any fitness on the road tonight, so best to just get it done.

From there I go to breakfast in the hotel which is mayhem – there is some sort of conference there and it looks like a tea cup hurricane has hit; so I opt for a quick glass of orange juice and some toast so I can be on my way out as quickly as I arrived. Thank goodness there is coffee at the client's building which is actually drinkable, even for a coffee snob like me...

I head to the client for an 8.30AM start, as we have a lot to get through in our all day working session. As a result of a recent major business transformation project, we are supporting this organisation in designing an Induction programme to achieve a number of objectives from understanding the new ways of working, to improving leadership visibility and supporting and empowering staff at all levels to take ownership of forming the new collaborative culture moving forward. I work one to one with my key client, and then we spend the afternoon in a stakeholder meeting taking into account all proposals and options to be considered in the final design, and primarily to ensure everyone walks away confident of being listened to and heard. Once we have at least a collective understanding of what needs to be weighed and how we will do that, we close the meeting and I work some more with my key client to determine next steps and timelines to ensure all is well in place and we are on track with our initial project plan.

Following the close of our day together, it's back to the car as I settle in for a long drive back down south, as I have to be in Cardiff for a fourth client on Thursday morning. At the last minute I decide I'd rather get up early in the morning from my own bed to get to Cardiff rather than sleep in another hotel, so I head down the M6/M5 towards the Bath area where my lovely cottage and bed awaits me...

Thursday –

5:00AM – another one of those early starts, but this time I jump out of bed as I have a routine for working in Cardiff. I hit the road in a slightly more appropriate version of my pj's and drive straight to

Cardiff to the gym so I can be at the pool when it opens. I get in a good 45 minutes of swimming and get ready there, complete with coffee and breakfast, and then head to the client.

Today could be a very challenging difficult day, as it is a facilitated meeting where a senior management team needs to come to agreement and make some very difficult decisions about the way forward in terms of structure and performance expectations. There are also some tough organisational messages which have to be given, so it could be a tense and emotive meeting. I step into the day knowing that there are a range of thoughts and agendas in terms of today's objectives, so it is important to start getting as much onto the table and out into the open as possible. We go through that process and it seems to help the tone from the start. This is a day which requires a careful balance of facilitating input and opinions and also driving decision making so there are clear actions at the end of the day. While our process feels painstaking at times, by lunchtime there are some very clear results coming through and the team is working together positively and effectively, as a result of checking in and feedback throughout the session. After lunch we move the sandwiches away and I encourage them to do a quick combination teambuilding/energizer activity. At first some resist, then they quickly step in and take part. Within three minutes they are all laughter and smiles, and one of them remarks at the end how rarely they do things like this...and they would like to do more. We get through the afternoon session coming to a conclusion on a number of issues, and all are remarking at how much they have accomplished and achieved. This is a nice result from what could have been a very difficult day.

I get back in my car and head home. I am really feeling the week now, and all I have on my mind as I drive home is how much I want to go for a nice long walk along the river...and then watch Phil and Kirstie because I know they are on tonight!! The thought occurs to me that I may need more of a social life, but with lots of plans for the weekend coming up I am content with myself, my walking shoes, and then my television...oh, and maybe a glass of wine...

Friday:

6:00AM – its Friday!!! I leap out of bed into my running gear and head out for a good long run around the footpaths and the hills and then back along the river...my version of heaven! After that I quickly shower and then head to the train station to catch the train to London. I have another facilitated senior leadership meeting for the client undergoing the business transformation, this time for the finance and business leads to agree processes and procedures for ways of working in the new structure. There have been a variety of views of how best to proceed and we have a number of agenda items to work through, so the meeting prep involves prioritizing carefully what must happen today in terms of success, as there are a number of actions which cannot be taken until these critical decisions are made. Fortunately I am feeling energized by the success of yesterday's meeting – even though it was a different organisation with different challenges, the needs and emotions and even types of conflict are similar. I share some options for ways of working and we move forward. By the end of the day we have come to decisions on all of the issues, and even more importantly, the team is in collective agreement about both what they have decided and how they will positively represent their decisions as a cohesive team. The relief of the meeting organizer is visible, and I am so pleased that they engaged so well in the process and we have accomplished their goals.

I say goodbye and good weekend to them all, and agree a debrief review session for early next week with my key client. From there I head to the tube and then the train, and then finally home.

On the train from Paddington I reflect on the week. I've been around the UK in six cities in five days, and still managed to swim, run with geese, lunch with a friend, walk along the river, and get some writing done. My clients are not just satisfied, they are happy with the work we are doing together. Because by taking care of myself, I can keep my energy at a level which allows me to focus on them fully when I am on the clock. It's a career that is a lot of hard work, a lot of paying attention to a range of views at once, a lot of stepping willingly into uncomfortable situations...a lot of motorways, train

stations, and hotel rooms...and a lot of interesting people, challenging puzzles to solve, and immediate judgement calls about the most appropriate path to take...all in all, it is a career that I am proud to have.