



# All in the mind

Attention! After a successful Turf Managers' Conference presentation at BTME, performance coach Karl Morris returns with advice on how to focus clearly on the important things in work, golf...and in life

**It was a great pleasure to be asked to be a keynote speaker at BTME. I was tremendously impressed by the organisation of the event, the wide range of educational opportunities and above all the willingness to learn and the curiosity of the attendees.**

When I first received the invitation to speak I wondered how much my work as a coach would be relevant to the audience and the challenges they currently face on a daily basis.

Yet the more I thought about it, the clearer the parallel became. Greenkeeping and sport are so similar in that they constantly throw challenges and setbacks at us and most of the time we are under pressure to perform and produce results.

Over the years I have been very fortunate to work with some of the world's best golfers and time after time I have seen how the very best are prepared to respond well to setback and disappointment. They have a mental toughness and tenacity to keep going when results are less than ideal.

There is no doubt we are living in challenging times at the moment - much of which is beyond our control - but our future success or failure will be determined by our RESPONSE to those challenging times, just as our response to a dropped shot or missed putt will define our ability to score well at golf. It is our mindset that is often the key between success and failure, not just the situation we find ourselves in.

I remember once hearing somebody say "the quality of your life will be determined by the quality of

your questions" and, from initially not understanding the gravity and importance of this statement, I am now convinced this single statement is possibly the most important concept you will ever hear. I don't believe in positive thinking in the form the media currently peddles it and various mind gurus, but I do passionately believe in the power of quality questions.

Quality questions focus one of your most precious commodities, your attention. Your success or failure in your work, your golf and your life, will depend, to a very large

degree, where you focus your attention.

In very simple terms, your attention will either be on something useful or useless. I am assuming as your eyes fall across these words, you are hoping your attention is currently on what you are reading. If it is, then you will more than likely gain something. However, your attention could be on what you need to do later, what you're going to have for tea or even what other people in the room are thinking about you as you sit reading Greenkeeper International. After





reading the last statement, you may have found how your attention has wandered. Sorry about that, but it does just highlight how fragile and temporary our attention can be.

So a major part of being successful is to understand and apply the principle of focused attention - and how quality questions can be one of your greatest assets in bringing your attention to the place you not only want it to be, but to a place which is useful and productive.

When you have the capability to direct your attention, you begin to take control of your world as opposed to the world controlling you. In the modern world, it would seem we constantly face a combination of factors and situations that are trying to steal our attention. This is shown in the incredible way people become addicted to social media, and in the constant stream of sound bites and calls to action which inhibit and restrict our capability to just be in the here and now with our attention. Is it any wonder that golfers can struggle to play a game which positively insists on them being attentive to what is going on, right here and now, in this moment, playing a unique shot they will never be confronted with ever again? It is exactly the same with our work. Either our attention is on it or it's not, and good ques-

tions can help us focus our attention in the most productive way to the challenges presented.

Often people ask dreadful questions focusing attention in a totally unproductive way. Think of a recent challenge you have had and ask yourself these three questions:

“Who is to blame?”

“How could I prove I'm right?”

“Why have I failed?”

Now if you have just run those questions through your mind, I don't need to be a psychic to know your current state is probably less than ideal to deal with the situation. The questions have directed your precious attention in to areas that are frankly useless. However if you had the same challenge and you asked yourself questions like this:

“What are my choices?”

“What is possible?”

“What is the best thing to do now?”

Run those questions through your mind in response to the same scenario and I guarantee that you will be in a different and more productive state because your attention is in a useful place. Most people ask habitually poor and unproductive questions, blissfully unaware how detrimental those questions are to their attention.

With many of the golfers I work with, I ensure they have sets of

questions that serve them well both on and off the golf course.

“What does a good shot look like here?” is a great question to ask when you are out on the course because it forces your brain to produce an image of the shot you want, as opposed to a shot you may fear.

“What did you enjoy today?” and “What did you learn today?” are two questions I suggest may be useful to parents when their child, who is learning the game, comes off the course. It sends the young mind's attention in the direction of learning and enjoyment, two priceless commodities if you are looking for future success.

Asking good questions is not about trying to be positive, it is about taking charge of how you use your brain in the most effective way and not falling into the trap of sending your attention habitually into areas that do not serve you well.

So, notice over the next few days the questions that you ask of yourself and of others and gain some insight as to whether they are serving you or not. Are your questions getting the best out of your colleagues? Are your questions effective in terms of persuading others? Above all, are your questions effective for yourself and what you want to achieve now and in the future?

#### about the author



Karl is recognised as one of Europe's leading performance coaches and created 'The Mind Factor' to help clients consistently produce outstanding results at all levels of sport and business. His new book is called 'Attention! The secret to you playing great golf'. For more information on Karl and The Mind Factor courses and products go to [www.themindfactor.com](http://www.themindfactor.com)