

The Coach scheme for the wicking bed technology

Colin Austin 2 March 2013

Here I want to explain the coach scheme, why we need it and how it will work, what coaches actually do and invite readers to become coaches by contacting me at colinaustin@bigpond.com.

The Stages of Innovations and the history of wicking beds

First a bit of background - there is an old saying that the first stage of innovation is that people say it will never work and ridicule the innovator, then some people start to use it and find it actually works, then they explain how it works and finally how it was their idea and how they thought of it in the first place.

This is pretty much the story with wicking beds. Let me give a snap shot of the story. Some thirty five years ago Australia suffered severe sand storms losing millions of tonnes of top soil, which gave me the hunch that at some time the world would need the technology of creating top soil - a hunch that is proving spot on.

I started a series of scientific experiments to find out how to make top soil, not as easy as you may think but I did learn that the two critical essentials are to grow something and to keep the soil moist. Of course now we know a lot more about soil biology and the importance of fungi in creating soil.

But this gave me an interest in irrigation to keep the soil moist. This led me being invited to go to Ethiopia to see if there was a way of providing sustenance food in time of drought. I learned that the problem was not so much an overall lack of rain but a lack of rain when the seeds heads should have been filling. Any solution had to be cheap and easy.

I came up with the dead simple idea of digging a hole and lining it with plastics film to form an underground water reservoir, relying on the wicking action for the water to move up to the root zone.

There is a key point here, this work was charity for people suffering severe hunger, not just a bit hungry - mothers had no milk and their babies were simply dying from starvation. You cannot see that and think about making money. ***There has been and never will be any question of making money from the wicking bed technology from people suffering from lack of food.***

However Australia then went through a long period of drought, I and other people wrote a few articles about wicking beds in the press and I opened up a page on my web about wicking beds.

There were some failures with people getting the levels wrong with some trying to grow crops in the water reservoir while others had the reservoir too low so the water went putrid without watering the plants. But many succeeded and in the terminology of the web the idea went feral with hundreds if not thousands of wicking beds being built with great success. The water saving with wicking beds was proven time and time again by different users. We had phase two of innovation, acceptance.

We rapidly moved through phase three and four with people not just explaining how they work but setting out to make money from them, often at very high prices. This did not worry

me too much as I had never set out with the idea of making money out of wicking beds, it was charity work. I was a little p'd off that other people were trying to make money out of my idea while all I did was spend my time and money. But I am old and life is short so I was not going to get my knickers in a twist. But I did start to get worried as some of these systems being sold commercially were simply badly designed; they obviously had not understood the science behind the wicking system and were not working as they should. This was not good for the image of wicking beds. I did have patents on the systems but as far as I was concerned I was not running a commercial operation and while I was concerned about the image of the wicking bed technology it was simply not worth the time and money to pursue the expensive business of litigation.

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I think of these wicking beds as generation 1 where the primary aim is to save water. But now I see we are generation 2.

The twist in the story

However like all stories there is a twist half way through. I had suffered a broken leg in a car accident many years ago and now my leg was failing and I was becoming crippled. I went to China to explore possible non-surgical solutions, no joy, I needed the chop, but I did meet a very helpful lady Doctor who came back with me to Australia to look after me while I had the inevitable surgery. She looked after me so well I asked her to marry me and we settled down to an Australian life with the excess of the Australian diet. Net result she transformed from being a very healthy person to having severe diabetes and was in danger of going blind.

I started to study everything I could find about diet and health and reading books like 'Eat to Live' by Dr. Fuhrman and the 'China Study' by T. Colin Campbell. These convinced me that diet, particularly eating fresh healthy vegetables was a vital issue for our affluent society. This was not some minor issue it is one of the most important issues facing society.

Now I am in contact with the Diabetes community, there are some 1.5 million diabetes sufferers in Australia. But it is not just diabetes, you only have to walk down the street of any city to see just how many people are overweight, this leads to a whole range of other diseases, such as heart attack and cancer.

I saw wicking beds as part of the solution providing a way that people can have conveniently have access to fresh healthy vegetables. It changes the whole wicking bed scenario from a helpful tool for hobby gardeners to a pivotal technology for the health of a nation. Billions of people around the world can have easy and convenient access to healthy food.

As they say it is a game changer.

Life isn't meant to be fair

Of course we all like to think we live in a democratic society which is equitable and fair and we all enjoy equal rights and opportunities. We look to our Governments to provide the rules for this fair and just society. But life never has been fair and just, going back a generation to the days of a National State we had rich countries like Australia and poor countries but there were separate with not that much contact between the peoples. True the rich countries exploited the natural resources of the poor but that was pretty much transparent to most people and there was no doubt that the National Governments were in control of their countries.

Technology like the aeroplane and the internet and globalisation has changed all that. We now have the rise of the multinational corporation who have budgets and financial resources greater than many National Governments. They have immense power and nowhere is this more evident than in our food system. The old days (in which I grew up) of the mixed farm, with cows and sheep, the odd pigs and a few chooks and a field or so of crops with the farmer taking his produce to the local market have gone.

We live in global economy; much of what we buy is produced in another country on the other side of the globe. Now it is not for me to get into a losing battles with the multinational food companies, they will win, but I can work out a way that the wicking bed technology can be made widely available so everyone has the opportunity to eat healthy food.

You may have seen my spoof '00 and the soil princess' on my web site (www.waterright.com.au). that was just part one, now we have to look at part 2 how to make sure the secrets of good soil are for everyone benefit.

The system of 'coaches'

Just as Newtons first law says that for every reaction there is an equal and opposite reaction (which in lay language means that if you bang your head against a steam roller the force on the steam roller will be the same as on your head) there is an equal reaction to the power of the global economy, and that is the power of the social network. This is the principle of the system of 'coaches'. It is about people power, giving people the power to have healthy food independent of pressure from the mega corporations.

So what is the plan.

Open source

First we make the wicking bed technology in the words of the computer 'open source'. In practise this means that we make the wicking bed technology open to anyone for their private use. We will maintain the patents and trademarks but these will not be used to stop anyone using wicking beds, rather they will be used to stop any organisation trying to exploit the technology for their profits rather than for the benefit of the community.

Registered coaches

Secondly we have a system of registered coaches, they have use of the patents and trademarks, the legal protection of patents and trademarks ensure that no rival organisation can set up in competition or trying to restrict or limit their use of the technology. The system of registration of approved coaches provides a level of protection for the coaches.

Coaches are independent businesses

There is no centralised company; rather the coaches form a cooperating cohort of companies as individual business entities, either working as private individual or companies. In the early stages I envisage coaches will largely be private individuals working a part time job. But who knows where this will all lead.

The power of networking

Coaches exploit the immense power of modern networking. This obviously includes their own personal friends but they are encouraged to manage their own internet web pages and networking system to introduce more people to the benefits of eating healthy food from wicking beds. I see wicking beds as more than a way that a keen gardener can grow food

with less water, they are easy and convenient to use so any non-gardener can grow their own healthy food.

Services offered by coaches

Coaches have the option of offering a selection of services; it is up to them which services they offer. No doubt this list may change with time but these are the services I see they can offer

- Training and education, this may be formal training run in groups or private tuition on a one to one basis
- Assistance in the construction of wicking beds
- Supply or installation of complete wicking beds or boxes
- Supply of bio-packs
- Supply of plants for wicking boxes, - while many plants are readily available some herbs are difficult to obtain
- Sale of produce, e.g. food they grow in their own wicking beds
- Coaches are encouraged (but not required) to manage their own internet communications such as web site and Facebook plus publish article in the press on the wicking bed system

Coaches charge the customer directly - there are no royalty payments as such on these services.

I hope to work with coaches to establish by agreement a reasonable scale of fees for these services, however these will be recommendations.

Requirements of coaches

Coaches are required to

- Demonstrate their ongoing competence in wicking bed technology. As I hope this will be a global operation this will be done by having photos of their projects.
- Recognise and publicise the user of the name wicking beds™ and recognised it is trade marked
- Link to and publicise the wicking bed web sites, such as www.wickingbed.com www.wateright.com colinaustin.wix.com/wickingbed etc
- Share technology on the wicking bed system particularly with other coaches (I envisage a wicking bed newsletter and common web page)
- Purchase and supply customers with biopacks at retail prices

Support services for coaches

- Recognition and publicity that coach is an approved coach
- Supply and updates on wicking bed technology
- Umbrella promotion of the wicking bed technology
- Supply of contact names and leads in the coaches area
- Supply of biopacks

I look forward to your email

colinaustin@bigpond.com