



WORKING RESOURCES

Dr. Maynard Brusman

Consulting Psychologist & Executive Coach
Trusted Advisor to Senior Leadership

*Helping companies assess, select, coach
and retain emotionally intelligent leaders*



Executive Coaching... Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leaders

"Executive coaches are not for the meek. They're for people who value unambiguous feedback. All coaches have one thing in common, it's that they are ruthlessly results-oriented."

FAST COMPANY

Driving the trend for executive coaching is the business reality that good people are hard to find and harder to keep. With a constant need to stay competitive, companies are seeing coaching as a way to help valued employees develop swiftly in a rapidly changing business environment.

A growing number of Fortune 500 companies offer executive coaching to their top people. Whether hiring external coaches or training their own leaders in coaching skills, companies are finding that coaching is essential for creating change and evolving people towards their highest productivity and potential.



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The Executive Summit of the International Coach Federation defines executive coaching as a facilitative one-to-one mutually designed relationship between a professional coach and a key contributor who has a powerful position in the organization. The focus of the coaching is usually upon organizational performance or development, but may have a personal component as well.

Why Executive Coaching?

Executive coaching can be very useful in helping executives carry what they learn in leadership development programs back to the workplace and applying those lessons into practice. One study examined the effects of executive coaching in a public sector municipal agency. Thirty-one managers underwent a conventional managerial training program, which was followed by 8 weeks of one-on-one coaching. Training increased productivity by 22.4%. The coaching, which included goal setting, collaborative problem solving, practice, feedback, supervisory involvement, evaluation of end results, and a public presentation, increased productivity by 88%, a significantly greater gain compared to training alone (Olivero, Bane, & Kopeirnan 1997). If the observations from this study bear out, it means that executive coaching coupled with management and leadership training can boost productivity and help build leadership competencies.

The objectivity that an executive coach brings to a developmental opportunity is helpful to managers seeking to make difficult changes in attitudes, work habits, perspectives and interpersonal relationships.

There seems to be little question that coaching is a valid method of producing desired change with leaders. Companies that have employed coaches will agree that, overall, there are performance improvements, as well as improved well-being among participants.

About 6 out of 10 organizations currently offer coaching or other developmental counseling to their managers and executives according to a survey by Manchester, Inc., a Jacksonville, Florida, career management consulting firm. Another 20% of companies said they plan to offer such coaching within the next year.

One study shows that the top reasons for offering coaching include:

1. Sharpening the leadership skills of high-potential individuals (86%)
2. Correcting management behavior problems such as poor communication skills, failure to develop subordinates, or indecisiveness (72%)
3. Ensuring the success or decreasing the failure rate, of newly promoted managers (64%)
4. Correcting employee relations problems such as poor interpersonal skills, disorganization, demeaning or arrogant behavior (59%)
5. Providing the required management and leadership skills to technically oriented employees (58%).

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The Masterful Coaching Experience

The work of truly effective coaching within organizations involves much more than goal-setting. It involves unleashing the human spirit and expanding people's capacity to achieve stretch goals and bring about real change. This does not start with techniques like setting goals, motivating people and giving feedback. It starts with considering and altering the underlying context in which these occur.

The underlying context is all of the conclusions, beliefs and assumptions people in the organization have reached in order to succeed. This context is shaped by the shared interpretations people make about their business environment. And it also includes the management culture that is inherited or self-imposed. This basic cultural context must be considered in creating a framework for effective coaching.

In today's rapidly changing business environment, winning organizations need a new kind of management culture, one that is based on creating new knowledge. This requires constant learning. A crucial catalyst in this new management culture is the coach. His or her job is to provide direction while leaving plenty of room for people to pursue their passions, personal interests and projects.

Xerox's Paul Allaire says, "The key to the new productivity is people – helping them do what they can do, what they want to do, what they inherently know is the right thing to do."

In its simplest terms, masterful coaching involves expanding people's capacity to take effective action. It involves challenging underlying beliefs and assumptions that are responsible for one's actions and behaviors. At its deepest level, masterful coaching examines not only what one does, and why one does what one does, but also *who* one is.

Using Assessments with Coaching

Many coaches begin the coaching process with assessments. Some coaching involves extensive feedback from 360 degree surveys in which the person being coached receives input from peers, subordinates and superiors.

Initially there may be extensive work examining and formulating one's personal values, interests and creating a personal mission statement. This is similar to a business strategy and mission statement for the organization. There may be coaching around aligning the personal purpose and objectives with those of the organization.

The astute coach will help the person examine gaps or openings between what they believe they do and what they actually do. This is fertile ground for personal growth and development, but is also the area where people can become defensive and resistant. It takes a talented coach to help someone out of these stuck areas, or blind spots – where they do not see with clarity. This is where the effective coach uses finely-tuned listening and observing skills.

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Goals and Outcomes

What are the goals and outcomes of effective executive coaching? Traditionally, the goals have been fairly specific and have focused on preventing executive derailment. The coaching process may address a specific behavior that is causing managerial conflict, improve specific managerial competencies, solve specific problems, or help executives address behaviors or issues that are impeding job effectiveness.

Increasingly, coaching seeks to enhance the performance of high-potential executives. The goals of executive coaching are shifting and broadening as more and more executives seek out coaching for a variety of different reasons.

Here are some other important results cited in research on the outcomes of executive coaching:

1. Better management by enhancing an executive's ability to navigate sensitive political issues
2. Strengthening strategic decision-making
3. Opening a window onto organizational and self explorations

Research by the Center for Creative Leadership has found that the primary causes of derailment in executives involve deficits in emotional competence. These are listed as:

1. Difficulty handling change
2. Not being able to work well in a team
3. Poor interpersonal relations

A study of 130 executives found that how well people handled their own emotions determined how much people around them preferred to deal with them.

It is becoming obvious that coaching is not only about behavioral changes leading to improved performance on the job. The masterful coaching experience goes deeper than behavior changes into real and lasting changes.

Strategic Executive Coaching Program

Clients perform under pressure as team members, team leaders and as individual contributors. The client works directly on his or unique challenges, which are aligned with business objectives.

- What are the organization's key business challenges?
- What business goals need to be achieved?
- What are the business enterprise core values?
- What culture-specific leadership competencies define success
- Does the organization have a proven system to select, develop, and retain top talent?

The goals are Issue identification, clarification and resolution. The executive coach observes the daily interactive process of the participant, and provides direct face-to face consultation. The executive coach

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brings fresh perspectives to problems, and helps remove hidden obstacles to performance. For example, the executive coach helps the participant look at the individual personalities and styles involved in work team dynamics to devise strategies for success. Executive coaching works on levels deeper than simple how-to techniques. The discovery and implementation of core values is one kind of organizational transformation that can subtly shift workforce attitudes from the top down. This can lead to an atmosphere of corporate enthusiasm and optimism that is ultimately reflected on the bottom line.

As today's leaders find themselves increasingly challenged, they realize that they must find ways to transcend traditional limits. The executive coach incorporates relevant examples from research, different cultures, successful sports franchises, and business best practices. These examples help to broaden the client's horizons and create a learning context that fosters creativity and innovation.

With a coach as a committed and personal partner, participants utilize improved perspective to choose where to focus attention and resources. They overcome obstacles that previously limited or frustrated them. They develop their ability to perform consistently at optimal levels focusing on improved results.

Executive coaching helps participants transform stress into optimal performance, and use the kinetic energies inherent in change as a source of strength. Continuous learning, change resiliency and enhanced performance is the response to challenge the executive coach promotes.

The Executive Coach:

- Observes client behavior in the workplace, and helps clients learn to self-observe.
- Creates a partnership with clients engaging in a dialogue of mutual influence.
- Gives respectful, candid feedback to both client and company.
- Operates with the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Executive Coaching Process

Executive coaching is designed for an individual's unique needs and circumstances. The process, however, usually has five major steps.

1: Contracting

Initially, a contracting meeting for the purpose of clarifying expectations takes place. Typically, the meeting may include a human resources manager, the executive coach, and the executive coaching client. The objectives of the contracting meeting include:

- Identification of desired competencies
- Agreement regarding confidentiality boundaries
- Identification of measurable outcomes
- Confirmation of good chemistry

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- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Agreement regarding milestones and timelines
- Conceptual agreement regarding fees

A mutual understanding of the coaching process, expected results, specific issues and time frame of the coaching is developed. The Executive Coaching process typically spans a minimum of six months.

2: Comprehensive Assessment

A structured interview, data collection and relevant assessment instruments to clarify emotional intelligence competencies, leadership skills, values, interests, work styles and other key factors are utilized. Executive management coach and client engage in an in-depth dialogue of relevant issues focused on performance improvement. A 360 feedback performance appraisal informs the process.

3: Feedback and Action Planning

The first order of business is a feedback dialogue between coach and client. The focus is on relevant data from instrument assessments and a 360 feedback performance appraisal. Executive management coach and client collaboratively create a Leadership Development Action Plan that includes strengths, developmental targets and effective strategies for change. The focus is on self-insight, motivation, problem solving, skill acquisition, and leadership development. Interventions are aligned with client's vision and the key objectives of the business. The Leadership Development Action Plan focuses on behaviors that contribute to specific business results. Weekly coaching meetings are one to three hours.

4: Action Learning

The coach guides and reinforces the development of leadership competencies outlined in the Leadership Development Action Plan. Techniques include action learning, role play, and shadowing.

5: Follow-up and Sustaining Success

Approximately six months after the initial feedback session, an abridged version of the 360 feedback performance appraisal is conducted. The results of the assessment assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the coaching process. Further development of the executive is determined and aligned with business goals.

Working Resources is a Talent Management and Leadership Consulting, Training and Executive Coaching Firm Helping Companies Assess, Select, Coach, and Retain Emotionally Intelligent People; Emotional Intelligence-Based Interviewing and Selection; Multi-Rater 360-Degree Feedback; Competency Modeling; Succession Management; Career Coaching; Change Management; Corporate Culture Surveys; and Executive Coaching.

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