

Coaching at the Heart of Strategy



by Dr. Laurence S. Lyons



Coaching for Leadership: How the World's Greatest Coaches Help Leaders Learn

Marshall Goldsmith, Laurence Lyons, Alyssa Freas, editors.

Published by:
Jossey-Bass
350 Sansome Street
San Francisco, CA 94104
Phone: 415.433.1740
Fax: 415.433.0499
www.josseybass.com
with contributions from:

Nancy Adler, John Alexander, David Allen, Judith Bardwick, Richard Beckhard, James Belasco, Chip Bell, Roger Chevalier, Thomas Crane, Bert Decker, Alan Fine, Joe Folkman, Alyssa Freas, Robert Fulmer, Marshall Goldsmith, Don Grayson, Victoria Guthrie, Bill Hawkins, Tom Heinselman, Paul Hersey, Maya Hu-Chan, Julie Johnson, Beverly Kaye, James Kouzes, Kerry Larson, Richard Leider, Bruce Lloyd, Laurence Lyons, Carlos Marin, Howard Morgan, David Noer, Tom Pettay, Elizabeth Pinchot, Gifford Pinchot, Barry Posner, Alastair Robertson, Edgar Schein, Deepak (Dick) Sethi, Jeremy Solomons, Iain Somerville, Liz Thach, Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., David Ulrich, Cathy Walt, Robert Witherspoon

This chapter:
2000 © Dr. Laurence S. Lyons
+44 (0)870 787 2209
www.lsl Lyons.com
lsl Lyons@lsl Lyons.com

Observing the Coaching Scene

Imagine them, perched at the corner of a highly polished mahogany table in some elegant boardroom. They take turns at drawing on a whiteboard, one passionately elaborating on a point, the other deep in thought. A fresh pattern of thought sparks insight: highly animated, they evaluate every possible angle, moving toward a considered plan of action.

Now picture them meeting in a hotel lounge. Here they speak in more hushed tones, punctuated with sips of expensive coffee which has, in fact, generously paid for their admission. Their conversation is accompanied with gesticulation. At times they argue aloud. Equally, there are protracted periods of contemplative silence. They appear to be business colleagues, come together to clinch a deal. The observer may suppose them to be friends – or perhaps adversaries – working through some evidently complex problem. And in some ways, they are.

We will see their meetings reconvened regularly, the vital encounters often arranged at point-blank notice. Emergencies demand urgent, intense contact.

If recently successful, their conversation accompanies dinner in a prestigious restaurant. In more pressing moments, they will make whatever arrangements are expedient – a hurried trip to an airport lounge may fit the bill. Sometimes they will have no choice other than to talk on the telephone. For them, the venue is hardly relevant. The value is in the quality of the dialogue and in its consequences, not in its location. This is therefore a meeting of the utmost importance. The outside world cannot interrupt them, even if it were to dare to try.



JOSSEY-BASS
A Wiley Company



“It’s the single best collection of writings and writers on executive coaching.”

*- Warren Bennis
on
Coaching for
Leadership*

Strategy

To the casual observer, the practice of executive coaching may appear to involve little more than holding an animated conversation. But behind the immediate "here-and-now" setting in which such an exchange takes place, many worlds are to be found. One describes the executive's career that stretches beyond today, well into the past and future. Any modern career is set within a world of work in which the ground rules are in a state of flux. Central to this, we find the immediate present, the world of today, populated by colleagues in various teams, managers, direct reports, associates, suppliers, and customers. The specific configuration of relationships can include government, trade unions, banks, shareholders, stock markets, and so forth. Permeating this is the competitive or purposeful world of the organization in which the executive works. And then again, there is a world beyond the boundary – one all too often neglected in management books – desperately needing to be acknowledged, though

not explored, during the coaching process. This is the non-business, non-work, social, personal, family world. We must accept that within work there is life beyond work.

In order to be fully effective, a coaching dialogue must be able to integrate these worlds. Good coaching has the capacity to help an executive or team develop competencies and business effectiveness within any or all of the domains.

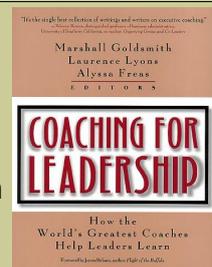
To complicate this picture, membership in the work teams to which the executive belongs (for example, project team, task force, or committee) is often fluid: people come and go. Team, personal, and organizational objectives also change over time. In addition, the organization itself is often in a state of reformulating its own identity, mission, and structure.

Yet, this apparently simple coaching dialogue does take

place. Our research shows that it is consistently successful when performed well. Amazingly, a seemingly simple "coaching conversation" accommodates turbulence and uncertainty, yet repeatedly succeeds in producing outstanding results. For the practitioner who has a limited perception of coaching as simply a collegial conversation, coaching will undoubtedly fail to deliver durable success. But coaching will be successful both in a strategic sense and over time when acted out as a structured dialogue of emerging purpose. Practitioners and their clients have a mutual interest in knowing how this can be brought about.

PUT COACHING INTO PRACTICE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Executive coaching is dramatically increasing in popularity. Leaders around the world are both using coaches and becoming coaches. But, the understanding of what executive coaching is and how it can increase leaders' effectiveness has not grown as fast as the application of this process. *Coaching for Leadership: How the World's Greatest Coaches Help Leaders Learn* brings together the best executive coaches to give the reader an understanding of how coaching works, why it works, and how leaders can make the best use of the coaching process.





A Structured Dialogue of Emerging Purpose

Good coaching is difficult to do. Perhaps the greatest challenge is to engage the executive in a dialogue of emerging purpose. The disarmingly simple question, "What should we talk about?" can be hard to answer well. Thus, the coach often works with the executive as a kind of scout, together selecting an appropriate path. Coaching is potentially both high-impact and high-risk. Dire consequences can result from setting off in the wrong direction – disappointing to both the executive and the business. In contrast, identifying the right path will reap high reward.

Dialogue is at the heart of coaching. In an interview, we find two people. One is typically a senior executive of a large corporation, responsible for a significant part of the business, the other an executive coach – neither an employee of nor a technical consultant to that corporation. The executive has million-dollar spending authority. The coach has no corporate authority whatever. But through dialogue alone, the external coach exercises considerable influence. With neither formal authority nor direct accountability, the coach's greatest ambition is to profoundly affect the way that the executive thinks and behaves.

Rapport is vital to make sure that the dialogue gets off the ground. The "chemistry" of the pair must quickly establish trust and credibility; the executive must have confidence that the coach is not simply wasting time. Good listening skills on the part of the coach, together with the ability to deliver honest feedback, are crucial to

keeping the dialogue grounded in reality – not on fabricated supposition or unsupported beliefs. Between them, coach and executive need to agree on how to separate transient, situational factors from those that are innate and require attention. This sifting can often require delicate judgment when the setting is a turbulent corporate environment. Every effort made in teasing out fact from raw data is well rewarded: carefully validated data is a key determinant of the quality of the outcome of the coaching venture.

The directional or strategic power of any coaching dialogue lies primarily in its ability to question. Questions may be asked to surface submerged issues or may be asked to help the executive to reconsider some position or proposed course of action. The executive's attitudes or opinions may become either reinforced or challenged: the person's current path will be either confirmed or probed. Even when the dialogue confirms the validity of a person's existing game plan, it adds value – boosting the executive's confidence while keeping business risks in check.

Coaching re-engages with reality when good questioning is followed by inspired analysis, detailed action planning, and follow-through back in the work environment. Working together with the executive, the coach crystallizes their conversation in an action plan. The end point of a coaching interview invariably involves the executive planning to try out some new behavior. Most importantly, the full value of any coaching activity can only

be realized when a new behavior is actually performed in the real world. At this stage – after the coaching interview has ended – the coach encourages the executive to follow up and execute the plan. In a sense, the coach now acts as both a memory and a conscience. Thus, coaching is best seen as a complete and ongoing process, not just a single interview event.

A good coach need not be an expert in the executive's job type or industry. A good coach does not even have to possess as wide a range of social skills as the executive. With a sound appreciation of business and interpersonal dynamics, a good coach is simply a process person who can establish rapport; is informed about the executive's immediate environment; is honest and courageous in providing feedback; is a good listener; asks good questions; is visionary and analytical; and is a good planner who seeks follow-up and closure.

The sheer power unleashed in the coaching process must surely obligate the executive and coach to consider several serious questions, such as: What constitutes success in this dialogue? Who, specifically, is my client? How should confidential issues be treated? Which topics fall outside the purview of coaching, and how do those affecting work performance get recognized? In the face of these ethical conundrums, the coach must strive to align dialogue in a direction punctuated by validated objectives. The coach must be brave enough to urge the executive to move forward – often by confronting some

taboo topic, hitherto deliberately ignored. The dialogue will always help the executive pursue selected objectives – yet not be overly directed by the coach. After all, coaching is concerned with facilitation, not giving advice. Although the necessity remains for the executive to persevere along the most successful route that can currently be identified, there is no promise that the path will be simple to find or easy to travel.

This brings us to two crucial insights into good coaching. First, it is necessary to look behind a dialogue to realize that it will not simply "happen" without background. The most robust coaching relies on broadly informed dialogue. Quite a lot of work may have to be undertaken in the collection, validation, and analysis of information before real coach-

ing can begin. The kind of information that is assimilated might include current facts about the markets, technology, or political environment in which the executive is working. Impressions held by colleagues, associates, and direct reports might provide vital indications about the executive's personal interaction. Sometimes the only alternative is to begin with an executive's own anecdotal information, but coaching in a vacuum is a dangerous game.

The second insight to be gained takes us beyond executive coaching. By incorporating the ethos of the organization within the coaching dialogue, it becomes possible to relate an individual's behavior to purposeful organizational change. When the whole organization is engaged, coaching becomes strategic. Moreover, within a

modern learning organization, team coaching and the development of strategic thinking may become one and the same thing.

For the coach, strategy need not reside in quarterly profit targets alone. Those committed to strategic coaching will expand the meaning of strategy to at once embrace individual, team, and corporate actors. Strategic executive coaching is an inclusive, practical approach, incorporating the idea of a dashboard or balanced scorecard, and it is well-adapted to a complex world in which even the ground rules are in a state of change.



Transforming People

For the sponsor, a coaching initiative might be viewed as a self-contained project, rather than as part of an integrated corporate strategy. However, whenever coaching succeeds in aligning the needs of the business with the developmental needs of its people, it cannot help but be strategic in nature.

Many organizations face a situation in which an entire block of talent shifts when issues of succession and development emerge. Typically, this occurs during mergers, downsizing, or block retirement. The creation of a career path to retain top talent and a

drive to expand into global markets are also examples of situations demanding a strategic coaching response. Whatever the cause, a gap opens up that has to be filled for the organization to remain strategically healthy. So, at one leading automobile manufacturer, fast-track engineers are today being coached to become tomorrow's senior leaders. Elsewhere, a Fortune 500 IT innovator has implemented coaching within a program that has integrated five separate operating countries into a cohesive and highly successful business region.

For the person being coached, the experience is invariably strategic. Coaching offers the executive a golden opportunity to step back and reflect on personal development. By expressly allocating precious work time, the coaching interview momentarily suspends the immediate pressures of the day and encourages the individual to think about "just me." From this viewpoint, the coaching intervention is able to break the pedestrian logic of mere reaction and repetition. For once, the executive has time to look dispassionately and proactively at more broad-brush issues in a far wider context. The individual

may well start to consider the interface between work and life. Work is within life; work is a part of life. In order that the executive may learn and develop at work, that individual must first understand where they are in their career and in their life. Often, reflection on one's purpose will validate or challenge one's current position. Such consideration may encourage an individual to move forward or to move on to something new. To the extent that coaching sensitizes people to reflect and act in a more purposeful way, it is again strategic in nature, helping to align the organization with the people who are in it.

In times of major organizational change, coaching often provides the necessary impetus for building and motivating teams. Team coaching helps establish and then build a collection of individuals into a fully functioning business network. The resulting team unites people across functions and divisions, often including members outside the formal organization. Time and again, we have seen a team-coaching process motivate people to coalesce. Provided that the group contains that critical mass of people needed for the business to move forward, a nascent transition team starts to emerge. Many team members will have recently taken part in individual coaching sessions, and so will be ready to think strategically at the moment the team starts to form. When a foundation of trust has been established, the conditions for cohesion are in place and the team spontaneously ignites in a dialogue of business improvement. Such teams are enthusiastic; such teams have solutions that will work; such teams are unstop-

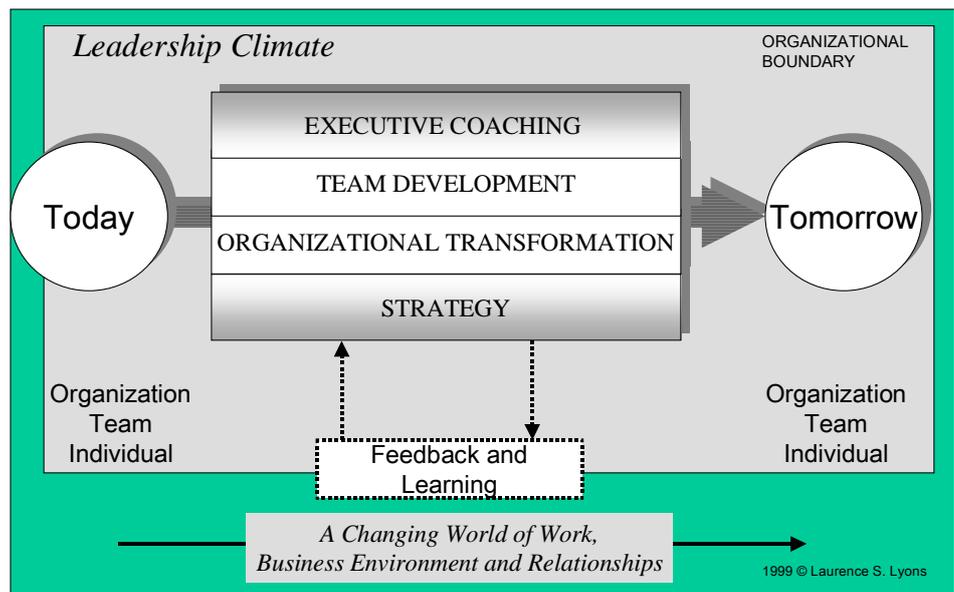
pable. A well-designed team-coaching process brings together the right people and raises the broadest challenge, in an environment in which failure is not an option.

Coaching also plays a special role at the most senior level in an organization (that is, with the board of directors or senior management team). At this level, issues are often motivational rather than technical. Technically, the coach will play a unique role as interpreter by insisting that jargon gets transformed into business concepts that are commonly understood. Motivationally, members may differ significantly in their beliefs about the purpose of the business and may hold conflicting expectations about what success means and how to measure it. Then again, business owners may hold wildly different views about asset valuation and a preferred exit or merger strategy. Located at an intermediate level in large companies, divisional and regional boards often grapple with a particularly perplexing question: How can we find ways to add value from our unique vantage point in the overall structure? In all these cases, coaching offers yet another framework for dialogue. Coaching provides a climate within which vital, though seemingly intransigent, issues may be brought to the surface, confronted, and then dealt with. Coaching offers the senior team a practical tool to break any logjams that are in the way of progress.

In all of these cases – for individuals, teams, and boards – coaching offers a structured dialogue of emerging purpose, directed toward success. As Figure 1 shows, with the right

conditions in place coaching is organizational transformation; coaching is team development; coaching is strategy in motion.





Strategic Coaching gets people, teams and organizations from where they are today to where they want to be tomorrow. The leader is committed to ensuring the existence and maintenance of the coaching process and its alignment with business results.

Figure 1. The Strategic Coaching Model



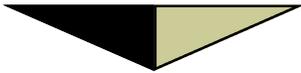
Leadership

In an era in which leadership is replacing management and learning is replacing instruction, coaching is surfacing as the accessible face of strategy. Business strategy no longer commands an exclusive domain secreted within the impersonal body of an abstract "organization." Today, as demands on everyone's time intensify, strategy is manifest in the flesh and blood of each executive. Coaching is not simply a passing fad: it offers a pragmatic supporting context in which modern strategy flourishes. In today's turbulent world, strategy has developed into something that emerges,

always tracking a moving target. And the preferred vehicle - responsive enough to reduce the risk in successfully traveling toward that ever-changing destination - is to be found in the dialogue of coaching.

Any dialogue that brings an executive closer to goal achievement in the real world truly succeeds at a strategic level. Achievement-oriented dialogue reaches outside the immediate interview to make real things happen. Coaching has the power to let strategy come alive and therefore to work in practice. Executive

coaching has become current simply because it has become relevant. Coaching facilitates success and is congruent with the way we want to work and the way we have to work. It is relevant to the modern world of business because it is holistic and adaptive. Coaching is also a method that respects people as individuals, not merely as cogs in the business machine. Rooted in conversation, coaching is evolving as a natural form of leadership.



A Radically Different World of Work

As knowledge work relentlessly replaces manual work, we are witness to the dawn of perhaps the most meritocratic workplace environment in history. Management is no longer perceived in terms of maintaining the business machine, but is seen as the motivator and leader of men and women. Our understanding of the essence of management is reeling from radical change.

The management metaphor has, until now, been extremely useful in helping executives become more systematic and better organized in order to plan, motivate, and control. But, the word "management" has come to represent an attitudinal straightjacket that can stifle, and often excuse the need for, that kind of truly innovative thinking that has become a prerequisite for success. As markets become more efficient and intensively competitive, ideas of coercion and control – together with a reliance on rigid rules – hinder, rather than help, businesses succeed.

Noticeably, the adjectives used to describe management work have already started to change. Terms once borrowed from engineering and finance are being replaced with descriptions from the social and humanist vocabulary. Thus the "efficient company" has become a "learning organization." Language is not the only thing changing. The perspective is shifting steadily and surely from labor to knowledge; from management to leadership; from product to consumers and service; from routine operation to inspired creativity; and from task repetition to marketing innovation. As technology and automation shift

the boredom of work from people to machines, the human world of work that remains challenges our intellect, not our muscle.

Fast-paced competition means that businesses can no longer afford to reward the routine repetition embedded in the all-too-rigid "management" model. A new culture, one that prizes sensible action and appropriate adaptability, is challenging as well as complementing written strategic plans. These vast tomes were invariably out of date on the day they were published, and contained too many untested or generalized assumptions to be workable in practice. Long delays in the planning cycle allowed the organization to meander aimlessly while waiting for the control loop to close. It is not easy to enter into dialog with a written plan. These days, competitive advantage is not to be found in written plans alone. Corporate success is now intimately related to the way in which individual executives think, act, and interact on a daily basis. To win and receive reward, executives must now do the right thing, not simply the written thing. It is not enough to take problems to others and await a response. The competition simply will not stand back and wait. Today's successful executives do not "need the meetings," instead they "meet the needs."

The change in the nature of work is not only radical, it is also deeply pervasive as leaders continue to shift operations into the global arena. Worldwide, a realization that a key source of competitive advantage is to be found rooted in the social fabric of the company is opening up new vistas

of opportunity. Whereas the technical business process was only recently seen as the dominant lever of change, we have come to recognize the human "etiquette" of the organization as a potent value driver. If we get the formula right, the currently emerging leadership culture offers leaders a genuine opportunity to make the world a better place.

Coaching offers us a unique response to help address that challenge at every level.



The Learning Executive

A complete overhaul is taking place in the way we see the relationship between education and work. In the traditional model, predicated on executing a single professional function over an entire lifetime, learning was confined to a single burst of training followed by years of practice. This sequence has now become less relevant for many. Today, "Education for Life" is rapidly replacing "A Job for Life" as the dominant career model. No longer does a specific job last for a lifetime; several jobs fragment a career, while learning has become continuous, rather than a one-time affair.

Executive skills must match the situation. Modern business is too dynamic to allow executives to succeed with the old rigid and simplistic assumptions. On a personal level, all executives face a recurring challenge in pragmatically responding to revolutionary trends and pressures in the world of work. A fresh dexterity is now demanded. Simply "painting-by-the numbers" no longer works in a world that demands so much more than a single prescribed answer. So today's successful executives

must embrace self-development and learning. At a time when organizations can no longer guarantee work for life, individuals have taken on "Learning for Life" as the paradigm model.

Fortunately, such an approach also helps to meet pressing organizational needs. Everywhere we find cycles becoming shorter, with businesses in a never-ending race to find a quicker way to reach a globally expanding market. The trend is also for work to make increasing demands on employees' time. In such a frenetic climate, executives cannot undertake learning as a separate activity. To keep technical knowledge up-to-date, an executive may have no alternative but to spend time off-site, but leadership skills are best learned in the workplace and on the job. Learning must be applied immediately, responding to issues of the moment. This "just-in-time" teaching of skills is another form of executive coaching.

Executives need knowledge and skills to cope with situations as they come up. Often

the circumstances are ambiguous. An executive may need to deal with a troublesome colleague; start a new assignment; present a difficult business argument; become more "visible"; or communicate more effectively with direct reports. The coach fits into the new learning model perfectly by allowing the executive to learn, modify, and apply a suitable approach in a particular business situation. Coaching allows executives to learn while at work, while keeping up the pace.



Striving for Success

Executives are invariably concerned with issues of corporate, team, and individual success. Because they face new rules of competition and new definitions of success, modern executives must find ways to align and balance these components. They must choose activities that truly add value over efforts that merely appear effective. This may seem little more than common sense, yet it reflects a genuine attitudinal

shift in the workplace. It is another important area in which a coach can challenge and validate the client's perspective. This can also engender a sense of empowerment in that the executive wants to "do the right thing."

Within the broad category of "knowledge work," mundane and passive stewardship continues to lose ground to crea-

tivity and innovation. In addition, the basis of reward is shifting from an emphasis on effort to a focus on results. Arriving at the office well before the official start time and regularly working late into the night and on weekends are no longer automatically seen as characteristics of an effective executive.

Technology has allowed work-

ing styles to be more open and flexible, while at the same time allowing work and life to impinge on each other, making both more stressful. Coaches can help executives to negotiate this delicate interface without being intrusive. Once again, the coach needs an ethical position and rules of engagement or terms of reference within which to operate. As we embrace information technology, giving ourselves more freedom in choice of lifestyle, we usually prefer – and even insist – that the value of our work contribution be measured in terms of outcomes or results. For knowledge workers in particular, the time of day or the geographic location of their efforts has become irrelevant. Outcome, not input, now attracts reward.

In yesterday's business world, the "numbers" and the routine mechanics of operations lulled organizations and their executives into believing that they were fulfilling a purpose simply by repeating traditional formulas. Certainly, repetition worked well in the factory model, but repetition is no longer a guarantee for success in a service and knowledge economy. A new style of leadership is called for. This shift

from management to leadership is primarily one of outlook and attitude. Leadership moves us from rigidity to flexibility; leadership allows us to adapt in a more uncertain environment; leadership urges people to take responsibility, to take the initiative, to do the right thing, and thereby to excel.

It is not surprising to find that dynamic leadership is overthrowing the familiar and traditional "social norms" established in the era of stable hierarchical management. The successful executive today must follow this trend in order to achieve desired outcomes in a business world that is becoming more volatile.

Leadership has become crucial in creating value and achieving competitive advantage in the modern work organization. Leadership is not exclusive to a few "top executives"; it is class-free and pervasive. A leader treats people as responsible adults and encourages all to act in the interest of mutual success. A leader promotes a sense of individual worth and community and diligently directs activity toward the business ambi-

tions of the organization. The "culture" and leadership style of an organization are not a consequence of doing work in a certain way. Instead, they are a healthy context within which excellent work is done. Managers motivate, whereas leaders inspire. Inspired companies are winners. Corporations need far fewer managers and far more leaders, and coaching offers a direct and practical way to instill this new culture into corporate life.

Coaching provides a route to leadership. Coaching can unlock the latent leadership potential in managers and reinforce leadership where it already exists. A culture of coaching can nurture leadership. And when coaching aligns the development of the individual, the team, and the organization toward a mutual definition of success, then coaching becomes leadership. Leadership through coaching offers a strategic and practical direction for all.



Coaching in Practice

It can be as lonely at the periphery of a modern networked organization as it is at the top of a traditional pyramid. Problems can come from talking too freely inside an organization, however flat or virtual it may be. Work colleagues become tomorrow's interested parties. Truly innovative concepts can sound like crazy ideas in the early stages, and few executives want to take the risk of appearing foolish.

Even private discussions can contain political topics that when touched on, even tentatively, can establish a position from which it is difficult to reverse. Leaders need a safe and supportive theater or laboratory in which to rehearse and refine their ideas. Coaching meets this need.

Coaches present executives

with an opportunity to engage in a dialogue of development. Where there is no coach, the chance for this reflective dialogue may be missed. When executives have no one to talk to, there is no tested or evolved dialogue, there is no attitude formation, and so an important part of executive thinking – thinking through – is missing. In all these ways, coaching is supportive of ex-

ecutive and organizational learning. Coaching provides a platform for practical action directed toward intelligent and strategic intent.

Every organization is different; each has its unique definition of success. In whatever way the dimensions of success are articulated by each board, team, or individual executive,

coaches are charged with finding a developmental path to progress. In striving for success, leaders must find ways to advance the business, while respecting core organizational values and fundamental beliefs. These must be understood by coaches at a visceral level. To deliver quality, a coach needs to see far beyond the superficial level, at which all corporate value statements

look similar, and discover in detail the actual values in play. And, then again, as the world progresses to continuously repaint an ever-emerging strategic organizational context, these values are destined to develop and change over time.



External and Internal Agents

Most leaders acknowledge that in order to remain healthy an organization must reach out to its stakeholders and into the environment. Indeed, a modern organization will actively extend its social fabric through dialogue with coaches, consultants, and others. Yet, it is a source of astonishment to many that an organization's maintenance functions require any interaction from outside.

The traditional or legal definition of a corporation can fool us into believing that it will remain forever self-sufficient. The need for external nurturing agents may seem to fly in the face of this belief. However, the "outside" or external aspect of the organization has been long recognized in "systems theory" as extremely important. In today's organizations, interaction with the environment is being rediscovered as a vital activity required to reduce business risk. Here again, the coaching opportunity supports another crucial facet of leadership – the need to be in touch with the reality beyond the formal boundary of the organization.

Yet, an organization that regards executive coaching as a service provided entirely by external suppliers can never attain a true climate of leadership. Modern corporations

must be capable of maintaining cohesion in the newly evolving, flatter, and networked workplaces. Today's leaders do not seek to set themselves apart, but instead are determined to replicate their best leadership behaviors in those around them. They are also open to absorbing, as well as propagating, such exemplary behaviors. Thus, internal coaching – or internalized coaching – is vital to working in the modern, cross-functional network in which all participants find it natural to coach.

However flat an organization may be, executives will always need to interact with their direct reports. Here again, coaching provides the executive with a foundation for dialogue that is well-suited to leading "free agents," who are less likely to respect positional power as a legitimate motivator.

The term "mentoring" is widely used to describe an activity closely related to coaching. A mentor is likely to have had a successful personal track record in a role similar to that of the client. Thus, the nature of this relationship may tend to contain relatively more content than process. Reputation and trust towards the mentor are

powerful determinants in making the chemistry work. A senior mentor can be a great asset who is likely to be able to tap into to an otherwise inaccessible range of useful business contacts.

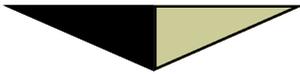
When working in the same organization, a mentor requires no learning curve to absorb culture. Steps should be taken – and periodic checks should be made – to ensure the internal mentor does not inadvertently become a compromised interested party in the day-to-day operations of the person being mentored. There is only one other essential qualification: a good mentor simply needs to be a good coach.

The coaching approach is also spilling into all kinds of work relationships. For example, some organizations have instituted an informal "buddy" system, which can be little more than sharing contact information at training events. Some larger divisions of Fortune 500 companies are now putting coaches on the payroll as full-time employees. It is not uncommon for senior executives to take their coaches with them when switching companies. This becomes part of the hiring negotiation process,

along with share options and other benefits. The sheer pervasiveness of the coaching relationship in organizations

today – whether inside, outside, or between organizations – confirms that coaching is seen as an effective style of

working with the blurring boundaries in and around organizations.



Future Directions

In its modern form, coaching is a young and evolving field whose definition has yet to be determined and within which good practice is still being understood and developed. Yet, coaching has been able to draw from many established fields, including consultancy and counselling. In addition to being integrative in the theoretical sense, coaches have to be highly accommodating and adaptive in practice.

One important challenge for the coaching profession in the future will be the ability of its practitioners to maintain the links between the personal development of individual cli-

ents and the attainment of solid business results for their organizations. Only when this can be achieved consistently can a coaching program hope to justify the investment that it demands. The formula for success will display a number of characteristics. Coaches must be able to address issues that are individual, team, and organization-wide; they must act in a way congruent with the organization's style of leadership; they must promote and facilitate positive organizational development; they must be practical; and they must help in the achievement of business results.

In combining these elements, the Strategic Coaching Model (see Figure 1) provides a modern blueprint for business success. Couched in a culture of modern leadership and based on the powerful dynamics of human interaction, the model simply asserts that coaching is at its best when located at the heart of strategy.



About the Contributor

Laurence "Larry" S. Lyons is the founding director of *The Metacorp Group* and is the European Practice Director of the *Alliance for Strategic Leadership Coaching and Consulting*. He is an accomplished coach, consultant, public speaker, and author, as well as an authority on organizational transformation. His twenty-five years' experience includes senior line and staff management positions in organizations of all sizes.

Larry provides consultancy in business strategy and organizational development to clients in all sectors. Larry's executive coaching and consulting career extends over several years and includes many blue-chip and multinational clients, such as British Air-

ways, Unilever, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, British Broadcasting Corporation, WH Smith, MediaOne, Bank of England, Oracle, Dresser Industries, EDS, and Deutsche Bank. While leading consultant relations at Digital Equipment in the UK., Larry has worked at partner level with all the major consultancies. Many of Larry's personal coaching clients are to be found in Who's Who. He has chaired and presented at conferences on consulting and coaching at the Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry, and the Strategic Planning Society. In the early 1990s, Larry pioneered the "strategic cell development," an approach that rapidly accelerates the development of managers and lead-

ers. Laurence Lyons holds a Ph.D. in organizational analysis and an MSc in management from Brunel University. He is a member of several professional bodies and a member of associate faculty at Henley Management College, Oxfordshire, England, where he is Director of Research of the Future Work Forum and teaches senior management courses. He is also a member of the Peter F. Drucker Thought Leaders' Forum.

Together with Professor David Birchall, Larry is co-author of the highly acclaimed book *Creating Tomorrow's Organization* published by Pearson Professional. He has also been published in the U.K.'s Institute of Directors (IoD) Director Guide Series; the Peter F. Drucker Foundation Leader-to-Leader journal; and the Finan-

cial Times Handbook of Management.

Larry is frequently quoted in the media. He has appeared in such diverse publications as *The Times*, *Computing*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Journal of the Institution of Chartered Surveyors*, and *Practical Training*. He has appeared in *British Airways Business Life* magazine and has been interviewed on BBC National Radio 4.

Dr. Laurence S. Lyons
+44 (0)870 787 2209

