

Improving the



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BOTTOM LINE

Managing Yourself:
Are You Ready for
a Coach?

May 2008

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER courtesy of ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS MANAGEMENT

Managing Yourself: Are You Ready for a Coach?

The world of work is changing, and fast. Having a successful career means continually learning and adapting to rapidly evolving environments.

It's your responsibility to manage and build on your intellectual capital and adapt to new challenges in your industry. To identify the best career move, you need to develop your capacity to self-assess honestly and be willing to learn new skills and concepts.

You can't do it alone. You may think you know what's best for you in your job and career. But coaching yourself is like the blind leading the blind: You can't know what you don't know.

The best workforces consist of men and women who derive deep satisfaction and a sense of challenge, fulfillment and meaning from their work. If you don't enjoy your job, you won't give it your best.

Do You Love Your Work?

People who love their work:

- ▶ Have tremendous energy
- ▶ Go the "extra mile"
- ▶ Embrace new responsibilities and challenges with enthusiasm
- ▶ Are committed to their company goals
- ▶ Take immense pride in their performance
- ▶ Feel a sense of community within their organizations
- ▶ Are promoted more frequently

Coaching occurs all the time within an organization as a management or leadership style. But what we are referring to here is coaching from an executive coach who is professionally trained and

The age of customization has brought us the personal trainer, personal shopper and personal computer. Now, there's a proliferation of personal development services available to help you reap more from your career: the executive coach.



ORGANIZATIONAL
SUCCESS
MANAGEMENT

We make companies better by providing low-risk, high-impact solutions for maximizing profits. Using a unique blend of strategic consulting, organizational coaching, and process improvement, we help businesses align the essential elements of their organization (strategy, people and processes) to optimize efficiency. No matter what industry or size business you have; we can help you define where you want to go, evaluate and improve the processes needed to get you there, and coach your employees to discover and use more of their potential personally and professionally.

For any business strategy to be effective, adoption by key management and personnel is critical. Our proven methodology achieves adoption by helping everyone understand, embrace, and execute the organizational goals and strategies created through our coaching processes. Good coaches don't win games; they train and equip their players to win games. In that same manner, we coach your staff to achieve sustainable results.

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hired externally, and whose sole job is to provide development opportunities.

The trend to engage personal development coaching services has grown steadily for more than a decade. While there is no definitive count of the number of coaches practicing in the United States and abroad, their ranks have swelled.

No universal certification guarantees quality or qualifications. Former outplacement specialists, therapists, psychologists, HR specialists and motivational speakers have transformed themselves into executive coaches. Some have undergone rigorous coach training programs, and some are talented and highly intuitive people without formal instruction.

Coaching can have a dramatic impact on performance, with results besting the lessons learned in training courses and leadership development seminars. Many leading companies have instituted executive coaching programs, including American Express, Corning, Hewlett-Packard, Morgan Stanley and Philip Morris.

While coaches were originally assigned to those experiencing difficulties or in danger of derailment, there is now wider acceptance of hiring coaches for even the most successful managers. Organizations recognize that people can grow and change. Having a coach assigned to you often signals career advancement.

If you are thinking about hiring a coach for your personal development, or asking your organization to provide an executive coach, consider the following.

Who Needs a Coach?

A coach can be most useful at particular career points:

- ▶ 1. You are transitioning into a new career stage such as being promoted to a management or leadership position that requires new skills.
- ▶ 2. You lack fulfillment in your present position and are considering a career change, within the same company or externally.
- ▶ 3. You are experiencing stress and sense you may be on the road to burnout.
- ▶ 4. You want to improve your ability to manage and influence others by understanding how to navigate office politics.
- ▶ 5. Your relationship and networking skills have become more pertinent as you increase career responsibilities and want to learn better “people skills.”

- ▶ 6. You want to improve your emotional intelligence and learn to better manage your inner experiences so you can manage others more effectively.
- ▶ 7. You are dealing with global issues: long-distance responsibilities or actual relocation.
- ▶ 8. You are experiencing diversity challenges that you'd like to handle better.
- ▶ 9. The strengths and talents you brought to your job are not the ones that will guarantee future career success.

Are You Ready for Coaching?

You may think you'd like to have a coach for several reasons. Perhaps your friends and colleagues are experiencing positive coaching results. Coaching is also viewed as a fast-track fad: All up-and-coming leaders seem to have their own executive coaches. How you view coaching—as a sign of prestige versus a strategic need—will influence the results.

Some people are more aware than others of their weaknesses. Overly ambitious and confident people sometimes lack a core sense of true value: They over achieve to prove their self-worth. The best way to fortify genuine self-worth and self-esteem is to work with a trained professional and examine self-beliefs.

Unfortunately, some who desire a coach are unprepared or unwilling to do the work. Coaching requires tremendous courage to face what other people may be saying about you, as well as the ability to treat their perceptions as valuable feedback. A coach can help you overcome inherent defense mechanisms that keep you in denial about your shortcomings. Especially when a 360-degree assessment is used, in which your peers and associates both up and down the organization provide input, you will need to trust the process and your coach to achieve results. In the words of one coachee, “Coaching can hurt ... before things get better, really better.”

How to Pick Your Coach

Once you recognize that you can benefit from having a coach, you must decide whether to hire one yourself or ask one to be assigned to you.

Hiring your own coach creates some challenges: They can be expensive, and you will have to find the best one for your specific needs. Because you likely don't know many executive coaches, you'll also have to do some research.

Be aware that in selecting a coach based on your personal feelings, you may not pick someone who best fits your needs. In other words, you run the risk of choosing someone you like, rather than someone you need. While liking your coach is a good start, having a coach who can challenge and stretch you toward new development is what's most important.

Hire your own coach if you have questions or concerns about remaining with your company or personal development issues that are best left confidential. If you decide to take the plunge, contact your human resources department and ask for referrals. HR specialists may already work with coaches who have proven track records, and these individuals will likely be familiar with your organization.

You may also contact the local chapter of a national professional association, such as the American Society for Training and Development, International Coach Federation, or other coach and mentor groups. Be sure to specify that you want a business or executive coach, rather than a personal or life coach. You want someone with experience in organizations and with executives. Pick a coach who has formal education in psychology or organizational development, as well as experience in real-world business dynamics.

Having a coach assigned to you by your company also poses a few problems. You probably won't get to choose your coach, and you will have to deal with confidentiality issues. Because the organization—not you—is the client, it can set the ground rules. You can—and should—require a confidentiality agreement in such cases.

Confidentiality Is Critical

Ask for an upfront agreement about what your coach will tell your employer. It is appropriate for your coach to share with HR or your supervisor:

- ▶ 1. Information about goals
- ▶ 2. Attendance at coaching sessions
- ▶ 3. Alignment of company goals with developmental issues
- ▶ 4. Achievement of milestones that indicate progress
- ▶ 5. Timeline for the completion of coaching

Navigating confidentiality within an organization is tricky. Trust between the coach

and coachee is one of the most important factors contributing to the success of the relationship.

If you don't feel you can confide in your coach about the real issues that concern you, you would be better off hiring your own coach. The expense is an investment in your personal development that will last for years to come. It can make the difference in having career success on a deeper, more meaningful level. The decision about who will coach you and how your coaching will occur is crucial for getting results.

How Does Coaching Take Place?

Coaching occurs in many different ways, somewhat dependent on the model practiced by the coach. Because coaches have many different backgrounds, there are many coaching styles.

Almost all coaching, however, includes a process of assessment, setting goals for change and improvement, a plan for achieving these goals, accountability and a timeline for working together (anywhere from 3 months to a year or more).

Before retaining a coach, ask about methods used, the steps you will be required to complete, how much time is involved, whether coaching will take place in person or by phone, which coaching model is used, whether outside contact with peers will occur and the limits of confidentiality. Set review periods to evaluate progress and determine if coaching will continue (and for how long).

Assessments May Be Formal or Informal

The most thorough assessment is 360-degree feedback, which provides the coach with input about you from peers, bosses, subordinates and, in some cases, your spouse. This process is used in only about 10 percent of coaching situations, however, as it's expensive and ties up the time of 10–15 other people. It can have a serious impact, but feedback must be skillfully delivered.

Alternatively, a coach may accompany an individual throughout the workday—a process called shadow coaching. Most experienced coaches believe many career pitfalls are predictable enough for the experienced eye to spot without formal assessments.

Coaching can help most common personality types perform more effectively on the job. Some dysfunctions occur at both ends of the spectrum of human personality; people are aggressive, abrasive, domineering or so task-oriented and introverted that they fail to develop good relationships.

OSM Philosophy

True organizational success occurs when: goals are clearly defined, processes are optimized to support the goals, and skilled employees work together as a unified team dedicated to executing the goals.

Key Benefits of Coaching

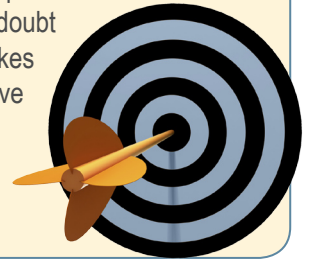
Coaching helps you discover and use more of your inherent potential personally and professionally, and makes you more aware of what is happening around you. Throughout the coaching process, ongoing questions and feedback are designed to raise awareness of your feelings and thoughts. As a result, you become more amenable to soliciting and receiving feedback.

Successful coaching relationships yield other benefits and improvements:

- ▶ An attitude of gratitude
- ▶ Improved emotional intelligence
- ▶ Increased ability to influence
- ▶ Improved relationships at home and at work
- ▶ Greater flexibility in thinking and behaviors
- ▶ Ability to question underlying assumptions
- ▶ Enhanced capacity to learn continuously
- ▶ More receptive to feedback

By virtue of the learning experience gained from coaching, you acquire skills to continue learning in the real world without a coach. This may include better questioning skills, the ability to listen better, and the ability to be silent and nonreactive when appropriate.

Some studies suggest coaching programs have high returns on investments—as much as 500 to 800 percent. While it may be difficult to quantify results when measuring soft skills and emotional intelligence, there's no doubt that investing in personal development benefits the organization financially and psychologically. It makes good business sense to invest in leadership development and growth, and coaching has proved to achieve lasting results.



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