



## Coaching: An OD Companion

By Diane Hetherington



**Coaching is hot!!** In fact, in its annual career guide in October 1996, U.S. News & World Report said coaching is currently the runner-up hottest consulting field, just behind management consulting. The magazines *Entrepreneur*, *Fast Company*, *Life*, *Money*, *Industry Week*, *New Age* and *Fortune* as well as the NY Times and the LA Times, are increasingly covering the phenomenon of business coaching and the value it brings to business owners.

Change is occurring at an unprecedented and rapid pace. New changes are upon us even before we have implemented last week's plan. Acceleration, change, chaos, choices, choices and more choices ... what's a person to do?

In organizations, successful leaders and managers have mastery of the skills that have traditionally been rewarded. Their careers and identities are embedded in this way of operating. After all, these

approaches have been effective in the past, that's how they have come to their current positions. Now, a new model of success is being introduced. **This new way of doing business is often challenging to implement, even for those leaders who are creating the model.** It is far easier to "talk" this approach than to "walk" it. Responses to this challenge may show up in the form of resistance, to paying lip service, or to words and behaviors with no commitment behind them. Even for those individuals with high receptivity and commitment, old habits die hard.

Constant change calls for increasing our capacity to adapt to new structures, to learn new ways of operating, and to develop new skills and competencies. To create and sustain these changes, leaders need support. Many are highly trained, widely read and understand the rationale for change. Intellectual understanding is a beginning. Integration of

attitudes and behaviors requires ongoing attention.

Executives, business owners, leaders, managers, and individuals are seeking clarity, an opportunity to stop, look and listen to what is going on in their lives (professional and personal) and to move toward conscious and fulfilling choices.

Enter the coach.

**Coaching is an on-going alliance designed to unleash the human spirit:** to heighten client awareness, to engage the client in learning, and to expand the capacity to continually create desired results. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge calls this personal mastery. In *Coaching for Performance* by John Whitmore, Timothy Gallwey describes the essence of coaching as "...unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance." The army's catchy phrase is "Be all you can be...!" Coaches are in

the business of bringing out the best in their clients.

### **The Coaching Partnership**

Coaching is very effective at focusing on results and determining strategy to get there ... the attention is on values, vision and strengths. Through coaching, clients have an opportunity (1) to clarify what is important to them, (2) to see current reality more clearly, (3) to examine their behavioral patterns to determine those that are effective and those that are not, (4) to reframe any underlying contexts that limit and define how they think and act (5) to develop new skills and abilities, (6) to make informed choices, (7) to continually take actions aligned with their purpose and values, and (8) to experience success in creating desired results!

### ***Learning individuals become models for creating learning organizations.***

A mutual foundation of trust and commitment is crucial to the coaching relationship. Two-way, open and honest communication is a must.

**The client** directs the agenda, commits to participating in the process, agrees to show up with a learning attitude, makes the appropriate choices and is responsible for outcomes.

**The coach** guarantees confidentiality, provides a supportive presence, observes and listens, provides timely and tangible feedback, supports the client in discovering his/her own thinking and solutions, helps the client maintain authenticity in intention and action, asks questions and offers statements that stimulate thinking, engages the client in learning and creating a successful model of action, provides acknowledgement and affirmation.

### **A Study**

A 1994 study conducted at the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University showed the power of personal coaching versus traditional management training. Three hundred respondents participated in a variety of coaching experiences, ranging from skills-based training to personal development.

Each participant was asked to compare the effectiveness of books, tapes and seminars against the experience of working with a qualified personal coach for a period of 10-12 weeks. Nearly 90% of participants agreed that personal coaching was more effective than traditional training methods with regard to retention, internalization, knowledge, and behavioral change.

The 300 respondents focused on three major elements as being most helpful in affecting personal change in their lives: personal interaction with their coach, personal accountability for their own behavioral change, and personal application.

High performers traditionally know how to use coaches. They regularly take a powerfully clear look at current reality. High performers are accustomed to analyzing their moves, seeking to embellish what worked and to change what did not. They seek feedback and ideas for improving performance. They continually adjust their strategy and actions. They are committed to excellence.

### **Coaching to Sustain Change**

**In organizations** the probability of sustaining long-term culture change is increased when top leadership embodies the new way of doing business. Coaching offers a place for executives and leaders to examine their ways of operating and the impact of their behaviors on members of their organizations. Learning individuals become models for creating learning organizations.

The process of being coached allows a leader/manager to see how letting go, not giving advice and not having the answers can lead to the

development of a collaborative, participatory and empowered team environment. Managers experience, first hand, the significance of owning responsibility for their outcomes and for allowing others that same privilege.

An added benefit to organizations when coaching is part of management development training is that managers learn how to coach others in the process of being coached themselves, providing further integration of management coaching skills.

In recently down-sized organizations, coaching supports remaining, often

### **OD Consultant as Executive Coach**

Many of us have been engaged in this process for some time. Certainly, some of the skills and abilities core to the OD profession lend themselves to effective coaching: a client-centered agenda; creating safe space for the work; the capacity to be fully present; active listening; use of questions to deepen thinking; naming our experience of what is happening; attention to what is being said and what is not being said; determining when and how to intervene; feedback; serving as witness for the client's story.

#### ***About the Author***

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harried, staff in maintaining focus and attending to priorities. In recently re-engineered environments, coaching increases understanding of the human process and furthers integration of human processes with corporate goals. In succession planning processes, coaching enhances awareness and propels the development of personal mastery.

Coaching may be the ideal companion to provide leverage in our work of supporting client systems in the planning, implementing and sustaining of change in organizations.

Coaching enhances the capacity for business intelligence and emotional intelligence.

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