Coaching as a Development Tool
Insights and Perspectives from Practitioners

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Coaching as a Development Tool

Insights and Perspectives from Practitioners
About the Journal

The National HRD Network publishes a semi-academic quarterly journal where in each issue is dedicated to a theme.

**The Journal publishes primarily three categories of articles:**
- Conceptual and research based.
- Contributions from thought leaders including a limited number of reprints with due permission.
- Organisational experiences in HR interventions / mechanisms.

**About this issue:**
The theme of the current Issue is “Coaching as a Development Tool - Insights and Perspectives from Practitioners”.

**Editorial Board Members**

**Dr. Pallab Bandyopadhyay**, Managing Editor, is a Leadership Architect, Career Coach, Change and Transition Specialist with thirty years of successful professional experience in managing entire gamut of Human Resources Management with proven expertise in managing multicultural globally distributed knowledge professionals. He has rich experience in companies like Citrix, Dell Perot, Cambridge Solutions, Sasken and ALIT. He is a doctoral fellow in HRD from XLRI, a product of NTL, USA and provides HR consulting with many large Indian and MNCs and start-ups in the area of Leadership coaching, Organisation development, Long-term capability building, Strategic change and Organisation alignment.

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NHRD firmly believes in and respects IPR and we appeal to the contributors and readers to strictly honour the same.

For any further clarifications, please contact:

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Dear Readers,

Our current issue of NHRDN Journal is dedicated to the theme “Coaching as a Development Tool-Insights and Perspectives from Practitioners”. While on one hand we see coaching as a developmental intervention reaching a stage in India that is not going to fade away in foreseeable future. On the other hand as Frank Bresser puts it very aptly the term “coaching” is seen as abused and watered down by extended use. It is at this juncture we felt it will be a laudable effort to bring to our readers a clear understanding of coaching as a process.

So who is a coach? I would like to begin with my favourite quote on coach by Michael Singletary an American football coach who once said “I feel that a great coach is one that has a vision, sets a plan in place, has the right people in place to execute that plan and then accepts the responsibility if that plan is not carried out.”

But for this issue we are focusing on Executive Coaching. Since we believe that clearer you are about your understanding of executive coaching, more responsibly you will act as a person in whatever capacity you are concerned with coaching in the corporate context. Hence we emphasised to get the practitioner’s perspective – from both executive coaches who are coaching people to help develop, as well as HR-leaders who are responsible for using coaching as developmental tool in their organisations. As we have done it earlier we have tried to capture their perspective through documented individual and organizational cases, reflections and learnings coming from actual experiences in organizational context, free flowing conversations coming from one on one interviews coupled with review of books related to coaching. I am sure you will find this issue useful so as to enable you to be better equipped to find answers to the following questions with clarity and precision.

a. When do you need to bring in coaching intervention as a developmental tool in your organization?
b. Whether you need to build a coaching capability in your managers?
c. What kind of external coaches you need to hire for your organizations to ensure right fit to your employees?
d. How would you measure the effectiveness of coaching process already deployed in your organization?
e. What are the main features of the relationship between coach and coachee? f. Is a standard framework/methodology for a coaching process is must to ensure consistency?
g. What skills are most important to become an effective coach: active listening, skilful questioning, giving feedback, helping setting right goals?
h. Can managers become coaches of their team members?
i. What method is most appropriate for coaching; face-to face, telephone, and video conferencing?
j. How do you distinguish coaching from mentoring, training, consulting and therapy?
k. What impact do different organization cultures have on coaching? To what extent you need to build a supportive organizational culture to ensure coaching success?
l. What is your target group to begin coaching process in your organization, and how should you choose them for a pilot project? What impact does the choice of a target group have on coaching?

I can go on and on, but asking these questions continuously would help you achieve, an excellent clarity on the whole executive coaching process.

Now moving from an individual perspective I would like to focus on organizational perspective.
While writing on “What CEOs Really Want from Coaching”, at the Harvard Business Review, Gretchen Gavett found that about two-thirds of 200 plus CEO’s, board directors, and other senior executives who participated in a 2013 Stanford University study who did not receive any outside advice on their leadership skills, and yet almost all were receptive to suggestions from a coach. The experts believe that most leaders in today’s organization have an agenda of their own. And perhaps that is the reason why an executive coach can offer a rare and safe environment for the CEO to explore and achieve goals that are in the best interest of the CEO as well as the organization. True to the spirit of engaging in conversations with the CEO as what Harvard Business School Professor Thomas DeLong calls a “Truth Speaker”.

It is very encouraging to see that executive coaching which started as a perk for the top level executives at Indian corporate sometime back has now started seeing the downward push. Organizations are beginning to see the value of coaching at middle to even first line level of the management. As an executive coach, this opens up more opportunities for business and increases the use of coaching as a developmental tool. So where do people see the use of coaching most? Research indicates that creating growth opportunity and building ability to manage change are the two most sought after reasons for providing coaching opportunity to individuals. Needless to say that coaching is being used increasingly used by corporates to strengthen their leadership development interventions.

However as we are witnessing maturing of executive coaching industry in India it is also bringing into focus some of the nascent problematic issues in the forefront. Research indicates the following negative trends that are emerging in Indian market as well.

1. Unethical marketing practices to build coaching business.
2. Lack of relevance for using a standard coaching process / framework for consistency.
3. Inappropriate use of certain practice / standards from professionals trained in disciplines other than coaching.
4. Mushrooming of coaches with too little and relevant corporate experiences.
5. Complete absence of rigorous academic research/published data to support culturally appropriate coaching outcomes to highlight benefits of executive coaching.

The professional bodies, academic institutions, HR professionals, practicing executive coaches and professionals who have benefitted from coaching process all have a role to play in arresting these trends. If they are not arrested today they are more likely to prevent people from gaining value from executive coaching. Before I end my editorial I would like to quote motivational author Catherine Pulsifer who aptly said “A manager is a title, it does not guarantee success. Coaching is an action, not a title and actions will result in successes!” I therefore urge all concerned, especially the line managers and HR professionals to create appropriate plan of action that can eradicate these trends and keep coaching in the mainstream as a way for people to grow and develop in their personal as well as professional lives.

Since the journal has become online now, you need to make sure that your email ID is correct. In case you or your fellow professionals and members have any problem in receiving the journal online do write to Pranay Ranjan (pranay.ranjan@nationalhrd.org) at national secretariat. As you also noticed all our issues are theme based and we do not publish any article in a particular issue that is not related to the theme for that particular issue. So my request to future contributors will be to plan their contributions based on the future themes only and send me your contribution at me@nationalhrd.org. Please also note that final decision to include your article will be based on the decision of the guest editor and the editorial team.
I am happy to inform you that the October, 2016 issue will be guest edited by Professor Manish Singhal from XLRI Jamshedpur on another relevant and contemporary theme “Corporate wellness”. Similarly January, 2017 issue will be dedicated to the theme of “Stakeholders Management-The Role of HR” guest edited by HN Shrinivas, a TATA veteran.

I am confident that you will enjoy reading this issue. We would like to know about the themes that you want to focus us in our future issues. Please send your suggestions and feedback to (me@nationalhrd.org) after reading this issue.

Dr. Pallab Bandyopadhyay
Managing Editor
(On behalf of the Editorial Team)
Guest Editor - Editorial Comments

Bimal is the Founder and Managing Director of Think Talent Services, a boutique firm specializing in leadership development, talent management and culture change, operating since 2010.

Prior to his consulting career, Bimal had over 23 years of experience across different industries, across geographies including the USA, Middle east, Africa and APAC. His latest corporate position was as HR Director for Nokia-Asia Pacific, supporting the massive growth for the company. His contribution in building a high performance team to take the business from half a billion to over 5 billion USD in India and from 200 to over 10,000 people is well acknowledged. He had previously held senior positions in Eicher, British Telecom and Tata Sons. His credentials lie in an extremely business focused solutioning and providing insights and methods which are both business and people friendly.

Bimal’s experience has been across different areas in HR including building and maturing management teams, M&A integration, HR system and process implementation, large scale change interventions, and setting up high performing factories and R&D centers. He has been part of several projects across his assignments dealing with corporate strategy, growth decisions and management partner choices. He currently consults and coaches across industries as wide as High Technology, Chemicals, Banking and Engineering. He is also associated with Center for Creative Leadership, USA as a executive coach and with Duke Corporate Education as an educator. He sits on the boards of several small to mid-size young entrepreneurial companies.
Guest Editor - Editorial Comments

The area of coaching has been very close to my heart. I was lucky to have some early experiences with some very talented sports coaches during my school days. At that time, I did not really understand the intricacies of what they were exactly doing as coaches. The experiences of interacting with the ‘sports teacher’ and the outcomes looked pretty impressive and fun. Some of my school colleagues went on to play for the state and the universities teams in various sports, much beyond their apparent abilities as well. An insight struck me many years later. I could vividly look back and in retrospect understood that these coaches/teachers would treat everyone as a ‘unique individual’, and each individual felt appreciated and challenged at the same time.

Many years later, as a practicing HR manager, I got introduced to coaching in organizations, and it was déjà vu feeling for me in some way. It was a bit revealing as well; reading all the literature, getting trained to be a coach, experiencing being formally and informally coached and then being a practicing coach. This helped consolidate the early learnings which came through being coached by teachers, managers, parents and relatives in different situations. The ease, skills and commitment which many of them showed when ‘coaching’, especially not having been trained as formal coaches, was worth emulating. Over the years, with wider and deeper experiences around coaching, it appeared to me that coaching is an art form, much beyond science, with something intangible, like all art forms.

When asked to guest edit this issue, I intended to get as many experiences as possible into the issue. I believe, readers must experience the colors, hues and shades of this art form and take away the beauty in whichever way they interpret it. The field of organizational coaching has evolved over the years and there are a wide variety of experiences and perspectives; as also many different models and methodologies, associated nomenclatures, and practicing philosophies. The collection of material in this issue will hopefully give you some flavor from the vast arena of coaching.

The interview with industry veteran RR Nair showcases the evolution of coaching and illustrates his own perspectives and experiences in coaching. Coaching, at-least as a formal development tool in organizations is still in its infancy phase in India, and RR has almost seen it evolve over the last two decades or so as a practicing coach and advisor. While we looked at the evolution of coaching, how it would look like in the future was another aspect worth exploring. Chella Ganesh’s piece, titled ‘Coaching 2021’ throws some light on that. Readers and coaches can all build further on some of the futuristic trends, and maybe add a few more trends from their own experiences and insight.

The article from Dr. Vishal Shah provides a structured way of looking at coaching. Devoid of models, it provides a generic approach to coaching, a guideline to budding and experienced coaches. It is also an interesting outlook from a coach who is a ‘work in progress’. Kaushik Gopal from CCL provides us not only another framework in coaching engagements, but also an Asian perspective through the examples and cases. To me, from both these articles, the learning was in the possible differences in approach to the coaching process. More importantly, what was evident was that each coach brings their own unique ‘eyes of the beholder’ outlook, even when there is a structure to the coaching process.

Aviad Goz provides a perspective on how breakthroughs could be achieved by using yet another profound model created by Aviad himself. This model has been hailed by David Covey as the 4th generation coaching model. We have another case study on how a global organization has used the same model for large scale coaching, through an article authored by Yael Willerfort and Reetu Raina. This is also a case where a common model has been applied across countries in the same organization, with strong results across geographies, outlining the benefits of having a common framework for implementing coaching in large organizations.
Dr. Arvind Agarwal and Santhosh Babu bring a different perspective. Instead of looking at coaching as a 1-1 process, they have looked at it as a team transformation process. Given that these cases are referring to top teams and their transformation, these interventions could well be seen as impacting the organization at large by transforming the top teams. Arvind talks about culture change through a coaching process while Santhosh speaks of multiple top teams and a variety of experiences in coaching a group of individuals together.

Women leadership has been of interest, especially among many discussions in industry around diversity and inclusion over the last few years. In the spirit of adding to that area of knowledge,

Dr. Pallab Bandopadhyaya’s article on women coaching provides some additional unique insights. It certainly throws some light on unique issues faced by both coaches when coaching women, and by women coachees themselves.

Gagan Adlakha’s vivid depiction in ‘The case of the reluctant coachee’ (this is my terminology) is a live example of how coaches can build credibility, and use a variety of skills and techniques to build awareness and readiness in a coachee.

We have four organizational case studies, all exhibiting practical implementation. The L&T case study (authored by Yogi Sriram, Vandana Hebbar and Prakash Krishnamoorthy) and the Wipro Case study (authored by Tanaz Mulla) gives us the “insider” view. Both cases showcase very different approaches, and exhibit examples of how a structured thought through intervention approach can fetch results. It also provides us learning that different organizations may need different approaches, and what may work in one place, may not work in another. These cases also depict how large coaching processes may need internal anchoring and robust HR effort to succeed.

The other two cases are written from external perspectives – by coaches who have implemented a successful coaching project. The article by Suraj Chaudhary and Rahul Goswami showcases a case of a large global bank. There’s another unique case. This one is penned by four members of ICF Mumbai Chapter- Ashu Khanna, Saraswathi Anand, Rajiv Ranjan and Parineeta Mehra. It showcases coaching implementation in an NGO. The nature of the client organization and the sensitivities involved make it a ‘non-corporate’ example of how coaching can be used in different organizational settings.

The two books picked up for a review are very different from each other. Coaching for performance by John Whitmore is considered a classic and almost a must read for coaches. Commodore Dilip Mahapatra brings a fresh, crisp approach while reviewing this one. Siddhartha (book), reviewed by Rohit Sinha is the development story of Buddha, with himself as a coach. It’s about his journey towards the path of self-awareness and understanding deeper meaning of life. It is an intense and heartfelt case study throwing light on personal reflection, development and gaining insight through layers of meaning.

Finally, I have really enjoyed reading through all of this material. Each piece retains the original flavor of the writer/s. We have tried to retain the original style and flavor, so very little real editing has gone into it. Thanks to each of the contributors for their time and effort, their passion for the subject, and the willingness to share. Also, I thank my colleague Gurleen Nanra, who interviewed RR Nair and helped put all this together with me.

Bimal Rath
Founder - Think Talent Services Pvt. Ltd
(Guest Editor for this issue)
Interview with RR Nair

“RR” is a Consultant to business on ‘HR Strategy’ and ‘Leadership and Organisation Development’. He served Unilever Group companies and as HR Director he did pioneering work in strategic HR and business partnering. He is an Independent Director on company Boards, a CEO coach for organisations ranging from Fortune 500 to reputed Indian business houses, and a management educator. He brings to business and academic scene both local and international perspectives. A past President of NHRD Bangalore Chapter, he was chosen for the NHRD National Award for outstanding contribution to the HR function, and was later conferred Life-time Achievement Award by CNBC-KPMG. He is an Honorary Fellow of Coaching Foundation India Limited “in recognition of his exemplary life-time achievement in facilitating the growth of human potential as a Coach & Mentor”.

Interviewed by

Gurleen is an Organizational Psychologist by profession, currently working with Think Talent Services.

She has an innate interest in understanding human behavior across various functions. She is an extremely passionate and a self-driven individual. She shares Aristotle’s view that “Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim, and end of human existence”.

Besides interest in Psychology, she is also keen on understanding the deeper meaning of human existence. She is an avid reader, inspired by Carl Jung, Eckhart Tolle, Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Stephen R. Covey, Daniel Goleman, Thomas Harris, Marcus Buckingham and many more!

She has authored various research papers, articles, and essays.
Interview with RR Nair

Gurleen: When did the executive coaching take off, and how has it evolved in recent years?

RR Nair: Globally executive coaching appears to have been an offshoot of sports coaching. It then transcended into the business since early 80s. Yet it’s only recently that businesses have started realizing the potential of executive coaching to develop leaders and give them the edge in a VUCA world. Leadership skills are as important for today’s leaders as sound business acuity. Executive coaching has now earned the status of a best, customized solution for leadership development among other methods of growing talent. In India, there is growing acceptance of coaching and unlike in the past when ‘derailing behaviors’ were the focus of attention, now it’s more about helping people realise their full potential by focusing on their strengths. Coach is a catalyst in others’ journey in life by pushing them out from their comfort zone thereby helping to realize their dreams.

Gurleen: Do you only take up certain kind of Coaching Intervention projects? What is your typical coaching client?

RR Nair: I work with a variety of leaders who have enormous strengths and yet enthusiastic to face challenges from many angles. For example, multinational top talent who are posted in their subsidiaries in India on significant leadership roles for a specified period. Coaching goals include enhancing cross cultural competence including their skills to interface professionally with members of their new environment. Having lived and or worked in Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Asia-pacific, and having had firsthand exposure to multi-cultural challenges, it’s an advantage for me to work with them in a responsible, flexible, challenging and nurturing way. Often I get called in for coaching senior and top management to strengthen further their leadership skills. Invariably the focus areas would include, among other organisation specific needs, strategic thinking, people leadership, leading change initiatives, fostering a high performance culture strengthening personal effectiveness including executive presence. Some of the leaders have to deal with the dynamics of working in a matrix structure and effectively using multiple influencing strategies. Often dilemmas relating to career life planning also surface during coaching conversations. These leaders are identified as high potential talent who need to be future ready for CEO/CXO roles.

Increasingly having recognized the need for accelerated development of high potential young talent, organisations are focusing on team coaching in order to unlock their teams’ potential to produce superior results. How to coach teams to high performance is indeed challenging because team coaching is relatively new and the impact team coaching can have differ significantly. Experience suggest that the starting point is by understanding the dynamics of the team, individual and team assessments, identifying gaps and work towards a ‘shared destiny’ mindset. The coach’s role is helping teams to go beyond their current capabilities. If superior results have to come, everyone has to commit to doing something differently than what they have been doing previously. Teams often face challenges during post-merger integration, rolling out change management initiatives, and while handling conflict situations. To be effective, the coach has to constantly renew oneself in team coaching skills.

Gurleen: How much time would you typically spend with a client?

RR Nair: It varies. First few coaching interactions must happen ‘in-person’. The person is encouraged to reach out on telephone or skype when a coaching moment opens up or to discuss insights from self-assessment data in between the face to face sessions. We must also respect the value of their time and focus on the results of coaching.

Gurleen: Once you coach these executives or high potentials, how do you ensure that your coaching actually makes a difference?

RR Nair: Coaching should help a person define ones direction through a series of powerful and purposeful
conversations in the context of the person’s values and unrealized potential. Goals are defined realistically, explore on the strategy to achieve them, develop action plans, agree on the metrics to measure effectiveness, establish timelines, follow up - all these form part of the coaching process until the person internalizes, transforms and impacts business and team. The why of the tools to be used is important; whether psychometry or multi-rater feedback.

The coach need to ensure that an honest, and trusting relationship can develop, allowing both the partners successfully learn to challenge, share and ‘grow together’.

It’s challenging to measure the results of coaching in a purely analytical manner though evaluating success is not impossible. Once the why of coaching is established based on a deep understanding of the organizational context and issues and the person’s needs, an aligned understanding of the coaching goals shared by key stakeholders is helpful. At the same time it’s useful to ascertain where the person is right now and what will be most helpful rather than following a ‘one size fit all’ approach. A degree of versatility to play the role of a trusted ‘development partner’ is required to customize the approach. A ‘coachee-centered’ approach is vital to make a difference.

Coaching will produce better results if the person being coached is also more self-reflective and self-aware. For example, the capacity to observe thoughts, feelings and behaviours as they happen. And the person accepts without being defensive about what to improve or change. The person is motivated and willing to invest time to accomplish the desired goals. The person has knowledge and skills to make the shift, can alter mental modes or view issues through multiple lenses and sees a world of possibilities. And finally willing to experiment with new behaviours and stick with them, and consciously reshape old styles and practice new ones.

In sum, the person who is being coached have to ‘own and drive one’s own development’. To reiterate, ‘transformation’ has to happen from within.

Gurleen: You mentioned about coaching expats entering into the Indian markets. Do cultural differences have an impact on the effectiveness of your method and of coaching in general?

RR Nair: Yes I believe so. The coach can provide cross-cultural information that addresses the needs of the individual. By enhancing their cross-cultural sensitivity, eg learning how not to judge cultural differences in haste, they can adapt and begin to thrive in their new environment. By helping the person to develop a mindset of openness and exploration, and by raising their awareness of the new culture they can gain new insights to learn and to live and work in a multi-cultural environment. Adapting one’s leadership style to a different cultural setting can be tough especially when the new setting demands a style different from one has been comfortable in the home country. Coaching could focus on developing inter-cultural sensitivity.

Gurleen: Is there’s a difference between Indian and European styles of working?

RR Nair: It’s somewhat difficult to answer this question because it implies generalization. Yet Indian society and European culture vary in terms of hierarchy, degree of openness, communication, respect for systems, and process adherence. And many more...

Gurleen: Do you think coaches are simply glorified psychologists, listening to the problems and deficiencies of executives? Is the coach simply a sounding board?

RR Nair: A coach should have a deep understanding of the business first, its industry, the type of challenges the business is facing, the role and the task of the leader and the leadership team. The coach should also have a deep understanding of behavioural science and organizational development. More specifically, skill-sets that are related to helping a person discover the potential and to flourish and grow both professionally and personally. Because, essentially coaching is a helping process - how to build chemistry and how to establish a trusting relationship are crucial coaching skills.

Coach often plays the role of a sounding board without being prescriptive.
Gurleen: How important is “Detachment” in a coach-coachee relationship?

RR Nair: Both attachment and detachment are two sides of the same coin. Attachment because as a coach, there is a deep sense of purpose and commitment in wanting to see that the person succeed. The joy of seeing other people grow encourages an attitude of nurturing and growing. At the same time the coach must have the capacity to step back, detach from the scene, be a ‘fly on the wall’ and watch the dance from the balcony.

Gurleen: What are some books or movies that every potential coach and must read or watch?

RR Nair: There are many! Marshall Goldsmith’s & Laurence Lyons’ Coaching for Leadership, John Whitmore’s Coaching for Performance are fine readings. Films include the classic ones like Gandhi, Lagan, Chakde, Remember the Titan, The legend of the Bagger Vance, King’s speech and Invictus...the list is endless!

Gurleen: What other advice would you give to the emerging leader of today dealing with complex cultural, political, strategic, and other organizational challenges within organizations and social systems today?

RR Nair: Develop your own unique leadership style and tenets of trust and tenacity. Enhance learning agility. Constantly revitalize emotional intelligence. Be contextually relevant in terms of society, economics and technology, and anticipate changes in customer expectations, both explicit and latent. If you take care of your team, the team will take care of you and the business. Recognize the power of arts, be visual art or theatre or film as persons with artistic flair will bring in systems thinking, relentless reflection, creativity and respect for diversity. Take advantage of ‘skills veterans’ and role models, and be the champion of your customers, employees and your destiny. And all these rooted on your purpose and values.

Thank You Gurleen for this great opportunity to dialogue with you! I enjoyed the discussions immensely.
Personal Breakthroughs for Senior Executives using the Coaching Process

About the Author

A globally recognized thought leader in personal and organizational development, Aviad Goz is the founder and CVO of N.E.W.S.™ Organizational Navigation Dynamics, and the founder and Chairman of Momentum Group.

He started his career as a trainer and coach in 1986 and has worked successfully since then with managers and executives in more than 1,800 organizations around the world. Some of the companies he has helped navigate through crossroads to achieve success include Fortune 100 companies such as Microsoft, Intel, Cisco, IBM, GE, HP, Pfizer, P&G, and Coca-Cola, to name a few.

Over the course of many years, Aviad observed that individuals and organizations struggled to manage themselves effectively when they arrived at crossroads. He diagnosed four main reasons why individuals, teams and organizations usually got stuck: They had no clear direction or a vision for their future; they suffered due to a lack of motivation and drive in moving forward; they were stunted by poor planning and execution capabilities; and they were held back from pursuing their vision by deep inhibiting beliefs and fears.

This realization provided Aviad the impetus and objective to visualize and create the N.E.W.S.™ Model in 2003. After an extensive research and study, he designed a unique compass-like structure where obstacles, that prevented people and organizations from reaching their goals, could easily be identified, and practical solutions could be put in place to help them overcome their challenges and lead them toward new heights. Recognizing the N.E.W.S.™ model's huge potential for impact, he used the insights gained through his experience as a coach and trainer, working with industry leaders, to skillfully construct additional need-based, customizable solutions for navigating through changes and challenging times. To date, in response to the needs of industry, he has drafted 15 programs and solutions based on the N.E.W.S.™ Model for different applications, all relating to various aspects of development for greatness. These programs are now being used around the world in over 30 countries.

Through all these various ventures, his mission to lead individuals and teams towards evolution and breakthroughs in their development has remained steadfast, and his deep motivation and commitment continues to propel his creativity to new levels.

To add to his visionary success, Aviad has also authored and published 11 books and numerous articles on development in HR, OD and medical magazines. His most recent book Self-Navigation: A Compass for Guiding Your Life and Career was published in 2013 and has been translated into many languages. Over the span of his career, Aviad has trained generations of trainers and coaches all over the world and helped millions to lead more productive and fulfilling lives.
Coaching CEO’s and senior executives is a unique experience. They have usually made a long way by the time you meet them. They are successful and have much experience. Sometimes they feel that there is not much for them to further learn or develop.

Very often, senior executives engage coaches as a sounding board because many of them are "lonely" at the top and there are some issues they cannot discuss with colleagues from their own organization.

This is why it is not common that a coaching process of a CEO or senior executive becomes a process of development or breakthrough.

Over the years I have coached hundreds of CEO’s and senior executives around the world. Very often these processes turned into a transformational breakthrough process, mainly because it was really needed.

Mark was the owner of a large industrial company in the field of irrigation systems. He was a third generation owner after his father and grandfather. Mark was a very centralized manager and used to “carry” the whole company on his back. He had some managers but very weak management team. He had to be involved in every detail. When I met him he was quite burnt out. When I started coaching him, it was because there were some problems with their US distributor which Mark wanted to fix. I used the N.E.W.S. Navigation assessment tool to try and realize together with Mark where the problem was. Already in our first session it became clear that the issue lied with him. He could not trust employees or vendors. They felt it and the mistrust became mutual. We also discovered that being so centralized caused his employees to be happy for him to do all the work, whilst they had an easy life. I also attended his meeting with the distributor and found there were relations of total mistrust. Mark did not like the findings but agreed to be coached to save the situation. We started with “North” process to try to identify how he sees his own future in the organization. Mark wanted in the future to be freer, to have time to think strategically and to spend more time with his family. It became clear that he would need to trust others to achieve this. We then explored his “South”, which was about what was preventing him from reaching this required future. We discovered that he was very concerned that if he delegated responsibilities to others, the company would fail and collapse. This was rooted in some early experiences in life.

We used coaching tools for breaking through limiting beliefs and started a slow gradual process of delegating responsibility and creating more trust around him. This was not easy, but progressed well. Also the skills of empowerment and delegation were needed in the “West” that deals with “How” to reach your North. The coaching lasted 12 powerful sessions. Few months ago Mark already had a functioning management team and he left for a three weeks tour with his wife for the first time in twenty years. Mark confided in me:

"I never thought that in this life time I would be able to leave the company for three weeks and it would not collapse". Upon his return he was amazed that things even improved in his absence.

Larry was a marketing manager and a part of the top management team in a multinational Hi-tech company. When I met him, he was quite frustrated. He wanted to advance and found himself "stuck" in the same position for many years. He felt that he could do and accomplish much more.

We analyzed his situation with a N.E.W.S. questionnaire and discovered few findings. Larry did not have a clear idea what he really wanted to become in the future. His "North" was not clear. He was also frustrated from his relationships with his boss, the CEO. He felt his voice is not heard and he cannot really influence the direction of the company and the major strategic decisions.

The coaching process started with clarifying his professional "greatness" direction and his next best practical model. The clarity was that he wanted to move to be part of the three people who actually led the organization or move to a smaller company as a CEO.
We focused first on trying to achieve his goal within the organization. When we discussed his relations with his manager, we found in his "South" a fear to express his views. This was based on a deeper fear that if he would say what he really thinks he would lose his job and will not have a way to provide for his family. This fear paralyzed him. The boss therefore could not appreciate Larry too much as he was silent in most management meetings. Yet Larry’s leading values were honesty, authenticity, and integrity, in a constant contradiction.

The road map we followed in this coaching process was to clarify his future intentions (North). To find what drives him (East), to discover what stops him (South) and to create a plan of movement of how to achieve the North (West).

The most difficult part was to help him overcome his hesitation to express his views with courage and sensibility. We used tools of logical, emotional and practical methodologies to "go beyond" this fear so that he could start voicing his views. After some attempts and "baby steps", Larry started to express his views. The challenge was to coach him how not to be aggressive when presenting his views, but to express them in a way they could be received. We had many role plays to practice for such situations. To his amazement, the CEO eventually thought that his independent views were valuable. Not only was he not fired, he actually became close to the CEO and is now considered number two in the company.

David was a bright R&D manager with great track record. He joined a large multinational IT company at a VP level acting as CTO. David worked in the past with large organized and well managed IT organizations. He expected that the onboarding process will be well organized as he was used to. To his surprise in this new company there was no organized induction process. His superior, the Division President was too busy and did not have time to meet him. He could only reach him by phone for short conversations. His tasks were not clear. He just got very high unrealistic set of yearly goals and was left alone to figure them out. Inside the division David found a total chaos that was created by the previous executive. He also met a lot of resistance and lack of cooperation. David was lost.

In this company we conducted executive onboarding coaching to all new VP and DP level executives. I met David when he was already three months in his role and the first thing he told me was that he was considering to leave this job due to the amount of difficulties and lack of clarity and support from his boss.

We started by clarifying his "East" - what is his authentic motivation and drive. David’s drive was about creating impact and change. So we agreed that this was an opportunity to create such impact and change. Then we created his "North" in this role. How he envisions his unit in the best case scenario in the future? These two processes caused in David re-engagement and a new hope. We then moved to a process of how he should work with his boss, not from a "victim" position. It became clear that David has to be much more proactive and driving in this relationship. David had to cross some "South" limitations about how to demand what he needed from his boss in order to succeed in this role. We also worked out and role played together how to meet the people who resisted him and put things right. David grew stronger and more confident from meeting to meeting. He stood up to his boss. Got his attention, got the support and resources he needed. The "resistance movement" slowly died out and David could start to implement his plans in the "West" to organize the work of the unit and bring it to the high standards needed. This was not easy, but the small successes on the way fueled David’s confidence and drive. Today this is one of the best units in the organization and David is candidate for promotion to a senior leadership role.

So, it is clear that whatever level in the organization a person is, there are always issues to do with self-limitation, lack of clarity about direction, communication challenges and the like.

Even with very senior level of executives a professional organizational coach with clear methodology and much experience can help a great deal, especially when personal development and breakthrough are needed in order to move on and succeed.
Check out another very interesting case study penned by Reetu and Yael keeping N.E.W.S Model of Coaching (proposed by Aviad Goz) as a base.

Coaching as a Development Tool Insight and Perspectives from Practitioners

About the Authors

Reetu Raina

Human resource professional with over 16 years of work experience in working with large Indian and global conglomerates, Reetu has led large organizational transformations.

Key strategist and thinker in Organization Development she has conducted research on “Engaging Indian Millennials”. The paper won various accolades and was published by SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management).

Reetu has successfully built learning and development functions from scratch. Leadership, Culture and diversity being her passion and field of involvement at present from past over 5 years.

Reetu has managed learning and organization development across functions and in diverse industries such as Telecom (Reliance Infocomm Ltd, Mumbai), financial services (TATA AIG Life Insurance, Mumbai and HDFC Bank Mumbai) currently she is Global OD Practice Lead leading the practice of employee experience and change for Amdocs globally.

Reetu was adjudged as Women Super Achiever by World HRD Congress in 2012 for the exemplary work done in the field of Leadership development. Reetu has been frequent speaker in Evolving Corporate Universities Forum on the most evolving leadership concepts like “Adaptive Leadership” in ECUF 2011 at Singapore.

Reetu is a certified and practicing executive coach and holds Masters in Business Administration from Pune University.

Yael Willerfort

Yael Willerfort - Shiloni has been with Amdocs since 2004. For more than 4 years she is leading the Culture and Identity practice of Amdocs corporate’s Organizational Development unit.

As part of her role, she leads the process of reinvent Amdocs values and its implementation, she is responsible for the research of OD new directions, and involves with building Amdocs methodologies for change management, teaming and collaboration and more. Today she focuses on employees’ engagement, sensing strategy and she is leading the internal coaching program supporting managers and senior leaders all around the company.

Prior, she was HR Business Partner for several units, working closely with the heads of units on the unit’s human capital strategy and supporting managers in verity of HR domains. Before she joined Amdocs she worked with several High Tech global companies as HR manager and Recruiting managers.

Yael is a certified and practicing executive coach, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Economics from Bar Ilan University and a Master of Organization Psychology from Tel Aviv University.
Coaching as a Development Tool Insight and Perspectives from Practitioners

In today’s world of technological disruptions one thing which has been impacted the most is the human angle of development which cannot be provided by machines. In the recent World Economic Forum in Davos the main topic of discussion was how technological disruption will change the way we live our lives, the only thing which cannot be taken over by machines would be the human care and emotional aspects of human development.

And if we connect this reality to corporates, one thing which we need to keep in mind is that in this wave of automation we cannot give the job of developing our people as effective managers and excellent leaders to the machines!

As an organization operating in the knowledge economy, one of the challenges which we faced was how to groom young managers who have excellent technical skills and help them become effective managers. This need lead to redefining the role that HR has to play in future. And it emerged as consulting ability of HR to build the organizational capability for the new culture.

For grooming young managers to be effective in their role, we needed deeper behavior intervention which at times organizations couldn’t provide due to time or other constraints. So we decided to review our priorities and focused on creating a culture and not an event for solving this challenge. We believe that if we have to make a sustainable, behavioral change it can only be done by changing the culture of the organization and not by creating an event by having a workshop.

The second question we had to answer for ourselves was which elements of the culture we needed to touch and how to create a sustained change? Looking at all the data points right from Employee Satisfaction Survey, Pulse surveys and employee round tables, we came to the conclusion that our need was to “Develop Managers as Coaches”.

As mentioned earlier, since we wanted to create a culture and not an event, we decided that we will build internal coaching capability within organization and this model meant slightly larger investment. We felt that it would give us a much better ROI even through the investment in terms of budget and efforts was much larger for us than with regular HR interventions.

We designed an Internal Coaching Capability Model that would help us identify Coaches within the organization who nominate themselves for the coach position and were assessed on certain coaching skills. After the final selection participants underwent the coaching certification course. On completion of the course, Coachees are assigned to Coaches with a one year supervision session by a Master Coach.

To be a coach might start as an individual aspiration and developmental journey for the participants, but eventually the organization is creating change agents and culture of coaching within the organization. The coaches doubly benefit from the process and they are learning as coaches from experiences of their coaches and at the same time they can implement their learning for their teams as managers. And for the HR professional to be coaches it was even deeper as they could give business the value of consulting and realize their own potential and empower themselves to meet the business needs.
Any model is successful only if the end user perceives and finds value in it. Training and certifying engineers is not an easy task. So we had to ascertain a structured behavioral model which our employees could understand and we found NEWS coaching model to be apt for engineers due to its objectivity and structure.

Year on year the demand for new coaches has been increasing and we have to kept adding new coaches to the pool. Today after running the process for three years we can feel the first tremors of change and it comes in the form of language.

Change of language is the first step towards the change of culture, “when you start talking eventually you start behaving”.

The key elements where coaching helped us to develop our managers:

1. **Direction Setting**
   - When the coaching culture started seeping in we started observing a question frequently brought to us by managers, “Where do you want to go?” to their team members. This started helping managers see the objectivity in the process of developing their teams and setting of goals. And this shift from person to goal started making sense to employees and helped in building the trust in their managers.
   - For managers, it started giving them the sense of direction which employees are looking for and at times employees themselves were not clear about it.

2. **Motivators and Inhibitors**
   - The question about engagement started getting redefined for managers as they started talking about the languages of “what are your internal drivers?” which is personalizing the conversation and the shift started from the earlier conversations of “You seem to engaged or disengaged” which was a generic conversation.
   - These discussions are not only what starts but stops you as well.

3. **Meaningful Feedback**
   - The feedback started moving from event, task project delivery to much broader level which was Individuals, their aspirations, the meaning they derived from their work.
   - This coaching model helped our managers connect individuals to task and not vice versa.

4. **Focus on developmental goals**
   - With structure and meaning brought to discussions, managers had enough data to ponder what an employee is capable of and what he/she aspires for. With this objective data managers could help their team member’s bridge the capability gap by defining their developmental goals.

5. **Technical Experts to People Managers**
   - The biggest outcome of this entire journey was the transformation which happened to managers who were touched by this process. One of the fallouts of information technology industry is that technical expertise is what people are admired for. And this leads to progression and movement of people on to higher rungs of the corporate ladder.
But one of the biggest gap which occurs in the process is, the competencies which are required as you go up the ladder are less technical and more people oriented competencies. And tendency of technical managers is to fall back into their comfort zone of technical expertise and people management takes the back seat, as a result of which the organization suffers and is unable to leverage on collective wisdom of its employees.

Coaching practice helped our managers to build a muscle which they had not exercised so far. It was uncomfortable for them at the beginning but they were practicing it with the coachee assigned to them so there was less conflict of interest and performance pressure. So this became the soft launch for managers to build themselves as effective coaches.

But all this doesn’t come easy it requires organizational commitment to build the culture which is effective and leads organization for long term goal achievement. One of the challenges you face when high investments are at stake is what is the outcome and how soon will we realize the ROI. And is coaching a pill which will eventually transform our employees after the medication course?

What helped us at Amdocs was the right expectation setting with relevant stakeholders especially that, “Coaching is not an answer for every problem you face with managers or leaders”. Another point which helped us was the employees who underwent this process of being internal coaches eventually serves some need of theirs as professionals to contribute to organization in different way other than their day job.

We need to start the process of building coaching culture in the origination internally and externally with clear objectives and performance indicators in mind. Outcomes from such process are many but focusing on the key elements which lead to impact is extremely important.

In 21st century the role of HR is getting redefined where they have moved from personnel departments to becoming strategic partners with consulting ability and hence coaching will be the key for this transformation. Our internal coaching model based on NEWS is a step towards HR preparedness for our future organization.
Coaching High Potential Women leaders: Reflections and Insights from an Executive Coach

About the Author

Dr Pallab Bandyopadhyay is a Leadership Architect, Career Coach, Change and Transition Specialist. A doctoral fellow in HRD from XLRI, Jamshedpur, he has received training at various human process and organization development interventions at NTL, USA. He is also certified in Hogan and Thomas personality profile assessment. Dr. Pallab has thirty three years of successful professional experience in managing entire gamut of Human Resources Management with proven expertise in managing multicultural globally-distributed knowledge professionals as head of HR functions at Country / Regional / Global levels at Citrix Systems, Dell services, Perot systems, Cambridge Solutions, Sasken Communication Technologies and Ashok Leyland Information Technology. He has been responsible for providing strategic HR leadership to achieve business and people growth in multi-cultural and multi-locational fast growth environment in USA, Europe, India and APAC region. He is currently engaged in providing HR consulting to many large Indian and MNCs and start-ups in the area of Leadership Development, Executive coaching, Organization development, Long-term competency development for HR professionals, Organization Talent Management, Strategic change, Organization design and alignment. His diverse set of clients includes names like Dr Reddy’s Laboratory (DRL), Honeywell Technology Solutions (HTS), Cadila Pharmaceuticals, Manhattan Associates, The Manipal Group, Cambridge Silicon Radio (CSR), Sears, RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, KPMG, CGI, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Bangkok and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Indore.

Dr Pallab a member of national board of NHRDN, and has been the member of the national level design team of NHRDN that created the HR competency model (HRSCAPE). A visiting faculty at XLRI, Jamshedpur, IIM Kozikode & Shilong in the area of HRM/OB. Dr Pallab is a research guide for PhD students at Symbiosis University, and an advisory member of the board for “Sukrut” a unique psychotherapeutic clinic and professional development centre based at Bangalore He has been a recipient of Super Achievers Award for two times and HR Leadership Award for outstanding achievements in the field of HR.
Coaching High Potential Women leaders: Reflections and Insights from an Executive Coach

As an HR professional and executive coach, I often faced this question from my internal clients. Do you need to use a different methodology and process when you coach a high potential women leader compared to her male counterpart? I have been working as an HR professional in large corporate set-ups for almost last three decades helping both men and women through various developmental interventions and personal coaching to realise their true leadership potential. Helping people to achieve career and life goals have been my passion that kept me sustained and fulfilled in my work-life. Throughout my thirty years of corporate HR career followed by three years as a leadership architect and executive and career coach, I’ve got the privilege to work with both men and women in the space of leadership coaching. But it is only in the last few years after handling a number of relatively more focused and longer assignments that were focused on women leadership in India, I did realise that there definitely exists some distinct differences when you deal with women leaders as coachees in India. Though I must admit, by and large you begin your coaching process with similar framework while coaching high potential men and women as coachees.

Through all of this, I’ve come to know one thing very well, if you are aware of these distinct differences in coaching applications, the success of your coaching outcome could be more effective. While I don’t wish to bring a sweeping generalization about all, I can tell with some profoundness that I have discovered that women coachees manifest certain distinct differences from men in leadership behaviour from a socio-cultural and psychological dimensions. Among other things, they showed differences in terms of their leadership mind-set, using communicating style and interaction preferences while dealing with their team members. In this article I have tried to touch upon some of them in terms of my own learning. I do hope it might be useful for both executive coaches as well as HR leaders who are planning to introduce coaching as a developmental intervention for women leaders in their organizations.

Getting connected at the contextual Reality

Many professionals believe that executive coaching greatly depends only on your ability to ask good and great questions. Surely asking great questions is a great skill for a top level coach. This is because asking great questions is based on the basic tenet that experiential and visual pictures touches a coachee more deeply and therefore motivate them to change fast by achieving their coaching goals. But to do that you need to operate from a deeper understanding of the context. It is simply beyond the questions that you ask. It’s about getting connected at the contextual reality. And for those of us who belong to opposite gender, we need to understand that women in India view the issues they face in their lives like work-life balance, family priorities, career-path and career - success in a very significantly different ways. And the learnings they acquire in these areas do impact them in their future leadership journeys in significantly different ways. In order to best learn these aspects, you need to strengthen your observations coupled with well-intentioned research into these issues for a relatively longer period. I have spent considerable amount of time in last couple of years to research to understand these aspects in greater detail. I must admit that I have learned lot more about it than what I thought I knew about them as a head of HR in my earlier corporate life. The reason is very simple. All my earlier learnings were internalized from a predominantly male brain perspective which the current advances in neuro-biological research confirm. As Mark Kastelman (1), a brain researcher and the author of the book “The Drug of the New Millennium” aptly summarized “This means that in most cases, men and women do not behave, feel, think, or respond in the same ways, either on the inside or on the outside.”

Some of the differences that Mark Kastelman pointed out are significant to understand this aspect. These are listed as follows:
The male brain is highly specialized, using specific parts of one hemisphere or the other to accomplish specific tasks. The female brain is more diffused and utilizes significant portions of both hemispheres for a variety of tasks.

Men are able to focus on narrow issues and block out unrelated information and distractions. Women naturally see everyday things from a broader, "big-picture" vantage point.

Men can narrowly focus their brains on specific tasks or activities for long periods of time without tiring. Women are better equipped to divide their attention among multiple activities or tasks.

In men, the dominant perceptual sense is vision, which is typically not the case with women. All of a woman's senses are, in some respects, more finely tuned than those of a man.

As male coaches when we start listening to the problems of our women coachees, we can’t help them figure out a solution for their problems without understanding the differences in leadership perspective between male and female. It is not enough for us to use a mere tactical framework and move forward in a meaningful way. Many of my women coachees confided in me that they found some of their earlier interactions where their coaches were not talking into account this crucial gender difference and were unable to connect at a deeper level. Consequently they completely faltered in the coaching process and were not able to bring about a lasting positive change as coaching outcome.

Not a Quick-Fix Solution

My experience tells me that coaching outcomes become far more positive when a coachee does a deep self-exploration. While on this journey many of them face a sense of ambiguity for some time before they achieve their coaching goals. I have seen women responding to this stage of ambiguities in more spontaneous ways. I have experienced that a majority of women leaders whom I have coached are willing to spend more time in this process of self-exploration. In some senses they differed in the way they approached this process of self-exploration. While men (at least most of them) had a short term approach where they were looking for very tactical quick-fix outcomes from this self-exploration process, women were far more long-cited, ready to spend more time with the process and also expecting far more profound changes in outcomes.

While reflecting on this parameter, I came across an interesting research study that might throw some light from a researcher perspective. Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman (2) while conducting a 360 degree leadership evaluation of 7280 top level leaders across the world found women leaders scored higher on the aspect of "Engaging in self-development" than men.

In general, I experienced that high potential women leaders enjoyed the process of self-exploration. I would like to share a feedback received from one of my coachees in this context. This feedback does capture the sheer joy of self-discovery fairly well…“Many sessions were meant for retrospection and understanding my person & purpose / priorities. Then, with a few subsequent sessions, you helped me realize why certain things are the way these are, for me. The best part of the whole journey of the self-realization is that it happened without making me judgmental about myself! And rightly so, because there are no rights and wrongs; it is just about managing the situations involving you and stakeholders from all walks of life, both professional & personal.”

Who Is High Potential and Who Is (not)

Before we talk about high potential women leaders, it is most important to first identify the criterion by which organizations identify high potential candidates for coaching. Since a majority find it difficult to respect and value great potential of women leaders if they are not able to pinpoint the traits which are taken into account to judge the potential. I say this from my experience since it also has impact on women who are selected for coaching. I have seen both organizations where special initiatives are taken to promote women leadership. Organizations where the process is transparent and selection criterion are clearly articulated, the impact on
women coachees are very much self-enhancing. Whereas, those organizations which starts such an initiative with a fan-fare but fails to articulate their objective and selection criterion clearly to its selected women leaders, it creates a negative impact. As a result, this adds an additional burden to already existing identity crisis among Indian women that exists in many workplaces. Keeping this in mind organizations especially the HR folks need to build the criterion for selection process through a lot of collaborative research. It is absolutely essential for an organization to get answers to these questions before they finalize the criterion for selecting high potential women leaders. These are listed below:

- How women view successful leadership?
- What kind of impact they would like to make as a leader in the organization?
- What they consider important and essential traits for successful leaders?
- What values they consider important and essential in their careers that help them to become a successful leader?
- How they view progress in career has its impact on their work-life balance, family priorities?
- What they view as the key obstacles to achieve their career goals and how can they overcome these challenges?
- Do they believe that the style they use to influence people can become more effective with the passage of time and if so, what do they need to do to achieve this during the leadership journey?

The list can be endless. But my point here is very clear, we need to create this criterion for high potential women leaders from a predominantly women-centric views of leadership. Because it communicates, especially in large part of Indian corporates where masculinity synonymous with success in leadership that today's progress in organization come from recognizing that fact that while women who think and act differently, brings in diversity and strength to the Leadership success. Research has already proven this fact. Let us put forward some evidences from executive coach Joel AGarfinkle (3). According to him

- A McKinsey & Company study showed companies with three or more women in senior management ranked higher in organizational excellence such as leadership, accountability, innovation and six other factors, than companies with no top women.
- The London Business School's study of 1,000 international teams found work teams balanced equally with men and women had more innovation than those teams that had an unequal ratio.
- When Chicago United studied Fortune 500 companies, those with boards including more women had a return on equity of 25% vs 9% for men only boards.
- Another study showed Fortune 500 companies with the highest number of women on their boards saw increases of 66% return on investment, 53% return on equity, and 42% return on sales compared to those with the least number of women.

**Grow with Your Strength**

What I need to learn additionally to become a successful leader? This is the most common question I faced from my women coaches. The implied question here is what I need to learn “extra” to manage my team and peer groups who are mostly men. Aspiring women leaders need to see role models from whose leadership styles they can learn a great deal. However due to paucity of women leaders in Indian corporates, many women leaders have grown in a culture that overstressed the success of masculine traits in leadership behaviour. As a result of which many mid and senior level women leaders (with some notable exception) could not master the courage to experiment with distinctly feminine leadership behaviours and evaluate their efficacy in real time work situation. I became aware of this phenomenon when many of women coachees shared their apprehensions while dealing with conflicts and cooperation. While they intuitively believed an overtly masculine style can be completely dysfunctional, they were apprehensive about experimenting with their natural feminine style. In addition, fewer female leaders available as role models and as credible sources of
advice and support also restrained them from seeking advice and experimenting with their natural style. I believe that for many years in India, notable aspiring women leaders struggled to find a role-model who leads successfully in spite of manifesting her unique feminine leadership style. In spite of the fact that research evidences suggested otherwise. For example a group of researchers from Stanford University School of Medicine (4) discovered that when faced with a problem that must be solved by cooperating with others, males and females approach the task differently. When the researchers asked people to cooperate with a partner and then tracked the brain activity of both participants, they found that males and females had different patterns of brain activity. “It’s not that either males or females are better at cooperating or can’t cooperate with each other. Rather, there’s just a difference in how they’re cooperating” quoted one of the researchers.

Core of every successful leader is his/her self-identity. You have to remember that one becomes a true leader when he/she asserts leadership through some purposeful actions irrespective of the facts whether team members and/or peer group follow or reject such actions. As women leaders grow through challenging assignments, role expansion or horizontal movements in career; they need to continuously nurture and sustain this leadership identity. In my experience, here the coach needs to spend more time with his/her women coachees. You need to work very closely with aspiring women leaders to first build a strong and unique leadership identity and then ways and means to nurture them for self-sustenance. I have also found encouraging support from coaches in such situations that can help a women coachee to step outside her comfort zone and experiment with those leadership actions that has no precedence in the organization and yet she knows (intuitively) that this will work. As aptly summarized by one of my coachees which came as a feedback “...............Wow !!!!!!!!!it worked........ more I listened to them ........I got more space to influence them ...............I now feel at ease to experiment with some of my newer ways of leading my team.”

I am happy to see many young aspiring leaders like my coachee who no more believes that they need to fit desperately in men’s world for success by imitating “what worked historically here” and instead ready to think and act differently by bringing in diversity and alternate view to lead at workplace with ease and spontaneity.

Which Glasses You are Wearing?

For coaching to be most effective, it is critical that we as coaches understand that organizations are not gender neutral. And therefore we need to periodically re-examine our own world-view of gender issues. As pointed out in a study (5) coaches must be aware of certain realities that a women leader encounters in a gendered environment at workplace. These include:

• Standards of success are measured in male terms.
• Women are isolated from formal networks.
• Wage and salary structures are different for work that is traditionally male and work that is traditionally female.
• Different norms determine the acceptability of male managers’ behaviours and female managers’ behaviours.
• Different norms apply to the demonstration of vulnerability.
• Ongoing discrimination exists for women in managerial roles.

You like it or not, unfortunately many of these facts narrated above are applicable to many Indian organizations and therefore I have realised that knowledge of potential gender differences that exists in the organization does have impact on coaches whether to consider altering or amending their coaching style. In reality, it has also helped me as a coach to proactively prepare myself to better understand the issues that my women leader coachee to raise, as well as help her identify appropriate coaching goals and a pragmatic and workable strategies for addressing them.

There is one more point that I want to emphasise here. You need to examine your deepest belief in women’s ability to succeed in corporate environment. And this stems out from your early experience in childhood to your
experience in working with women at various corporates. Fortunately for me, I’ve been greatly influenced by my mother who has enabled me to recognize some of her behavioural traits and the underlying values (behind these traits) which made her accomplish her career goals. She came across as a master multi-tasker and highly collaborative in her approach to influence others at both family and workplace. What I appreciated in my mother was very important in shaping my world view of women leaders in my corporate career as a coach. I have also been lucky to work under many women as my leader, team member and colleague who helped me to understand their decision-making processes, the dynamics and subtleties of their leadership style, and some of their approaches towards leadership. This has further enriched my capability as a coach to bring in balance and diversity in my thinking and consequently my coaching style to succeed at workplace especially with aspiring women leaders as my coachee. To conclude, I believe you cannot operate optimally as a coach for women leaders until and unless you have learned and integrated some form of gender sensitivity in your approach.

What’s in Future?

I would like to end this article by pointing out a remarkable research study (6) conducted by two British researchers Ryan, Michelle K. and Haslam, S. Alexander. In their study, they discovered that women were more often promoted into leadership roles by organizations facing worst performance issues as opposed to their male counterparts. This phenomenon they described as “Glass Cliff” simply meant that in the corporate world, women will be offered leadership roles (as compared to men) during periods of crisis or downturn, when the chance of failure is highest. This other challenge that women are going to face is what researchers have already started talking about—the second-generation gender bias (7) prevalent at modern workplaces. Second-generation gender bias refers to practices that may appear neutral or non-sexist, in that they apply to everyone, but which discriminate against women because they reflect the values of the men who created or developed the setting, usually a workplace. It is contrasted with first-generation bias, which is deliberate, usually involving intentional exclusion. One of the most talked about second-generation gender bias that organizations do manifest is about the behavioural trait like assertion by leaders. The popular notion tells you that the leaders are expected to be assertive, so that women who act in a more collaborative fashion are not viewed as leaders, but women who do act assertively are often perceived as too aggressive. This kind of bias erects powerful but subtle and often invisible barriers for aspiring women leaders at today’s workplaces (8). So the need of the hour is to educate today’s workforce to change age-old cultural assumptions about women capability and build supportive organizational structures, practices, network and patterns of leadership behaviour that sustains building a dedicated cadre of women leaders for the organizations.

The hope today is the new thought processes that are bringing in sweeping changes at modern workplaces. Wise organization leaders have recognized the fact that this is not a competition of who thinks better, or whether men or women leaders are better suited for certain roles. Rather, they recognize that when women leaders begin using their leadership strengths and combine them with men’s thoughts and actions, organizations can sustain their better performance in the long run. This being the situation, it is therefore essential that aspiring women leaders are given opportunity to be coached more rigorously than before. A better coached woman leader will solve organizational problems often in a more comprehensive manner considering both at a same time, the effect on people in one hand and the impact of bottom line on the other.

I would like to end this article by reminding readers that adversity often produces better leaders for future. Aspiring women are not an exception to this, as can be evidenced from the words of Dr HerminiaIbarra, Cora Chaired Professor of Leadership and Learning, and Professor of Organizational Behaviour at INSEAD “We find that when women recognize the subtle and pervasive effects of second-generation bias, they feel empowered, not victimized, because they can take action to counter those effects. They can put themselves forward for leadership roles when they are qualified but have been overlooked. They can seek out sponsors and others to support and develop them in those roles. They can negotiate for work arrangements that fit both their lives and their organizations’ performance requirements. Such understanding makes it easier for women to "lean in."

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Who other than a good coach can help future Indian women leaders to achieve her career goals and more importantly how and what they should do to make it happen.

References
I Don’t Need a Coach

About the Author

Gagan Adlakha, Senior Partner at Vyaktitva, is a Life / Executive Coach and an specialist in the area of people performance. An XLRI 1990 alumnus, Gagan joined the IT sector in its high growth phase and handled a variety of roles covering the complete gamut of HR functions for over 10 years. He rounded off his corporate experience by handling business roles for the next 4 years.

Gagan turned entrepreneur in 2004 and joined Vyaktitva as a partner with the desire to help enhance people performance across organisations. Gagan has been working on various Coaching, Organizational Design and Learning & Development assignments focused on individual and organizational performance. He has designed and delivered solutions for premier organizations including the Max group, PepsiCo, Amex, Unilever, Colgate, Airtel, Genpact, Hewitt, Whirlpool, Accenture, GE, ITC, Hero, RB, Mother Dairy, Ericsson and IBM.

The article presented by Gagan is based on the constructs of ‘Get Real coaching model’ of Vyaktitva.
I am not sure if I need a coach” said Kabir as we sat down once the HR head left after introducing us. “I am a self-made man and have reached this position by the stint of my own strengths and hard work. If I had a problem, I wouldn’t have been in this role.

I smiled at the advent of a fairly common notion of coaching and said, “What makes you think you have problems? I am not here to fix a ‘problem’. A coach’s job is to help you be more successful and joyful. Else why would Federer, Tendulkar and Woods have coaches even at the peak of their careers?”

Kabir smiled as he settled further into the sofa and asked “So what can I expect from this engagement? And what does my company want you to do?”

“You are my primary customer, Kabir. Everything will be keeping your interest in mind and in confidence. However, you are a new CEO and the organization, obviously, has high hopes and expectations from you. My job is to accelerate your learning and make you successful much faster. They want to make every effort and investment to make you successful. Obviously, being a CEO, your actions will also have a huge impact on the other leaders around you and thus affecting the organization’s performance and culture. Your success will be organization’s success.”

Kabir reported “Sure that makes sense. But what’s to change? Things have been going well and I have been told to focus on my strengths”

I smiled and explained, “Of course you have many strengths. That’s why you are a stellar performer. But to say that you need to keep looking at them to become better defies logic. It reminds me of the Mullah Nasaruddin story where he is searching for his lost ring under a street light because it’s an easier place to search rather than the dark alley where he’d lost it. Working on strengths is a no brainer, something that you already do very well. However the real opportunities, the biggest levers to be more successful, the real treasures, lie in the shadows.”

“Hmmm” he reflected. “How will you do that? Isn’t that up to me? You are not even from this industry.” said Kabir, still apprehensive.

I explained “You know your trade better than most Kabir, but you also know that being a leader is not a functional or an industry skill, it’s a life skill. As they say, what got you here will not get you where you want to be. You’ll need to continue doing many things but also drop some and pick up new ones. I am here to help you do that as quickly and with least pain. In all aspects of your life*

“But this is a professional engagement’ he said.

*Leadership is neither just an aspect of your life nor is it a mask you wear. Great leaders are great people from the inside. The focus will be on you as a person in all aspects of your life. You cannot slice and separate different parts of your life. You may play many roles on the outside but in each role, the inside is the same. Leadership is an inside out job.”

“How does that work? Explain that more, please” Kabir requested.

I continued, “Where we are today is a mix of what life threw at us and what we made of it. Everyday we are required to make choices, some are big ones like what profession we are in, who we marry, how well we manage our finances, or where we work and live; most are smaller but not necessarily less impactful, such as our lifestyle choices: what and how much we eat/drink/smoke, how much we exercise, what we spend time on, who we hang out with. Even an act of making your to-do list or calendaring is nothing but choosing what to give time and attention to. Where you are today in the journey of life is a summation of all the choices you made enroute. You made the choices and the choices made you! And the choices you make in the future will create your consequent future.

The moot question is that how many of these actions are our conscious choices? If we were to use the analogy...
of the iceberg where only 10% above the waterline is visible and not the remaining 90%, human actions are the
visible 10%. However, the 90% causing those actions are hidden in our sub conscious and the unconscious
mind. These shadows are where our limiting patterns lie. Identifying them and reworking them can hurl us into a
very different future. My job is to make you more aware of yourself and what’s not visible.

“This looks like a lot of work. What do you expect from me and do you think people really change?” asked
pensive Kabir.

“Yes meaningful change is not easy. The deeper you go into the iceberg, the tougher it gets, but that's where
you need to go to identify the right things to change and make the change sustainable. If the coaching/learning
effort is shallow, it will be short lived, much like a New Year resolution or a post training action plan. You cannot
change by remaining in your comfort zone. You need to be ready to get uncomfortable along with complete
ownership and relentless everyday effort.”

“What will your role be and what process will we use?” asked Kabir.

“Let’s work with an example. Can you tell me one area where you think you might have an opportunity to
become better? Something people have mentioned in your reviews and feedback.” I enquired.

Kabir thought for a while and said, “I think I could be more people oriented. Be more sensitive to them and
understand them better.”

“Thanks, that’s good. Let’s work with it.” I said acknowledging his opening up.

“I will be your navigator as you go on this transformational journey. We will use the Vyaktitva’s Get Real
Coaching model and start by identifying and interpreting the patterns in your life. And in this case, we will
validate your feeling the need to be more people oriented. Where all does it play up, where are you less of it and
where more, what are the repercussions etc. Get to know the pattern really well. Post that we will identify how
this may be holding you back from becoming better or meeting your aspirations and that this is indeed what you
need to work on. At this point you’d need to take a serious look at your return-on-effort before making a
commitment to work on it because it will need work.

Once we start on your people orientation, the work will be at both psychological and physiological levels. This
will be a longish phase where you will iteratively reflect on your actions and act on the reflections. We call it
'Refl-action'.

Each of our sessions will be based on your current reality and understanding your actions or inactions which
helped create it and how they were apt or could have been different. In your example it could be meetings you
attend, your one on one interactions, your reviews, taking task vs people decisions etc.

Going deeper we will identify the beliefs and fears in your sub-conscious, which are causing these actions.
Here the beliefs could be that achieving results are paramount, data and logic are more important than
emotions, success is meeting your targets which are normally numbers etc. and your fears could be fear of
failure or the fear of people not accepting you or humiliation.

The Refl-action phase will help re-script these beliefs and help you manage your deep down fears. You may
start realizing the excessive task orientation may give short-term gains whereas a good balance builds the
team and the organization. You may recognize the role of emotions and how empathy can be huge influencer.

Once your beliefs and fears are worked on, they slowly start impacting your actions and thus the
consequences are different. Over time this will become a habit and the new and desired patterns will be your
new reality. This is how we will complete the cycle and it usually takes 12-18 months. In case there are other
patterns to work on we can start again.”

“Sure coach. Looking forward to it. When do we begin?” said Kabir, getting up and shaking my hand.

He was a model coachee. Never missed a session and made an honest attempt at everything we agreed. There
were as many slips and misses as there were successes but he was a quick and a keen learner. The proof of the
pudding was when a year later his 360° report showed a huge jump in the desired parameters and he showed it
to me with much glee and gratitude. He was also, as always, cracking his targets and the company was doing
better than ever before. He became a firm believer of Get Real coaching and asked me to coach many of his
senior colleagues.
Executive Coaching for Cultural Transformation

About the Author

Dr. Arvind Agrawal is a senior business leader who has been Management Board Member, CEO, Director of Marketing, Strategy and Human Capital Management in some of the most reputed organizations in the country.

Until recently, he was in the Management Board of RPG—a large diversified Group as President of Corporate Development and HR where he continues as Advisor with responsibilities for coaching business leaders and facilitating organization development.

Since transitioning from his corporate journey, Dr. Agrawal has led the formation of Global HR Lead Partners LLP with a charter to offer executive coaching and consultancy in leadership, organization development and human resource management to clients both in India and internationally.

Dr. Agrawal holds a PhD from IIT Bombay and is alumnus of IIT Kharagpur and IIM Ahmedabad.

Further he is Professionally Certified Coach (PCC) accredited by the International Coach Federation (ICF).

In recognition of his many contributions, Agrawal was awarded the National HRD Award in 1992. He served as the National President of National HRD Network during the year 2000 - 2002.
Executive Coaching for Cultural Transformation

In the organization context, executive coaching is often used for developing leadership capability of individuals in the senior management positions. Quite differently, this article presents a case where coaching was used by an organization to align management behavior of the entire senior management team. Management literature is replete with researches indicating that senior management behavior has very high impact in establishing the culture of the organization. Therein lied the opportunity. If coaching goals for senior management are in sync with desired management behavior, then it can lead to organization wide cultural transformation. This is exactly what was attempted in Raychem RPG – a company in $3 billion diversified conglomerate RPG.

Raychem RPG Limited (RRL) is a joint venture company engaged in manufacturing and marketing of products in energy, oil & gas and power transformer industries for both domestic and export markets. RRL products are generally well accepted by the customers in India as well as overseas. Often it enjoys leadership in the markets it serves. To further accelerate growth and profitability of the business, in the year 2013, RRL developed new business strategy. This included closing down as well as divestment of some businesses that were laggards in terms of growth and profitability. It also decided to bring in new products through acquisitions, technology tie-ups besides in-house development.

To fully implement the new business strategy, RRL identified the need for cultural transformation. In a day-long workshop of the top leadership team, current culture and desired culture were identified as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Current and Desired Culture in RRL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Culture (2013)</th>
<th>Desired culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Performance oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally focused</td>
<td>Global mind set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmented customer focus</td>
<td>Customer centric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate people orientation</td>
<td>Advanced people orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notaggressive</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately innovative</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality focused</td>
<td>Quality Focused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To operationalize this, management behavior for each of the desired culture was also developed.

Items of the management behavior were then added in the 360-degree process called Quest that RRL already had for several years in the past. Through this process, leadership team members get feedback from their managers, peers and subordinates. This practice has been well institutionalized in RRL for several years. In fact, not only the leadership team but middle management managers also get Quest feedback on their managerial behavior.

Desired culture and the new management behavior were communicated to the entire workforce in RRL through the Large Scale Interactive Process (LSIP).
Full account of the cultural transformation in RRL has been given by Ratish Jha & Anvesha Singh in their article titled, ‘Cultural Transformation at Raychem RPG’ - published in NHRDN Journal of January 2015 (page 112-117).

This article here, specifically deals with role-played by coaching in the cultural transformation at RRL.

Modified 360-degree process Quest that included the new management behavior was adopted for implementation in April 2013. Quest score 2013 indicates current status of management behavior in the company (Table 3).

Further to help leadership team fully align their individual style with new management behavior, they were given executive coaches. This was done to all the four CXO team members who were heading the various Strategic Business Units (SBUs) and the seven of next in line managers. Total of eleven managers in the senior management team were given coaches. Total of six external coaches were engaged in the process. These were all seasoned coaches with considerable experience of coaching senior managers in business organizations. They brought their own individual coaching models and styles. Each of them was assigned one or two managers for coaching for a period of six months through formally signed contract.

Each of the coaches was formally briefed about the cultural transformation initiative in RRL, the new management behavior and the 2013 Quest score of the respective coachees. CEO of RRL personally briefed the coaches in terms of expectations from the coaching goals and these were formally agreed between CEO, the coachees and the respective coaches. Further, coachees informally kept CEO informed of how coaching was progressing. In addition, CEO held formal midterm reviews with coach and the coachee. In each of these mid-term reviews, coachee debriefed on what new behavior he was attempting. CEO also shared specific instances where he had seen the coachee attempting the new behavior. These reviews reinforced the new behavior and also re-emphasized the need to continue focus on the change toward the agreed coaching goals. Author of this article himself was personally present in all of these reviews. These were held in very positive climate with genuine attempt on part of CEO as well as the coach to help coachee progress toward the new management behavior.

Coaching exercise continued throughout 2013 and most part of 2014.

In most cases, coaching had very positive impact on management behavior of the coachees. This was widely acknowledged by the CEO himself as well as many others in the CXO team. Changes in the management were expected to be reflected in the Quest score. Table 2 below indicates the Quest score of the coachees for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

### Table 2

**Overall Quest Score of Coaches (named A to K)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coachees</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Table 2, above for 3 coachees (G, H and J) 2015 Quest data was not available as they had left RRL.
Table 2 above shows the overall Quest score which is aggregate of scores of all the items in the Quest questionnaire. Scores of all the items related to desired culture also indicate the similar trend. For reasons of brevity, the detailed scores have not been shown in this article. In the Table 2 above, Quest score for 3 coachees (A, D and E) have been highlighted in green. In these three cases, Quest scores clearly indicate positive changes in their management behavior. In all other cases, the Quest scores show decline. This result is quite contrary to the expectations and widely held perception of the CEO and many members of the CXO team. It appears that subtle changes in behavior that were visible at the upper echelons in the organization have not been noticed by the vast majority of the people in the organization or perhaps their expectation levels have gone up much more as a consequence of LSIP. This needs to be further assessed by going in to details of the Quest score of each and every coachee.

Nevertheless, at the overall organization level, aggregate Quest scores indicate that RRL has made significant shift toward the desired culture (Table 3)

![Table 3](image)

Table 3
Quest Score of RRL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Culture</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Oriented</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Mindset</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Centric</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quest score of RRL is average of quest scores of all managers who went through Quest process in whole of RRL. This is Quest score of RRL as a company.

On all the dimensions, as shown in Table 3 above, Quest score of RRL indicates that the company has succeeded in establishing the desired culture.

As perceived by all the significant stakeholders, coaching of senior management team members helped them in aligning their behavior with desired management behavior. This was important enabler toward successful cultural transformation in RRL. However, Quest score trends of the senior management team members, over last three years, do not support this conclusion. There is need for further analysis to understand the underlying issues involved in the Quest scores of the individual managers.
In a career spanning over three decades, Ganesh has come to be respected and acknowledged for his contributions as a practitioner, consultant, coach and thought leader in the field of Organisation Development, Human Resources Management and Executive Coaching.

Ganesh is the co-founder, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of CFI (Coaching Foundation India Limited), India’s most preferred destination for potential coaches and clients and a trusted source of thought about Coaching. (www.cfi.co.in)

Ganesh Chella is also the founder of totus consulting, a strategic Human Resource Consulting firm (www.totusconsulting.com) and totus HR School, a firm which specializes in making HR functions in organisations more effective through capability building. (www.totushrschool.com)

He is the author of two books and over 100 published articles.

His book “Creating a Helping Organisation – 5 engaging ways to promote employee performance growth and well – being” provides path breaking insights into the helping needs of Indian employees and the place of various helping relationships to address these needs.

He has also co-authored "Are you ready for the corner office" the first attempt in the country to document and publish coaching cases and through that demystify Executive Coaching.
What will be the State of Coaching in India in the Year 2021?

I have been practising as an Executive Coach for over fifteen years and leading a large coaching institution for over a decade. That puts me in a good position to look five years ahead and make a reasonable prediction about the shape of coaching in India in 2021!

First things first – Coaching has gone well past the stage of being considered a fad that would soon disappear. Coaching is here to stay and grow. In what form and in what manner coaching will take shape is what our crystal gazing will hopefully tell us.

What Fuelled the Popularity of Coaching in the Last Decade?

Our country’s exciting economic and business context has been the most significant driver for the growth of coaching in various forms – executive coaching, business coaching, mentoring and internal coaching.

Every large Indian corporation was looking at a three or four fold growth in revenues during this period. As promoters, Boards and business leaders began to look at the strategic drivers that would help or hinder achievement of their plans they found leadership coming right on top of their list.

While lack of availability of leaders in enough numbers was one dimension of the void, the absence of contextually appropriate critical competencies among existing leaders (ability to handle scale, work in a global setting, handle complexity, need for flexibility) was an even more serious dimension of the void.

For the first time we saw that leader development moved from being the HR Leader’s or Chief Learning Officer’s sole concern to become the CEO’s top agenda. CEOs had specific and individualised expectations from their leaders and wanted bespoke solutions that would address their specific needs from a behavioural dimension. I have several engaging conversations with CEOs and Board members about their hopes and anxieties around their leadership and how it effects the fate of their business plans and the future of their business, and not to forget, the hundreds of employees they are leading. This convinces me that leader development is now business critical.

In this context, Executive Coaching which is a very personal, humanistic, result-oriented and one-to-one developmental experience quickly became a very central and integral part of all leader development interventions. Sponsors bought into it not because it was fashionable but because it worked. Coaching by its very design gave CEOs and Boards the opportunity to almost “make to order” the outcomes they expect from their development investment – something that was not so easy to achieve in the past.

The conscious decision taken by many organisations in recent times to grow talent from within has also contributed significantly to the growth of targeted talent management solutions to support such internal growth strategies. Here again, Coaching found an important place among the range of developmental experiences used by organisations to enable such growth.

If change and development are the goals of learning interventions, coaching signalled the arrival of a superior technology to achieve such change. Given its ability to assess, challenge and support in a personalised manner, it has demonstrated the potential to yield better results. As a result, we have seen more and more trainers and OD facilitators integrating coaching into their repertoire of approaches to bring about change in their client settings.

So, the last decade in India has seen coaching grow and mature into a very robust developmental experience and has now found a permanent place among the range of well-respected developmental interventions in organisations.
The Picture in 2021
I see at least seven interesting trends that will characterize coaching in the next five years. These are obviously not the only ones. Nor are they arranged in any particular order.

a) Coach Education, Coach Providers and Standards
Let’s start by looking at the supply side.
By 2021, the proliferation of Coaches and Coach Training providers would have peaked out.
There will be far more greater awareness by then that setting up a coaching practice is not for everyone and also not easy at all.
Professionals will begin to think several times before signing up for a Coach certification program or consider coaching as a potential career option. A greater sense of realism will prevail.
The distinction between the quest for acquiring credentials to set up a practice and acquiring competencies to enhance one’s leadership style will also become clearer. More will seek competencies and less will seek credentials.
There will be far greater levels of awareness among users about standards in coaching education and coach practice and this will force providers to act with greater accountability, innovate, improve and conform.

b) The Quest to Create a Coaching Culture
While coaching will continue to be offered to those at executive levels by professional coaches from outside and its popularity will increase steeply, the question in the minds of many is whether coaching will remain an elitist privilege for only those at the top and if the hundreds and thousands of employees below these executive levels will have to fend for themselves.
Progressive organisations are beginning to address this need by seeking to create a coaching culture where leaders and managers are able to serve as coaches and mentors and also demonstrate a coaching oriented style that will support employees in their organisations to succeed.
As I look five years out, I see a lot of work happening on this front.
The role of the immediate manager will continue to change and evolve very significantly in the coming years and this will augur well for the development of a coaching culture within organisations.
Firstly, the power distance between managers and team members will continue to diminish rapidly. The manager will increasingly be seen as another team member with specific responsibilities rather than be seen as the boss. The socio-cultural changes that are shaping parental relationships with children will also shape the managers’ relationships with team members.
Greater access to information, diminishing supervision in the traditional sense and increasing spans will also lead to the making of a very different kind of a manager.
As a result of all these changes, the only way in which managers in the future can add value to their teams is by being facilitators, guides and coaches. Consequently, coaching will fast become a critical competency requirement for all managers and organisations will work to develop it.
Many organisations will find that the easiest thing to do to create a coaching culture is to train their leaders and managers in coaching skills. They will hope that by creating the skill and mandating them to coach, they would have created a coaching culture. This path to creating a coaching culture is full of pitfalls and disappointments. Supervising managers do not have the time to do all this. They are preoccupied with task, with their own challenges and sadly, do not even enjoy a strong personal relationship with their team
members. So, the journey to creating a coaching culture appears long and hard. But the cost of not trying would also be high.

It is my belief that by 2021 there would have been enormous organisational learning about what it will really take to create a sustainable coaching culture. I also believe that at least a few shining examples will emerge by then.

c) Emerging Adulthood

Jeffrey Arnett is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at Clark University in Massachusetts. He is the originator of the theory of emerging adulthood and the author of Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties.

What he said of youth in American societies is certainly of increasing relevance to the Indian society, given the increasing levels of prosperity and economic progress.

Professor Arnett maintained that until not too long ago (the 1970s in the American context and maybe the 1980s or thereabout in the Indian context). The typical 21-year-old was married or about to be married, caring for a new-born child or expecting one soon, done with education or about to be done, and settled into a long-term job or the role of full-time mother. According to him young people of that time grew up quickly and made serious enduring choices about their lives at a relatively early age.

In contrast, today, the life of a typical 21-year-old is so different he concludes. Marriage is at least five years off, often more. So also is parenthood. Education may last several more years, with intentions to do long undergraduate programs and then taking off-ramping breaks and then post-graduate programs and internships. We see that for this group, job changes are frequent even as they look for not just pay but also fulfilment.

Arnett says that for today’s young people, the road to adulthood is a long one. They do not marry, become parents, and find a long-term job until at least their late twenties. They are spending these years to explore the possibilities available to them in love and work, and move gradually toward making enduring choices. While such freedom to explore different options is exciting, with high hopes and big dreams, it is also a time of anxiety and uncertainty, because their lives are so unsettled, and many of them have no idea where their explorations will lead. So, there are fears and a lot of confusion.

I come in contact with this group ever so often and am so deeply concerned about the lack of life skills that are so necessary for them to cope with this freedom, solve problems and take decisions arising from such an orientation and in general be able to handle the uncertainties and the burden of the choices made by them.

In the next five years, I see more and more urban youth going through what Arnett calls emerging adulthood challenges. Many of them are likely to seek life coaching to develop the much needed life skills to manage this phase of their lives. The case for the arrival of life coaching is very strong.

d) The Muddle in the Middle

While we can expect to witness the challenges of emerging adulthood, we can also expect to see those in the classical “muddle” in organisations going through enormous stress.

Organisation depend the most on their employees in the age group of 30 to 45. Most of the so called top talent in most organisations comprises employees in this age group. The so called middle managers are also in this age group.

Now, this is also a time when so much is happening in the lives of these employees.

They are struggling to find time to nurture their marital relationships, bring up young ones, care for their aged parents, deal with their own health issues and beyond that, cope with the ever increasing job demands.
Whether top talent or not, they are all struggling to discover where they are headed, what career choices they should make, how they should develop themselves to navigate the ever increasing task demands or business uncertainties, how they should future-proof themselves, how they should deal with the inevitable dishonesties of organisational life, where they can find meaning and how they should cope with larger existential questions and so on.

Their managers do not have the time to listen to them or talk to them and these managers may not even enjoy a trust based relationship with them in the first place. So, you see it is lonely not just at the top but also in the middle.

In the next five years, I see this group willing to seek and pay for help in the form of formal coaching and mentoring support. They will look for coaching on tap so to speak. Organisations might even fund this, almost like a perquisite.

In the next five years, self-sponsored coaching will certainly be a reality.

e) Counselling Disguised as Coaching

As the challenges of everyday living increase and transient stress lingers on, more and more executives are likely to need counselling or other forms of therapy. However, many are still far from accepting this need openly.

I have already been seeing a number of instances where executives are sponsored for coaching when they actually need counselling. Organisations do this because they see a genuine need and may be challenged suggesting counselling as an option to the executive. Also, in-house Employee Assistance Programs are currently positioned as something meant only for the juniors.

I predict that in the next five years, a large number of individuals who need counselling will continue to be referred for coaching merely because it may be more acceptable. Whether these coaches will be of help or cause harm is my real worry.

f) Remote Coaching will Gain Popularity

I am a purist as far as coaching is concerned. I strongly believe in doing all coaching work face to face. Our coaching institution also upholds this belief. However, we see the need to change and adapt. Given distances, difficulties in travel and matching schedules and of course costs and access, we see the need to adopt a hybrid approach where face to face sessions are combined with sessions over phone.

In the coming five years, phone coaching will become more and more prevalent and well accepted. I guess, if one were to choose between not receiving help and receiving it over phone, the latter seems quite fine. Of course, making it effective will continue to be a concern.

g) Coaching Project Manager will Emerge

Finally, at least large organisations will see the need for a dedicated person to project manage the large number of external coaching and internal mentoring programs that will keep running through the year. This will end up adding one more specialisation to the already wide array of super specialisations that exist in HR today!

So, you see, the field of coaching is poised for really exciting times in the next five years and beyond.
Effective Coaching: A Powerful Developmental Tool

About the Author

Dr. Vishal Shah

Dr. Vishal is currently Vice President – Leadership & People Sciences at Wipro. He is responsible for leadership development and organization effectiveness initiatives.

Dr. Vishal comes with a blend of corporate and academic backgrounds. Prior to Wipro, Vishal has worked in multiple industries like IT, BPO and Retail. He has also had the opportunity to work in diverse set of roles in Sales, HR and Consulting. A passion for people & people development is a common thread that runs through his career.

Vishal is an alumnus of IIMB’s PGDM and FPM programs. He has published papers in reputed international journals and presented in international conferences. He is also an ICF certified ACC coach and is preparing for his PCC certification.
Effective Coaching: A Powerful Developmental Tool

Executive Coaching is a potent tool in our arsenal for developing leaders. It produces visible impact and change in people. Coaching is essentially about helping people realize their innate potential and increase their effectiveness. However, as with all other approaches, coaching needs to be employed with care to ensure its effectiveness.

Coaching Models

A recommended approach is to follow a framework or model that helps deliver the best possible results out of a session. A model based approach helps in keeping the coaching engagement on track. It also provides a sense of purpose to the coaching session. The notion of “coaching presence” is important in coaching and good frameworks deepen the coach’s presence during the conversations. There are multiple coaching models available and the GROW model is probably the most well-known of them. The essence of most coaching models is presented below –

• **Preparation** – Before the start of a coaching session, it’s critical to prepare for the session. Preparation includes understanding all the available information about a client’s work history or personality profile. This helps the coach build a relevant picture of the client. It further helps in understanding the context of the Client, which is so very important. Preparation also consists of getting into the right frame of mind and shutting down distractions to be able to fully focus on the Client.

• **Building Chemistry** – The chemistry between the coach and the client plays an important role in the success of the coaching engagement. Hence, coaches need to pay attention to elements that build connection and trust with the client. This creates a safe environment where the client feels safe in opening up and talking about issues, challenges and dilemmas. It’s the comfort level between the two that empowers the coach to question and challenge the client.

• **Visualizing the End State** – A key principle of coaching is that movement happens towards a specific goal or set of goals. Hence, the coach helps the client in visualizing the end state of the theme in which the client wants to work. Articulating the end state is a step towards formulating goals. Goals stated clearly, in a SMART format, help in making the clients work purposeful.

• **Shifting Perspectives** – The ability to shift the perspective of the client is a key skill that a coach has. Sometimes reframing the situation or the problem leads to unexpected insights. This can be done through the use of multiple techniques. Probing skills, use of metaphor, visualization techniques, and drawing upon clients’ past experiences— a coach carries many such weapons in her arsenal. Coaches do not just provide support to clients but also challenge their thinking wherever necessary. The sense of movement that a client experiences in the hands of an expert coach is a big benefit that coaching can provide.

• **Providing Support** – As clients work through their goals, they often need support and reassurance. A coach can provide this as and when needed. Affirming and encouraging the efforts that the clients make motivate them to go the distance. A coach also provides the scaffolding necessary for the client to progress in a step by step manner. This in turn improves the chemistry between the coach and client and increases the chances of success of the engagement.

Principles

While model sharpen the results from coaching sessions there are some fundamental principles that anchor the entire process!

For one, coaching cannot be mandated. It’s important that the client accepts a coach’s services on a voluntary basis.
This will happen if in turn coaching is offered as a developmental opportunity in organizations and not as a measure for correction. Once a client has expressed the desire for coaching, then chemistry becomes important and efforts are needed to match her with the right coach.

Maintaining the integrity and ethics of coaching is another important principle. Clients need to be provided a safe, secure and comfortable environment in a coaching session. Confidentiality is bedrock of the coaching relationship. Inevitably, situations emerge where coaches face a dilemma about whether client specific information should be shared with the organization. The guiding principle should always be that unless there is an organizational policy violation, client information needs to be treated with complete confidentiality by the coach. This goes a long way in establishing trust in the coaching process.

Caselets

Once a structured approach backed by underlying principles is followed, coaching can then be applied to various situations effectively. The following caselets outline typical scenarios where executive coaching has had a positive impact on the client’s development.

In one particular case a senior executive was facing difficulties in coping with the expanding demands of his job. There was a pressing need to scale up her bandwidth and capacity. So the client was assisted in identifying the twin goals of “effective delegation” and “coaching his reports to build their skills”. Action plan was identified and tracked. The coach provided the scaffolding for the client to achieve his goals, without prescribing solutions. At the end of the assignment, the client agreed that a second line of two leaders was able to reduce her load and hence increase her bandwidth.

In another case the client was looking for a promotion to the next level. During the context analysis and goal setting it was identified that the client had a strong desire to win a prestigious award within the company. This was then set as the goal to aim for. The coach kept the focus strongly on actions being taken for winning the award and providing motivation when the energy flagged. At the end of the assignment, the client’s team had exceeded performance on multiple parameters, as fallout of targeting the award.

Reflections

These and many such other coaching engagements have also deepened my understanding of myself. It’s not just the client but even the coach who benefits from the coaching experience. As I reflect back I realize that my journey as a coach has been a real journey of personal development. Initially I started out as a typical advisor, trying to solve problems for the client. As my learning progressed I realized that the focus needs to be on the person and not on the situation. It’s about the “Who” and not the “What”. I internalized this in stages. For instance, even after I started focusing on the person or the client I realized that I needed to shift my focus from the client’s problem solving efforts to the client’s inner feelings and motivations. That realization was a clear shift in my learning.

The other learning I had was when I understood that I need not take any performance pressure in my role as a coach. There were times when I had anxieties about whether I would be able to deliver value as a coach to the client. The impact of this was that it made my approach mechanical. On the other hand, the more I relaxed as a coach, the more I shifted my focus to the client. The more I relaxed the more I listened deeply. And the more I heeded to my intuition. This increased the benefit to the client multifold. The coach plays many roles from that of a mirror, to a support to a confidant. I needed to trust my gut and my capabilities as a coach, to be able to play the right role at the right time. I also started understanding why the coaching literature spoke about the need to be a “mindless” coach. It was essentially referring to the need to be completely in the present during a coaching discussion.

The most important learning however was the internalization of the fact that a coaching engagement is a partnership engagement. There are no hierarchies in this and it’s the coach’s responsibility to provide a safe
The coaching relationship works at many levels and the coach needs to be able to address the cognitive as well as the emotional aspects of the client’s current state. For e.g. I needed to use gentle, supportive questions and phrases and use a conversational tone. This would make the client feel confident enough to share and express thoughts and emotions. A genuine shift takes place only when we are able to treat the client as a whole person. And this is also important because the only material that the coach can really work with is the one that the client willingly brings to the table.

Even though I have been coaching for many years now, I still am a student of coaching. Given the richness of experience that coaching provides, I am sure my learning will only accelerate with time.
The Personalized Learning Partnership: The RACSR Framework as a Customized Coaching Solution

About the Author

Kaushik looks after coaching for CCL APAC and is based out of Singapore. The role includes both the induction and preparation of talented leadership coaches to support the mission of CCL as well as the thinking through coaching solutions for clients. He has been in this role for the last five years. His responsibility has provided opportunities for building resources in Singapore, China, Australia, India and other South East Asian countries. He has worked with top teams in the region, facilitating team workshops as well as more in depth coaching conversations. By training he is a psychologist-psychoanalyst, though his scope of work has extended beyond the individual focus to groups and organizations interested in thinking about people issues. He also writes as a case analyst for Business World (India).

Coaching Talent Manager, Singapore, CCL APAC
Before any coaching starts there is a need. An example... A leader in a multi-billion dollar enterprise, who was heading up a ‘futuristic’ initiative, had done a fabulous job of getting it all together. From the word go, he had got his team and resources together, arranged for the manufacturing process, set up the entire flow through to the final delivery and, indeed, built the foundation for the product for years to come. There was only one thing amiss. The team he was leading was far from happy. They kept complaining that the way he related to people was very dis-respectful and rude. The reporting manager was very concerned about the situation. This represents the organization need. If the organization turns a blind eye to this, it may entail a huge cost, hitherto unexamined. There can be many such instances. Here is a sampling of other needs:

• A manager from South Asia was heading up an operation in an African country. His success in his previous assignment did not automatically translate into success in his new role. The people and culture were different, the attitude to work distinct and the relationship to ‘authority’ very unique. Expectations of the management team in the home country were high. What was he to do?

• A very competent woman executive of a large telecom company was on the threshold of being recommended to be on the board of directors. The only thing that was a question mark was her ability to hold her composure under pressure. What could she do to inspire confidence in the decision makers to have her take up the position?

• A functional head was promoted to taking over business responsibility. His ‘partiality’ to the custom solutions group was so strong that in spite of the role change, his behavior was more appropriate to his previous role. How would he make the mental shift to operating from his new role?

Needs can vary for leaders. There are issues connected with lateral movements, vertical movements, facing the unfamiliar, the cross-cultural, and so on. The response to the need is critical. In today’s world we have many options available to us. One of them is to engage the services of a leadership coach. What I will focus on in this article is a framework for leadership coaching that can be used for leaders or groups or teams across the board, once the need for it has been clearly recognized and acted upon. The framework is known as the RACSR model (pronounced ‘racer’) and has evolved at the Center for Creative Leadership over the forty plus years of its existence and focused work in the leadership development space.

Coaching is a very specialized activity that is more than just a conversation. It differs from any other conversation in that it provides a space for the thinking through of areas that are not always very clear; they may be hard to look at; it may involve touching on aspects of oneself that are ‘sensitive spots’ or areas where one is not an expert. Therefore one of the first things to consider is the building of a solid foundation for the Relationship (the first R of the RACSR framework). How does the leader know the coach can be trusted? What is it about the coach that would allow the leader to discuss hard to talk about areas in a way that is open and honest? If there is trust and openness, the space between the coach and the leader can hold many a meaningful conversation. If there are doubts, the conversation itself becomes restricted and consequently will be less valuable for the leader.

The second thing to consider in the RACSR framework is to be able to have a thorough Assessment of the person and the context as completely as possible. The coach needs to ask the leader: What are the facts? Can we get a perspective that is not limited by the views of the leader alone? Can we poll people who have experience with the leader, for their perceptions, collected in a fair and objective manner? Can we use tools for the collection of data/understanding that are tried and tested and capable of eliciting valid information? Can we thoroughly understand the context, the pressures, and the external and internal forces acting in the situation? What are the business realities? How has the organization been doing? This part builds on the
Relationship and in fact reinforces it further: the nature of the inquiry itself shows the quality of the coach’s approach and the ‘learning agility’ that s/he has. The inquiry is not coach led but one which gradually becomes a joint process that both become engaged in, expanding the arena of facts and information.

**Assessment** opens up the space and reinforces the **Relationship** between the leader and the coach. The coach gets a better understanding of the leader and can then draw attention to the way the issues are being framed and thought about. This process begins to Challenge the thinking and assumptions and introduces alternative ways of seeing that expand the potential responses to the situation. Typical questions include: How has the leader been thinking so far? What may he be missing? What are some of the other ways one might frame the issue? What has not been considered? A thorough discussion around this opens up possibilities for both thought and action. The leader begins to see alternative ways of moving forward that are specific to him. He begins to look at what he could do that would make a difference, that would take him to a path hitherto not considered and therefore on a trajectory quite different from the start.

The fourth part of the RACSR framework is about being mindful of the **Support** the leader is likely to need, which will ensure that he is not alone in his addressing the challenges that have been articulated. Here the expanded understanding is going to require a set of actions which may not be very familiar and involve the leader in going outside his so-called comfort zone. Does he need support to move towards what he has challenged himself with? Who will be the best source of support? What will he do to ensure he gets the support he needs? What would be the consequence of not getting support?

Finally, the focus is on **Results**. Narrowing down or converging the focus, the questions are now around: What goals does he feel will be necessary for him as a leader to move towards? Has he been able to spell it out clearly and in a way that is do-able? How will his progress be measured? What will indicate his being successful in his plan? How can he monitor the process regularly?

Our focus has been the individual leader. The framework is one that can be commonly used across leaders in different kinds of organization including for profit, not for profit and government. However, the very essence of coaching is: its being able to address the needs of each leader as a unique person. Often when two individuals put their minds together, as opposed to having to think about oneself alone, the relationship can potentially open up previously un-thought of areas. This is where the skill of the coach comes in to expand thinking and the inherent possibilities in a context, making the effectiveness of the leader far more than what would have been. The art of creating such a space is at the very core of meaningful coaching.
Coaching Top Teams: Perspectives and Insights

About the Author

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Santhosh Babu is the Managing Director of OD Alternatives (ODA), a consultive firm working in the area of leadership development, culture change and Organisation Transformation. He is the author of the book “Coaching the art of developing leaders” published by Wiley and wrote a column in Business Today called “Buddha in the boardroom”. Santhosh is passionate about helping leaders create purposeful and sustainable organisations.
Coaching Top Teams: Perspectives and Insights

What is the best way for senior executives to make sure that they perform at their best continuously without sacrificing who they are? Go for advance studies? Hire a consultant? Take a sabbatical? Coaching could be the answer. Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman of Google, when asked what was the best advice he was ever given, has been reported to reply, "Hire a coach." He continued to add that his immediate reaction was not favorable, which happens to be the most common reaction to such suggestion. Nearly two-thirds of CEOs do not receive coaching or leadership advice from outside consultants, according to the latest study from the Center for Leadership Development and Research at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Coaching is known more as a tool that supports an individual and helps raise awareness and accountability. There are enough data, material and cases that explore the one on one aspect of coaching. Here in this article I am articulating and sharing my organisation’s experience of using coaching as a tool to build leadership capability among CXO teams as a group learning experience. This is different from group coaching as still the interaction is one on one but multiple coaches coach the entire leadership team.

Here we are bringing up three aspects; coaching; leadership development philosophies and the role of top teams in building an organisation culture.

What We Mean by Coaching

Coaching has multiple meaning even today among leaders in organisations. How we see coaching is a great place to start from. In a coaching session the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Therefore, creating awareness and clarity and building accountability on actions the client chooses is the role of the coach.

Coaching accelerates the client’s progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choices. The process focuses on where clients are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future, recognizing that results are a matter of the client’s intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach’s efforts and application of the coaching process.

This means we do not get into situations where the organisation wants the Coach to "guide" the client or "advise" the client or "teach" the client. We strongly believe that the client has all the answers and the role of the coach is to create a safe space and help the client to find their answers for themselves. Recently I met a CEO who wanted coaching support for him and his nine direct reports and he clearly told me "I do not want to shape an agenda for this coaching. Each individual will decide what they want to work on with their coach and the organisation does not want to know what they are working on". This was music to my ears, as I was not pushed to prove the ROI of the coaching intervention.

While there are many methodologies and philosophies coaching use, we follow a Triple Loop learning approach. The first loop of learning is the cause and effect learning and it is about the "doing" aspect of coaching. "I do not tend to prioritise work so I am going to prioritise now" is an example of single loop learning. The double loop learning is when the client understands the beliefs and values associated with non-prioritisation and create new set of beliefs and values that helps prioritisation. The Triple loop learning is when the client learns about how he learns and who is he being. Here is the "being" part creates a deeper shift and transformation in the client.
Top Teams and Leadership Development

Now what are some of the collective tasks of the top team (CEO and his direct reports) and how coaching could help create a top team that build both objective (the performance) and the subjective (culture) part of the organisation?

These talks are the “doing” part of any leadership teams

1. The need to move from functional leaders to enterprise leaders.
2. The need to role model and drive a differentiated culture
3. The need to drive change and innovation
4. The need to build a leadership pipeline

So what are the “being” parts of the leadership teams? Who they should "be" when they do what they need to do?

1. Self-awareness and authenticity
2. Purpose and value driven
3. Listening from deep empathy and curiosity

The best way to help leadership teams to demonstrate these being and doing aspect is through coaching, as there are no standard learning modules that could be contextual and deeply transforming. Let me share three cases where we coached the leadership teams and then I will share some insights from these interventions.

Top Team Coaching - Cases

The senior leadership team of WNS wanted to build a coaching culture in the organisation and also build capabilities in their leadership team to navigate through the VUCA world and make WNS future ready. The intervention started with coaching the CXO team for six months and coaches were given to their leaders in India, Europe and US. After six months of the intervention, the leadership team felt that they would like to build a coaching culture within WNS and they went through a coach certification. Once they created an internal pool of coaches at a CXO level, it was easier for them to enroll others into a coaching culture. According to Swaminathan R, Chief People Officer of WNS who is a trained coach now “Coaching is the only sure shot leadership intervention tool at CXO level and has sustainability over any other method of leadership development intervention”

Mercedes Benz India as a part of their global transformation initiative wanted to create a mindset shift among their dealer principles (people who own their dealerships) and found coaching would be an effective tool to help dealer principles to empower their CEOs and build a professional culture in their dealerships. The twenty dealer principles in the country went through one on coaching for six months. Mercedes feels at a senior leadership level coaching was an ideal intervention for their dealer principles. Boris Fritz, VP Sales and Network Development, Mercedes Benz says, “We, at Mercedes-Benz India were planning for the next wave of growth with a clear long-term strategy. Our dealer partners play a vital role in our business. Hence, we wanted to assist our investors transform their business from personally (owner)-driven to a new way of doing business, which is professionally managed and aims to aid future growth. The coaching sessions were focused on their personal growth journey and also supported them in transforming their dealerships. I personally feel coaching is an effective tool to build leadership capability at senior levels”

Aircel wanted to have a leadership intervention for 20 people who are CXO minus one level in the organisation and decided one on one coaching would be an ideal methodology. Here all the 20 participants were coached for six months. Coaches met the managers of the clients to get sense of expectations and then created the coaching objectives and agenda with each of their clients. “Coaching is a critical managerial tool in today’s competitive world to further develop leaders who are already successful. It is important for the leaders to get into the stage of internalization for self-development, which would give them the opportunity to step back from their day-to-day minutiae of the business and look at the wider picture. It is about giving leaders the space to talk openly and get
help and support in “raising their game” and “taking the next step forward” by leveraging their unique and individual leadership styles.

“At Aircel we believe a coaching culture is very important for the business to succeed in meeting the day-to-day challenges. Coaching for Excellence as an initiative was introduced at Aircel with the aim to improve the leadership skills, establish new perspectives, and above all, help leaders reach their maximum potential in a given scenario. The objective was to have an intervention aimed at the leadership discovering and reflecting for answers internally,” says the Aircel CHRO, Dr. Sandeep Gandhi.

Insights and Recommendations

Insights from coaching CXOs as a leadership development intervention

1. When a group of people from an organisation is being coached, it’s good to have a workshop to kick-start the coaching journey. The workshop usually focuses on self-awareness, the legacy the leaders want to leave behind and how to get maximum benefit from the coaching intervention. At the end of the six-month coaching journey, it’s good to have a closing workshop where participants could share their insights, improvements and future plans. Both in the case of Aircel and Mercedes we did this and found extremely useful.

2. If possible do a verbal 360 through one on one meetings or telephonically. This is much more powerful than any digital 360 assessment. The coach talks to 6 to 7 people and gathers data about the client and creates an initial report that is used to set the coaching objectives.

3. Chemistry between the coach and client is very important. So allow the clients to choose their coaches by giving them profiles of three coaches. They could also have an initial call with the coach to see if both of them are excited to work together. If the client chooses a coach the accountability is with the client from the very beginning.

4. Make it contextual yet personal. While each organisational context would vary and one could surely bring in the organisational needs, the competencies required and the business situations into the coaching intervention still make sure that you make it personal also. This means the client can still drive the agenda and use coaching to build overall satisfaction in his or her life. I strongly believe if you improve one area of your life, other areas also will get improved.

It's time we should rethink the way we develop our top teams. Coaching all the team members might be the right thing to do in your organisation context.
Coaching in the Digital Age: Catalyst CCCP @ Wipro Ltd

About the Author

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Tanaz is a part of the leadership development team of Wipro Limited (NYSE: WIT) which is a global information technology, consulting and business process services company with a workforce of over 170,000 serving clients in 175+ cities, across 6 continents.

As a learning and development professional, Executive Coaching & Leadership Development is her areas of interest. She is an alumnus of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and in her association with the organization for the past 21 years, she has had the privilege to partner many transformational assignments in Human Resources function, apart from her current involvement in the leadership development field.
Coaching in the Digital Age:
Catalyst CCCP @ Wipro Ltd

Abstract

The title, “Coaching in the Digital Age” reads like a paradox. On closer view, Coaching is a complimentary and crucial skill to possess, if one wants to emerge successful in the VUCA world, both as an individual and as an organization. Presented in the article is a Coaching program run at Wipro Ltd by the Leadership & People Sciences team in partnership with the Quality Team called Catalyst – Change Coach Certification Program.

The article seeks to enumerate the following aspects
1. The Principles behind the Design of the CCCP
2. The Workshop Design
3. The Post Workshop Learning – Journey Approach
4. Assessment Methodologies deployed in the program
5. Learnings from the Program

“There’s always a moment that separates the past from the future, and that moment is now.”
Aniekee Tochukwu

Coaching @ Wipro Ltd:

Coaching has always been a part of Wipro’s cultural landscape, metamorphosing into various forms, either in training sessions or in leadership journey programs.

The Quality function, in 2015, faced a peculiar situation. They had 50 odd Change Coaches who were facilitating an important organization wide initiative in Delivery Transformation called NextGen. These Change Coaches, by education and experience were specialist in the hard skills (Analysis, Nos, Processes) but had head space for increased effectiveness when it came to the soft skills (Facilitation & Coaching).

It was also clear to the senior leadership in the Quality team that unless the Change Coaches focused on developing Coaching skills, their effectiveness was going to be limited. The team was keen to undertake a program which was a lot more structured than an informal, loosely stringed together training session on Coaching.

The Quality function, in partnership with the Leadership and People Sciences team, hence decided to roll out a Coaching Certification program for their Change Coaches.

The unique feature of this program was the way it was structured and executed.
Design Principles for CCCP – Catalyst:

3 Design principles guided us in our journey to craft the Catalyst Program. All 3 were centered around the Change Coaches.

- Owning Change at an individual, account or team level
- Develop, Practice and Use Coaching Skills
- Stakeholder interface would feed forward into the design of the Program

To make meaningful shift in behavior, it was necessary to craft a Learning Journey for all Change Coaches.

The Workshop Design – Catalyst:

The one day workshop design was focused on achieving the following 3 objectives:

- Develop the participants level of Change Readiness as assessed via the Change Readiness Inventory
- Develop the participants level of Coaching Skills Readiness using the GROW Model of Coaching
- Facilitate discussions for ways in which they can to be more effective

All 50 + Change Coaches went through the 1 day workshop where with the help of the Change Readiness Inventory, role plays with the GROW model of Coaching, videos and discussions on Change Agility, the need for superior Coaching Skills coupled with Change Agility was made.

In addition to facilitating workshops across locations, the Leadership and People Sciences team did a small research project to understand the Effectiveness of the Role of the Change Coaches as perceived by their key stakeholders namely the Change Leaders (CL’s) and the Change Agents (CA’s). Reaching out to 30+ CL’s and CA’s across 10 accounts, gave us insights which corroborated the findings of our workshops, thereby strengthening our design of the post workshop learning journey.

Shadowing the Change Coaches was also done for 5% of the Change Coaches. This gave us insights into how their day was structured, their coaching interactions frequency and effectiveness, their meetings with stakeholders etc.

The Post Workshop Learning – Journey Approach:

The individual results of the Change Readiness Inventory that the Coaches went through (in the 1 day workshop) along with the results of the Study & Shadowing, helped us carve out the learning areas for the Change Coaches. For e.g. – Out of the 7 attributes of Change Readiness, majority of participants scored “Tolerance to Ambiguity” at low levels. In addition to this, the aspects of Optimism and Change Agility were explored. Armed with this insight, we went about creating a Learning Journey for all Change Coaches. This included Weekly Learning Plans (included videos and articles on relevant topics) followed by an Expert Webinar where the same concepts would be debriefed so that learning was contextualized for the Change Coaches.

Whilst the learning journeys were designed for teams, the one on one coaching sessions and the peer coaching sessions were designed for the individual Change Coaches. These Coaching practise sessions assisted the Change Coaches in getting a better understanding of the Coaching skills (Active listening, Empathy, Ability to ask Insightful Questions) as they went through their own sessions and gave their observations on the coaching sessions their peer’s facilitated.

In addition to the learning journey sessions, there were sessions facilitated by Devender Malhotra (Chief Quality Officer – Wipro Ltd) and Rituparna Ghosh (General Manager – Agile) outlining the successes of the Quality team in 2015 and detailing the integral role for the team in achieving Ambition 15X20.

The learning Journey commenced in Dec 2015 and ended in April 2016.
Assessment Methodologies deployed in the Catalyst Program:

Come May 2016, we put all Change Coaches through 4 assessment modules to check their application of learnings on the job.

Fig 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1: Peer Coaching</th>
<th>Activity 2: One-on-One Coaching</th>
<th>Activity 3: Reflection On Learning</th>
<th>Activity 4: Reflection On Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate your learning effectiveness of coaching skills through peer coaching sessions</td>
<td>Demonstrate learning effectiveness of coaching skills through one-one-one coaching sessions</td>
<td>Submit a write-up on your learning experience of the program</td>
<td>Submit a write-up on how you have applied the learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanaz will reach out and block your calendar starting May 2, 2016, in case of any schedule conflict, one more alternate choice will be offered.</td>
<td>Lakshmi will reach out and block your calendar starting May 9, 2016. In case of any schedule conflict, one more alternate choice will be offered.</td>
<td>Please use the attached template. Deadline: 16 May, 2016 To: <a href="mailto:manasvi.rao@wipro.com">manasvi.rao@wipro.com</a></td>
<td>Please use the attached template. Deadline: 23 May, 2016 To: <a href="mailto:manasvi.rao@wipro.com">manasvi.rao@wipro.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the fig 1.1. Above, we had 2 reflection modules and 2 Coaching modules as the assessment methodology. Fig 1.2 shows the certification process status as of 15 June 2016

Fig 1.2

CERTIFICATION STATUS

Completion percentage 69%
40 out of 58 participants have completed all the requirements towards change Coach Certification

Average % age scores for each quartile are
70%
63%
59%
51%

Assignment-type wise completion percentages

There were 3 types of assignments - (1) peer-to-peer coaching (2) one-on-one coaching and (3) writing reflection papers for learning and for application

Certificate of Excellence
Awarded based on interviews in presence of a master coach and a functional head

Shortlisted for interview
Top 15 out of 40 participants are shortlisted for interview out of which receive Certificate of Excellence

Out off for marks has been set of 6.5% for the purpose of shortlisting
The Change Coaches will qualify for 2 levels of Certification:

1. **Certification of Excellence** – For the Top 10% of the Change Coaches

2. **Certificate of Completion** – For all who successfully complete the 4 modules of Assessment.

We are currently at the stage where we have identified the top 15 Change Coaches who will go through for the interview stage of the assessment.

**Learnings from the Program – Catalyst**

From the Leadership and People Sciences team, there are 3 of us, who have designed and facilitated the Catalyst Program in partnership with the Quality team. The learnings for all of us personally as leaders and collectively as a team have been numerous. I have captured the top 3 learnings which stood out:

- **Coaching, just like learning, needs to be contextualized in order to be truly effective**: The Change Coaches cannot be seen as pure play coaches, with no stake in the outcome, as they are tasked with an organizational mandate. Having said that, effective Coaching Skills like Active Listening, Empathy, and Ability to ask Insightful Questions make them so much more effective in their role.

- **Change happens, but at its time and its pace. All we can control is our effort, involvement and passion**: When we started the program, we faced widespread scepticism about the Learning Journey approach. There were substantial number of Change Coaches who did not believe in the methodology. However, when they experienced the power of Coaching, in the “here and now” moments of the Coaching sessions, there were quite a few converts.

- **We cannot WIN all**: Inspite of running an exhaustive Learning Journey based program interspersed with Coaching sessions, 2 of the Change Coaches (out of 58) have seen little value in the program. We plan to have detailed discussion with them to understand the area of mismatch between their expectations and our program design.

---

The best learning I read was from a Change Coach and I have reproduced it here, ad verbatim:

> “Change Catalyst certification journey has been transformational and I am confident I will be using it in every walk of life (even in personal life)”
References:


(1) From web site for leadership class taught by Associate Professor T. J. Jenney at Purdue www.tech.purdue.edu/ols/courses/ols386/crispo/changereadinesstest.doc

(2) http://www.performanceconsultants.com/grow-model


(4) A shout out to Lakshmi R Acharya lakshmi.acharya@wipro.com & Pranab Chakraborty pranab.chakraborty@wipro.com of LPS team @ Wipro Ltd for successfully designing & facilitating this Program in partnership with Neeta Thakur neeta.thakur@wipro.com of the Quality team @ Wipro Ltd.
Coaching in L&T

About the Authors

Yogi Sriram, is Senior Vice President – Corporate Human Resources, Larsen & Toubro Limited, a USD 16 billion conglomerate, with global operations. He also leads a world class Institute of Project Management.

He has a B.A Economics (SRCC), Masters in PM & IR (TISS), L.L.B. and MBA – FMS (Delhi University), a Diploma in Training and Development from ISTD. He is accredited in psychometric testing techniques such as MBTI (NTL Maine US), FIRO-B. He had been admitted as the first HR professional in India as Fellow of AIMA.

Mr. Sriram has over 39 years of Human Resources experience, of which 26 are in Leading Human Resources teams at ABB, BP, Taj and L&T. He has expertise in succession planning, career sculpting, team coaching, talent management and change management. He has published papers in journals of international repute and has laid the foundation for most of L&T’s signature leadership programs.

Prakash Krishnamoorthy has over 7 years of professional experience out of which he has been in the Human Resources function for past 5 years.

He holds an Engineering degree in Electronics & Communication from Anna University and is an MBA (HR & Finance) from ICFAI Business School.

He started his career as a Software Engineer with Infosys wherein he was involved in JAVA programing & testing.

Currently working at Larsen & Toubro Limited, Prakash functions as an Executive Assistant to Mr. Yogi Sriram – SVP, CHR. Additionally, he is also responsible for Leadership Talent Acquisition and Young Professional Talent Hiring.

Having started his career in the Leadership Talent Acquisition team he was initially involved in sourcing and mapping profiles with relevant roles and has slowly graduated to compensation negotiations with leadership hires. He has gained a good exposure in liaising with the international law firms for employment agreements and separations. He is also responsible for hiring fresh graduates and Brand Building at Engineering Colleges.

Working as an EA to Mr. Sriram has helped Prakash in learning high-impact decision making. He has gained experience in projects of great magnitude and complexity by being involved at the Apex-level for Strategic and Operational initiatives.
Coaching in L&T

Vandana Hebbar holds MBA(HR) degree from Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneshwar.

She has an overall work experience of two years. Having joined L&T a year back through the Campus route, she has been responsible for two roles, (1) Executive Assistant to Mr. Yogi Sriram – SVP, CHR; (2) Generalist role for Head Office HR.

Her main focus areas include improving new joinee experience, sourcing & screening profiles for various positions at middle management level, employee engagement, rewards and other HR processes at Head Office. In addition to this she assists the SVP, CHR in key projects and activities.

An avid reader, Vandana enjoys music, painting and sports. She has won several accolades for singing. She also has won awards in inter college table tennis, volleyball and throw ball tournaments.
Coaching in L&T

Definition

- The process of observing an individual perform a task and then giving feedback to improve performance and overcome shortcomings
- Enabling people perform to give their best to meet their organization’s goals and their personal goals
- A dyadic approach to achieve high performance by leveraging people’s potential to the maximum possible extent while ensuring their personal development.
- Getting people to discover their own strengths and improvement areas. It involves helping people to set goals for their improvement while at the same time achieving the tangible goal of the organisation.
- To help people to function at a higher level and using a self-directed methodology of helping them to grow as individuals by gaining self-confidence and affirmation.

Classifying Coaching
Performance to enhance an employee’s performance in their current role at work, to increase their effectiveness and productivity at work.

Skills to focus on the core skills an employee needs to perform in his/her role.

Life to explore what they want in life and how they might achieve their aspirations and fulfil their needs.

Career to understand the world of work in order to make career, educational and life decisions.

Encouraging Beneficial for employees who have begun their career and have lots to learn

Training Works well for employees whose skills have gaps with respect to required competencies, or those employees who want to move to a new function.

Mentoring Works well for employees who are at the peak of their learning curve but need new opportunities to widen their horizon

Counselling This approach is common in coaching and is used in almost all cases in synchronization with other approaches. For effective counselling, the coach requires a high level of empathy and effective listening skills for the coach

Self an individual uses to facilitate her own process to move forward

Manager or HR a manager who learns and uses coaching skills to manage and lead his team; a human resources professional who learns and uses coaching skills to facilitate a single coaching conversation, known as spot coaching; or an individual who learns and uses coaching skills to assist a new hire in quickly building her proficiency

Outsourced to coaching firm is provided by a professionally certified coach who works outside of the organization at a coaching firm

Coaching at L&T
1. L&T Immersion Program:
Mentorship program for Graduate Engineer Trainees

The L&T Immersion Program is a two month paid summer internship for technical under graduates comprising of a live project of business importance, which emphasises the technological edge of the organisation. This also helps in introducing these youngsters to L&T culture.

Employees experienced in L&T, good in technical knowledge, with patience, the ability to transfer their knowledge with “easy to understand” communication, are identified as Project Guides, two months in prior to the interns being inducted. They play the role of a mentor, provide the interns with deep insights into the organisation and work towards the intern’s overall development and rounded experience. Project Guides undergo a 1 day session to understand the L&T Immersion Program in letter and spirit, digest the challenges involved in making this program work and understand expectations of interns from this program, captured through a survey. Interns connect with their Project Guide 15 to 30 days prior to their joining via video or a phone call, which acts as an Ice-Breaker and an expectation sharing session. This initial meeting sets the context and line of direction for both - the Project Guides and Interns.
A Buddy is assigned by the Project Guide who not only facilitates smooth on-boarding on the date of joining, but also helps the Intern on project related matters in the absence of a Project Guide. A common Facebook page is also created for the Project Guides, Interns and the HR coordinator to help get connected virtually all the time, to address any emerging challenges related to the projects.

During the program the Project Guide is required to provide cross-functional networking opportunities to the Intern within the same or different business to highlight the diverse nature and degree of offerings by L&T. The Intern gets an opportunity to participate in technical seminars on contemporary topics and cultural/sport activities within the organisation. The intern is also given access to L&T’s “ATL- Any Time Learning” an online learning platform and any two learning modules (Behavioural, Technical and Management subjects), as assigned by the Project Guide. Shop floor or site visit is organized for the Guide and Intern to help them experience the design taking final shape as product and equipment.

The program contains one Mid-Term evaluation followed by a final evaluation in the 7th week of the program. At the end of the internship, the project guide in consultation with a subject matter expert will evaluate the project of the intern and recommend him/her for a Pre Placement Offer. Acceptance of Pre-Placement Offer will ensure availability of tried and tested talent over a period of two months to the concerned department. The interns learn about applied statistics by gathering insights from their projects and also learn project writing skills. They learn about the real world, customer expectations and the demands of business. They get their first glimpse of a “corporate culture”.

2. Prasun

Mentorship Program for MBA recruits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>The Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance, Career</td>
<td>Encouraging, Mentoring</td>
<td>Manager and HR</td>
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Prasun (meaning – blossoming) is a yearlong mentoring program during which Mentors are assigned to every MBA recruit (Mentee). This was initiated to help the MBA recruits seamlessly assimilate and adapt to L&T’s system, practices and culture.

High potential employees who have been successful in their roles and who have undergone the Leadership pipeline program offered by the Company are chosen as Mentors. Care is taken to see that the Mentors are based in the same location or place of positioning as the Mentees. This provides an opportunity to the Mentees to reach out to the Mentors as and when required and discuss any concerns, issues, aspirations, training needs etc. with them, with adequate face time.

Mentor & Mentee are formally introduced to one another at a structured 2 day orientation program at L&T’s Leadership Development Academy. Their role is also clearly defined during this introduction. During the course of their first interaction, they arrive at a social contract promising to meet one another at least once a month.

The Mentors during their monthly meetings, share a lot of information about L&T’s culture and businesses. This prepares them for the business realities and enables them to respond appropriately. Monthly feedback in the form of written reports are shared every month with a very senior employee of the Company. Mentees are encouraged to identify their training needs and communicate the same to the Mentors. The Mentors also suggest training which they perceive would benefit the Mentee in realizing their full potential.

These requirements are addressed by conducting a two day intervention after six months of the Mentees joining the Company. During this intervention, Mentees & Mentors also candidly share their feedback of their experience. With this year long program, L&T hopes to develop employable & deployable talent pool in a quick timeframe and build L&T’s brand as an employer across premier campuses.

The learning in this program is about team work, social intelligence and translating the conceptual inputs of an MBA programme to a work context and business
3. Leadership Development Program (LDP)

Grooming young leaders to take up future business leadership roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>The Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills, Career, Life</td>
<td>Training, Mentoring</td>
<td>Outsourced to coaching firm</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Leadership Development Programme, initially designed by McKinsey and now modified and delivered by Corporate HR, Learning & Development of L&T, is an exercise intended to prepare selected individuals for the mantle of higher level leadership positions.

The 8 to 9 month programme is well spaced out with monthly coaching sessions by senior and experienced Behavioural Coaches. Four Learning Forums and several Workshops all geared to providing participants with knowledge and skills relevant to future Leadership roles. The individual also undertakes a Breakthrough Project that may extend beyond the 9 months of the programme's duration.

The process begins with identification of the learning edges through a 270 degree feedback process and MBTI (psychometric instrument). The focus on the Breakthrough Project (BTP) which addresses the participants' Learning Edges and is aligned to their respective Business Division's (IC's) strategy, is very apt. The BTP provides a live laboratory for the participant to apply his/her learning in a real life situation. Newer and newer learning dimensions are introduced at every coaching session. The coach & the participant share thoughts and exchange ideas prior to each Forum & the workshop to maximize the learning for the participant. After the sessions the new learning and insights are, further, reinforced at the coaching sessions. The process primarily focuses on the leader's mind-set, his/her demonstrated behaviour and overall personality.

There are at least ten key support mechanisms which may seem intangible but which are actually quite tangible and weave a developmental web tightly, that helps in driving this process

1. The support to the L&T LDP is at the apex level.
2. Pride and self–esteem of having been handpicked from across an ocean of talented performers.
3. Participants' will to make a difference is evident in every interaction.
4. Guidance brings about a major difference in the mind-set of the participant.
5. Encouragement from the superiors to the participant.
6. Best in class learning system, tools and processes which are customized to leave an indelible mark on the minds and hearts of the participants.
7. The customization of unlearning and learning by seeing through a mirror and reflecting upon the experiences.
8. The laboratory to apply the learnings and show tangible improvements.
9. The pressure to bring in the change and relentless focus in crisis situations as well.
10. Integrating the entire ecosystem.

The Leadership Development Program (LDP), the L&T coaching intervention, is therefore unique: unique in its process dimensions; unique in its rigor of deployment, and unique for the ecosystem, to make it successful. The future leaders are also guided by a Senior Executive of the company to guide the individual on his/her professional competencies, career and BTP, during LDP. They learn leadership behaviours appropriate for success at the work place, about themselves and the discipline that is required for success. This is program is positioned as Step 2 in a seven Step leadership program and is a vital contributor to the leadership pipeline.
Coaching Works: Insights and Leadership Development Through Individual and Group Coaching

Akanksha Core Team

**Ashu Khanna**
(PCC) has been partnering as a Leadership Coach with senior executives for over a decade. Ashu is the President of the ICF Mumbai Chapter. She is also a Chartered Accountant.

**Saraswathi Anand**
is a PCC Coach, with a decade of experience as a Leadership Coach and is the Secretary and Head of Projects of the ICF Mumbai Chapter.

**Rajiv Ranjan**
is a member of the Management Committee of the ICF Mumbai Chapter heading the membership function and has been an Executive Coach for the last two years after a long stint as a senior professional for 35+ years in the textile industry in India.

**Parineeta Mehra**
is an ACC coach and a Marshal Goldsmith Certified coach, with 20 years of experience in various capacities across industries and is part of the Programs Team of the ICF Mumbai Chapter.
Background

The ICF Mumbai Chapter was formed in January 2015 with the vision to create awareness and understanding of coaching in Society. Additionally, as a chapter, one of our goals is to share learnings amongst coaches to build coaching skills.

As a Chapter, it has been our endeavour to contribute to society and during the International Coaching Week (ICW) in May 2015, we connected with NGOs and offered pro-bono coaching services. Following the success of the group and individual coaching sessions conducted during the Coaching Week, we were approached by a well established and reputed institution, to develop their leadership team. This NGO is doing significant work in providing education to under privileged children, in Mumbai and Pune.

This case study focuses on our year long intervention with the NGO.

Objective

The engagement objective was to develop leadership capability of the team.

Desired outcomes of the assignment

• Greater ownership and accountability across teams
• Openness and adaptability to change
• Maintaining good interpersonal relations within teams

Scope

The organization was keen to develop the leadership team of 25-30 mid to senior level managers. Majority of the team had been working with the NGO between 3-7 years, while some of the team members had been there since inception. The age group of the participants was between 28 to 55 years.

Methodology

The target group was a varied mix of middle and senior management employees with mixed level of self awareness and internal assessment processes had been introduced only recently. The organization was keen to align the leaders and teams. We decided to use an integrated approach of group coaching complemented with individual coaching sessions. The insights and actions steps from group coaching were supported and followed through in the individual coaching sessions.

The structure was as follows:

• One group coaching session every quarter
• 2 Individual coaching sessions between each group coaching session
• Group coaching sessions were facilitated by two senior coaches for each module.
• We requested Chapter members to volunteer for individual coaching

Group Coaching

The group coaching sessions were designed on the basis of the core objective, desired outcomes, understanding of the team mix and stage of the organization. Recognising the need to create self awareness, to
align each team member and identify and take ownership as leaders, the group coaching sessions themes were designed as follows:

- Be Who I Am (Self Awareness)
- Alignment with organizational vision & values
- Team collaboration
- Effective Leadership

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- Team collaboration
- Effective Leadership

Group Coaching Sessions

Be Who I Am (Self Awareness)

The objective of this session was to create awareness of the Self. To develop leadership, it is critical for each person to understand their core values, strengths, limitations, and unique contribution to the organization.

To build trust and rapport, we asked each team member to acknowledge each other. This created an awareness of team perceptions and sense of value for each participant. We effectively used activities to create space for reflection for the participants to identify their personal strengths and limitations, in a symbolic manner. For example, one person shared that, although he was perceived as prickly, he was actually sweet on the inside. Sharing of such examples created an environment of awareness and openness. From this level of awareness, the participants were asked to explore their unique attributes that could be leveraged for the benefit of the team. This aligned the participants to each other’s value proposition.

Our Learnings

Prior to having the 1st group coaching session, we had spent time with the core team of the client organization to understand their needs and also agreed on the proposed design. However, during the session, we realized that the participants were uncertain about what to expect, as they did not know how ‘group coaching’ would be different from any training program. Majority of the participants were sensitive in nature and needed a higher sense of space and safety. Therefore, to establish trust and intimacy, it would have been helpful to have an orientation session for the participants.

Alignment with Vision

The objective of this session was to align individuals to the organizational vision and values. With new people on board, it was important for the leadership team to understand how the team connects with the vision; understand how they perceive the organization today and what the organization needs to do to bridge the gap.

We worked with them individually and in smaller groups as requested by the organization to ensure a sense of safety and alignment. Participants were asked to visualise the organization and one participant shared that she saw the organization as a tree that had grown with several branches, symbolizing growth. Participants...
explored how to enable such growth. Each group shared their thoughts with the larger group to leverage the collective wisdom.

**Our Learnings**

Prior to this session, the design was shared with only one of the key stakeholders. Midway through the session, we realized that the group was uncomfortable with individual focused questions. We adapted the approach by forming small groups to ensure an effective outcome.

We learnt the significance of establishing the agreement with the client and ensuring that all relevant parties work as partners - coaches, participants and key stakeholders. When the partnership is missing, or is only between some parties, the space for exploration gets impacted. At every stage, it is critical to establish the agreement with various stakeholders. The impact of shift in coaching presence was visible on the effectiveness of the group.

**Team Collaboration**

The objective of this group coaching session was collaboration with and between teams. As the organization was on a growth path, it required seamless intra and inter team collaboration.

A combination of activities and coaching questions enabled the group to introspect individually and collectively and create action plans. The group learnt best with activities and group work peppered with coaching questions. Sports and sportsman spirit was chosen as the main theme for the exercises for participants to identify the team behaviours that the sportsman symbolizes. Many people were inspired by Sachin Tendulkar for his teaming.

**Our Learnings**

By the 3rd session, recognizing the need for partnership between stakeholders and adapting to the needs of the audience, we modified our approach to give higher space for reflection and exploration. The participants worked in smaller groups and we were sensitive while asking direct and provocative questioning. During the workshop, we mixed coaching questions with exercises for reflection and sharing. This blend in approach softened the space and enabled better trust within the group.

**Effective Leadership**

In the last group coaching session, the objective was to identify leadership qualities of individuals and leveraging them as a team for effective leadership. Participants shared their success story as a leader in small groups and the group identified leadership qualities which existed within the organization and could be leveraged for the organization. They explored how to contribute to the vision of the organization individually and collectively as leaders. To enable this, each team created their action plans and also discussed how they could support each other in the same.

The coaching space and presence allowed the collective wisdom to surface and enabled them to take ownership for accomplishment of the organizational vision. The CEO acknowledged the achievement and passion of the team to stretch their goals and aim for a higher and larger vision together as a team. Using coaching presence and direct communication, shifted the energy in the space.

**Our Learnings**

Prior to the last session, we had an open and direct conversation with the key stakeholders communicating what was visible as a parallel process in the coaching space. We realised that there was a need for all parties involved to take ownership for the success of the workshop. During the workshop, as we observed the shift in confidence of the participants direct communication and powerful questioning triggered them to take that leap of faith to articulate their desire to expand their vision and work collaboratively and with synergy.
Individual Coaching

The organization identified 21 coachees for individual coaching who were also part of the group coaching sessions. From the Chapter, 15 coaches volunteered for individual coaching. Coaching developmental areas were identified for the individuals by the organization and the themes and action steps from the group coaching sessions provided grounds for exploration and self reflection. The coaches contributed 67 hours of coaching and some of the coachees have shown change. Post the individual coaching journey, many coachees wrote in expressing their gratitude for having had the individual sessions such as:

“This has been a beautiful process and journey of self realization which has helped me understand the significance of positive articulation, putting my thoughts down and applying it. It has brought in a lot of clarity and confidence in me – personally and professionally; and helped me identify, filter and articulate the larger goals and then keeping smaller goals and actionables that will help move towards them.”

Conclusion

As a testimonial to the effectiveness of the coaching intervention, the client organization is exploring how the ICF Mumbai Chapter could continue partnering with them. They are also working on creating a new strategy recognising the preparedness of the organization and desire of the team as a whole to expand and achieve a higher vision.

As a young Chapter, taking on such an initiative for the first time only with volunteers, we learnt that the key points for designing and executing a successful coaching intervention, are:

- Orienting the organization and audience on what is coaching and how is it different from other interventions.
- Ensuring that the coaching agreement is established at every step with key stakeholders and between facilitators.
- Staying focused on the context of the worship and keeping that alive during the session
- All stakeholders and coaches work as partners at all stages of the assignment and take collective ownership of the success of the process
- Designing a clear framework by identifying key themes for each group session and agreeing the same with the key stakeholders
- Holding a safe space through coaching presence and dancing in the moment for the group to explore safely and create awareness
- Direct Communication with key stakeholders
- Adapting to the different learning styles of the individual / group.
- Consistent review and monitoring for group and individual sessions.

Client Testimonial

“Thanks to the ICF Mumbai team of coaches, we were able to invest in the development of our mid- to senior-level management team through a combination of individual and group coaching methodology. This created a space for people to explore how to maximize not just their own capability but to identify as a team what would enable us to bring out the best of our collective efforts for the organization. The ICF team was flexible, thoughtful and intentional in their approach despite this being a voluntary effort and we look forward to continuing our partnership with them in the years to come.” Vandana Goyal, CEO Akanksha Foundation
Case Study

About the Authors

Over two decades of experience in a corporate career and as an independent consultant, Suraj has worked across Asia Pacific, Middle East Africa, Europe and India and has been part of organizations such as IBM, GE, Airtel, Escorts and VNL in senior roles spanning Sales, Marketing, Management Consulting, Operations and Strategy Planning.

In his last role, he headed International Sales for VNL, a telecom infrastructure product company with full P&L responsibility and was responsible for setting up the Distribution Channels across 15 countries in the EMEA region besides selling to telecom operators in those regions.

He did his B.Tech (Mech) from IIT (BHU), Varanasi and MBA from MDI, Gurgaon (Marketing and Strategy). A certified coach (NEWS/CLI/RCS) and trainer (Dale Carnegie) for senior management, Suraj has been a consultant to Promoters/Directors and senior executives on building leadership pipeline and succession planning, creating pragmatic work plans to make teams more effective at work. His strategy planning and business consultancy experience on people, process and technology helps him provide a much more holistic solution to clients.

His skills and expertise include Executive Leadership Development, Business Strategy, Executive Coaching and Senior Management team Facilitation.

With over 30 years of intense industrial experience in significant international and multi-functional scale, Rahul focuses on executive coaching with Think Talent.

Rahul is a strong proponent of sustainability and value based corporate/social/civic responsible behaviours, and seeks to incorporate these approaches in his work delivery as well. His experience has been with companies like BHEL and Ranbaxy. His senior management assignments with global leadership and developmental responsibilities, included - Corporate and Business Finance, Information Technology (CIO), Strategic Sourcing & Alliances and Strategic Planning. He also runs his independent strategy consulting practice, StratVi Consulting.

Rahul is a certified executive coach through NEWS (Switzerland), and enjoys facilitating entrepreneurs and C-level functionaries enhance their personal and/or team alignment and performance. He focuses on supporting organizations to address aspects of strategic transition from one performance orbit to another, development of execution and performance plans for enabling strategy adoption and execution, and building of the organization and its leadership talent in alignment with the strategic needs and direction. His recent assignments have been in food and retail, steel, machinery manufacturing, automotive components, branding and secondary marketing, other service organizations, pharmaceuticals etc.
A large global bank with a sizeable back office which has quite a significant presence in India was looking to engage a set of coaches. The bank runs an annual leadership development program which includes assessment through external partners, an internal 360 feedback process and some degree of action learning & coaching. In this engagement, the other arts of the process except coaching were pre-decided and stabilized over a couple of years.

The cohort which went through the leadership development program each year was about 10-12 high potential individuals who could in time take up country management level roles. The process of selecting these individuals was fairly rigorous and the overall program was sponsored by the India management team.

The organisation was in a phase of carrying out significant changes in business strategy and consequently changes in structure and processes were inevitable. Almost all members of the cohort were going through the leadership program - experiencing changes either in roles, managers or in work content. Even during the period, the organization was committed to the leadership development process, but with an acknowledgement of the changing backdrop. Another contextual piece worth noticing is that the previous cohort (participants of last year’s leadership development program) had mixed feedback about the coaching process adding to their development, and their reported experience had the second cohort uncertain on the value of the coaching intervention. This was one of the reasons why a new coaching partner was scouted for, and that is how we entered - a team of four coaches, working independently, yet exchanging notes from time to time under the common framework provided by a boutique leadership and consulting firm (name withheld).

Intervention and Process

In this backdrop, the consulting firm designed and delivered a customized intervention, which engaged the participants in the coaching journey, built confidence in the process and helped the coachees to successfully achieve their agreed and committed goals for the journey.

A global coaching ‘methodology’ was adapted as the semi structured coaching model for the engagement. The coaching engagement was completed over nine months. It was initiated with a one and a half day appreciation program on the coaching methodology, along with a session focusing on how the participants could benefit from 1-1 coaching. The interactive classroom sessions were conducted by a senior experienced instructor with local and global experience. One of the key objectives of the session was to ensure readiness and openness of the coachees to the process, given the past history.

The session also guided the participants to interpret their self-assessment diagnostic questionnaire to identify possible coaching areas.

The 1.5 day session ended with all four coaches joining the cohort for an ice-breaking mixer over lunch. This enabled the coachees to interact with the panel of coaches and subsequently indicate their preference for a coach. We found this session to be particularly of value in building initial comfort, rapport and confidence with the coachees.

Once the coach-coachee pairs were established, the coaching sessions commenced.

During the first session, the coaches discussed inputs from the 360 feedback (done internally by the company), the assessment reports, IDPs (that were done earlier by a 3rd party) as well as the qualitative data gathered from the individual self-assessment.

Based on the above inputs, individual coaching goals were identified with each coachee. These were further ratified by respective managers of the coachees.
The coaching engagement lasted six sessions over a six month period, with each session timed up to 90 minutes. All sessions were conducted face to face, and typically at neutral offsite venues.

The coaching sessions were interspersed with periodic casual group conversations with senior corporate professionals. Topics focused on areas in which the cohort had challenges. These conversations helped provide them with another perspective while also bringing all of them together to check on how they were doing on their respective coaching goals.

**Program Management**

There was a designated program manager from either side to manage the coaching intervention, to ensure sessions take place on time, and to highlight any issues related to a particular coach or coachee. This was done so that corrective steps could be taken in time. The coaches met on regular intervals to ensure the process rigor was followed to provide a seamless learning experience for the coachees.

A mid-term coaching report and an ‘end of the journey’ coaching report was shared as part of the process. This was carried out to ensure that the managers are kept in the loop. Also if the coachee’s manager were to change at any point during the coaching engagement, the new manager could be appraised of the coachee’s development journey quickly by going through the report.

**Group development divergent: Pre and post coaching**

Post coaching, levels of awareness increased significantly among the cohort regarding their developmental goals. There was a clear and significant progress seen in the areas related to their coaching goals as per a focused mini 360 survey conducted post the coaching engagement, built around the coachee’s coaching goals. The specific improvement areas were noted as an input and given out to the individual line managers.

There were some additional areas where we observed the full group of coachees moving ahead beyond the individual development objectives. These were validated by the organization as well, later on.
Book Review
Coaching for Performance by Sir John Whitmore

About the Author

Dilip Mohapatra, a Navy veteran served Indian Navy for 28 years and rose to the rank of Commodore. He held varied leadership positions during his naval career and hung his boots prematurely in 2000, to pursue a second career in the industry. His assignments post Navy includes Global Head of HR Sourcing, Global Head of L & D at TCS, Director, Tata Management Training Centre and Vice President at Suzlon group of industries. He again quit active professional engagement in 2012 and currently is on an honorary assignment as the Chief Mentor and Strategic Advisor to KIIT University, Bhubaneswar. He is a certified NEWS Coach and also freelances in the space of high end leadership training and executive coaching. He pursues his passion for poetry and literature in his spare time and has four poetry publications to his credit. He also writes prolifically for professional magazines and journals on training, management and HR.

He has been decorated with VishistSeva Medal by the President of India for distinguished services rendered to the Armed Forces. His website may be accessed at dilipmohapatra.com.

Navy Veteran and Certified NEWS Coach and Former Director, Tata Management Training Centre
Book Review
Coaching for Performance by Sir John Whitmore

Introduction

Coaching for Performance by Sir John Whitmore is considered as one of the most definitive work on the principles and practices of coaching that is designed around the growth of human potential and purpose. John Whitmore is well known for the GROW model framework that concerns with Goal, Reality, Options and few W’s, i.e What is to be done, When, by Whom and the Will to do it. In this book, he systematically develops the two main words used in the title, Coaching and Performance and builds the best bridge to connect the two. While he deals with both the subjects very objectively by enunciation of the fundamentals, he intersperses his discussions with few qualitative treatments highlighting the underlying philosophies.

The Meat of the Matter

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 deals with The Principles of Coaching, Part 2 with the Practice of Coaching, and Part 3 with Leadership for High Performance and Part 4 with Transformation through Transpersonal Coaching. Given below is a short walk through the chapters to introduce and enthuse the readers to explore further when they lay their hands on the book.

Part 1: The Principles of Coaching: The author starts with the basic dictionary definition of Coaching and traces its origin to sporting, introducing the concept of ‘inner game’ and presents coaching as something beyond its dictionary meaning. He then enunciates the essence of coaching as ‘unlocking people’s potential to maximize their own performance.’ Then he goes on to differentiate coaching from mentoring and outlines the areas when Coaching would be useful, namely motivating staff, delegating situations, problem solving, handling relationship issues and team building. Then he devotes two chapters on the role of the manager as a coach and the nature of change to build the context of coaching and highlights that building awareness and responsibility in the coachee is the essence of good coaching and explains the interplay of attitude, knowledge and experience. He then goes on to enumerate the qualities of a coach and deals with effectiveness of questions, followed by Sequence of Questioning that introduces the GROW framework, which is referred to as a sequence for asking coaching questions. The next four chapters 7 to 10 explain the GROW framework in much more detail. A chapter is devoted to explain each part of the framework. Chapter 7 starts of with G which stands for Goal Setting. The importance of starting a coaching session with setting goals is the focus; there is also an example of a session showing the kind of questions to ask in order to set goals. The R part is dealt with in chapter 8 and stands for Reality check. Next chapter deals with O which is for options. Questions are used to generate possible options that might help to move the person being coached towards achieving set goals. The final aspect of GROW is W for WHAT is to be done, WHEN, by WHOM and the WILL to do it. This concludes the coaching cycle.

Part 2: The Practice of Coaching: This part consists of 9 chapters and starts with an analysis of ‘What is Performance?’ Through a case-let titled The Johnsonville sausage, he brings about the perils of sticking to the past and not changing with the time. He then elucidates the gap between potential and performance and people not taking responsibility for their own work and how the company managed to be profitable with their changed approach through coaching for performance. Then he emphasizes that performance, learning and enjoyment are intertwined and proceeds to the next chapter where through the conscious/unconscious competence/incompetence model he explains the linkage of performance with learning, and highlights the seamlessness of self-esteem, confidence and performance. Chapter 14 deals with Coaching for Meaning and Purpose and has a list of insightful questions on Goal, Reality and Options, which may not be exhaustive but are good enough to trigger relevant thoughts in the mind of the coach to explore. The next chapter is devoted to
use of coaching for giving feedback and for self/team assessment and development. Then the author shifts focus from the individual coachee to teams and in the next two chapters talks about team development and team coaching. The classical stages of forming, storming, norming and performing are superimposed on the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and exemplified in a three step process of inclusion, assertion and cooperation, that the coach may adopt. The next two chapters point out the barriers and benefits of coaching. The external and internal barriers have been enumerated and explained through simple self-directed questions. The multiple benefits both at the individual and organisational perspectives have been very well put forth.

**Part 3: Leadership for High Performance:** The first chapter deals with leadership challenges like globalisation, CSR, emerging changes in values and ethics, culture change, etc. and highlights the usefulness of coaching to the higher rungs of leadership in a company to address these vital challenges. Then in two more chapters, the foundation of leadership and Leadership qualities are discussed in the context of coaching. The focus is on values, vision, authenticity, agility, alignment and purpose. Finally the author paints the portrait of the future leader with additional hues of self-belief, emotional intelligence, awareness and responsibility.

**Part 4: Transformation through Transpersonal Coaching:** The final sections of the book are new territory that has been added in the 4th edition. Coaching is generally seen in the context of performance – doing and achievement of individual and organisational vision. This part builds on the same and takes one to a higher plane. In three concluding chapters, the author deals with the topics of emotional and spiritual intelligence and explores the depths and inclusiveness of psychosynthesis. These are relatively heavy stuff but have definite relevance to successful coaching. In the process of enhancing self awareness and sense of self responsibility, this knowledge becomes very useful to the coach to reach the inner self of the coachee. A deeper understanding of the link between universality and individuality across different levels of awareness and time continuum opens immense possibilities to the coach to appreciate the transpersonal domain in multiple layers and hence equip him better to be highly successful. This part definitely makes Whitmore’s work more seminal and unique.

**In a Nutshell**

The book in part 1 and 2 is an eclectic mix of what, why and how of coaching that deals with concepts, philosophy, principles and practices of coaching and which transcends from behavioural and cognitive coaching to humanistic and transpersonal coaching as one reaches the last chapters in part 4. Part 3 that deals with the leadership aspects which contribute to the completeness and wholesomeness of the subject of the book. The style of the author is an interesting mix of being both objective and reflective, as warranted by the topic under discussion. The book is recommended as a must read for any coach whether new in the field or an experienced one, to enhance their perspectives, depth of knowledge and to dwell upon the food for thought which they would find extremely useful for applying in multiple client situations. The book would also be very useful to the managers and leaders in an organisation to add to their managerial and leadership skills in good measure.
Book Review

Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse

About the Author

Rohit Sinha

Rohit oversees the HR function for the Modular Fabrication business of L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering. The business operates out of India and GCC locations supporting the domestic and international projects of L&T as well as those of other clients of the industry. The revolutionization of the Hydrocarbon business of L&T is underway with a focus on execution par excellence.

Rohit is leading the HR's role of partnering with business with a focus on capability building and alignment of the different strategic business groups of the organization through HR interventions.

Leadership learning is his passion. He divides between Mumbai and Oman.
Siddhartha is the most famous and the most influential work of Nobel Laureate Hermann Hesse (1877-1962). Siddhartha is story of a young man born in a Brahmin family who is intrigued by his quest of eternal truth. He devotes all his time thinking, contemplating & meditating, seeking meaning of life. He is loved by his parents who are happy seeing his thirst for knowledge, he is respected by friends who see him as an ideal youth and adored by his village for his saintly demeanor.

In his journey for the truth of life, Siddhartha takes a turn when he leaves his family and social life to become a wanderer in the woods. He learns from his fellow wanderers & teachers, the art of self-denial through self-afflicted pain and suffering by denying the basic necessities of life. He learns how to conquer the pain of hunger and thirst by spending years in the jungles, contemplating & meditating. Though he succeeds in fleeing from the Self a thousand times, images return every time. He starts doubting his efforts, starts doubting the path and finds his goal of achieving Nirvana, an elusive dream.

Siddhartha decides to quit this path of trying to achieve the ultimate truth through self-denial and sets out for a new, undecided path. He comes to society and learns about the learned soul, Gautam Buddha. He is directed to the abode of Buddha in ‘Jetavana’ where he sees a large congregation of people listening to the enlightened one. Buddha talks about the ‘Dukkha’; suffering, the origin of suffering and the way to free oneself from the suffering. He tells that life is pain and the salvation from pain is possible through his teaching. He accepts the seekers who express the wish to join Buddha to be in peace.

Siddhartha listens to Buddha and at the end of the sermon goes up to him. Taking his permission, Siddhartha expresses his views in most polite words. He says that though the Buddha path tells the way to live in a righteous way avoiding the evils of human life, the instruction does not contain the secret of what Buddha has attained. He further tells him about his decision of neither to follow Buddha’s path nor seek any other doctrine and go his own way in seeking release from self.

After leaving the abode of Buddha, Siddhartha reflects; ‘what is that’ the teachers of the world, including the most enlightened one could not teach him. A thought comes; it is ‘how to get rid of the self’. He further thinks that so far he has only learnt to deceive it, deny it or hide from it. He could never conquer it. And suddenly he realizes that in seeking the ‘Atman or Brahman’, in search of the unknown, he has been fleeing from himself. He has been afraid of himself and destroying himself in the process. A smile comes on his face as he awakens from a deep sleep of his quest for ‘Atman’. He decides that he would no longer run away from himself. This awakening suddenly starts making him see the world as if he was seeing it for the first time. He starts finding it beautiful, strange & mysterious. He starts reveling in its beauty. He looks around to find the world new and mysterious.

He feels the joy within to explore the life afresh. At the same time, he realizes that he is absolutely lonely, having left his family, village and his childhood friend. Siddhartha decides to venture into his new life alone and reaches a river where a ferryman takes him across the river. In the new chapter of his life, Siddhartha meets a beautiful courtesan who falls in love with him and offers to teach him love. Siddhartha spends time with her learning the lessons of love. The lady recommends him to the city merchant who appoints Siddhartha as a business partner. Life moves on. Siddhartha makes the best of passion, riches and power as the years pass by.

As he grows in business & riches the worldly vices start catching up with him. He picks up the habits of impatience, possessiveness and intolerance. He is no longer kindhearted to needy people. At times, he would hear a feeble voice from his heart asking him if he was leading a strange life. He tries to handle this question by involving himself more in the worldly life but the voice from his inner self starts becoming stronger. He starts...
finding this life a game that he has been playing without his heart in it. One day he sees himself in the mirror to realize that once a handsome & youthful Siddhartha, now has ugliness with old age, anxiety & shame written over his face.

One night he leaves this worldly life and his beloved, who is pregnant with his child, to the forest again. He happens to walk in the forest for days together to reach the same river and meets the same ferryman. The ferryman invites Siddhartha to stay with him and be his partner as a co-ferryman.

During the course of life as the ferryman, years later, he meets his beloved at a time when she is dying. She happens to reach the river shore in her quest to meet Buddha and gets bitten by a venomous snake. Siddhartha takes care of her in her last moments and cremates her. He tries to keep his son with all his love. His son does not reciprocate the same feelings, rather despises him and runs away from home, never to return. Siddhartha is saddened by the separation from his son. He then recalls that his own father who he left years ago would have suffered with the same pain. Many such events of life are flashed in his mind. He realizes that the life is a strange repetition of events. Siddhartha learns a new lesson in this sojourn, this time from the flowing river. He looks into the river to find faces of his father, his beloved, friends and relatives, appearing & disappearing, in different phases of life. He sees all the events of his life appearing & passing on. He sees all forms & faces in numerous relationships; helping, loving, hating, destroying, and getting reborn and so on. Each one was mortal, each event; transitory. He realizes that a stone, after a period of time becomes soil and from soil it becomes a plant or an animal. So it is a stone, but it is also a plant and also an animal. It is always everything if one sees without the illusion of time. He notices that the river is flowing, reaching its destination, still it is there, it is everywhere. This too is taking several forms of vapor, cloud, rains and ocean and still remains in a flowing state.

Siddhartha comes to see life as everything as one with no duality. He learns that in every truth, the opposite is equally true. The world is never one sided. But in words and thoughts it is divided into two, into good and bad, into illusion & truth, into suffering & salvation. And this duality & man’s resistance to duality is the source of suffering. He also realizes that though this knowledge can be communicated in words & thoughts, wisdom cannot be communicated. One needs to go through one’s journey to gain this wisdom. He reflects that all his experiences, sensory pleasures and physical & mental suffering etc. have been there only to prepare his soul as his wisdom ripens. And he needed them in order to learn the world without comparing it with an imaginary vision of a perfect world. He recalls his learning from the river that every wind, every cloud, every rain, every bird is equally divine and concludes that the only wise thing one can do is to accept things totally; as they are.

Thus, it makes love the most important thing in the world. Total acceptance of ‘what is’ and ‘going with the flow’ is the essence of life, the flowing river teaches this eternal lesson of life to Siddhartha.

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