



# How to Improve Your Organization with an Executive Coach



## Introduction

Most large organizations already have their own point of view about the leadership competencies required for success in various roles.

These competencies form the basis of job descriptions, hiring and promotion decisions, performance reviews, and professional development plans.

At the same time, it is important for you as an executive to have your own point of view about what makes a successful leader.

The following chart presents a simple yet elegant overview of leadership that can be tailored to any organization's existing framework.

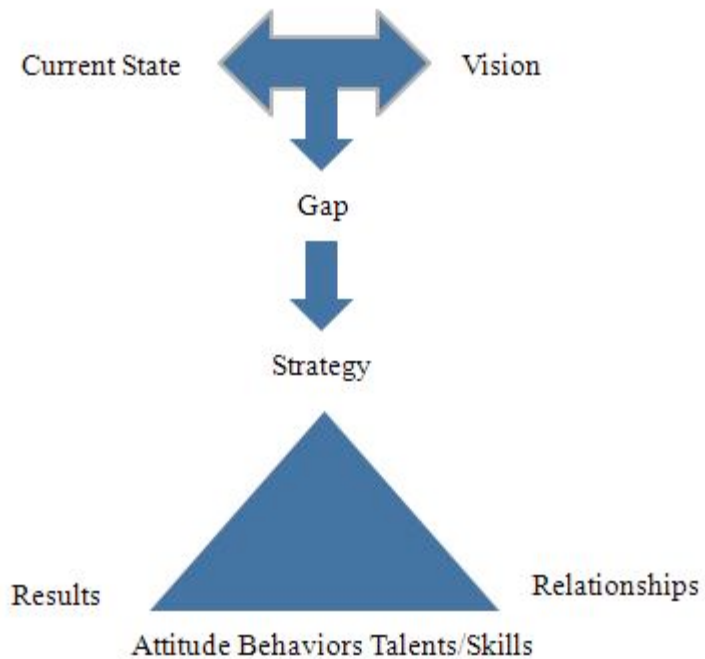
This can help you as you engage in the Executive Coaching process as you work to define leadership and identify ways to leverage and enhance your own performance.

The chart will help you when and if you are asked, "How do you define leadership?" – and it will help you have a ready answer.



At the top of the chart, there is a gap between the current state and future vision for the organization.

The leader's job is to discover the causes of the gap, and fill it in order to take the organization into the future.



For instance, if the organization currently has a market share of 10% and revenues of \$100 million, the leader might have a vision of taking the organization to \$200 million and 20% market share within 3 years.

Note that any future vision should include specific goals and time frame so that the gap is measurable.

In this case, the organization has 3 years to fill a gap of \$100 million in sales and 10 market share points.

To fill the gap and achieve their vision, the leader will need to have competency in the following areas:



**Strategy.** Strategy means defining what type of organization the company will be, setting direction for the organization, and creating a plan to achieve that direction.

**Relationships.** Nothing gets done in organizations without a committed, energized, and aligned group of people. The leader needs to be outstanding at engaging people and forming alliances to achieve extraordinary results. In today's world, it is no longer acceptable to get people on board simply through formal influence (e.g., having a title).

The leader needs to command respect and influence people based on an ability to connect with people on a personal level.

**Results.** At the end of the day, leaders make things happen in significant, measurable ways. They know how to get things done, move things forward, get resources, anticipate and mitigate risks, and execute their plan.

The foundation of this triangle is attitude, behaviors, and talents/skills.

Attitudes are the mindsets that drive successful results, including passion, professionalism, a sense of possibility, and a desire to win.

Behaviors are the actions that motivate people and get results, and include powerful communication, influence skills, and taking time to build relationships.

Talents are the things the executive does well, while skills express those talents in relevant ways.



## *Using Coaching to Tap into Vision, Purpose, Values, Talent, and Passion*

Many executives cringe when consultants and coaches talk about fuzzy “feel good” concepts like mission, purpose, values, talent, and passion.

Like you, many have been through so many fad programs, wasted retreats crafting mission statements, drives to achieve quarterly results no matter what and short-sighted restructuring, that they get cynical when it comes to these concepts.

Despite this reluctance, you need to be willing to understand your own deeper aspirations and reasons for coming to work. Therefore, as you engage in conversations about vision, purpose, values, talent, and passion, acknowledge to yourself that you feel uncomfortable and skeptical.

However, also be willing to explore the reasons that drive you to do the work you currently do.

All of the above work begins to form a foundation for you and your coach.



## *Coaching the Leadership Development Planning Process*

As noted previously, most large organizations already have a development planning process for their employees, especially executives and managers like you.

Where possible, you should answer the following questions for yourself on how you and your organization will define success for your coaching experience.

- How does the organization define success for your coaching experience?
- How are you performing according to these definitions?
- What are gaps in performance?
- What are specific goals to set to improve performance?
- How can the executive fill the gaps and achieve these goals?

Because different people learn in different ways, you may be asked to work on a number of assignments during your coaching experience.

These include:

- Assignments
- Feedback from colleagues
- Training
- Self-study
- Formal and informal mentors

You will also be tasked with developing a specific plan to fill any gaps and to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. Not only will this plan will set the agenda for your coaching sessions, it will form the basis of future metrics and benchmarks related to overall return on performance and investment.



## Coaching for Vision

Every executive needs a dashboard to track progress.

When you work with an **ActionCOACH** Executive Coach, you will work with an *Executive Dashboard* (which serves the same purpose that a car's dashboard does for its driver) to help focus on the key things that matter while leading the organization.

It also helps you and your coach agree on key areas of focus during your work together, and gives you a tool to refer to during each coaching session.

The following are descriptions of the eight key areas that every executive should track on a dashboard to improve overall leadership performance:

1. **One-Year Vision for Organization.** Where do you want to take the organization in the next year?
2. **Three-Year Vision for Organization.** What about in three years? (Note: Five years has become a bit too long given today's pace of change, but if you prefer a five or even ten year vision, that is fine).
3. **Top Three Priorities to Achieve Vision vs. Current State.** Challenge yourself to list only three priorities to take the organization where you want it to go. Examples: Penetrate the European marketplace by the end of the year; hire five new seasoned leaders to run profitable units; launch a new line of lower-end products to market to box stores; focus on decreasing the defect rate to less than 1% by end of the year.
4. **Top Three Metrics to Track, Including Goals for those Metrics with Time Frame.** These will be the most important goals that the executive must achieve to be successful. Consider setting standard and "stretch" goals for each.
5. **Key Performance Indicators I Expect My Employees to Achieve** (list the top three indicators for each employee). You should specify what you expect from each employee, listed as specific performance indicators that can be measured. Now you have an accountability chain that starts with you and progresses down the organization.



6. **Key Relationships to Be Successful.** You should list the relationships in your network that will be most important to nurture and build (or develop). That way, you can focus on improving those relationships.
7. **Values That Define How I Will Lead.** These are the values that you defined earlier. Now you can refer to them again and again to support leading by example and creating an organizational culture that embodies your most important traits.
8. **Top Three Goals for Professional Development.** List up to three goals you will continue to develop. These can include new skills, knowledge, attitudes, talents to build on, and/or behaviors to increase or decrease.

## *Coaching to Eliminate Blind Spots*

One of the most valuable roles of your Executive Coach is to uncover potential blind spots in your overall vision – factors that are seen by others as counterproductive behaviors that ultimately serve to derail a career.

If you and your coach do identify a potential blind spot, you can both begin work immediately to address it. Otherwise, at any time, the blind spot can be a career damaging factor over time – not unlike an artery that increasingly clogs with fatty deposits (unknown to the patient) – that at any time it could cause a major crisis.



## *Coaching to Improve Behaviors*

The goal of behavioral coaching is simple: change one behavior in measurable ways.

However, the behavioral coaching process does much more than change behavior.

It builds relationships between you and your colleagues, and improves communication and trust in the organization.

This is because you can enlist colleagues to support you in getting better and in achieving a higher level of performance, while providing ongoing feedback and advice.

As a result, you and your colleagues build a greater rapport, a better sense of trust and a more solid sense of team.

The following is the process and guide for behavioral coaching:

- You enlist up to seven colleagues to provide advice and support.
- You and your coach confirm that these colleagues are willing to support the executive in improving performance. No pressure is applied to colleagues. If a colleague is not willing to support the executive with open and honest advice, a new colleague is found without consequence.
- Complete your own Blind Spot and High Level Assessments.
- Synthesize the results by identifying top patterns and opportunities.
- Work with your coach to choose one specific, observable, simple behavior to change that will help you improve. Because the process is the most important part of this experience, the behavior need not be complicated. Examples include: make eye contact; acknowledging employees for good work; stating expectations clearly; telling people how they are doing, and smiling more.



## *Coaching to Improve Perceptions*

There is a debate in the coaching community about whether one should coach people to change from the inside out, or outside in.

That is, should you and your coach focus on the inner perceptions under the assumption that improved perceptions will lead to improved behavior, or should the coach focus on behaviors alone, since that is what other people ultimately see?

It might seem that way at some organizations, at least to the untrained eye.

IBM has more than sixty certified coaches among its ranks. Scores of other major companies have made coaching a core part of executive development.

The belief is that, under the right circumstances, one-on-one interaction with an objective third party can provide a focus that other forms of organizational support simply cannot.

And whereas coaching was once viewed by many as a tool to help correct underperformance, today it is becoming much more widely used in supporting top producers.

In fact, in a 2004 survey by Right Management Consultants (Philadelphia), 86% of companies said they used coaching to sharpen the skills of individuals who have been identified as future organizational leaders.



## *Making Coaching Work for You*

If you are looking at adding Executive Coaching to your repertoire, make sure you have an idea of what you want to achieve ... and make sure you and your coach set a number of metrics and benchmarks that can be measured both in terms of time and money.

Not only will you get more from our coaching experience, you and your organization will be able to track and justify the time and resources devoted to coaching – and the overall positive impact and effectiveness coaching can have on your organization.

## *Getting Started*

To discover more about everything Executive Coaching can do to enhance your performance and your career, contact me ... and I will offer you a free Executive Coaching assessment, at no cost or further obligation to you.

Just contact me and we can get started right away.