



australian
growth
coaching

No.2

GROWTH Papers



A Leadership Coaching Roadmap

Over the years, business leaders have heard it all in terms of leadership and professional development jargon:- collaboration, empowerment, action learning, emotional intelligence, visioning....and the list grows. What is it about the concept of 'coaching' then that is attracting people's attention and making them want to learn more? How is it different to any of the other fads that we have seen come and go? Why are organisations across the country devoting so many resources to developing coaching cultures? How do successful organisations navigate around typical roadblocks to maximise people performance?

Both the research and many years of executive coaching experience have demonstrated that the reason why coaching is so popular is simply because it works. **Implemented well, coaching brings about long term sustainable change and growth.** Coaching that is implemented in a practical, caring and time efficient manner incorporates all of the leadership and professional

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development methodologies referred to above. Amazingly enough, coaching is purely about chatting to individuals and teams in a way that brings out the best in them. How many people in your organisation would say that they are working with maximum enthusiasm and commitment and at their full potential as a result of the way you converse with them?

Dr Daniel Goleman, the renowned psychologist and emotional intelligence guru found that, “When done well, coaching boosts not just employees’ capabilities but also their self confidence, helping them function both more autonomously and at a higher level.... In short, the coaching style may not scream ‘bottom-line results’, but in a surprising indirect way, it delivers them.” (2002)

If you’re a leader, then first and foremost you are a coach. Some of this is old news and some of it is new news. The old news is that most people no longer respond to the old ‘command/control’ style of leadership. One of the keys to successful leadership today is to know how to ‘let go’ of the need to tell others what to do. Hierarchical attitudes and behaviours tend to get in the way of people performing at their maximum potential. Coaching, on the other hand, is about building relationships and having conversations in a natural and authentic manner that supports others to analyse and implement their own solutions.

In the past, there was a lot of pressure on leaders to know all the answers. In our knowledge economy, it’s about

realizing that no leader has all the answers. The new leader will hopefully have a vision about what needs to be achieved and be talented at sharing that vision with others. But ultimately it’s the people closest to the action that have to address challenges in the moment. The modern leader, through structured and authentic coaching conversations, will facilitate their people’s sourcing and application of new ideas to address those challenges.



Part of the newer news (at least for some) is that creative collaboration is at the heart of coaching and it must be facilitated in a culture that focuses on developing people sincerely and from the heart.

Coaching is about:

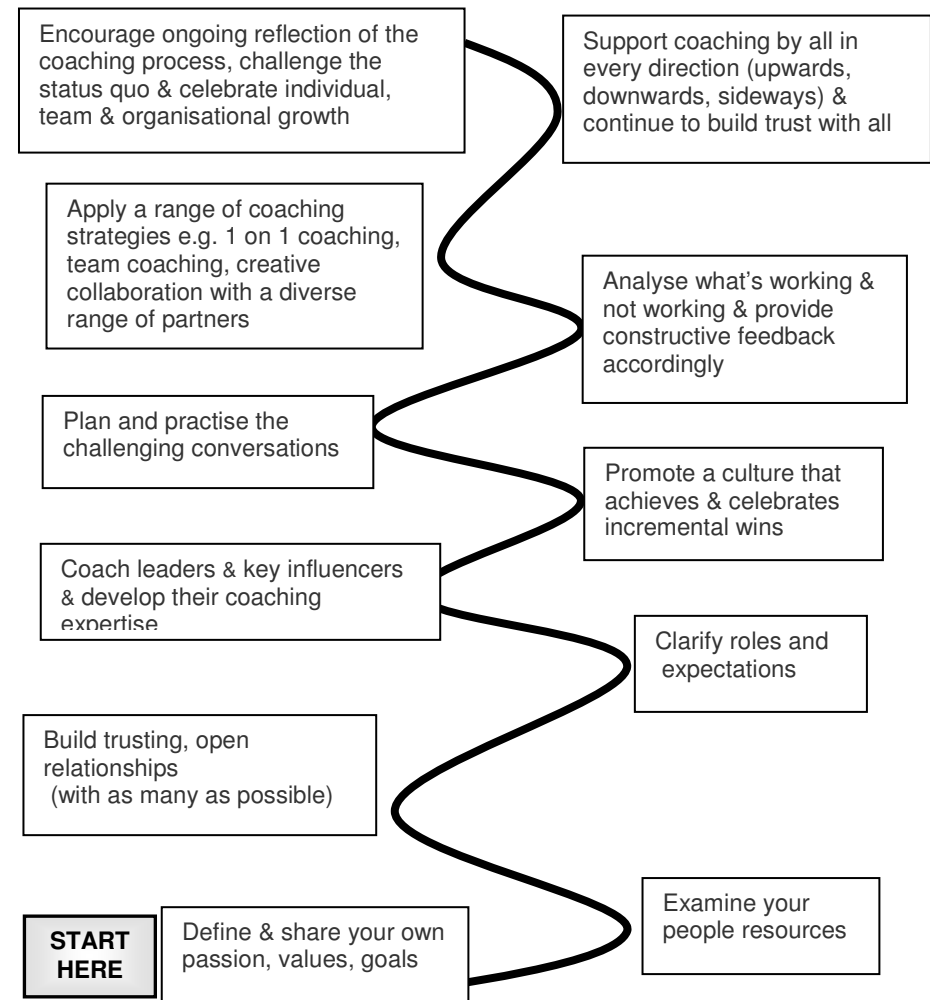
- Seeing talent in everyone (yes, everyone!) vs. focusing on problems
- Expanding people’s frames of reference vs. allowing them to remain stuck in old perceptions of themselves
- Impacting on people’s visions and values and supporting them to see new possibilities vs. managing people on tasks
- Developing vs. supervising and checking
- Feeling comfortable about giving honest, constructive feedback vs. feeling frustrated by avoiding the “hard” conversations.

In a nutshell, coaching conversations involve clarifying goals with individuals or teams, examining their current reality (what's working, not working?), collaboratively exploring options, agreeing on actions (the what, the how and the when), then implementing support mechanisms that will ensure the new behaviours are maintained, like good habits.... Paradoxically, it's that easy and that complex.

The paradox comes because reality asks, how do you have conversations that inspire and maximise performance in others when there are major **road-blocks preventing success**? The organisational culture, people's negative attitudes, their poor skills, their lack of awareness or commitment, lack of time, lack of resourcesaren't these the same road blocks that have stymied leaders' past efforts in achieving empowerment, collaboration and so forth?

In working with a range of organisations from different sectors, a road map was designed that allowed the organisations to successfully navigate around most, if not all of these road blocks, facilitating the remarkably successful creation of coaching cultures that are unleashing previously untapped potential. This road map might assist you to create a culture that inspires daily, robust coaching conversations across your organisation.

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Of course, creating such a road map is neither easy nor fast but the proven benefits in achieving sustainable growth are worth the effort. The roadmap needs to be etched out in a transformational learning culture that values and addresses:

- trust, through doing what you say you're going to do
- continuous learning which is modeled at all levels
- learning that is linked not only to organizational goals but to individual aspirations also
- the commitment of resources to the coaching process (including time and, where required, money)
- different learning styles
- emotional differences and the need to build individual and team resilience
- collaborative learning
- awareness of how strengths can be leveraged, not just how weaknesses are to be addressed.



In summary, more than at any other time, all people in all organisations need to be flexible, resourceful and responsive to the increasing expectations of demanding

stakeholders. Leaders today are not expected to know all the answers but they do have a responsibility to release aspirations, facilitate openness to new ideas and equip people with the confidence to implement them in a timely manner. Coaching is about building capabilities simply and powerfully through the quality of conversations that are fostered via a strategically planned roadmap to organizational success.

References

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