

A Framework for Executive Coaching

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The purpose of this paper is to share a few ideas regarding the goals, approaches and ways to think about the process of executive coaching. Keep in mind that all executive coaching is designed to meet the specific needs of the client, and those needs may vary greatly.

Why Executive Coaching

Executives will enter into a coaching relationship for several reasons. These may include any or all of the following:

- To identify personal behavior change that may increase their effectiveness and to implement a program of behavior change.
- To gain understanding about one's personal strengths and weaknesses and to develop plans to build on strengths and develop in weak areas.
- To improve leadership of the executive team.
- To seek assistance in understanding business strategy and alternatives.
- To gain insight and assistance in developing the culture of the organization and leadership skills to impact that culture in a positive way.
- To engage a confidential sounding board, someone in whom the executive can confide and seek objective and unbiased feedback.

It will be important for you to decide why you are entering into a coaching relationship and what you hope to gain.

Coaching Approaches

Coaches are influenced by their own background. One Harvard Business Review article, written by a psychiatrist, argued that all executive coaches should be licensed therapists. I couldn't disagree more. Therapy is therapy and executive coaching should improve personal leadership performance that should have a positive impact on business performance. It is just as important to have insight into business strategy, management, leading an organization and change in an organization, as it is to have psychological insight.

Approaches to coaching can generally be defined as the following:

- *Psychological coaching* that explores personality characteristics of the leader, their origin, and ways to change or adjust to those personality characteristics.

- *Behavioral coaching* that identifies pinpointed behavior that, if changed, will improve the performance of the executive. This approach almost always includes participation by those who work with and influence the executive being coached.
- *Team and cultural leadership coaching*. This includes the dynamics of the leadership team and how the leader influences both his or her team and the culture of the organization.
- *Business and strategy coaching* that may include aspects of any of the above, but also helps the executive think and make decisions about significant business issues.

My approach includes some combination of the last three, depending on the stated needs of the client.

A Framework for Thinking and Planning

Is a framework needed or useful? Why not just talk, think, and plan together? A framework is not required, but it is helpful to organize one's thoughts, to frame important questions and issues. This framework can be applied to the executive alone, or it can be extended to his team or to the entire organization. It can involve discussion by the executive and coach alone, or it can involve input from the members of the executive team.

A simple framework: It may be useful to understand that both individuals and organizations have five types of assets or capabilities that create value. Each of these capabilities is an area that can be discussed, evaluated and improved. In discussing how each of the characteristics applies to the individual executive the goal is to identify specific things he or she can do to act, to take specific steps to improve personal performance and thereby improve business performance.

- **Spiritual Capital:** To the degree that an organization can enable, support, or encourage a depth of personal morality and dedication to a noble purpose, it possesses spiritual capital. I sincerely believe that this form of wealth accrues both to the organization and to the individual. It will interact and support every other form of capital and, ultimately, will have its effect on the financial bottom line. In many ways it is the *first cause*.
- **Social Capital:** Social Capital is the value of trust. The degree of trust you engender in others will determine the likelihood of them hiring you or purchasing your products or services. It defines the likelihood that others will engage you in solving problems with you. It is a key to the effectiveness of all teams, families or communities. It determines brand equity and market capital. Entrepreneurs often begin their business within a small circle of trust and gradually expand the radius of trust, increasing the scope of their network and their business.

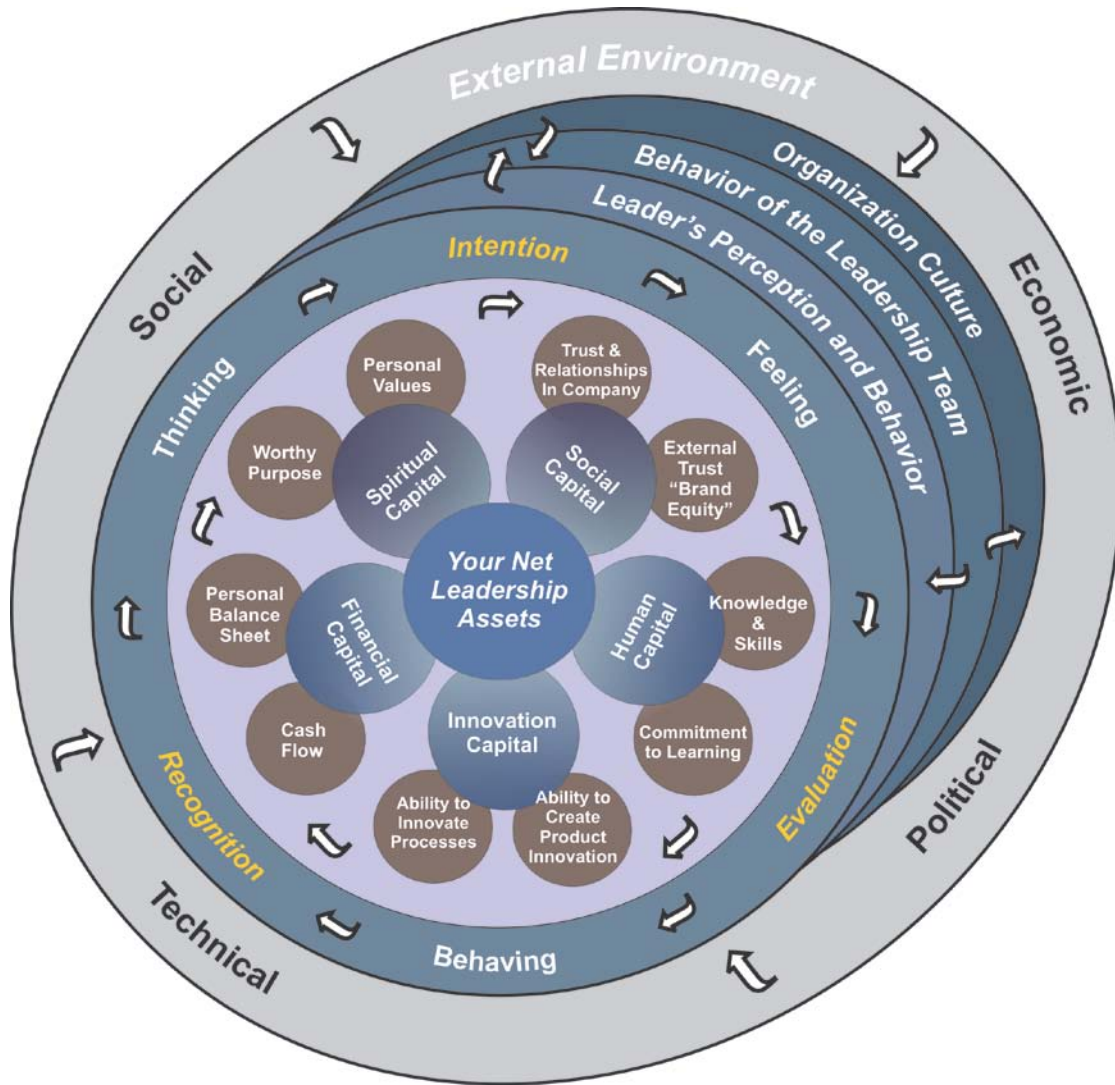
- **Human Capital:** Human capital is the sum of all of the competencies and motivation of the people within the organization. Human capital has always been a critical component of the performance of any business, but today's entrepreneur is likely to bring with him, not money, but competency and motivation, the two key ingredients of human capital.
- **Innovation Capital:** Personal and business competitive advantage is derived from the ability to find better ways, to innovate, in either product or process. A critical element of leadership is the ability to stimulate innovation within the firm and to personally embrace innovation. In a stable environment leaders could improve performance by doing the same things better. But, there is no more stable environment. Now, all advantage comes from innovation and change.
- **Financial Capital:** The essential components of financial capital are found on the balance sheet, the income statement and current cash flow statement. These are the indicators of financial capital, but they are not the cause. Financial capital is the outcome of the successful development and utilization of the previous four forms of capital. Most entrepreneurs have a passion for solving a problem, creating some new social network, or developing a technology that will provide a unique customer experience. These are the drivers of wealth creation.

A comprehensive framework: The following diagram incorporates the idea of the five forms of capital and the system within which the executive operates. In addition to managing the organization, the executive manages his or her own personal system, the people and things that impact how he/she thinks, feels and behaves.

All companies are subsystems of a large system. That larger system is the economy of countries and industries. It involves the social system that provides human resources and shapes markets. It includes the ever changing technological environment. And, the political environment has an increasing impact on the behavior of leaders. Healthy individuals and companies recognize the elements of the larger environment that they cannot change and to which they must adapt. Successful leaders recognize the "real world" in which they live, are constantly evaluating that world, and developing adaptive strategies. An executive coach can be helpful as the executive thinks through these realities and tests adaptive strategies.

The internal environment of the organization is constantly interacting with the behavior of the executive. No one behaves with complete independence of the culture. And, it is a primary function of executives to manage their internal strategy, the culture of the organization, as well as their external or market strategy. An executive coach may have experience in changing organization culture and may be helpful to the executive in thinking through how he or she may impact the culture. As I listen to executives, their greatest

frustrations are often around their ability to influence behavior and culture within the organization.



The leadership team is the first level of influence for the executive. A great leadership team is an indication of a great leader and the greatest asset to a leader. Executive coaching very often involves seeking input, feedback and “feed-forward”, that may guide the executive in adapting his or her own behavior. Feed-forward, rather than focusing on how a team member feels about how the leader has behaved in the past, simply states how the leader can best perform in the future.

The leadership team may be involved by providing confidential input to the coach, or may participate in coaching so that all members of the team can gain insight into how their behavior may contribute to the success of the team. In what may be called “pure”

behavioral coaching, the members of the team become primary change agents, reinforcing the desired behavior of the leader.

The most important focus of executive coaching is on the internal thoughts, feelings and behavior of the executive. The coach should help the executive gain insight, recognition, regarding his own thoughts, feelings and behavior that may contribute to performance or may inhibit performance. This recognition should lead to intention, the deliberate decision to do something different and a specific, workable plan, to make that change. This should be followed by some form of evaluation or self-evaluation that can be shared between the coach and client.

In short, it is the coach's job to work with the executive as a partner, a team member, in creating the ideal set of leadership assets, the spiritual, social, human and innovation capital that will result in personal and organization performance.

A PERSONAL AUDIT OF SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

1. If someone asked, I could describe my life's purpose in one clear sentence.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

2. I can explain how my current work is a step along the path toward my life's purpose.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

3. My spouse or family members know that my life has a purpose beyond merely achieving financial success.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

4. When I wake up in the morning I feel energized by the challenges facing me because I know they are leading toward a worthy goal.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

5. I am willing to sacrifice short-term gain in order to continue on the path toward my higher purpose.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

6. I can recall decisions I have made in the past few months that required me to consider and employ my personal values.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not at all Somewhat Very Much

7. When choosing my current job I considered whether I could adhere to my values within this organization.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

8. When considering decisions at work I am comfortable raising the issue values as a factor in decision-making.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

9. My spouse, or family, and I discuss our values when we make important family decisions.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

10. If I was confronted with an opportunity to make a lot of money but required to compromise my values, I know that I would choose the value based decision.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

A PERSONAL AUDIT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

1. I develop a high level of trust with co-workers and associates as demonstrated by their seeking my advice and counsel.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

2. I go out of my way to demonstrate caring, interest in the lives and well-being of others at work.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

3. Over the years I have maintained lasting personal relationships with friends I have made through my work.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

4. Other associates trust that I will look out for their best interest and extend myself to be helpful to them.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

5. If I needed help finding another job, or if I had a job for someone else, there are many friends I could call who I expect, might be helpful.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

6. I am very close to members of family who do not live with me (parents, children, grandchildren, brothers or sisters) and I in touch them on a frequent basis.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

7. My family has regular family gatherings on Holidays or other celebrations and I look forward to these gatherings.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

8. I know my neighbors well and we get together in each other's homes often.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

9. I am a member of more than one professional association and I look forward to attending their meetings.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

10. I have friends other than family members with whom I enjoy going to sports, concerts, or other entertaining activities.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

A PERSONAL HUMAN CAPITAL AUDIT

1. I read at least one non-fiction book each year that informs me of new developments and thinking in my field of work.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

2. I have a plan for my own professional development that includes additional education (within the company or outside).

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

3. I am interested in the advance of science and read articles on new discoveries in some field such as biology, medicine, or the environment.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

4. I subscribe to news magazines and enjoy reading in depth articles on topics such as world events.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

5. I participate in some on-line forum where issues and problems in my field of work are discussed.

- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
6. I am a member of professional organizations that share knowledge in my field.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
7. At least once a year I attend a conference or seminar to learn from other professionals in my field.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
8. I subscribe to at least one magazine or journal in my area of expertise.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
9. I mentor or provide training to others in my field.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
10. My colleagues come to me for advice regarding technical matters.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

A PERSONAL INNOVATION AUDIT

1. In the past week I have offered at least one idea to improve the work of my team or group.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
2. In the past month I have offered at least one idea to improve the work of my team or group.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
3. In the past month, at least one idea of mine has been implemented at work.
- 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True
4. I study the latest improvements made by other groups, inside or outside my company, to see if I can adopt those or improve on them.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

5. I participate on a team that is looking for ways to improve my company's product or process.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

6. I have a personal goal, or my team has a goal, for how many innovations or improvements we can make in a given time period (week, month, year).

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

7. I am more likely to be thinking of how to do something better, rather than thinking how to avoid mistakes.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

8. Every day I think about how I, or my team, can do something better for our customers.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

9. I have actively sought to apply lessons from some other field, business, technology, or history to my work.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True

10. I read books and journals or magazines looking for innovations that I can apply in my company.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Not True Somewhat True Very True