

Coaching in the “New Normal”

By David Giber



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The way of conducting business has gone through major changes over the past 18 months and the field of executive coaching has responded. Here are some of the changes that have taken place:

- ◆ The field of executive coaching has grown and continues to do so—several colleges are now offering certified training programs for coaches.
- ◆ Businesses are looking for shorter, more targeted assessments. They are less interested in wide ranging, 360-degree feedback. They want more focused questionnaires with larger areas for comments. The goal is to find feedback that is actionable, practical, and clear. The question being asked is how will this improvement in thinking and behavior contribute to the executive’s ability to lead the business and drive competitive advantage?
- ◆ The use of online feedback that is initiated by an executive without consultation from an internal or an external source points to a new move towards peer coaching and mentoring. These systems allow someone to initiate a focused feedback process that is quick, anonymous, and utilizes user-friendly, no overhead-cost technology.
- ◆ Growing assurance and lowering costs with using video conference tools (i.e. Skype, Logitech, etc.) means that coaching can be done face-to-face much more easily than before.

All of these trends point to positive changes, creating new norms in the world of executive coaching. The ease of technology allows for more improved and more personalized follow up. The use of simplified assessment systems and peer coaching allows people to use their own networks to provide ongoing, real-time feedback which ultimately can be more effective.

Executive coaches need to help their clients use these tools. While formalized assessments will always have its place, it is a client’s network of feedback and support which often differentiates what changes last and what changes fade.

At Linkage, we are working to incorporate these approaches into our executive coaching and our training for coaches. We find that many of our clients are building networks of professional peers facing similar challenges. We are establishing the tools and technology to foster peer coaching and shared dialogue on critical business- and personal-related leadership issues.

Effectiveness for using this technology depends on clear guidelines around the coaching relationships and help with driving critical conversations. We have found that clients are researching the steps in their talent pipeline and identifying the developmental dilemmas in each career transition. This is helping coaches with training to identify typical issues that an individual is likely to face when transitioning into, for example, a new general manager role.

Michael Watkins and other writers on career transition have been identifying and describing these transitions. We have found a renewed interest in the work of William Bridges who more precisely differentiated “transition” versus “change” many years ago.

The “new normals” for executive coaches are clear:

- ◆ Understand, at a detailed level, the competitive challenges and job level transitions your clients are facing
- ◆ Provide clients with the tools to help them talk about these challenges and gain ideas from peers about how to be effective
- ◆ Provide ideas for how to use affordable and practical technology that helps people connect, coach and support each other
- ◆ Use briefer, just in time assessments that keep the feedback process alive and make the coaching fresh and relevant

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Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage’s mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

With a relentless commitment to learning, Linkage also offers conferences, institutes, summits, open-enrollment workshops, and distance learning programs on leading-edge topics in leadership, management, human resources, and organizational development. More than 200,000 leaders and managers have attended Linkage programs since 1988.

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