

# Coaching with Style: Effective Coaching Head First

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A few years ago I had hired a consultant to work with my team on some key issues. We weren't making much progress and I asked him what he recommended. He replied: "You need coaching, you all need coaching". When I dug deeper to elicit the strategic reasons, goals, process and "fit" of the actual coaches involved, it was clear that these issues had not been thought through well enough to merit launching a coaching initiative. But how do we identify the 'missing pieces' in coaching?

With a recent Hay Study finding that 25-40% of Fortune 500 companies now are using executive coaching, we run the risk of seeing coaching become the "end-all be-all" to all ills. Since coaching inevitably involves people, and all people have brains, it is useful to look at our own "operating system", the brain, as a way to diagnose effective coaching. Our experience has shown that in order to truly be truly effective, an organization needs to use a whole brained approach to managing a coaching program.

If you look up coaching in the dictionary, you will discover that the original meaning of coach, from several hundred years ago, was a means of transportation—to get from point A to point B. It then was broadened to include sports, performing and tutoring. The dictionary does not include the definition of today's "new coaching" that we are seeing in the marketplace: Life coaches, team coaches, peer coaches, executive coaches, culture coaches etc. However, the original meaning is still quite relevant: coaching *should always be* a means to get from point A to point B!

So how do we use our brains, our own 'operating systems' to get from point A to B? The Whole Brain® Model goes beyond a simplistic left/right approach to include four distinct approaches to our thinking.

To honor the upper left mode of our brain, we need to start with the goals and objectives we

want to accomplish with the coaching initiative. Key questions to consider are:

#### Upper Left Quadrant A: What are we doing this for?

- ◆ What is the purpose of this initiative?
- ◆ Have we analyzed the needs well enough to determine that coaching is the right answer?
- ◆ Who is the client? The coachee, the organization or both?
- ◆ What is the focus of the coaching process?
- ◆ How will we measure the performance outcomes?
- ◆ What specific goals do we want to achieve on an individual and organizational level?

Our left mode also needs to define the "how" and process we will use to achieve those goals. Marian Thier, author of Coaching C.L.U.E.S., describes a successful coaching practice as needing schedule and structure for each appointment, a review of each session, assignments to practice between sessions and no multi-tasking during session, These elements align perfectly with the lower part of our left brain, which needs to address the following:

#### Lower Left Quadrant B: How will we do this?

- ◆ How can we define our agreement/contract, and how we will proceed?
- ◆ How can the coachee be held accountable for changes they need to make?
- ◆ What specific expectations can we set that will provide structure to this process? What is our timeline?
- ◆ What will be our guidelines and policy regarding ethics, confidentiality?
- ◆ How can we stay on track against articulated goals, stay on top of our session schedule, plan for practice between sessions and ensure follow-through occurs in

a timely fashion?

- ◆ How do we monitor quality assurance?

Marian also feels that coaching without understanding the context of the coachee does not work. Looking at context is part of the array of right brain processes which are also important to address. Understanding the coachee and learning about their environment both provide context. A study by the Council on Leadership has shown that fit between coach and coachee is a critical factor in coaching success. A mentoring program used the HBDI® (Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument) to match individuals with similar brain dominance profiles as mentor and mentee. **They found that the “fit” and trust was so immediate that out of 700 pairs, only 2 did not “stick”.** Karlin Sloan, a master trainer of coaches, likes to use assessments to help the coach and coachee better understand each other, improve communication and build rapport and trust. Good fit does not require similar preferences; however, both the coach and coachee must be very aware of their preferences and values to stay clear of landmines that can interfere with the integrity of their process.

**Lower Right Quadrant C:** How do we build an effective relationship?

- ◆ How do we determine if we have the right fit? In what ways are we similar and different? How can that enhance or detract from the coaching relationship?
- ◆ How do we maintain the right balance between personal and professional goals?
- ◆ How do we develop great rapport and yet keep it very professional?
- ◆ How do we build enough trust to get the “real” work done and address tough issues?
- ◆ How do we keep communication open and effective?
- ◆ How can we honor each other’s values and differences?

Coaching cannot happen in a vacuum! Integration and alignment with the leadership, training and vision of the organization is essential to move the coaching experience beyond a “stick on fix”. The last portion of the Whole Brain® Model addresses those key questions:

**Upper Right Quadrant D:** How does this all fit into the big picture?

- ◆ How does this align with the strategy and development initiatives in my organization, assessments we have been using, my boss’s goals for the department etc
- ◆ How does this initiative fit with the coachee’s personal vision and objectives for growth?
- ◆ How can both coach and coachee have the freedom to experiment to find the right tools and processes, yet stay on track?
- ◆ How can we make this process fun and creative so we both grow with it?
- ◆ How do we look for patterns that may reveal important issues to address?
- ◆ What coaching model will we use to provide a conceptual framework?

A Whole Brain® approach ensures that “all of the brain” is attended to in the process. Franklin University has built a very innovative coaching program for their MBA students which uses a Whole Brain® approach to ensure all needs are met along the way. **They have found that if any one area is left out, it is likely that they will need to be addressed later and time and energy could be wasted along the way.**

Set up your coaching with the brain in mind. With proper planning and all modes addressed, coaching can demonstrate that it provides improved Performance (A), is a Process that drive action (B), helps People grow and develop (C) and opens the door to new Possibilities (D).

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Herrmann International clients, for whom better thinking has become integral to their business culture, include:

