



EXECUTIVE COACHING: MORE THAN “THROW STRIKES!”

Just a decade ago, Executive Coaching was most often provided to those few senior executives with *problems*. The goal of the coaching was to *fix* whatever dysfunction the organization thought the executive displayed. Today, Executive Coaching is widely seen as an investment in executive *development*. The goal now is to increase the *performance* of the senior executive. And it appears that this change in corporate investment is working. In one recent study of 86 coached senior leaders in 48 organizations¹, 92% of the senior executives said they plan to use a coach again. And 63% of the organizations they worked for said they planned to increase their use of coaching over the next five years.

THE SOMETHING THAT’S WORKING IS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In the study noted above, the vast majority of participants cited ***leadership*** development as the primary reason coaches were engaged. Effective *leadership* is a cornerstone of effective *performance*. In fact, an executive’s leadership skills can often play a more significant role in performance than his/her functional expertise. Unfortunately, while senior executives are often well trained in their functions, they are usually *poorly* trained in leadership.

Consider the typical CFO. Most often, the senior executive in finance in the corporation has an advanced degree in finance or accounting and holds many professional certifications, often including a CPA. And CFOs typically possess formidable skills in Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, state and federal accounting regulations, Excel and several other general ledger or industry-specific software programs. But, beyond a few required management courses in graduate school, it is rare for the CFO to be well trained in collaborative problem solving and decision making, conflict resolution, critical thinking, change leadership, team dynamics, effective communications or active listening. Rarer still is the opportunity for the senior financial executive to assess or measure his or her leadership strengths and challenges on the job without the risk of significant negative and often, immediate consequence.

At ***Business Navigation Group***, we complement functional expertise with leadership development. We give senior executives the opportunity for self assessment and reflection in many challenge areas for today’s corporate leaders. We also provide skills training using tools and techniques that have been specifically developed for effective

¹ “Coaching: The Fad that Won’t Go Away”, [Fast Company](#), July 8, 2008, Jim Bolt.

use in complex corporate environments where leadership decisions are multidimensional and have far-reaching consequences. Most importantly, we provide the senior executive with the well-trained ear of another senior executive—our coaches have all held senior operating positions; CEO, CIO, Vice President, General Manager, in major global corporations.

Our coaching practice focuses on two types of executives. We assist the **CEO or senior executive** with more effective application of his or her leadership skills. And we provide the **high potential or newly-hired executive** with leadership skill development as well as more effective skill application.

COACH AS FOIL FOR THE CEO OR SENIOR EXECUTIVE

Many very senior executives, CEOs and their management teams, effectively use their coaches as **foils**—people with whom they share ideas before they are executed, concerns before they become problems and choices before they become cast in stone. Together, the executive and coach often refine, change or even abandon ideas or choices before they are executed. Here, the coach often plays a role for the executive that he or she cannot find elsewhere in the organization: sounding board, “fair witness”², undiscovered stakeholder, or confidant.

Most senior executives have had the experience of proposing a project or program that his or her entire staff greeted with approval only to find later that, well; it wasn’t such a great idea. Only no one dared point that out beforehand.

Most senior executives realize that the power of their position can result in receiving less than candid feedback from their staffs. But few have a trusted confidant from whom they can receive an honest assessment; someone who will help shake that idea apart, look at it from many angles and work through the possible consequence scenarios. Before execution.

COACH AS MENTOR FOR THE NEW SENIOR EXECUTIVE OR THE HIGHPOT

For the newly-hired senior executive or the up-and-coming executive with significant potential, executive coaching is often executed in a different context. Here, the coach can provide both coaching as described above and **mentoring**—or the actual delivery of instruction for skill development. Here, a variety of self-awareness assessments (like Jung Typologies, leadership style or readiness profiles) are helpful in assisting the executive to better understand his or her areas of strength or challenge. In addition, tools such as *deconstruction* (pulling apart the pieces of an interaction to better understand: what went wrong, what went right, how could the executive have conducted him/herself differently, what may have been a better approach) or techniques like *action preparation* (what is my goal here, how will I handle it if X happens, what are the possible outcomes if I choose this action) are powerful teaching devices. This form of

² A fictional profession created for the novel, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, by Robert Heinlein. The Fair Witness was trained to observe events and report exactly what was seen and heard, without extrapolations or assumptions.

coaching assists executives in acquiring the additional skills most often needed for advancement, or—in the case of the newly-hired executive—for more effective organizational assimilation.

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BUSINESS NAVIGATION GROUP'S EXECUTIVE COACHING PRACTICE

Executive Coaching is an emerging discipline and its practitioners have no license, certification or degree requirements. Almost anyone may declare themselves to be a coach and, unfortunately, many do just that.

At ***Business Navigation Group*** we have three Managing Partners who provide coaching services to executives. Two are located in the US; one is in the UK. Each has several characteristics that we believe provide the credentials required to offer executive coaching—coaching that improves executive leadership performance. See if you agree:

- ❖ advanced degrees in academic areas relevant to executives—business, economics, marketing, and management
- ❖ certifications in executive coaching from accredited academic institutions
- ❖ certifications in underlying assessment tools like Jung Typologies
- ❖ more than 20 years of *operating* experience at senior executive levels in global Fortune 50, mid-tier and early-stage companies
- ❖ experience as faculty members in management, marketing and business at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in US and UK accredited colleges of business
- ❖ publications and conference presentations in both peer reviewed academic and business and trade association venues
- ❖ creation of widely accepted (and peer-reviewed) tools like Value DialogSM, The Multidimensional Decision-Making ToolSM, Advocacy TeamsSM, and The Executive Team Leadership AssessmentSM.
- ❖ senior executive clients who are very pleased and would be happy to speak with you about their experiences with us

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To discuss how Executive Coaching could benefit you or your organization, please contact us or see our website (www.biznavgroup.com) for more information.