

# Executive Coaching

By Barbara Pate Glacel, Ph.D., in *Corporate Woman*

Executives in organizations today are facing a world never seen before. Change is happening around us in such magnitude that the lessons of the past don't necessarily bode well for the present, much less the future. Constant and continuous learning is the only way to prepare for the future and continue to lead. Helping an executive to face this challenge is an executive coach.

The coach is not prepared to fix a problem executive, but to help someone who has been successful to continue that success. All of us have rough edges that need to be ironed out, for sure. The coach can work on those, too. But most often the coach is a mirror and a sounding board to the executive. Too often, executives live a feedback-starved existence. So, the coach can be honest and direct in reflecting back to the executive how behavior affects others in a constantly changing world.

Coaching is about learning. It is about discovering where the executive is presently, what is the future direction needed and wanted, and laying out a path to get there. It is a mutual process between coach and executive.

Leadership is situational and there is no one best way. That means the coach and executive are partners in trying new behaviours that must be practiced right in front of the organization and all other viewers. There may be some shocks along the way that facilitate future learning and change. This humbling experience requires an executive who knows oneself well and has the humility to ask for help from others.

## Nine Guidelines

1. Make coaching a regular part of your leadership development program at all levels.
2. Internal coaches and mentors are appropriate for high-potential and first-line leaders.
3. External coaches provide confidentiality and safety for mid-level and senior leaders.
4. Chemistry is important. The coach and leader must get along and respect one another.
5. Regular time must be set-aside for coaches and leaders to meet together. Real-time learning doesn't mean learning only "on the run."
6. A reflection process using the EIAG model (Experience, Identify, Analyse and Generalize) should follow every executive action.
7. Enlist the aid of boss, subordinates and peers by making development goals public. Ask for frequent feedback.
8. Make performance appraisal and reward congruent with executive coaching methods and results.
9. Allow for mistakes and learn from them. Executive behavior and behavior change is not always perfect the first time around.

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