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YOUR LEADERSHIP: FOR OR AGAINST YOU?

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Abstract

Are your leadership skills working for you or against you? Would you like things done differently? Have you been pulled into too many directions and work life is out of balance? What will it take for you to take action? Come, explore your innermost desires, and identify areas of change with experienced coaches. Clarify your visions, goals and ideas in an encouraging and supportive environment.

Many deaf and hard of hearing people have been underserved, ignored, misunderstood, misdiagnosed and looked down their whole lives. Coaching can help them to rediscover their self-worth and the power within themselves. Coaching provides balance, fulfillment and creates positive life and transition changes for everyone, including deaf and hard of hearing persons.

Educators, professionals, administrators and staff working with this population need to redefine their values, vision and roles in their jobs in leading or mentoring customers, clients and students. These are the crucial people who need help to define their values, clarify their visions, create and sustain life-changing results that move these deaf and hard of hearing persons to achieve fulfillment and balance in their lives. They should be directly addressing the needs of each person and consciously interweave the systems of agency, school, family and community to work together to meet the individual's needs. The coaching process offers a safe, non-judgmental place for change to happen.

There are two definitions of coaching:

1. A definition of coaching is facilitating change that will lead to desired results: Facilitating movement from a current state to a more desirable future state. *Adler School of Professional Coaching, Inc. 2005-2006*

2. A definition of coaching leaders is the focus is on coaching leaders and the client's capacity to take effective and purposeful actions to achieve desired results and to find fulfillment through their work and their lives. *Georgetown University Leadership Coaching Program 2007*

This is where coaching comes in for the leaders. It has repeatedly been shown that coaching pays off not just in better performance but also in increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover. But what makes coaching work best is the nature of the relationship. Coaching skills includes effective questioning and active listening to provide leaders awareness and responsibilities for their actions. Outstanding coaches sense how to give effective feedback. They know when to push for better performance and when to hold back. In the way the coaches motivate their leaders, they demonstrate empathy in action.

A successful leader is a person who is willing to take a journey in life. The key to transform someone who understands leadership into a person who successfully leads in the real world is character. Character qualities activate and empower.

Leaders with a visionary outlook are people-focused influential persons to help people grow and reach their potential. It requires a successful journey with an experienced team of leaders and followers. It is very important to be open-minded and ensure the communication channels are with clarity, accessibility and understanding for the leaders and their teams. Communication is the key to be a great leader.

An interactive workshop, "Your Leadership: For or Against You?" was presented at the national ADARA 2007 conference, "Coming in Full Circle, Deaf Services: 1966-2007" in May 2007. This topic was addressed to current and prospective leaders in professions working with deaf/hard of hearing persons in direct and indirect services, administration, technology and legal areas. This workshop was designed to give participants opportunities to gain personal insights, critical thinking, problem solving, sharing and sense of team play.

A hands-on presentation focused on the coaching model. It was an intense interactive integrated learning and exploration coaching activity that provided participants with the basic means to have more productive

conversations and build better relationships with their colleagues, consumers, clients and customers in programs, agencies and schools serving individuals who are deaf, late-deafened, and hard-of-hearing with/without additional disabilities. This, in turn, is the catalyst for better results.

Participants were provided with a basic introduction to learning about self, creating productive and fulfilling relationships, understanding within systems, dynamics and instruments of change. The participants were asked to think about a specific situation when they were operating at their best. The participants turned to someone next to the person and told the story of that moment with their partners.

1. What are the personal characteristics you were drawing upon?
2. What are the strengths you were accessing in yourself?

We asked the participants their three adjectives that identify who they are at their best. We also asked the participants what they would want to walk away from this workshop. We established contract/ground rules for the group. A coaching relationship starts with engaging people in a conversation where they clarify their vision, goals and ideas as well as their agreement to be challenged and supported.

In the beginning of the workshop, these constructive questions were to be asked of the participants focusing on their leadership skills in the workplace before going into the main activity:

1. What part of leadership either inspires or works for you?
2. What part of leadership frustrates you or does not work for you?
3. What causes disharmony in your work environment?
4. What part do you play in this disharmony?
5. What will be one thing that you will do different next week?
6. Are there any obstacles to that goal?
7. Where will the support come from?
8. What did you learn from this exercise?

We asked the participants to think about three leaders they have known personally and whom they admire, then list their names, qualities and characteristics. They were then asked to categorize them into their leaders' intellectual, technical and emotional groups.

Emotionally intelligent leaders help organizations create a competitive advantage through emotional intelligence, which would:

1. Increase performance
2. Enhance innovation
3. Effective use of time and resources
4. Improve motivation and teamwork
5. Instill trust.

Exceptional leaders with emotional intelligence tend to have excellent social skills. These leaders have “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships,” (Coleman, 2004).

Five Emotional Intelligence domains of personal competence and capabilities that determine how we manage ourselves (Coleman, 2004) include:

1. Knowing one’s emotions (self awareness).
2. Managing one’s emotions.
3. Motivating oneself.
4. Recognizing emotions in others.
5. Handling relationships.

The main point is that leaders can stop having the undesirable emotions they are having. Leaders can learn to choose their emotional state. These are the principles which underpin Emotional Intelligence:

- IQ and technical competence are important.
- Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand your own emotions.
- Emotional Intelligence matters because emotions drive behavior and impact how things happen.
- Emotions drive leadership and our body transmits emotions (see *Blink* by Gladwell—when a leader does anything, people pick up their “cues”).
- Emotionally Intelligent people embody themselves more fully than others.
- Emotional competence in leader’s strengths or weakness can be measured in the gain or loss to the organization of the fullest talents of those they manage.

Today’s leaders need Emotional Intelligence more than ever. We may all know someone who didn’t exactly shine at school, but went on to be

successful in their chosen careers. A simple reason is that IQ is only one aspect of doing well while other reasons involve our abilities to empathize, fit in, to understand our self and other people.

In addition, numerous studies have shown that Emotional Intelligence makes the difference between a highly effective leader and an average one. In today's competitive knowledge-driven organizations leadership is more important than ever. Today's leaders, from top executives to line managers, must have more than just the right technical skills and IQ, they must possess Emotional Intelligence.

Critical Emotional Intelligence research show that 85%-95% of the difference between a "good leader" and an "excellent leader" is related to emotional intelligence (Coleman, 1998). In business, 70% of lost clients may be due to an Emotional Intelligence cause. For example, the client didn't like that company's customer service and decided to leave the company (Stroul, N. & Chittum, R., 1999).

The government has also shown interest in Emotional Intelligence research. The U.S. Air Force invested almost \$10,000 for emotional competence testing and saved \$2.76 million in recruitment (Handley, 1999).

Readers should reflect on their vision in a leadership position. Consider asking:

- What are the exciting things about the position?
- What are the two concerns about the position?
- What are the two concerns about the position in the deaf community?

For a final consideration, the participants were led by using the Simple Coaching Model map, "Grow Model," by John Whitmore, a powerful tool. There are four steps in the process, and GROW is an acronym: Goal, current Reality, Options and Will - which are seen as the four key elements. The purpose of the GROW model is to: compel attention, focus for precision and detail, and create a feedback loop.

G is for Goal: What do you really, really want?

R is for Reality: What is happening now?

O is for Options: What could you do?

- Identify your obstacles

W is for Way Forward. Way Forward and Will: What will you do?

- Create your action plan and get started. See what works for you. Map out to your path to success.

The participants were split into small groups to make a list of actions based on the GROW model on how to improve leadership in the deaf community and share with the large group.

Below is an excellent summary of questions to ask each person as listed in the book.

Questions to ask for Goal -Objectives or topics match wishes to discuss.

- Step #2 Questions to ask for Reality: The match's realistic starting point
- Step #3 Questions for Options: Feasible choices or options
- Step #4 Will do: Commitment to an action plan

Participants had opportunities to ask questions, and receive feedback from the facilitators. The presenters were trained by the Adler School of Professional Coaching and the Georgetown University Leadership Coaching Program.

Conclusion

Our goal as coaches in the workshop is to not tell the leaders what to do. The purpose of our goal is to help leaders figure the solution themselves with tools to map out their paths to success. The GROW model is one of many coaching tools for leader performance. As John Whitmore wrote in his book, "It is a way of managing, a way of treating people, a way of thinking, a way of being."

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