



# MASTERFUL COACHING

THIRD EDITION

ROBERT HARGROVE

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Robert Hargrove

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*To my son, Rob.*

*He will be a great leader some day.*

*(As he grows and develops, so will I.)*

*I am lucky to be his father.*

## PREFACE

Since I wrote *Masterful Coaching* in 1995, coaching has become a hot phenomenon in both business and popular culture. Watch a Sunday football game or listen to any talk radio program like *The Big Show* in Boston, as I do, and you will discover that the endless fascination goes beyond the top athletes. Not only are people interested in the players, like quarterback Tom Brady's latest march to the Super Bowl or Tiger Woods's quest for winning yet another major, but also people are interested in the coaches, such as Bill Belichick and Butch Harmon, who help the athletes become household names and fulfill their mythopoeia destiny.

What are TV shows like *American Idol*, the cooking show *Hell's Kitchen*, and design shows like *Project Runway* but forums for young talent to be scrutinized and receive coaching with sometimes brutal candor needed to reach an Impossible Future, whether it is to become a pop star, own a high-end restaurant, or have a chance to play at the top of the fashion world? Interestingly enough, the real stars of the show are not the performers, but people like *American Idol*'s judge Simon, whose brusque honesty lets people know where they stand—something most of us want at work but never get.

Coaching is also hot in the business world, as many signs indicate that companies like General Electric, Pepsi, and Apple have dropped the terms *leader* and *manager* and now use *coach* instead. Today, driven by the fact that most CEOs have jobs as difficult as putting a human on the moon and the fact that we are living in an age of talent, coaching has gone from a random activity, quietly practiced by a few, to an exploding profession practiced by the many.

Today thousands of talented people throughout the world from many different occupational backgrounds, including business

leaders, lawyers, psychologists, and accountants, are flocking to this new profession in droves. Indeed, the *Wall Street Journal* reports that coaching is now a billion-dollar industry and growing fast. According to Bob Nardelli, chairman and CEO of Chrysler, “I absolutely believe that people, unless coached, never reach their maximum capabilities.”<sup>1</sup>

For talented people who have tasted success in far-flung fields, coaching hits a powerful sweet spot for fulfilling rising human aspirations and motivations. Everyone wants powerful and profound professional relationships. Everyone wants to have an impact. Everyone wants to get (yes!) rich. I happen to know of many people who have become millionaires doing executive coaching.

**You’re invited.** While this book is focused on a passionate professional who aspires to become a world-class executive coach, CEOs and frontline leaders will be able to find many lessons here that they can practically and immediately apply. (See *Masterful Coaching Fieldbook* for more on the leader as coach.)<sup>2</sup>

**Share the Masterful Coaching vision.** You will learn how you can be a Masterful Coach who can help people achieve something seemingly impossible and make a difference in their world.

**Reset your mind-set.** Leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results and life-altering solutions, not homogenized leadership competencies or abstract training programs.

**Learn the Masterful Coaching Method.** The game is helping people to realize an Impossible Future and win at the great game of business. You will learn to deliver this through 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations, a method that is transformational and result oriented.

**Launch a super-successful coaching practice.** This book will show you how to create superb client relationships and a growing profitable business. It will also show you how to create powerful coaching relationships with the people who report to you.

# INTRODUCTION: BETTER LEADERS, BETTER WORLD

*Coaching is the fastest, most powerful way to develop leaders.*

My motto is, “Better Leaders, Better World!” In Boston, Bangalore, or Beijing, in the halls of every Global 1000 corporation, government agency, or nonprofit organization, with issues from affordable health care to equal educational opportunity or reducing our carbon footprint, life goes on at the same petty pace until a leader steps onto the scene and takes a stand that a difference can be made.

I have observed in my work with hundreds of executives in a multitude of organizations throughout the world that it’s generally only a handful of extraordinary people who dare to see and hear the call to leadership concerning pressing human needs and wants and mobilize people to bring about the introduction of a new order of things.

What if we could somehow increase the size of that handful of leaders? Or double it? What if we could find a way for ordinary people to become extraordinary leaders? What would the impact be on our schools and neighborhoods? What would the impact be on the struggle for the United States to maintain its economic leadership now that the world is flat and there is no job that is America’s God-given right anymore? What would the impact be on global warming, global poverty, and hunger? On global terrorism?

Today almost every business is faced with a leadership lag: the time between coming up with a vision or game-changing strategy and the time it takes to find the leaders to implement it. The question is: How do you create an effective leadership pipeline?

How do you develop leaders consciously and intentionally rather than by accident?

I have worked with many CEOs and top executives in Global 1000 corporations, as well as trained almost thirty thousand people in leadership development programs and through my work as a director of the Harvard Leadership Research Project. I have come to realize that the traditional paradigm of leadership development based on a list of homogenized corporate leadership competencies and abstract training programs is wrong-headed.

Out of a commitment to inspire leaders to make a difference in their world, I stumbled on what I believe is a real breakthrough. It is based on coaching leaders to declare an Impossible Future that they passionately care about. An Impossible Future is one that cannot be achieved based on history and can be only realized by leaders reinventing not just their organizations but also themselves. It's my belief, based on a decade of experience, that coaching is the fastest, most powerful, most profound way to develop leaders—whether in the White House, the executive suite, hospitals, schools, or neighborhoods.

The implications of this discovery are vast, and this is why I say that coaching is a cause for me, not just a business. I am not interested in coaching as just another dangling leadership development initiative. I am interested in coaching as a vehicle for developing leaders who, as a result, have the capacity to win in their business and make a difference in their world. I am also interested in interacting with people in such a way that at the end of the day, they see coaching as the ultimate self-development and growth experience—something that is life altering for them.

I have drawn on three traditions:

1. The tradition of the great leaders and coaches in business, like Jack Welch of General Electric, Steve Jobs of Apple, and N. Murthy of Infosys in India, who realized Impossible Futures through game-changing solutions and thus created unparalleled profits, growth for stockholders, and wealth for thousands of employees.
2. The tradition of the sports coaches from Boston, my home town—like Red Auerbach of the Celtics, Bill Belichick of the Patriots, and Terry Francona of the Red Sox—who took

teams from worst to first and created a legacy of winning championships.

3. The tradition of the great gurus, such as the Dalai Lama, whose stock in trade is based on the tradition of Nalanda (an ancient university in India and translated from Sanskrit as “giver of knowledge”). I consider myself a student of all of these people and think of them often.

The Masterful Coaching Method presented in this book is the fastest, most powerful way to develop extraordinary leaders and extraordinary results. As I wrote in the first edition of this book, the aspiration to become a Masterful Coach who can help leaders realize an Impossible Future and make a difference, whether in the life of one person or the life of all humanity, is one of the highest aspirations of what it is to be a human being. It is difficult for me to think of a more noble profession and occupation to go into or one that has the potential to have more of an impact. At the same time, coaching has the potential to be very lucrative, and many people I know in the field have gotten rich.

Having said that, there is a world of difference between the Masterful Coaching approach and most of the usual coaching approaches on the market. In most cases, these are throwbacks to the old paradigm of leadership development based on studying characteristics and traits. It is my observation that most abstract training programs produce lots of information but with little impact on people’s leadership ability. If leadership development happens at all, it tends to be very slow.

**Extraordinary leaders develop in the process of producing results.**

This is a book about Masterful Coaching as it applies to realizing a vision or transformational goal in business. I like to work with people who have been put in a job that they are not yet quite ready to do and then use that as an alchemical chamber for them to grow. I have noticed a direct correlation between coaching people to achieve an extraordinary result and their development as a leader. The faster people are able to achieve results, the faster they will develop. Thus, the whole Masterful Coaching method is designed to give people power and velocity in reaching their goals.



Business is a wonderful medium for this to happen because it provides people with an opportunity to stretch their minds and skills in the process of producing results. Consider the following three premises:

- Business is the ultimate self-development and growth experience.
- Business is the ultimate proving ground for building a leader's soft skills in the process of achieving hard bottom-line results.
- Business is the ultimate transcendent service opportunity.

Although I am interested in other domains—such as government, health care, and education—I have decided to focus on this area because it is where I have the most domain expertise. Take heart, however: the Masterful Coaching vision, mind-set, and methods can easily be applied by leaders not just in business, but in government, health care, education, and other areas. All the aspiring coach needs to do is read the book extrapolatively and improvise according to their situation.

**Masterful Coaching is about realizing an Impossible Future.**

Beware of coaching people on a predictable future or little game. I love working with a leader I admire and respect on an Impossible Future or big game and hate working with a leader on a predictable future or little game. I love the idea of making big changes to big things and abhor the idea of making little changes to little things. I love the idea that a coach's role is expanding people's capacity to win the Super Bowl of their own life and hate the idea that a coach is just there to listen, like Dr. Freud.

Thus, I decided early on to experiment with the idea of coaching executives one-on-one (and later in teams) to build the capacity to realize an Impossible Future and win at the great game of business. This seemed in keeping with the fact that we are moving from an age of progress based on predictable goals, competitive benchmarking, and incremental improvement to an age of disruption based on Impossible Futures through radical innovation and blue ocean strategies that take people out of bloody red oceans where the competition is fierce into uncontested waters (markets).

I looked for leaders with big organizational and personal ambitions, together with an attitude of learning. For example, I worked with John Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics at the Pentagon, who was tasked with transforming the military for an age of terror. I worked with Marsh Carter, who now has the task of transforming the New York Stock Exchange from a U.S.-based to a global-based concern. Then there was Gerard Kleisterlee, CEO of Phillips, who in 2006 became European CEO of the Year and told me his Impossible Future was shifting the corporate culture from “make things better” to “make different things.”

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The person who was there before isn't there now;  
the person who is there now didn't exist before.

---

**The impact of Masterful Coaching on a leader is transformational.**

I ask people to define an Impossible Future or extraordinary result with the intention of pulling off a bit of what I call wizardry. I get people inspired, empowered, and ready to take on the world, then hit them with the other half of the double whammy: “Whatever it is that got you here as a leader isn't going to get you there. Your old leadership style may have gotten you to be able to consistently deliver on so-called stretch goals and every boss you ever had loving you and your team respecting you, but it may not take you to your Impossible Future.”

People soon begin to see that to reach their Impossible Future or reinvent the organization, they are going to have to reinvent themselves first. I make it clear to people, at least in principle, that the first step in dramatic organizational change is dramatic personal change. This usually leads to talking about the Masterful Coaching feedback process, which is such a world apart from the typical 360-degree feedback that is based on computer tick sheets, check the boxes one through five that it is almost unrecognizable. (See Chapter Ten for more on the feedback process.)

The Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback approach is simple and powerful, and it is totally transformational. It is designed to produce an alteration in people rather than just be another ho-hum assessment that people don't know what to

do with. People get meaningful feedback one by one from each colleague based on interviews, which has the impact of helping them break the grip and excel beyond winning strategies that made them successful in the past but now have become a source of limitation.

As people go through each interview, they (1) unfreeze their noble certainty in their whole leadership approach that has gotten them here; (2) change who they are being as a leader in the light of the Impossible Future or unintended results; and (3) refreeze their newly discovered leadership approach by making it real through action.<sup>1</sup> The transformation doesn't happen overnight; it takes time. The person who was there before isn't there now; the person who is there now didn't exist before.

The Masterful Coaching method also employs triple loop learning (synonymous with transformational learning) as a way of coaching leaders to produce desired results in real time. It is based on the premise that falling short of your main goal or producing unintended results is usually the result of some way of being, a way of thinking, or action that is unknown to the person at the moment. The book shows you how to teach people to alter their way of being and their patterns of thinking and behavior so as to be able to produce intended results for the first time. (See Chapter Seven for more on triple loop learning.)

### **The Masterful Coaching approach connects coaching to ROI.**

In my work in leadership development over the years, I have regularly been asked how one shows return on investment (ROI) or measurable results. In truth, as long as the work I was doing was about leadership characteristics and traits or only about transforming thinking and attitudes, it was a difficult question to answer. Like most other leadership gurus, I stumbled around in the dark thinking of something smart to say. In truth, the human resource people asking the question lived so far away from the world of results that they didn't even really want an answer.

Yet when I started coaching leaders on realizing an Impossible Future and winning at the great game of business, all of that changed, because suddenly there was a scoreboard. It showed that Joe, for example, grew the company by \$1 billion through organic growth largely due to innovating business concepts (products) and achieved \$500 million in real improvement

through Six Sigma. Furthermore, the leadership pipeline that was broken with key leadership positions unfilled was now brimming with top talent, in part due to a fundamental shift in corporate culture.

The fascinating and intriguing discovery was that it seemed that each step the leader took toward realizing an Impossible Future or transformational goals required a corresponding step (or rather leap) in his or her development as a leader. Suddenly I started getting letters and e-mails that Joe had not only achieved more than anyone thought possible but transformed as a leader in the process. This work eventually led me to an epiphany: *extraordinary leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary and tangible results*, the heart and soul of the Masterful Coaching method.

Once I saw leadership development and results as connected, it was as if the scales had fallen from my eyes. First, I needed to see myself as a business guru, not just a leadership guru. Second, I needed a different time span for the coaching relationship than the typical three-day training program, because significant results cannot be produced in three days. Third, the coaching process that occurs from month to month has to be able to deliver on helping people achieve something impossible and change their lives.

## MASTERFUL COACHING: THREE EDITIONS AND GOING STRONG

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Your second edition was not like a second edition;  
it was like a new book.—A reader

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I admire Picasso because he woke up every day and delighted in the act of creation. I can't say I am on the level of Picasso, but I admit to being like an artist as well. I take pleasure in the sheer joy of creating things—whether it's cooking an Italian fish stew, building an innovative house, or writing a new edition of a book.

I have written three editions of *Masterful Coaching* (the first came out in 1995), in large part because my wonderful editor, Matt Davis, gave me the opportunity to ply my trade by requesting the books. Each has been dramatically different. I recall

someone writing me after the second edition was published and saying, “It’s not like a second edition with a new prologue by the author; it’s like a different book.” To me that was a great point! I am sure readers who have known me for a while will say the same thing about this book.

It’s amazing how much the climate of the times has changed since I penned the last edition in 2002. The talent wars, the “China price,” collaboration on the Internet, and more have changed everything. Although the principles of Masterful Coaching remain the bedrock on which this edition is built, the state of the art has advanced in the light of new challenges for business leaders and new coaching experiences. The stories, examples, and metaphors used in this book have been updated as well.

### *MASTERFUL COACHING*, FIRST EDITION: INSPIRE AND MAP THE TERRITORY

I wrote in the first edition that the desire to be a Masterful Coach by helping leaders realize Impossible Futures and change the world is one of the highest aspirations for what it is to be a human being. Also, I framed coaching in terms of producing extraordinary and tangible results, not a psychological or mechanistic approach predicated on figuring out the right set of leadership behaviors and getting them into people. The book also provided the first iteration of the Masterful Coaching method: a five-step coaching model.

---

Coaching is one of the highest aspirations for what it is to be a human being and takes place in the domain of accomplishment, not therapy.

---

I knew that if I was to get plum coaching assignments, I had to become the future of coaching, not be associated with coaching’s past. There were few executives at the time who used executive coaches, and the reason was that there was no cultural clearing or opening in the corporation for that to happen. In many organizations there was an old conversation about coaching that got in the way of establishing a culture and the common thought that “coaching is a last-gasp effort before being shown the door.”

My intention was to generate a new conversation about coaching that would create a new cultural clearing that would allow and pull for executive coaching and the leader as coach. This got expressed as debunking the Five Myths of Coaching, a goal I have been somewhat successful in, as there are many executive coaches in both big and small companies today, though many don't yet buy into the approach. Consider the myths and the reality:

*Myth 1:* Coaching is for losers, a last-gasp effort before being shown the door.

*Reality:* Coaching is for winners who seek to go to the next level.

---

*Myth 2:* Coaching is about filling leadership behavior gaps.

*Reality:* Coaching is about an Impossible Future and changing your life.

---

*Myth 3:* Coaching is a separate leadership development activity.

*Reality:* Coaching integrates leadership development and results.

---

*Myth 4:* The coach is a process consultant who asks questions from a distance.

*Reality:* The coach is like a sports coach on the playing field, doing whatever it takes to win.

---

*Myth 5:* Coaching is an activity that happens in annual reviews.

*Reality:* Coaching requires continuous, but not continual communication.

---

Results versus homogenized leadership competencies; results versus 360-degree computer tick sheets; results versus behavioral modification.

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## MASTERFUL COACHING, SECOND EDITION: FURTHER INSIGHT INTO THE PARADIGM AND METHOD

I wrote *Masterful Coaching* with the idea of putting coaching on the map, and to some extent I must have succeeded. The demand for revolutionary new leaders and for implementing revolutionary new business models and the inability of traditional leadership training to deliver created a huge opening to jump-start the coaching profession.

At the time of writing the second edition, the number of coaching companies was staggering—almost ten thousand. Even in 2000, according to one survey by an executive coaching company of 150 firms, it was reported that 30 percent of CEOs and 50 percent of executives use coaches. Seventy percent of the companies planned to increase their use of coaches to develop high-potential leaders. It also showed that 90 percent of those leaders who had used a coach planned to do so in the future.<sup>2</sup> As of today, this trend has not abated.

In the second edition of *Masterful Coaching*, I built on the many experiences I had in coaching over one hundred executives in different companies and various industries. The work I did with clients allowed me to enrich the second edition's favorite coaching tales as well as provide new guiding ideas, tools, and methods—for example, building a one-year coaching program around an Impossible Future or creating a Source Document or winning game plan or providing a new approach to executive 360-degree feedback.

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The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.

Michelangelo

---

I also noted in that second edition that my experiences with executive coaching led to a new program, team-based action coaching, which involves a coach, the business leader, and the leader's team. This program resulted not only in leadership breakthroughs but also in business breakthroughs. Fred Stiers, an oil refinery leader who participated in the program, told me of the tremendous

impact the program had: “We pretty much followed the Masterful Coaching approach and it made the company hundreds of millions of dollars.” It became clear to me soon after the second edition of *Masterful Coaching* was published that coaching was not only catching on like wildfire, it was beginning to make both traditional leadership development and consulting irrelevant. Coaching was beginning to be recognized as a powerful new domain and, as *Fast Company* put it, a fad that wouldn’t go away.

One CEO told me that by working with his executive coach as a thinking partner, he could come up with much better strategic answers than any of the Big 8 consulting firms, as well as actually implement them. Also, there is a huge difference between developing leaders through real-time coaching and developing them through the typical classroom approach.

## MASTERFUL COACHING, THIRD EDITION: ESTABLISHING COACHING AS A DISTINCT PROFESSION WITH STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

While coaching is clearly part of the conversation happening in the CEO’s office and human resource department, there is a huge variation between what I was talking about in the first and second editions of *Masterful Coaching* and most of the coaching happening on the front lines of business. To be sure, some of the feedback made me feel triumphant; other feedback I got was troubling, however. One British executive told me, “There are more coaches in London than hot dinners and I am not sure the quality in some cases is even equal to British food.”

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There is a need to establish a universally accepted definition of executive coaching.

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It occurred to me that while the growing popularity of coaching has given rise to hundreds of schools of coaching that offer so-called executive coaching certification programs, questions arise:

- Who is certifying the certifiers?
- What are they certifying people in?



- Is coaching about accomplishment or therapy?
- What are the process and criteria for certification?
- How can you certify people in the profession of executive coaching if there is no universal definition of what it is and no universally accepted standard principles and practices?

Let me illustrate. If you live in Boston, Brussels, Bangalore, and go to an obstetrician to have your baby, the doctor will almost invariably follow the exact same set of standard operating procedures. The same is true with dentists, lawyers, and so forth. However, the standard operating principles that executive coaches follow are almost always random.

I also learned in giving a talk at the Vistage Conference in California (a successful CEO coaching organization based on monthly and group meetings) that people are already inspired one-on-one enough about coaching leaders to shift from good to great, and most coaches have been exposed to various five-step models such as the GROW model (goal, reality, options, work). What they are looking for is a more advanced methodology for coaching leaders over the course of a year in a world of change, complexity, and competition.

My intention in this third edition of *Masterful Coaching* is to provide what's missing that will make a difference. The goal is to wed Masterful Coaching and extraordinary leadership throughout the twenty-first century, rather than have it be a passing fad that will lead to cynicism. To that end, the book establishes:

- A universally accepted definition of coaching: Achieving the impossible and changing your life
- A powerful new paradigm for leadership development: Leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results
- The Masterful Coaching method (standard practices and principles): executive coaching; 12 months; 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations
- The basis for designing executive coaching certification programs and criteria for certification offered by universities and other educational bodies

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Executive coaching is an amalgam of leadership coaching and business coaching.

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As an executive coach, you eventually hit a crossroads. The road most often taken by executive coaches is transactional tips and techniques about leadership, delivering on predictable goals as promised, and occasionally incremental improvement. The road less taken involves coaching people in transforming leadership, Impossible Futures, and winning in their business.

The Masterful Coaching approach is the road less taken and is not for the faint of heart. The Masterful Coaching Certification Program equips people to deliver on breakthroughs in business and breakthroughs for leaders. Whereas most executive coaching certification programs involve a certain number of hours in a classroom, the Masterful Coaching approach is based on practice and study.

There is a classroom component to teach the Masterful Coaching vision, paradigm, and fundamentals; the Masterful Coaching method; and especially the 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations. Yet the lion's share of the certification program involves coaching candidates as they coach their clients over a year's time. People are certified after completing three successful coaching engagements based on specific criteria.

A Masterful Coaching engagement is not complete until:

- The clients have declared and made significant headway in realizing an Impossible Future.
- There is a visible difference in the client's leadership as validated by 360-degree feedback interviews before and after.
- There is a culture change in the client's organization (team).
- The client makes the shift from a red ocean strategy where they compete in bloody waters to a blue ocean strategy, where they compete in uncontested market space.
- The client comes up with game-changing solutions, products, services, experiences.
- There are extraordinary and tangible bottom-line results.
- The client says this has been the ultimate self-development and growth experience.

This book has four parts:

Part One: Mapping the Territory of Masterful Coaching.

Part Two: The Journey to Masterful Coaching

Part Three: Coaching Executives to Create an Impossible Future  
and Win in Their Business—12 Months; 12 Coaching  
Conversations

Part Four: Master Classes with Robert Hargrove—Powerful  
Lessons in Personal and Organizational Change

## IN CLOSING

I very much enjoy hearing from people who have read my books, and I promise to respond to you. I would not only appreciate your comments on the book, but would like to learn about how you applied it on your own journey to Masterful Coaching. My e-mail address is [Robert.Hargrove@MasterfulCoaching.com](mailto:Robert.Hargrove@MasterfulCoaching.com).

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## PART ONE

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# MAPPING THE TERRITORY OF COACHING

Part One maps the territory of Masterful Coaching for professionals, leaders, and managers. The chapters address the vision of Masterful Coaching, “Better Leaders; Better World,” and emphasize that becoming a Masterful Coach requires resetting your mind-set to the fact that coaching for results, not changing behaviors, counts. It introduces the Masterful Coaching method, which is based on Impossible Futures, winning, and transformational learning.

Chapter One shows how the cumulative effect of change is making coaching not just a good idea but also a necessity. As organizations are disembodied through outsourcing and offshoring, the span of control shortens and managers increasingly have to coach small teams of top talent on game-changing projects. This requires that command-and-control leaders transform themselves into leaders as coaches who can bring out the best in genuinely talented people who don’t fit job descriptions and have no interest in punching a time clock. The chapter introduces the Masterful Coaching method, which is all about Impossible Futures, winning at the great game of business, radical innovation, and personal and organization transformation, as opposed to predictable futures, coming in second, continuous improvement, and behavioral tweaks.

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If you want to reinvent the organization, reinvent yourself first.

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The Masterful Coaching method is not for everyone, so if possible, choose your clients rather than just hungrily accepting any assignment that you get. Chapter Two advises looking for extreme leaders who push the envelope in terms of vision, build teams of talented deviants, and take bold and unreasonable action versus middle-of-the-road moderates who are leaders in name only and who hate vision, fake teamwork, and tend to retreat at the first sign of opposition. Extreme leaders not only raise the bar, they are, surprisingly, the most coachable. This chapter also discusses how to deploy coaching on an enterprise-wise level to achieve power and velocity in reaching goals.

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Masterful Coaching is about inspiring, empowering, and enabling people to live deeply in the future, while acting boldly in the present.

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Let's say you are now coaching a leader and it's going swimmingly, but how do you know whether you are showing up as a Masterful Coach or teetering on the edge of a so-so evaluation—one that you will never actually hear about until your contract is cancelled? Chapter Three provides a kind of GPS with four way-points so you can tell whether you are in the zone of Masterful Coaching or way off course and heading for the rocks: (1) the coach has a real seat at the table, not a casual consulting relationship; (2) coaching is about standing in an Impossible Future and getting your client to take action to make it a reality versus getting distracted; (3) coaching is about engaging clients in personal (organization) reinvention, not a competency tune-up; and (4) a coach is a thinking partner on puzzles, dilemmas, and conundrums.

## CHAPTER ONE

# COACHING IS AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

## The Masterful Coaching Vision, Mind-Set, and Method

Leaders today need to become revolutionaries or risk becoming irrelevant. Welcome to the revolution. This book is a call to arms—an invitation to take a stand for the future. The winds of change are blowing at gale force against the barricades of the status quo. We are shifting from the age of the machine to the age of talent, from a mass economy to a creative economy, from “The world is our colony” to “The world is flat.” Think Wal-Mart versus Sears, Apple versus Sony, Google versus AOL, Whole Foods Market versus Safeway, YouTube versus MGM.

CEOs have no choice but to become revolutionaries or risk becoming irrelevant at the hands of their competitors. This book is for leaders at all levels whose aim is to make a difference in their world and for coaches who desire to play a catalytic role in this process. This book is a manifesto and manual. It’s for people who believe that an Impossible Future is something you create, not just something that happens to you by luck. It is a book for innovative leaders who are unwilling to play it safe and for coaches who want more than just another contract. I introduce the Masterful Coaching vision, mind-set, and method—a powerful and concise step-by-step process. Before going further, let me set the table.

Companies need revolutionary leadership and business models in order to compete. We have reached a tipping point where

the cumulative effect of change demands revolutionary new business (management) models. The future of management is with the visionary leader, profit mechanic, and coach. The leader will be a visionary who changes the game while others sleep—a profit mechanic and a people developer. Creative intellectual capital (think Microsoft, Google, Apple), not a big organization on merger steroids, is the key to success.

If we aim to realize an Impossible Future and change the world, we better get together the best professionals in the world. Nothing less will do. Organizations need to be acting as organizers, not just employers (think Visa International, Amazon.com, or Linux software). Hierarchy, bureaucracy, and employee IDs will give way to hot zones, a stew pot full of joint ventures and astounding projects. Look for more brassy brands and professional service firms. The focus will be on creative intellectual capital, superb client relationships, and turn-key, life-altering solutions. Here are some of my favorites that have already succeeded in this realm:

IDEO—innovation is a team sport  
 Cirque du Soleil—ultimate entertainment experience  
 Whole Foods Market—gourmet healthy fast food  
 eHarmony—compatibility matching system  
 UPS—“What can Brown do for you?”  
 Everything on the Internet: Web2.0 (web businesses), not Web1.0  
 (just brochures)

Second, big centralized organizations are giving way to “empires of the mind” consisting of twelve people. The value of industrial-era M.B.A. degrees and huge, sprawling, centralized organizations with overlapping product divisions all but disappears as we make the shift to the age of talent (creative economy), and the trend toward outsourcing and offshoring continues. At the same time, the value of visionary leadership, together with creative intellectual capital and radical innovation, comes boldly into view. Bill Gates and Microsoft, with an empire of a dozen minds surpassing General Motors, America’s biggest corporation, in market capitalization was a sign of the times, as was IBM selling its PC business to China’s Lenovo.

Prediction! Even the best CEOs will find it hard to keep organizations like GM, IBM, GE, and so forth from being broken up in the next decade, as 90 percent of white-collar jobs “disappear” and or become reconfigured beyond recognition. The CEO as steward of the big company who had little choice but to be a command-and-control manager in order to coordinate the efforts of tens of thousands will be passing into history. The CEO as entrepreneur with an empire of a dozen minds (Apple, Google, Facebook) and a vision of an Impossible Future based on a dramatic difference will come to take their place. One thing is certain: if the people on your team are some of the smartest people in the world, command and control isn’t going to cut it. Nor will running the company according to the laws of physics that dictates if you want to grow, buy a big company.

Third, coaching has become an idea whose time has come as millions of business leaders seek an Impossible Future and 75 million baby boomers retire. In the next decade, coaching will become an idea whose time has come as CEOs discover that the old-fashioned management muscles needed to deliver predictable results and occasional incremental improvement aren’t sufficient to lead a team of talented people to an Impossible Future based on game-changing products, exciting new services, and spellbinding experiences. Increasingly they will tap into a growing army of coaches and consultants drawn from the ranks of 78.2 million baby boomers used to a high standard of living, loaded with expertise, not ready to retire, and looking to get the most out of the rest of their life.

For example, when Jeff Immelt became CEO of General Electric, he said that his primary task as a leader was not to wrestle a thousand-pound gorilla to the ground (stay on top of everyone and everything), but rather to act as a coach who would take people to an Impossible Future based on 8 percent growth a year for the company. His coaching started with a winning game plan. He personally got involved in building a talented cross-functional team to launch a new company, GE Infrastructure, a general store to third-world countries. His coaching duties also involved helping to transform a culture of general improvement efforts into a culture of radical innovation. Immelt believes that no executive can reach his or her potential without coaching, and one of



his first acts as CEO was to retain his old boss, Jack Welch, as his executive coach.

## THE LEADER AS COACH IS DISPLACING THE LEADER AS COMMANDER

Leadership from on high based on command and control, a poltergeist from management's past, will finally be exorcised, and the leader as coach based on stimulating imagination and radical innovation will take its place. The unit of organization has shifted from a big organization to a great group with a hot project, where each person is free to discover his or her own greatness. Interestingly enough, the best role models are coming from outside the United States. N. R. Narayana Murthy, with the formal title of chairman and chief mentor of Infosys in Bangalore, India, launched the \$20 billion company that employs fifty-five thousand people with the creative intellectual capital of six talented software engineers and a \$250 loan from his wife.

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First of all, I must say that God has been very kind to us because, as Louis Pasteur once said, that when God decides to announce his presence, he comes in the form of chance.

N. R. Narayana Murthy

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He had a vision of an Impossible Future of Infosys being one of the world's top three software firms and creating wealth for the Indian professional population based on the PC revolution, offshoring, outsourcing, and an army of talented, English-speaking Indian engineers. He also had a vision of leadership without formal authority based on the Indian tradition of the guru, which his title of chairman and chief mentor reflects. He lives in the same house he lived in when he started the company, starts each day by scrubbing toilets, and drives a locally made car to work at 7:00 A.M., when he frequently holds meetings with the board on strategy or coaches software engineering teams on the Infosys values of honesty, respect, and decency (charity).

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I would like Infosys to be a place where people of different genders, nationalities, races, and religious beliefs work together in an environment of intense competition but utmost harmony, courtesy and dignity, creating more value for our customers.

N. R. Narayana Murthy

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As big companies that make and sell things morph into professional service firms that offer customized solutions through joint ventures and hot projects, the chain of command has been decimated, and the senior person who used to see it as part of his or her job to mentor talented junior employees to get them up to speed has either disappeared or is working on a project in Dubai, London, or Singapore. Most newly hired talent rarely gets one lunch a year with the boss and often doesn't see much of a stretch assignment either. Companies are going to need coaching and mentoring to realize an Impossible Future and win the non-stop talent war. It's one thing to bring on a mentoring program, another to create a mentoring culture.

Bruce Wasserstein, chairman of Lazard Ltd., is a leader who has embraced both ideas. A masterful deal maker in 2005, he launched the seemingly impossible 2006 coup at Lazard in which he famously disassembled the family ownership and took the fractious merger and acquisition firm public. In 2007, he coached his veteran team of investment bankers on \$300 billion worth of deals, something that always involves offering a CEO's advice: Are you sure you are going to keep the number two guy in the company you are acquiring, because the number one guy is definitely going to leave? Wasserstein invests heavily in attracting a network of young stars. Every junior staffer gets a mentor who teaches this person the ropes and at the same time stimulates his or her imagination. The idea is to create a hothouse where young talent is encouraged to think deeply and creatively about the client relationship.

Today's leading CEOs, who have mind-bogglingly complex jobs as tough as climbing Mt. Everest, are increasingly realizing they can't do it alone. When Sir Edmund Hillary went to take on the Impossible Future of climbing Mt. Everest, one of his first acts

was to hire his sherpa, Tenzing Norgay, as a guide. Leading CEOs are now increasingly looking for a coach to guide and instruct them in reaching their goals and dealing with dilemmas.

How do you attract New York Yankees' top talent level with a Nashville Sounds' low budget? How do you break out of the no-growth morass? How do you transform a big organization that stifles game-changing ideas and create a gathering place that is as stimulating as Google search and as engaging as eBay, MySpace, or YouTube? In most cases, it's not about the coach having the answers but about coach and coachee discovering the answers together.

The image of the CEO as a solitary Zarathustra-like figure is giving way to the image of the CEO and Masterful Coach whose destinies are joined at the hip. In Nietzsche's book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the hero proclaims that God is dead and then attempts to conquer the world on his own, only to die early in battle having failed to create allies or take counsel from the wise. Nietzsche unknowingly created an apt metaphor for today's CEOs who are being fired in record time and record numbers for much the same reasons. My Pentagon pals have said of Donald Rumsfeld that during his years at the Pentagon, he acted as if he was so smart that he neither brought in the team nor requested coaching; however brilliant and powerful he may have been, the goals and complexities of Iraq proved too much for him.

In my opinion, in the years ahead, CEOs will stop drawing their identity from the solitary Zarathustra-like figure and start drawing their identity from the image of the CEO in partnership with a Masterful Coach who together go after an Impossible Future that would not be attainable individually. Can you imagine Sir Edmund going for the summit of Mt. Everest without Tenzing Norgay? No. Can you imagine Jeff Immelt becoming CEO of General Electric without the coaching of Jack Welch? No. Can you imagine Tom Brady winning four Super Bowl rings without Bill Belichick? No.

The CEO needs to get personally involved in bringing in coaches and mentoring programs rather than delegating it to human resources (HR) or whoever holds the fashionable (albeit empty) title of vice president of talent development. This area of blindness is based on a fundamental misconception that coaching

isn't about building the capacity to realize an Impossible Future and get some real-world results. It is a separate development activity.

Unless the CEO is regularly in the habit of genuflecting before HR and unless HR has a real mandate, rather than a fake one, to make coaching happen, this is a bad idea. In most cases, the vice president of talent lacks a relationship with the line manager, lacks a budget, and isn't in any position to make a strong recommendation. The person who should be in charge of executive coaching is the CEO or business unit leaders themselves, with HR taking the lead from them, not the other way around.

## CREATING A NEW CULTURAL CLEARING FOR COACHING

One of the goals of this book is to distinguish the future from the past of coaching. Today, as most CEOs know, there is a war for talent raging outside their window. They will say positive things about coaching, yet in most organizations, there is no cultural clearing for coaching to show up. I often hear, "I have had zippo coaching sessions with my boss in three years." There are many myths left over from coaching's past that result in a limited cultural clearing for coaching to occur in corporations. But perhaps the most important one is, "Coaching is for losers, a last-gasp effort before being shown the door."

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Coaching is for winners, not losers.

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When I introduce coaching in a company, I plant the seeds of a coaching culture by telling stories from sports and the performing arts illustrating that coaching is for winners, not losers. For example, when Tiger Woods met golf coach Butch Harmon, he went from being a talented young professional just breaking into the Professional Golf Association to the number one golfer in the world, winning a grand slam (four majors) in short order. Furthermore, rather than three sessions at the driving ranger, Butch Harmon and Tiger marched up and down every fairway for a year, practicing before and after every tournament.

Coaching is about expanding a leader's capacity to accomplish what he or she needs to accomplish. This book is about the future of coaching rather than the past. The sun is setting over the days when the executive coach, who looked like Dr. Sigmund Freud, was relegated to doing leadership lobotomies behind a locked door—trying to take out the “bad” and put in the “good.” Today, CEOs of leading companies increasingly realize that they need a coach who can help them accomplish what they must accomplish.

What is coaching? It is nothing but you and your client cocreating an Impossible Future together—one that is based on self- and organizational reinvention. It's about helping leaders make the shift from managing a big organization to creating a great group where each person is free to discover his or her own greatness. The executive coach today is more like chairman and chief mentor Murthy or NFL sports coach Bill Parcells than a shrink. This individual raises goals and aspirations and acts as a thinking partner, transformational agent, and driver.

## MAPPING THE TERRITORY OF EXECUTIVE COACHING

One of the goals of this book is to map the territory of coaching. In this book, you will hear about the vision of Masterful Coaching, the Masterful Coaching mind-set, and the Masterful Coaching method. I stumbled on the Masterful Coaching way not by teaching leadership but in the process of empowering executives to reach ambitious goals and aspirations: Marsh Carter, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange; Gerard Kliesterlee, European CEO of the Year in 2006; John D. Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; and many others.

In the past, I had taken almost thirty thousand business leaders through a not-so-typical three-day leadership training program with some great results immediately afterward—but also a lot of backsliding later. I discovered almost by accident in working with just a critical few that coaching was not only the fastest, most powerful way to develop leaders, but also the most sustainable. It was during this work that I had an epiphany that *extraordinary leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results*. This paradigm is the heart and soul of the Masterful Coaching method.

The prevailing paradigm of leadership development based on competencies is universally accepted as right, yet it is dangerously wrongheaded. Before Louis Pasteur, people believed that bloodletting cured all ills. That was the paradigm, and once inside that paradigm, you have two choices: “let more blood” or “let less blood.” It never occurred to people that while their paradigm was universally accepted as right, it was dangerously wrong. When Pasteur came along and said that bacteria caused disease, there was a paradigm shift, and new methods started to emerge. Something like washing hands became an obvious method. Before Masterful Coaching, the paradigm was that leadership development was a matter of studying characteristics and traits and later competencies, and the method was either one-on-one coaching or marching people off to abstract training programs that were either shorter or longer. Yet like bloodletting, it is so universally accepted as right that no one dares to notice that it is wrong.

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Despite millions spent on research, thousands of books, countless training programs, there is not a shred of evidence that the competency based approach works.

Noel Tichy, Management Guru

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## A NEW PARADIGM FOR COACHING

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This work is about establishing a new paradigm: extraordinary leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results.

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One of the primary goals of this work and my firm is to launch a new era in the history of leadership development based on the Masterful Coaching paradigm that leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results, rather than studying a set of behaviors. The new paradigm for coaching is based on seven guiding principles:

1. A leader is a coach and teacher versus commander and controller.

2. Coaching is about standing in people's greatness, not leadership lobotomies.
3. Coaching is about creating Impossible Futures versus filling leadership competency gaps.
4. Coaching is about creating a winning game plan versus fluffy mission statements.
5. A coach is a transformational agent, not a purveyor of transactional tips and techniques
6. Coaches focus on the scoreboard, not just pie in the sky.
7. The coaching relationship needs to be robust—more like an NFL football coach with the quarterback versus a typical consulting engagement.

If you stick to these simple but powerful principles, you will find that much of the Masterful Coaching method is almost self-concluding. Furthermore, you will discover that you can't go too far wrong. However, violate these principles at your peril!

Let's take a closer look at each of these principles:

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"We are going to shock the world."

Dick Advocat, Dutch coach of the 2006 maligned  
Korean soccer team that eventually went to the  
World Cup quarter finals

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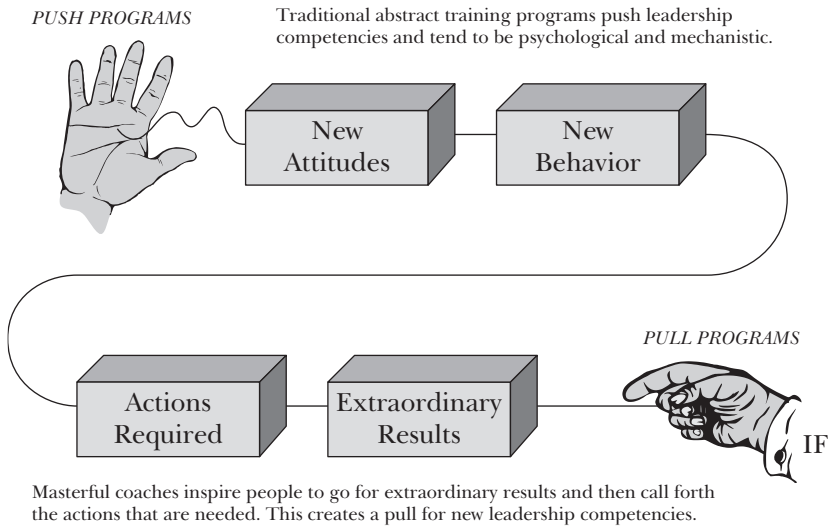
1. *The leader is a coach and teacher versus a command-and-controller.*  
A few years back, I landed in Singapore on my way to give a speech on the leader as coach to a group of local business leaders. My first observation is that Singapore works! The evidence is everywhere. Prime Minister Lee had a vision of an Impossible Future of Singapore going from third world to first and unabashedly micromanaged his island to make it a reality. Since retirement, he has taken on the official title of minister mentor and often holds forth with his successors 'til the wee hours of the morning. According to Lee, he cannot direct government leaders or direct legislation, only help leaders on the front lines and in the heat of the action to step back to see the big picture. His top priority is to coach

Singaporeans to find a new act now that “Efficiency and Operational Excellence,” Singapore’s signature, no longer makes it due to rising gross domestic product (labor cost). With rising salaries, Singapore no longer can attract low-cost, outsourced business, and according to Lee, must now become a brand that is associated with “cool stuff”—professional service firms, high tech, and banking.<sup>1</sup>

2. *Coaching starts with inviting people to discover their own greatness, not leadership lobotomies.* I asked John Young, then assistant secretary of the Navy, a post previously held by Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt, “What do you see as your potential in the government?” He thought reflectively about the politics of the Pentagon and said half in jest, “I’m not sure I will ever be more than a peon.” I then did some 360-degree interviews, including with the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the CEOs of Raytheon, Boeing, and other industry leaders; and a dozen or so admirals and captains who told me that Young, then forty-two years old, had the potential to become Secretary of Defense some day. People were in effect inviting him to discover his own greatness as a leader rather than just be a defense program manager. When I gave him the feedback, the impact was life altering: he developed a broader leadership vision, “defeat any enemy on any battlefield,” which would require transforming the military. He also became a thinking partner of the Secretary of Defense, frequently accompanying him to the White House to discuss hot issues.
3. *Coaching is about creating Impossible Futures versus filling leadership competency gaps.* Most coaches start the coaching relationship by pulling out a list of homogenized leadership competencies and then seeking to identify and fill gaps—a push approach to leadership development. (See Figure 1.1.) By contrast, I start every coaching engagement by asking: “What would be an Impossible Future or big game you are really passionate about?” The next question is, “How are you going to need to develop as a leader to get there?” This is the pull approach to leadership development. Greg Goff, president of ConocoPhillips, with a reputation of being more of a deal maker than a leader, told me an Impossible Future



FIGURE I.1. A PULL VERSUS A PUSH APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



or big game he could be passionate about was to build an inspired, high-performing oil business out of a decidedly resigned group of employees and underperforming rusty oil refineries. As soon as he began articulating his vision and holding town hall meetings, he began to discover and express the leader within him. Profits shot up from \$1 billion to \$3 billion over the next eighteen months.

4. *Coaching is about creating a winning game plan versus fluffy mission statements.* Once we define an Impossible Future, I tell people the next step is not to come up with a fluffy mission statement but a winning game plan that tells everyone in the organization how they can win. I operate as a thinking partner who helps people break the grip and excel beyond winning strategies that made them successful but now limit them. For example, I coached Jim Morgan, CEO of ComfortSource.com, a small, high-powered Web-based furniture outfit that was growing by leaps and bounds but not making much profit. I told him that he couldn't out-Wal-Mart Wal-Mart or out-eBay eBay by selling thousands of unrelated items

and competing on price. Together we came up with a game-changing idea of marketing comfort, the ultimate source of luxury, along with a turn-key solution: “Rooms to Go.” The company’s business grew exponentially by 40 percent and multiplied its profits from 2 or 3 percent to 20 percent.

5. *A coach is a transformational agent, not a purveyor of transactional tips and techniques.* Three factors are the acid test of Masterful Coaching: impossible goals, winning against all odds, and, most important, being a transformational agent. I coached Sandra Welsh of Suffolk Construction whose job was to balance the company’s incredible growth with risk management—something that required a transforming corporate culture. General managers who had learned how to build a business from the back of a pickup truck had a lot of resistance to having to scrutinize their subcontractors’ insurance and safety procedures. Sandra understood that she had to reinvent the organization, but what she needed to do first was to reinvent herself. The 360-degree feedback revealed that the resistance she was getting was due to the fact that she was perceived more like an “insurance Nazi,” than a construction person. Over a few months, we addressed this, as well as building risk management into the contracting process.
6. *Coaches focus on the scoreboard, not just pie in the sky.* Coaching is often a dance between long-term visions and short-term goals. You may want to win the Super Bowl, but you first have to win the next game. That means executing the game plan, focusing on the scoreboard, winning, losing, and intervening in the drift. I was coaching Bill Donahue at Global Electronics on an Impossible Future for his company that involved breaking out of the no-growth morass. One day I happened to say, “You are doing great with your vision, but are you also focusing on the scoreboard [the key numbers of the business]?” Bill looked at the quarterly financial report he had just received and said, “Damn.” As it turned out, his group was creating some game-changing product ideas, but they were missing their production and sales targets. If things kept going in the same direction, his entire organization would miss their bonus. My casual question as an executive coach prompted Bill to intervene before it was too late.

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That's why they pay me the big bucks!

Executive Coach Bart Sayle inked a \$750,000 per year coaching contract with an organization

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7. *The coaching relationship needs to be robust—more like the NFL football coach with the quarterback versus a typical consulting engagement.* Think football coach and quarterback, not your typical consulting engagement. Bart Sayle, a British executive coach who took the Masterful Coaching Certification Program, asked the new CEO of a Fortune 500 company what an Impossible Future would be for his organization. The CEO said he would like to take the company from \$3 billion in revenue to \$5 billion and have this come at least 80 percent from organic growth rather than acquisition. Sayle responded, “You will probably reach that goal, but it may take you a decade or more. I think my coaching can give you the power and velocity to reach it in three years. If I did, what would it be worth to you?” The CEO said, “You’ve got my attention,” and the two agreed to a one- to three-year engagement worth up to \$1 million a year for Sayle, including stock options. The CEO and Sayle worked out what we call a “structure for fulfillment” that would increase their chances of success and included the following.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The coach works with the CEO and the executive team on an Impossible Future in weekly phone calls and monthly meetings.
  2. The coach has a seat on the executive committee and a voice in decisions and judgment calls.
  3. The coach leads a one-week breakthrough strategy session annually that is more like a “happening” than a typical business meeting.
  4. The coach can call meetings anywhere and can ask any question he or she wants.
  5. The coach has a monthly dashboard with the company’s financials on it.

## THE MASTERFUL COACHING METHOD

I have learned from leading Masterful Coaching Certification Programs that while the Masterful Coaching paradigm based on the seven guiding principles may be vitally important to resetting people's mind-set around coaching, most people are looking for a method that they can practically and immediately apply. In this section, I introduce the Masterful Coaching method and set your mind at ease.

First, the Masterful Coaching approach is perhaps the only coaching method that can be used by both CEOs and consultants with slightly different tweaks. It is the only coaching program that combines Impossible Futures and winning game plans together with personal and organizational transformation. It's also the only coaching approach that is truly predicated on producing extraordinary and tangible business results rather than producing mere behavioral change. As I told a group of CEOs and HR managers in Seoul, Korea, a couple of years back, the Masterful Coaching approach is what the iPod is to the Sony Walkman, the GPS to the road map, the HD TV to an old black and white set.

Second, I have designed the method so that it not only delivers on leadership and business breakthroughs but is user friendly. The design is based on a concept similar to what Steve Jobs once said of the first Macintosh Computer: it's designed to be as ubiquitous as a bicycle lying against the side of a garage. It's one thing to say that the Masterful Coaching approach develops extraordinary leaders in the process of producing results, but can the average person deliver? To share a story, following this talk I gave in Korea, I led a certification program in the Masterful Coaching method for a dozen or so leadership consultants schooled in the competency-based approach. At the beginning of the program, the guys were clearly nervous about whether they would be able to provide a coaching program that delivered not just leadership competencies but return on investment (ROI). Yet by the end of the program and understanding the structure of the coaching relationship, they were full of confidence, and felt fully empowered to do so.

Third, the Masterful Coaching method is about bringing power and velocity to people's goals. I was coaching a friend (a political appointee) in the State Department who had some

ambitious goals and plans, but only about a year before the presidential election, in other words, a short time to accomplish them. I said, “First, your power is not your position in the government. Your power is the velocity in which you can accomplish these goals. Second, a football game is one hour long, not two hours. You have to win in those sixty minutes. If you get 80 percent of what you have planned done in this next year, you will be a hero; 10 to 20 percent, just a footnote in history.” The executive told me, “I get it. My team and I have to start acting like we’re in a two minute drill in the Super Bowl rather than going for a walk in the park.” In the next week, he mobilized his team with some ninety-day catalytic breakthrough projects and got them into action.

Fourth, Masterful Coaching is a one-year program. In most cases, we suggest that the engagement be a minimum of a year. Why? If your paradigm is that leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary and tangible results, you have to design the structure of the program in keeping with that. We have observed that it takes a minimum of a year not only to realize an Impossible Future or transformational goal, but also to make anything happen in a big organization. It also takes about a year for people to transform who they are as leaders and to come together as a team. You can’t transform someone’s leadership style or get an extraordinary and tangible result in a three-day training program or even a three-month consulting engagement.

The Masterful Coaching method for building a team’s capacity to realize an Impossible Future is different from the methods of running a giant corporation. The image of the CEO as überboss of a giant corporation will give way to the CEO as coach of a great group of stupendous talent that is ready to rock the world. To put it another way, in the years ahead, the CEO may continue to be an überboss of a giant company, but be so in parallel with building a cross-functional team’s capacity to realize an Impossible Future and transform their world. Steve Jobs of Apple, Jeff Immelt of General Electric, and N. Murthy of Infosys are notable examples. It is a given that the managerial frames and method for running a big company so as to deliver predictable results as promised and occasional incremental improvement is different from coaching a small team to achieve creative, entrepreneurial, breakthrough results.

Coaching people to realize an Impossible Future or transformational change doesn't happen all at once; you have to create a process, just as you need create a process for general improvement programs. You need a powerful and concise series of steps to be taken over time.

The Masterful Coaching process empowers you to expand an individual's or team's capacity to realize an Impossible Future. While the leader of a big company like Ford, GM, or Chrysler might think it's important to coach the organization, I doubt if the conversation would be about how to match the Germans on design or the Japanese on TQM. It would probably more likely be about scouring the world for the creative intellectual capital needed to realize an Impossible Future based on the next generation of automobiles: as gorgeous as a Ferrari and as fuel efficient as a hydrogen hybrid while still being affordable. The Masterful Coaching process, which includes imagining the future, radical innovation, and blitzkrieg execution, is as important as zero defects and continuous improvement were a few decades ago.

We not only have a proven process, but a powerful and concise series of steps. The first thing we do in our Masterful Coaching Certification Programs is to introduce people to the Masterful Coaching vision of "better leaders, better world" and then teach them the fundamentals—for example: "Coaching is a way of being, not just a technique, so stand in people's greatness, even when they fall from it," and "Coaching communication is about speaking from a stand (one that conveys your belief in people) rather than speaking from your reactions." We also teach the difference between transformational learning and transactional learning.

## THE MASTERFUL COACHING WHEEL AND THE 5 PHASES OF BREAKTHROUGH

After the coaching fundamentals, we introduce people to the Masterful Coaching Wheel, which shows people how to structure a year-long program. The structure consists of the 5 Phases of Breakthrough and 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations. (You can see an illustration of the Masterful Coaching Wheel in the introduction of Part Three.)

Mastering the 5 Phases of Breakthrough accomplishes three things: (1) it allows you to get a handle on coaching people over a year's time; (2) it tells you what is involved in producing breakthrough results; and (3) it tells you how to adjust your coaching style, teachable points of view, and game plan according to which phase you are in.

These are the 5 Phases of Breakthrough:

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A coach alters his or her approach in moving from one phase to the next.

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|-------------------|--|
| 1. Formulation    | Engage and inquire into impossible goals, plans, leadership and business challenges.               |
| 2. Concentration  | Launch an initiative, a wow project, or rapid prototype, and keep going in the absence of results. |
| 3. Momentum       | Create a widening circle of small successes.   |
| 4. Breakthrough   | Build on success by scaling up.  |
| 5. Sustainability | Set up business processes; institutionalize gains.   |
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Clarity is power.

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## PHASE I: FORMULATION

In phase 1, which occurs in the first quarter, the coach invites people to engage and inquire into goals and plans. What would an Impossible Future be for you and your company? What would be a strategy that would obliterate the competition? Who do you need to be, and what do you need to do to make it happen? The key question here is not, "How can we reach a big goal through the same cookie-cutter approach?" but "What's missing that, if provided, can make a difference?" The leaders of Home Depot, Whole Foods Market, and eBay are good examples of those who spent sufficient time in this phase and came up with what's missing—which is not the same as what's wrong. Here, we not only formulate what the leader's role will be in leading the transformation, but how he or she will have to personally transform in order to make it happen. We create a business road map and a leadership road map based on 360-degree feedback.

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Stop talking; start doing.

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## PHASE 2: CONCENTRATION

Whereas in phase 1, the coach encourages people to engage and inquire, in phase 2, which takes place in the second quarter, the coach urges people to stop talking and start doing. You are going for a breakthrough, and breakdowns are common. Bill Caldwell, a business unit leader from a big oil company, and his team came up with an Impossible Future of “100% Replace” (on oil reserves that had been picked over for a hundred years). In the first team coaching session (formulation), my message was: “Launch an initiative, mount a catalytic breakthrough project, go for a result now!” They iterated on these for three or four meetings, but didn’t do anything to execute on them. Finally in the fourth month, I took Bill out of the room during a break and said, “You need to shift how you are coaching people. You need to be more like ‘Jumping Jack Flash’ and light a fire under people’s derrieres rather than play Mr. Empowerment and take your lead from the team.”

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Don’t let up!

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## PHASE 3: MOMENTUM

In this phase, which takes place in the third quarter, the coach teaches people that big goals are achieved through a widening circle of small successes. The coach emphasizes that each success spearheads a breakthrough, which creates an opening for a larger breakthrough. So don’t let up! John Young, tasked with transforming the military for the war on terror, asked me to be his thinking partner on how to build a much more robust toolbox with limited taxpayer dollars. He decided that rather than spending large sums of money asking three defense contractors to develop the armored personnel carrier for Iraq to the point where it was ready to roll off the assembly line, he would ask each to develop a rapid prototype at a fraction of the cost. This program worked so well that it rapidly built momentum and spread to other programs, saving the government billions of dollars.



## PHASE 4: BREAKTHROUGH

In this phase, in the fourth quarter, the coach needs to help people deal with the specter of visible, sudden, and unexpected success. Imagine that you open your first Wal-Mart in East Oshkosh one Friday, and by Saturday the parking lot is jammed. Imagine that as a result of an idea formulated while sitting in a coffee bar in Rome, you build the first Starbucks and discover that people are willing to pay three or more dollars for a cup of really good coffee. Imagine that you run a pilot plant to extract petrol from coal tar sand. Now that people have had their aha moment and made something happen around it, the coach works with them to expand their vision, scale up the idea, and turn a profit. Wal-Mart in every rural shopping center? Starbucks in every city? Coal tar oil in every gas pump? We have been talking here about a coach being a steward, catalyst, and nudge for a business breakthrough, but you will notice from every story I tell that a coach has a dual role to play as catalyst for a leadership breakthrough.

## PHASE 5: SUSTAINABILITY

The final phase, in year 2, involves coaching people to make the breakthrough sustainable. All too often creative entrepreneurs come up with a great game-changing product or service, experience the first blast of cash, and then buy a new BMW or book a trip to somewhere exotic. Six months later, you see the sign on their storefront or Web site: *Going Out of Business*. Coaching people in the sustainability phase has three parts: (1) paying attention to what's working and institutionalizing it (for example, paying employees a bonus to recruit great people); (2) paying attention to what's not working and fixing it (for example, your competitor's Web site is very searchable, but yours isn't); and (3) paying attention to what's missing that, if provided, will make a difference. This often involves coaching people on setting up world-class business processes that are essential to keeping your business on track: financial controls, marketing, supply chain, and so on.

## THE 12 CATALYTIC COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Coaching happens in conversations. The 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations provide you and the client a road map for the year-long coaching process. In the event that the client feels at sea in the process, I pull out a diagram of the Masterful Coaching Wheel and say, “This is the territory we have conquered: conversation 1: creating an extraordinary coaching relationship; and conversation 2: defining an Impossible Future; and this is where we are now, conversation 3: getting 360-degree feedback and creating a leadership breakthrough.”

The 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations (or rather network of conversations) all but ensure that you will be able to add value in every coaching session. Each one of those conversations is probably worth the time and expense of the coaching engagement. Having said that, as you take people through the conversations, you have to bring something from yourself into them rather than just rely on what’s on the printed page. It’s much more powerful to share a teachable point of view that you gained from hard experience than it is to share one you picked up reading the in-flight magazine on your way to the meeting. Part Three in this book goes through each one of the catalytic coaching conversations.

One way of looking at Masterful Coaching is as a mind-set or method that you try out on clients in a logical, linear progression. Coaching involves thinking and working together with the intention of achieving an Impossible Future and changing people’s lives through this process. It’s perfectly valid to look at the Masterful Coaching paradigm and method like that, and, in fact, that is what we are going to do in short order.

However before doing so, I want to discuss Masterful Coaching as if we were sitting together in a great restaurant or bar and I was telling you the story of what happened in coaching a particular individual. In other words, your conversations are a narrative about a person—in this case, a CEO or business leader, in the process of becoming. Although I talk often about CEO and coach, it is more a verbal simplification that might otherwise

stand for coach and business unit manager or coach and high-potential employee, for example.

Every coaching engagement is also a narrative about a person (or team) in a quest for an Impossible Future. The narrative usually starts with an extreme coach (like myself) who is more interested in helping leaders make a difference than in the next contract. It involves developing a relationship with an extreme leader, as with Greg Goff, executive vice president of ConocoPhillips, who wants to rock the world with a game-changing idea and is ready for radical change. In all cases, the process looks less like a logical progression than one with many twists and turns of plot.

The key job is to expand a person's capacity to realize an Impossible Future and bring about transformational change, which begins by asking provocative questions that raise people's goals and aspirations. John Young took on the task of transforming the military; Marsh Carter's was to reinvent the NYSE; Gerard Kliesterlee's was to move Phillips from "We Make Things Better" to "We Make Different Things." In most cases, people know they have to step into a reinvention paradigm to realize their goals. I get them clear that to reinvent the organization, they have to reinvent themselves first.

The narrative is not just about transformational goals, but about a person in the process of becoming. Every coaching engagement is a story of greatness and pettiness, brilliance and blindness, failure and grace. I often feel as if I am in a Shakespearean play where whether the play turns out to be a comedy or a tragedy depends on whether the hero has a revelation of his own foolishness and changes his ways. Perhaps this is because I seem to gravitate to extreme leaders who have a big vision, a big game, and a sizable chunk of arrogance that comes from having been so successful in the past.

I have learned that realizing a transformational goal in a big corporation requires the courage and patience of Richard the Lionheart, as well as the political skills of Machiavelli. It's one thing to manage an organization in the age of progress, but what about managing an organization in an age of radical innovation?

People need to reinvent themselves and their organization by learning how to be change insurgents. I also talk to coaches

about the difference between being a leader with all the magisterial power to declare a new vision and new era and being a change insurgent who reinvents the organization without getting the total buy-in of the bosses when starting out. In most cases, for people to reinvent the organization, they need to reinvent themselves first. One of the first things I work on with people is to stop defining who they are in terms of their performance alone and to start learning to love politics.

The principal issue is that in every turning point in history and in every country, there is the party of the dominant majority that represents the status quo and the party of change, usually a small minority. If you want to bring about change, you have to speak to the vision in people's minds and hearts so as to mobilize a great group to bring about change from below. I then teach people that a hot project or rapid prototype with game-changing potential is a great way to take the revolutionary fires of a small insurgency and get them to burn in the whole organization.

## TEACHING PEOPLE HOW TO MOVE MOUNTAINS

The executives I coach are often monsters of effectiveness who know how to move mountains by dint of their imagination, intellect, daring, and drive. However, their singular achievements are often achieved through dominating other people on the executive team rather than through collaborating with them (hence "monsters"). Like Zarathustra, they may gain power rapidly, only to die early in battle for lack of allies.

At a certain point, their ascent up the corporate ladder and ability to pull off a big vision or change initiative tends to plateau. At that point they have two choices: (1) run things up the ladder to the CEO in hopes they will force it down people's throats, with a fifty-fifty chance of success or (2) transform themselves from a monster of personal effectiveness alone to a monster of organizational effectiveness so they can literally move mountains.

This starts with the Masterful Coach teaching how to get maximum return on investment from relationships. For example, I sometimes say, "There is a time in every relationship where a three-minute phone call would have avoided a total breakdown."

I have also learned that the following power words can have tremendous impact: “Thank you” and “I’m really sorry!”

Finally, the coach needs to know when it is time to shift from a thinking partner and purveyor of emotional intelligence to prime mover of action. This means bringing the team together, getting objectives agreed on, ironing out conflicts, mounting projects, and taking action in a way that creates a rallying momentum and drives projects to completion.

## CHAPTER TWO

# WANTED: EXTREME LEADERS

## Extreme Leaders Want to Make a Difference

*Extreme leaders stand for something;  
moderates tend to get stuck in dead center.*

If you look at history, you find that the biggest difference makers are always considered extremists in their time. For example, the greatest U.S. presidents—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt—were all considered extremists by those who defended the status quo. They took strong positions on the issues of the day rather than pursued the mushy road to moderation, and it is easy to remember their accomplishments. We all know that Washington, Jefferson, and John Adams made a bold Declaration of Independence, that Lincoln freed the slaves, that FDR ended the Great Depression and established an economic bill of rights.

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Extreme leaders Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Sam Walton, Jack Welch, and Steve Jobs had unforgettable achievements.

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By contrast, when you think of more moderate leaders, even those who were popular in their day, Democrat or Republican,

it is hard to remember a notable difference or single major accomplishment: James Buchanan, Herbert Hoover, Gerald Ford, and Bill Clinton. I would say the same applies to leaders in business. For example, in the extreme leader category are Jack Welch of General Electric, Bill Gates of Microsoft, Fred Smith of FedEx, Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines, and Steve Jobs, the enfant terrible of Apple. Each created an Impossible Future through a game-changing idea that altered the status quo and brought about a lasting change. More moderate business leaders can't even be remembered by name, unless their name lives in infamy.

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Moderate leaders may be popular, yet it is hard to remember their accomplishments: Bill Clinton, Millard Fillmore, Herbert Hoover, James Buchanan.

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It is important to add that my definition of an extreme leader is someone who has big personal and organizational ambitions but operates according to fundamental values and sound moral principles. I have also noticed that extreme leaders—like Lincoln, FDR, and N. Murthy—while taking strong revolutionary positions, often proceed in evolutionary steps and rather than preach to the converted, they focus on building coalitions. The most impressive extreme leaders in business tend to be very grateful for the contributions of customers and employees, rarely using the phrase “I did this,” and often using the phrase, “We did this.” Yet at the same time, they are courageous and determined in their actions.

Extreme leaders intuitively realize that the higher you raise the bar, the more you will need coaching. “Wanted Extreme Leaders,” says one of my marketing pieces. The reason is that I have noticed extreme leaders, who have an Impossible Future and are ready for radical change, tend to be more coachable than mushy moderates who may be seeking advice from a coach. Extreme leaders perhaps intuitively recognize that the bigger the change they are trying to bring about, the more they need to take counsel from the wise. Lincoln's mentor was William H. Herndon, his senior law partner, who counseled him throughout his presidency to have bold goals but take gradual steps with the right timing. FDR's mentor returned FDR to himself: his desire

to be president and his vision for the country when polio had rendered him resigned and despondent.

I have found that the same applies to such businesspeople as Jack Welch, Warren Buffett, and Herb Kelleher, who established strong coaching and mentoring relationships, whereas moderate leaders tend to take counsel from a few, if any. I have also seen in my own work with Masterful Coaching that the best candidates for coaching are extreme leaders who are very smart and exude competence and have big personal and organizational ambitions, yet realize that in pursuing them, they are likely to trip over their blind spots, breakdown places, and learning edges. I have found that these leaders, despite their outward bravado, almost universally have an attitude of curiosity, humility, and learning.

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Extreme coaches are totally committed to stand in people's greatness: Vince Lombardi, Red Auerbach, Bill Parcells, and Benjamin Zander of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

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By contrast, I have observed that while leaders and HR folks who are middle-of-the-road moderates will buy into the ideas of an Impossible Future, winning personal and organizational reinvention in principle, but when it comes down to actual practice, this work will take them too far out of their comfort zone. If a leader tells me that his boss wants him to get coaching and that although he doesn't really have that many leadership or business challenges, there's always room for improvement, I know that if I accept the assignment, I am going to be in for a regrettable and forgettable experience.

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Extreme coaches have a total commitment to the person they are coaching, which is often unrecognized by those who see only their tactics.

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Whether in the world of business, sports, or the performing arts, everything I have said about extreme leaders versus moderates also applies to extreme coaches, who see it as their task to help an individual or team reach an Impossible Future and conquer transformational goals. This requires going beyond



TABLE 2.1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOCIAL GREASE AND COACHING COMMUNICATION

<i>Social Grease</i>	<i>Coaching Communication</i>
<b>Help and Support</b>	
Give approval and praise to others. Tell others what you believe will make them feel good about themselves. Reduce their feelings of hurt by telling them how much you care, and, if possible, agree with them that others acted improperly.	Increase other people's capacity to confront their own ideas, create a window into their own mind, and face their unsurfaced assumptions, biases, and fears by acting in these ways toward other people.
<b>Respect for Others</b>	
Defer to other people, and do not confront their reasoning or actions.	Attribute to other people a high capacity for self-reflection and self-examination without becoming so upset that they lose their effectiveness and sense of self-responsibility and choice. Test this attribution.
<b>Strength</b>	
Advocate your position in order to win. Hold your own position in the face of advocacy. Feeling vulnerable is a sign of weakness.	Advocate your position, and combine it with inquiry and self-reflection. Feeling vulnerable while encouraging inquiry is a sign of strength.
<b>Honesty</b>	
Tell other people no lies, or tell others all you think and feel.	Encourage yourself and others to say what they know yet fear to say. Minimize what might be otherwise subject to distortion and covering up of the distortion.
<b>Honesty</b>	
Stick to your principles, values, and beliefs.	Advocate your principles, values, and beliefs in a way that invites inquiry into them and encourages others to do the same

the everyday social grease that determines our interactions with others—for example, politeness, face-saving moves, and conflict avoidance. (Table 2.1 illustrates this.) It also involves setting high goals, never settling for less, and giving people feedback with the ruthless compassion needed for them to produce breakthrough results and breakthroughs for people.

In many cases, the total commitment of the Masterful Coach to the person being coached is unrecognized by the bystander, who sees only the tactics. Such bystanders often mistake face-saving moves with respect and sentimentality with compassion. For example, watch *American Idol*, and you will observe that most people think their singing or dancing is much better than it actually is. The next thing you know, one of the judges, Simon Cowell, gives people feedback with a kind of near-brutal candor that makes most of us squirm in our seats. Yet nine times out of ten, Simon is right, and we know that. In most cases, the ability of contestants to alter their performance and break through to the next level is a direct result of Simon's brusque feedback rather than the more compassionate feedback of the other judges.

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When extreme coaches meet an extreme talent,  
sparks fly and history is made.

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In the world of sports, one of the most iconoclastic coaches is Bill Parcells, who has a record of consistently taking National Football League teams from worst to first, no matter how good or bad the talent he started out with. He brought the New York Jets and the New England Patriots to the Super Bowl. In each case, he acted as a transformational agent in turning teams around, not just someone up to incremental improvement. He took spoiled superstar A players, like Terrell Owens, and solid citizen B players, like Troy Brown, and created a great group on offense, defense, and special teams where each player was encouraged to discover his own greatness. At the same time, Parcells often talks to players about a missed tackle or dropped catch in a rough way that would make most of us cringe.

Jack Welch, who believed very much in the idea of the leader as coach, built a CEO pipeline at General Electric second to none, increasing market capitalization at the same time from

\$12 billion to \$80 billion. Welch set high goals for people in his organization and then coached them in reaching the goals, alternating between incredible toughness and compassion. If you look at Welch's behavior from an everyday social grease perspective, he can come off as a soulless, foul-mouthed tyrant. If you look at Welch from the perspective of a Masterful Coach, you see something different. If you see Welch as standing for transformation, than you will see his tactics as toughness, driven by compassion.

## CHOOSE TO COACH EXTREME LEADERS WHO STAND FOR SOMETHING

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John Fish, the outsized founder of Suffolk Construction, has few interests outside the company and usually arrives at work before 4:30 A.M.

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I often think about people like Jack Welch, Bill Parcells, and Ben Zander, whose master class I attended at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, in choosing the people I work with at Masterful Coaching. I tell potential clients some of these same stories and ask them about their favorite coaches in order to make sure the relationship is going to be a match. I always choose extreme leaders who have a big vision and take a stand that a difference can be made and are willing to operate in the domain of creativity and risk rather than moderates, who are trying to look good and protect themselves while preserving the status quo. While my personal coaching style may be a bit less top down and more collegial than the guys in the stories above, my clients find out that my warmth and compassion are tempered with an edge.

One characteristic of extreme leaders is to hire coaches to help reinvent themselves and their organization. One of my clients is Suffolk Construction in Boston, a company that was started from scratch by its CEO, John Fish, twenty-five years ago. Today it has its signs on almost every construction site in Boston. Suffolk has gone from a \$750 million company in 2005 to about \$1.5 billion in 2008 and is predicted to reach \$2.5 billion in 2010 or before. I asked the former chief counsel, whom I will

call Wally, how the CEO had developed the company so fast—in less than twenty-five years.<sup>1</sup>

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Fish reached the billion-dollar mark long before its twenty-fifth birthday by shouting at subcontractors and being the low bidder, often driving competitors out of business with relish.

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He told me that Fish was so successful because he had no interests outside the business. He doesn't golf, ski, or go on a vacation that lasts for more than a few days. Fish, a trim executive with a gracious personality, frequently is up at 4:30 A.M. to work out, is at work by 5:30 A.M., and doesn't leave until well into the evening. Fish, whom Wally described as the most outsized leader he has ever met, used to get jobs by being low bidder and yelling and screaming at subcontractors. Wally said he created an environment where performing under pressure all the time was a given. Wally's office was near the CEO's, and because of that he had to be careful. Wally said that if you mentioned a good idea for taking the company to the next level, John would take your idea as a promise and never forget you made it.

Fish decided that to reach his Impossible Future, he needed to reinvent himself and hired a coach. And that's when he had an epiphany that he would be much more effective at building Suffolk if he abandoned his everyday way of being in the world and focused instead on an extraordinary way of being that was all about ROIR (return on investment in relationships). The company's vision is to build the business by consistently exceeding customers' expectations. Fish told me, "What this company is about is (1) building relationship with staff and subs, (2) building relationships with owners, and (3) lastly building buildings." In this order, Fish believes everything works, and he will make a profit; outside this order, nothing works.

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Today Suffolk Construction is all about growth by constantly exceeding customer expectations.

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One of the things that impressed me about Fish is that he represents not only the CEO as entrepreneur but the CEO as

steward, constantly citing Suffolk's goals and governing values. He might also be a notable example of the notion that to reinvent the organization, first reinvent yourself, as well as having a strong sense of the role that executive coaches can play as a catalyst in the process. Fish used executive coaching to help reinvent himself from the kind of leader who shouts orders from above and beats up on subcontractors (often driving competitors out of business with his low bids) to a kind of leader who steers away from unnecessary confrontation and builds powerful partnerships.

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Executive coaching has played a powerful role in both personal and organization transformation.

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Fish also brought in coaches for most of the general managers on the executive committee (who each bore the imprint of his former self) to catalyze Suffolk's transformation from a small, local construction company into a professional service firm on an almost national level—one that constantly seeks to exceed customer expectations. Suffolk doesn't put up buildings any more, but rather works through a network of joint ventures and subcontractors.

I was brought into Suffolk later in the game to coach Sandra Welsh, one of John Fish's executives. Her role was to help balance the company's incredible growth with effective risk management procedures. Sandra had proven to be an extreme leader in her own right. She had to get people who were used to the instant gratification of deal making and who grew up on the back of a pickup truck to slow down enough to talk about insurance.

When I went in to have a 360-degree feedback session with John Fish about Sandra, he told me she had made big progress in developing a risk management department program and gave me the background. She had been very successful in managing risks for the company, saving John a lot of money on insurance premiums, protecting his carefully built-up brand from reputation damage caused by mishaps, and setting up a profitable self-insurance program for Suffolk's subcontractors. However, due to either her prickly personality or resistance to change, she had run into some trouble with the general managers, who

called her “the insurance Nazi who didn’t know she worked in a construction company.”

When I asked Fish what her next development steps were as a leader, he told me he wanted her to be popular, be a highly effective executive, and be an effective change agent. When I asked him about the “how” of reaching these goals, he said “executive coaching” at least three times. He added that Sandra was very important to him personally and extremely important to the company. I knew it would be a tough assignment, but I bought in. I said I would throw myself 100 percent into coaching her.

## AVOID COACHING LEADERS ON THE MUSHY ROAD OF MODERATION

If the story of John Fish reveals what can happen when you have an extreme leader who used coaching to build a great company, as well as to transform it, the following story shows what can happen when the leader you are coaching is a mushy moderate, without much of a vision or appetite for radical change.

Jann Johansson, the newly anointed chairman and CEO of the European-based giant high-tech firm Global Electronics (a pseudonym), ushered me down the grand marble steps of his corporate headquarters in Stockholm. At six feet five inches, towering over me like a skyscraper, Johansson gently slapped my back, graciously opened the door of his BMW 750, and asked his personal driver to take me to the luxurious Grand Hotel. His parting words as he stepped away from the car were, “I don’t just think I want to move forward with the Masterful Coaching.” He continued, “I definitely want to move forward, and boldly. The only way we are going to reach our vision of creating a high-growth technology company is to reinvent this company, and I need your help.”

*So far, so good*, I thought. Global Electronics had stumbled badly in the late 1990s due to a lack of competitive advantage and escalating costs. The company was brought back to financial credibility by 2000 by a new CEO and then began to enjoy profitable growth based on a matrix structure that allowed the different product divisions to operate as independent businesses without a lot of bureaucracy. This winning strategy reached its limitation, however, leading to a total lack of cooperation that

made it difficult to respond quickly to new market opportunities such as the mobile phone and the personal digital assistant.

Soon after becoming CEO and chairman, Johansson announced at a company meeting of the top one hundred leaders that he was standing for a new possibility: “bringing Silicon Valley inside” and becoming a company that would foster “profitable growth” and “shape the future of our industry.” This would require reinventing their corporate culture so that it was much more innovative and collaborative. It would require a Six Sigma approach, and it would require talented people at all levels with a radically different leadership style. To make this happen, every person in the room was going to use an executive coach.

What Johansson didn’t realize is that he had vastly underestimated the extraordinary leadership that it would take on his part to make this reinvention happen and so he stepped into what’s called the “great programmatic fallacy.” One of Johansson’s behaviors was that he often tended to speak in terms of transforming other people as leaders and to deflect conversations about transforming himself. A company can do a lot of programs, but unless the leaders see that in order to transform the organization, they must first transform themselves, the programs are generally doomed to failure.

What happened next reminds me of something Jacques Barzun talked about in *From Dawn to Decadence*, a cultural history of five hundred years of Western civilization.<sup>2</sup> He said essentially that without extraordinary leadership, the most inspiring vision tends to be diminished by the reactionary defenders of the status quo. Even those hungry spirits possessed with the calling to make the vision a reality tend to give up eventually and adapt their behavior to the absurd norms created by reactionaries. In Global Electronics’ case, this is exactly what happened.

While the CEO, a lifetime employee whose father had worked in the semiconductor division of the company as a maintenance engineer, had made bold pronouncements at the meeting of the top managers, he soon became tentative in implementing them. One staffer told me candidly that Johansson once confided to him that he wasn’t sure why they had picked him for CEO. There were others he thought more deserving. “He isn’t sure of himself or the solidity of his position and is highly conflict averse,” this person told me.

While the powerful chieftains of the different product divisions liked the idea of becoming a high-growth technology company, they balked at the idea of losing any shred of independence in favor of the new flavor-of-the-month collaboration. They were also resistant to a corporatewide Six Sigma effort and would back it only if they were allowed to implement it in their own separate ways. When I coached Johansson to take a stand with his product division managers and use the coaching network we were creating to foster alignment, the HR manager, fearing that the coaches would become too powerful, stepped in and deliberately sabotaged both the entire reinvention strategy and the coaching effort.

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Reinvent yourself rather than reduce your vision  
when you hit the inevitable roadblocks.

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Johansson, seeking to avoid conflict, reduced the vision: “We will be a high-growth technology company that serves the best interests of the product divisions.” He also agreed to make the way Six Sigma was implemented discretionary. Finally, he delegated the coaching effort to the HR manager, who sentenced it to a kind of solitary confinement.

Under the HR manager there would be no collaboration between coaches or comprehensive effort, which he claimed would be too hard to control. Coaches were to coach only on leadership issues, not on business issues. (Let me note that we have found that the collaborative approach where the coaching is based on a marriage of leadership development and business performance allows the coaches to not only support the leaders they are coaching as individuals, but to also ensure that the coaching is aligned to the larger vision, mandate, and objectives of the organization.)

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It is not until leaders reinvent themselves that  
they are personally freed of the constraints of  
the past (of which past successes are a part) and  
begin to have the power to create a new future.

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Johansson chose to make the HR person’s behavior undiscussable, covering it up with reasons and excuses. At this point, I had no choice but to withdraw our coaches from the assignment.



Before I did, I had one last meeting with Johansson. I told him that what shapes the cultural clearing of any organization is who leaders are being, which shapes how people show up. “The way you and others think and act has been a key force in providing the cultural clearing of the organization that exists today.” I continued, “I know that you started out with a grand vision for the company, one that you truly believed needed to happen for the company to get to the next level, yet when you met disagreement and dissension, you lowered the vision.

“I don’t believe you know how much you are influencing the culture of the company and what is possible here. You may not like what I have to say, but to me, you are not showing up as the leader, and consequently leadership is missing in the company. You are not showing up as a collaborative, and therefore collaboration is missing. You are colluding with the organization’s defensive behavior and so is everyone else.” I concluded, “If you do not reinvent yourself before you begin this reinvention effort, it will surely fail.”

It is not that people on the leadership teams are resisting; it is that they come with a “master program” and don’t have the ability to start from a blank sheet of paper. Before you or anyone else can draw on your blank page, it is already filled up right to the edges. It is encrypted with your history, the company’s history, the winning strategies you think are right for yourself and the business, and ways of being, thinking, and attitudes. Usually the things that have made us successful in the past eventually become a source of constraint and limitation.

## DEPLOY COACHING ON AN ENTERPRISEWIDE LEVEL

If you want to coach CEOs and business unit leaders on an enterprisewide level to realize an Impossible Future and win in the great game of business, or help an HR corporate university chief create a culture of accelerated leadership development, you have to think not only in terms of coaching one person, but the deployment of coaching throughout the organization. This idea of coaching and the deployment of coaching apply not only to a big company but also to a small, entrepreneurial organization.

Coaching is about an Impossible Future or big game, but it doesn't start until you win people over. If you luck out and find a great leader to work with, your first steps will be to build an extraordinary coaching relationship in the process of reaching some transformational goals. It doesn't matter how big your reputation is as an executive coach or how highly recommended you come. Let me emphasize that coaching is about winning people over. A key part of this process is to start by asking questions about what people's goals and aspirations are before you get to their concerns, and stop talking about your wonderful coaching program—which I sometimes call “spilling your candy on the desk.”

We will cover how to win people over in more detail in a later chapter, but as this chapter is about deploying coaching on an enterprisewide level, it is important to mention the importance of defining an Impossible Future and transformations goals early on. If not, your coaching approach may turn by default into coaching the CEO on tweaking his or her leadership style. You will discover that once you come up with a first iteration of the vision and winning game plan, it's easy to make a bridge to talking about getting the team involved. And this naturally leads to talking about coaching and the deployment of coaching in the organization.

In a lot of cases, people would accomplish their high goals and aspirations on their own, but it might take a decade versus a few years. The whole idea of coaching is to bring power and velocity to the process of reaching goals. The bigger the goal and the higher the bar of excellence, the more the organization will need coaching.

You need a deployment manager from your team and a point person from the customer's organization. It's important in a big coaching engagement that the CEO's coach thinks of himself or herself not just as a coach but as a deployment manager who is there to bring coaching into the organization in service of the Impossible Future that has been declared. It's important from the other side for the CEO or business leader to establish a point person or contracting person. You may be a great coach, but chances are you don't have the necessary domain expertise in the business or awareness of the corporate culture.

For example, I had created a great coaching relationship with John Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, and together we had accomplished a lot in terms of a vision and implementation plan for transforming the acquisition side of the Pentagon.<sup>3</sup> One of the issues, according to Young, was that many of the Pentagon's weapons programs were broken, which he attributed at least in part to a leadership gap. He asked me to speak with General Frank Anderson, in charge of the Pentagon corporate university, to see if I could help with executive development. The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) has won all kinds of awards as one of the top corporate universities in America, competing only with IBM and Motorola for top place.

Frank astutely pointed out that this would be a challenge because in his view, the Pentagon didn't have a coaching culture. When I pushed back on this, he said, "Robert, if we had a coaching culture, then there would be a lot of four stars and three stars who had executive coaches." I took his point, and in turn, he smiled and said he wanted to go into the coaching business and asked me to speak to his deputy, Dave Fitch, in charge of executive development.

Over the next few months, Dave Fitch and I, working in collaboration with my point person, Susan Youngquist, came up with a brilliant deployment strategy that both gave Young some help in terms of his leadership team and built a sustainable coaching practice for the DAU that would be important to the Department of Defense for many years to come. It was a timely and important initiative as the Pentagon is in a process of transformation with the shift from the age of communism to the age of terrorism.

Our deployment process was based on a two-pronged approach. One side involved getting the resources to deploy coaching among Young's top staffers, including political appointees. With Young's encouragement, we signed up one of his principal deputies, a Senate-confirmed politico, in order to give him and his group power and velocity in reaching their goals. The second prong had to do with a DAU initiative to create a sustainable coaching initiative, focusing on a coalition of the willing. It involved some executive coaching for Anderson and team-based action coaching with his team, and finally a Masterful Coaching certification program for twelve high-level people in the DAU.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE FOUR WAYPOINTS

## How Do You Know If You Are in the Masterful Coaching Zone?

*Everything has been said before, but since nobody listened we have to keep going back and beginning all over again.*

ANDRÉ GIDE

I give speeches on the art and practice of Masterful Coaching and take a very strong view about what coaching is and isn't. Coaching is about raising aspirations and motivations, not merely a motivational technique. Coaching is about Impossible Futures, not homogenized corporate leadership competencies. Coaching is about winning in business, not mere team building. Coaching is about radical innovation, not just general improvement programs. Coaching is about personal and organizational reinvention, not leadership assessments or organizational development. These other traditions are of value, yet they are insufficient given the conditions of change, complexity, and competition that exist in today's environment. As Paul Allaire, former CEO and chairman of Xerox, says, "We are in a brawl without rules."<sup>1</sup>

I have been called a "master coach," "not your kinder gentler consultant," "enlightening," "highly provocative," "a practitioner

of crazy wisdom,” and a “crazed fundamentalist of the coaching profession, professing one true way.” I welcome all these comments. What I am up to is establishing executive coaching as a powerful new tradition with the potential to make traditional leadership development and consulting irrelevant. To do this, I need to open some eyes and challenge some sacred cows.

Let’s assume for a moment that you have bought into the Masterful Coaching vision and mind-set, that you have an extreme leader as a client, and that you have conjured up an Impossible Future or big game to play together. As you set about on your journey to Masterful Coaching, it helps to have some waypoints to know whether you are on course. Are you really doing the work of Masterful Coaching—or teetering on the verge of mediocrity? Although I go into the details of the Masterful Coaching method in later chapters, it is important to give an overall sense here of what it means to be in the Masterful Coaching zone.

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A Masterful Coach enters into the learning system of the individual or group with the intent of producing breakthroughs for people and breakthroughs in results.

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I am going to provide you with a kind of Masterful Coaching GPS and four waypoints—navigational aids for the voyage, the street signs that let us know whether we are in the right neighborhood. You will be provided with guiding ideas that will help you develop as a coach and that can be put to practical and immediate use. Remember:

- Coaching is different from leadership competencies.
- Coaching is different from consulting reports and recommendations.
- Coaching is different from organizational development.
- Coaching is different from abstract training programs.
- Coaching is different from Tarot cards or tea leaf reading.

## THE FOUR WAYPOINTS OF MASTERFUL COACHING: MAPPING THE TERRITORY

### WAYPOINT 1: CREATE A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP, NOT A CASUAL CONSULTING RELATIONSHIP

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You know you are on course as a coach if you are making headway to getting a real seat at the CEO's table rather than trying to get your foot in the door.

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In the normal course of events, most business leaders don't have a vision big enough for them to scour the world for a Masterful Coach. If they do hire a coach, it is usually a midlevel sort—the equivalent of three golf lessons at the driving range. Only in rare cases do the CEO and coach have a powerful partnership—the kind that a Tiger Woods has with Butch Harmon in the story that follows. Only in rare cases do the CEO and coach have a robust relationship where they are co-creating an Impossible Future together and winning in their business, something that requires the coach to have friendly, informal, frequent communication with the leader. The coach must not be considered an occasional visitor who comes and goes; he or she must have a real seat at the table.

In May 2001, there were thousands upon thousands of golf fans at the Augusta National who would have killed for a moment of Tiger Woods's time. Butch Harmon, Woods's coach, had Tiger's undivided attention for well over an hour on the putting green. Then Harmon jogged over to the caddie shack, pulled on the requisite white coveralls, and, at Woods's request, carried his clubs in the Masters' rain-shortened par 3 tournament. One reporter said, "I actually had a guy in the gallery ask me—I swear this happened—if that fellow over there by Butch Harmon was Tiger Woods."

Butch and his prize pupil have been practically joined at the hip since 1997 when Woods dominated the field and won his first professional Gold Major at the Masters at the age of twenty.

Tiger was sitting in his house studying the videotapes of his performance, blasting three-hundred-yard drives, hitting crisp iron shots right at the pins, draining putts from everywhere. Yet something he was seeing wasn't sitting right with him, so he called Harmon, a respected coach, and said, "My swing really sucks."

Woods knew he wasn't in the right position at various points in his golf swing and had won because "my timing was great." At the same time, he knew that his swing wouldn't hold up under pressure for the long haul, so he told Butch Harmon, the former golf coach to the king of Morocco, that he wanted to make serious changes in the way he struck the ball. Harmon concurred with this assessment and told him that it would take months to groove a new swing and that his game would get worse before it got better. This might lead some to say that Tiger's success at the Masters was a flash in the pan.

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Like Tiger Woods, the real leaders in sports, the performing arts, and business aren't content to merely be good; they want to be great.

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Tiger told Harmon that it didn't matter. He relayed something that his pal Michael Jordan had told him: "No matter how good they say you are, set incredibly high goals and keep working on your game." He told Harmon his goal was to eventually surpass his cherished idol, Jack Nicklaus (eighteen golf majors), and that he was sure he couldn't get there on his own. He wanted to build a powerful partnership with Harmon, who had worked with him on and off since Tiger was seventeen. Harmon accepted. Today in 2008, Woods has thirteen majors.

Harmon began working with Woods day-in and day-out. He told Tiger he would have to pump more iron to get his forearms stronger. Tiger then went to work on a *kaizen* sequence (Japanese for "improvement") that could be described as disciplined intensity: (1) pounding hundreds of practice balls a day, (2) reviewing tapes of the swing for hours so as to get meaningful feedback, (3) bringing Harmon with him to all his tournaments, and (4) repeating all of the above.<sup>2</sup>

It's rare in golf when a top pro teacher like Harmon accompanies a player like Woods to a tournament and walks every fairway

with him (as Harmon did in 1998), even carrying his bag during the practice round to get a bird's-eye view of his swing under pressure, all the while giving some appropriately wise counsel. The fact is that most top professional golf teachers have egos about as big as the players do and would consider such a thing to be beneath their station in life.

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A powerful partnership is created when there is chemistry, lots at stake in shared goals, regular interaction, and disciplined intensity.

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The reason Harmon did this was that he took the partnership with Woods seriously and became a celebrity in his own right as a result. Woods took it equally seriously, spending hundreds of hours practicing with Harmon, relentlessly giving him the same corrections. In golf, old habits die hard. In some practice rounds, Harmon would tell Woods the same correction fifty to one hundred times: "Here's the grip you need to have." Then holding the mirror up, "Tiger, you went back to your old grip position on that last swing." Or "Here is the position you want to be in at the top, Tiger," "No, you went over the top," and so on.

Harmon was wise enough to recognize the impatience of the twenty-year-old Woods. To make sure Woods mastered each piece of the swing, grip, stance, and swing plane, he told him only one piece at a time. Harmon didn't show him the next piece until he had completely integrated the previous one.

Eventually it paid off. One day in 1999, preparing for the Byron Nelson Classic, Woods noticed improvement. Then suddenly, on one swing, he sensed for the first time in a year that he had accomplished exactly what he wanted to. The motion felt natural and relaxed, and the contact solid. The ball flew high and straight. Excited, he rolled another ball into place but didn't make the same swing. Another ball. Didn't get it. Another ball. Didn't get it. Then he hit another pure shot. A couple of misses. Another pure one. And another. Soon the good swing started flowing like popcorn popping in a microwave.

Masterful coaches will tell you that it takes at least one year to accomplish something big—to break the grip and excel beyond old patterns. Woods called Harmon and told him, "I'm back!"



The same year he won six pro tour events in a row. Nicklaus had never won more than three in a row in one year. With his victory at the British Open in 1999, Woods completed a career Grand Slam of golf's four major tournaments, a feat accomplished by only four other golfers in history.

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The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

Arthur C. Clark

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## WAYPOINT 2: STAND IN THE FUTURE PEOPLE WANT TO CREATE AND GET THEM TO TAKE ACTION TO MAKE IT A REALITY

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You know you are on course if the CEO is working backward from his vision and not getting completely sidetracked by the day-to-day business.

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One of the important roles of a coach is to raise people's goals and aspirations so they can create a future that does more than look impossible. There is an additional challenge: while people may have the sincere and honest intentions of going for a transformational goal that will rock their world, it is easy to focus on short-term goals, like next quarter's earnings, or get sidetracked by the incredible number of demands that come at an executive each day. Thus, the role of the coach is to stand in the Impossible Future people want to create and make sure they take action in the present to make it a reality, making sure all the while that they don't lose sight of near-term concerns.

I was coaching John Nelson, CEO of Norton Company, a worldwide maker of abrasives like sandpaper.<sup>3</sup> The first time we met, I walked into John's office and saw him sitting there with a blue suit and red tie. I asked John if he had a vision or Impossible Future he was truly passionate about. His face reddened, and he seemed to have a difficult time talking about vision and passion in the same breath. A conservative man, it was hard for him not to associate passion with the romantically sensual side of life.

It was getting late on this winter's day and already dark outside. John explained that the hundred-year-old company, a solid operator but not that innovative, had been hit hard by global competition in recent years and had had to lay off thousands of workers. He took me into another room and pointed out a big window into the empty night sky the same way his predecessor had done to him, saying, "John, there has got to be a better way to run this company." He was appointed CEO shortly after, but that conversation with his boss haunted him.

As we walked back into his office, he reminisced about his years in the company and the commitment he had to employees based on their many years of loyalty. "But you asked me about what vision or Impossible Future I was passionate about," he said. Over the next several months, I met with John and the executive committee in formulating a vision for the Norton Company.

I pushed John to focus on growth and radical innovation, emphasizing that to focus just on costs could be a death spiral. I also interviewed many people in the company and said that we needed to work hard to transform a climate of resignation that had developed because of the layoffs and cost cutting into a culture of possibility and opportunity. Along with these qualitative goals, there was a numerical goal of moving the company from \$1.3 billion to \$2.3 billion in one year and \$3.3 billion in two to three years. I told John that now that he had formulated the vision, the next step was to communicate it to employees. He did this through a series of town hall meetings in a program called "Norton Taking Charge of Change."

John was a disciplined person, and I told him that now that he had a vision of an Impossible Future, my job was to be the incarnation of that future, making sure he took action to make it a reality and harping on the power of small wins. I recall it was about a month after the new year when I strode into his office and said, "Check the time! Is your New Year's resolution to make your vision a reality still intact, or have you sputtered into just running the business? Have you made some tiny starts on the big things you promised yourself? Have you bagged the pivotally important small wins the first two weeks of the year—that pivotal small win that keeps your Impossible Future and main promise alive?"

He smiled, half aggravated and half apologetic, saying that while he recognized the need for that kind of coaching to make sure that nothing fell through the cracks, he had a lot of pressure from the board and stock market to deliver on short-term goals. He said he appreciated the coaching and agreed in principle that he had to get back to his vision. I emphasized that he needed to focus on a critical few catalytic breakthroughs each month rather than on everything. Point taken, he pushed back on me: “I get very excited talking about what the next steps are whenever we get together, and I forget that I have very little nondiscretionary time. So focusing on a few critical projects and action items going forward is just what we need to get something done.” At the same time he said jokingly, “You can continue to be a nudge.”

### WAYPOINT 3: LEADERS RECOGNIZE THAT TO REINVENT THE ORGANIZATION, THEY MUST REINVENT THEMSELVES FIRST

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You know you are on course if the leaders you are coaching realize that the real barriers to culture change lie not out there in the organization, but in their own heads.

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To realize an Impossible Future almost invariably requires stepping into the reinvention paradigm. For this to be successful, leaders of the reinvention must break the grip of the governing orthodoxies they have been successful with. It's very hard for successful people to reinvent themselves and the organization without Masterful Coaching. For example, Home Depot of Atlanta created a \$50 billion business by selling tools and building materials but paid scant attention to operational excellence, which caused its stock to sink. CEO Arthur Blank realized that to turn the stock around required reinventing himself, but when you're a billionaire, why bother? Instead, he hired a new CEO, Bob Nardelli, from General Electric, who was operationally oriented. Bob made some big mistakes and eventually got fired, but he did bring in the operational excellence needed.

I was coaching the CEO and chief operating officer (COO) of yet another Atlanta-based company, Colonial Pipeline, a midsized organization not well known but responsible for bringing all the heating oil and gasoline up from Florida into New York Harbor.<sup>4</sup> When the CEO, Dave Lemon, and COO, Bill Scott, my primary coachee, took over, the company was on the edge of being taken over and nationalized by the federal government due to a pipeline spill. Bill, an operational genius, came in and turned the company around 180 degrees, winning four petroleum industry Golden Eagle safety awards for zero incidents. He also did a brilliant job when Hurricane Katrina struck and wiped out part of the pipeline. He got it back up and running in a few days due to dogged leadership and some very innovative tactics.

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If you are a breathing human being, you are resistant to change. Like all your fellow human beings, you are designed to be incapable of starting with a blank sheet of paper.

Tracy Goss, author, *The Last Word on Power*

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Bill told me he wanted to become CEO and wanted to transform the company into an inspired, high-growth organization rather than something that kept playing to the strong suit of operational excellence. This was more complicated than it appeared because Colonial was owned by a bunch of other oil majors, including Chevron, Shell, Texaco, and Koch Industries, which just wanted to milk it for its profits. The problem was that most of the veterans working at Colonial—bright, young, talented people—saw no future for themselves in the company now that it had been turned around and were ready to walk out (the equivalent of a good carpenter throwing his tools and value-added expertise in the river).

Bill had been promised the CEO's job when his boss retired if he succeeded, but there was something about Bill's leadership style that stuck in people's craw. "Yes, he has accomplished a lot," the chairman told me. "He's a real mountain mover, but he does it by dominating everyone else on the leadership team and through fear and intimidation tactics." The CEO confided, "That really has to change." I gave Bill this and other feedback through

the Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback process; this cold splash of water was enough for Bill to wake up and take notice. I said, "Bill you are the person in this company everyone loves to hate." I continued, "Your goal, Bill, is to become CEO and transform the company, which includes not only getting colleagues who you have been in competition with from the moment you walked into the door onto your side, but to convince your boss, the chairman who tended to pander to the board, that growth is a good thing, not a bad thing that will cost a lot of money with slow payback."

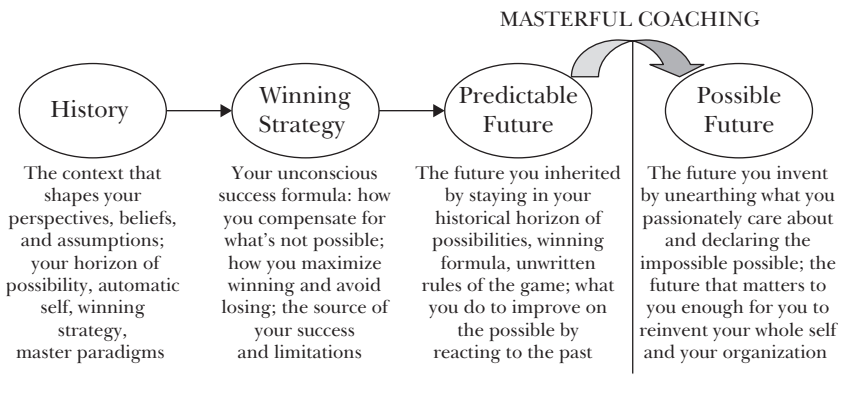
One of the most interesting aspects of the coaching assignment was a series of confrontation meetings with colleagues. These took place in Atlanta's best restaurants where we indulged in what Bill calls the three basic food groups: scotch, steak, and cigars. I was a coach (facilitator) at the meetings, making sure that people got past their defensive routines and discussed the undiscussable rather than just smoothing things over, while at the same time keeping things from blowing up.

Bill acknowledged that he had come to the company with a will to make a difference and that he had used dominating tactics to accomplish what he thought needed to happen. He realized through the 360-degree feedback that both his and the company's winning strategy had turned into a weakness. He in essence apologized and said he was working hard to become more collaborative.

Over the next year, Bill made a concerted effort to reinvent his leadership style and the organization, working in a Masterful Coaching process called the CollabLab, an accelerated solutions environment, to build a Miszion (a combination of vision and mission) and creating an inspired, high-growth company. I was genuinely impressed with the sincerity of Bill's commitment in making the shift from the smartest-man-in-the-room syndrome to someone with a basic attitude of curiosity and humility. Instead of trying to convince people through force of argument or pressure, he made an extraordinary effort to engage and inquire, to draw out every growth idea people had.

The chairman, board members, colleagues, and rank and file all reached out to Bill as he has reached out to them, essentially giving him their vote: "Bill, I am behind you and this vision 100 percent. Let's make it happen."

FIGURE 3.1. CREATING A POSSIBLE FUTURE VERSUS A PREDICTABLE FUTURE



Masterful Coaches support people to invent a new future that is not an extension of the past by unearthing what people passionately care about and then encouraging them to declare the impossible possible. Figure 3.1 illustrates this.

#### WAYPOINT 4: A COACH IS A THINKING PARTNER

You know you are on course if the CEO comes do you and says, “I’ve got a problem of mind-boggling complexity, and I need you to be my thinking partner.”

Coaching isn’t just about goals and plans; it is also about being a thinking partner to leaders whose jobs often entail dizzying complexity. You might be a thinking partner on anything from how to have a difficult conversation with the boss, to what would be a blue ocean strategy for the company, or how to get everyone focused on execution. The most important step in being a thinking partner is to ask questions and listen loudly, which quite often leads to moments of true insight. Good questions to ask are:

- What unintended results are you getting?
- How are you contributing to the unintended results?
- How are you looking at things now?

- How do you need to look at things differently?
- How could you look at the problem or solution in a different way?
- Where are you stuck in an old pattern?
- How do you need to shift your way of being, thinking, or behaving?

“It is like trying to deal with an enigma, wrapped inside a conundrum, surrounded by a dilemma,” Sheryl Steel said to Bill Brock, chairman of Shearing Inc. She was talking about her leadership role in Antigen, a subsidiary and a fast-track biotech company.

Brock laughed, recognizing the quote, which originally came from a comment Bertrand Russell made about dealing with the former Soviet Union. “There are a number of puzzles here that I am looking for a thinking partner on,” said Steel. “Have you got about a week?” she joked.

First, some background. In 2000, one of Antigen’s project groups, previously led by Carl Conti, succeeded after a decade of research in bringing to market a potential breakthrough biotech drug, Arterio, that is highly effective in the treatment of congenital heart disease. However, the drug development process took five years longer than expected and ate up huge amounts of the company’s research capital.

Steel, who had been lead marketing manager for the Schering group, was appointed to head Antigen, with a special leadership role to play. “Keep the aspirations of the organization high. We can hit a home run here,” Brock told her. “And bring some short-term discipline and rigor to the business at the same time.” Brock affirmed, “It is a both-and, not an either-or, situation.”

Steel’s appointment was made to the deep chagrin and anger of Carl Conti, who expected an upward promotion as a result of the Arterio success. Instead, Conti was moved sideways to a role of lead project manager for a project that held the promise of being a breakthrough cancer treatment. After the move, he stopped showing up as the hard-driving leader he was previously, which confused the people in his organization. He also became highly defensive in his behavior.

First, Conti resisted even the most gracious attempts by the highly capable and affable Steel to build a relationship with him, resentful when Steel asked him questions about the business.

“Are you questioning my judgment?” he demanded. Another of Conti’s defensive routines was always to speak through rose-colored glasses about the new project, touting it as a potential breakthrough but refusing to look at any breakdowns that were occurring.

The issue was that the biotech drug could potentially treat many different forms of the disease. Conti and his team were out marketing various applications of it to the Big Ten pharmaceutical firms. A major issue for Antigen was that the pretrial drug was still not out of the labs, and each different drug application required heavy capital investment. When Steel asked questions about the wisdom of this approach, Conti said, “We don’t know which of these drug applications will ultimately be successful, and we need to hedge our bets.”

There was a distinct lack of purpose, focus, and discipline in Conti’s organization. Seven development projects were in progress, which made it difficult to marshal enough resources to spearhead a breakthrough in any one of them. The word on the street was that the competition was moving fast in a highly focused way on related drugs in a key application area. Steel was puzzled not only about how to deal with Conti’s defensive routines but also her own as well. She told Brock, “I feel caught between trying to build a relationship with him and trying to bring some purpose, focus, and discipline to the business.”

The situation boiled to a head when Bill Brock called Steel to his office that day to tell her that the board had noticed that the her project was \$1 million over its projected budget and there was a need to make some very significant cutbacks. It was at this point that one of our coaches from Masterful Coaching, who had both a marketing and R&D background, was brought in to help sort out the situation.

The coach, Thomas Halpert framed it for Steel this way:

There are four dilemmas that you are faced with:

1. What strategic direction do we take the business in: spearhead a breakthrough by focusing on one application or spread our bets?
2. How do you deal with the defensive routines of Carl Conti: build a collegial relationship to engender trust and safety, suppress dilemmas, and defer to his reasoning, or confront



dilemmas and ask him to make not just his views but his reasoning public so it can be tested? [A defensive routine is anything done to avoid embarrassment or threat that does not remove the source of embarrassment or threat. Common defensive routines are withdrawing and distancing, suppressing dilemmas, making face-saving moves, easing into difficult conversations, and making hot issues undiscussable.]

3. How do you deal with your own defensive reactions: trying to be nice and avoiding conflict in order to be liked and accepted [Steel's own behavior] or unilaterally advocate your position?
4. If Carl Conti does not shift his attitude or decide to leave on his own, who will replace him? How do we not lose momentum?

## WHY A THINKING PARTNER?

There are a number of reasons for being a thinking partner or using that as a term in your coaching. First, shifting from the term *coach* to the term *thinking partner* can move people's thinking from, "This is the boss telling me what to do," to, "This is a colleague who wants to offer me an assist."

Second, a thinking partner is one of the most powerful ways to leverage the intellectual capital of any organization. When two people with different views and backgrounds come together with a basic attitude of curiosity and learning to solve a puzzle, the chances are that they will brainstorm ideas, question what they take for granted, and come up with insights they never would have reached on their own.

Third, as to why a thinking partner, I am reminded of a quote from Wittgenstein: "A man's thinking goes on within his consciousness in seclusion, in comparison with which any physical seclusion is an exhibition to public view."<sup>5</sup> Left alone to think in seclusion, there are any number of subjective factors that can distort the outcome. One benefit of using a thinking partner is that another person is able to bring some objectivity to the process.

Being a thinking partner often starts with simplifying people's thought processes but without overlooking complexity. I often open a conversation when there are overlapping dilemmas by saying, "This is not a trivial conversation, so let's be prepared to be in the confusion room for a while." It is okay to be in the

confusion room on the way to clarity. I also say, “Let’s see if there is anything we can simplify without overdoing it.” To this I often cite a quotation from Oliver Wendell Holmes: “I don’t give a damn about simplicity, from this side of complexity, but I would give everything for simplicity from the other side of complexity.”

## ROLES OF A MASTERFUL COACH

In the case of Sheryl Steel, Thomas Halpert first pointed out that she was stuck in a kind of pea soup, trying to think through the people issues and business issues at the same time. He suggested that the way to get out of it was to separate the business issues from the issues of organization defensive routines and then to deal with each one at a time: “Let’s start with the issue of business strategy and then look at how we can begin to recognize and disperse [personal] organizational defensive routines.”

Another key role of a thinking partner is to act as a sounding board. The coach can do this by asking a question that gets to the heart of the matter and then by listening with an inexperienced ear. This empowers the person to make tacit knowledge (what he or she knows but can’t say) explicit. The coach creates the space for the coachee to do her own thinking and discover her own answers, keeping in mind that the coachee is nested in the situation and an information-rich context the coach doesn’t have. The coach needs to draw out threads of insight and half-baked ideas, with an ear to helping the person come up with inventive and effective solutions.

Halpert asked Steel a provocative question: “If you were a consultant who was being paid \$5 million if you could come up with the right solution, what would you do: spearhead a breakthrough or spread your bets?” This led to a spirited dialogue in which they came up with a way of narrowing their focus to three major initiatives—not putting their eggs all in one basket but at the same time not spreading their resources too thin.

Then Steel and Halpert addressed the people issues and the defensive behavior. He asked about the relationship with Conti, “If you could wave a magic wand and have the relationship be a certain way, how would that be?” If you listen carefully enough, as well as build and jump on ideas, connecting disparate streams of thought, the person will often move beyond answers and come to the moment of true insight.

The answer that Steel came up with was that instead of she and Conti either withdrawing from each other, suppressing disagreement, or trying to advance their views on the drug development strategy through force of argument or pressure, they needed a radically different approach. “We need to engage in a learning process and stop being so defensive,” Steel declared. The coach built on this idea by suggesting that they should both make their reasoning process public by walking down the Ladder of Inference (see Figure 3.2), jointly finding ways to test disagreements, and openly discussing with each other their defensive reactions and action.<sup>6</sup>

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Everything you say reveals you.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Acting as a sounding board and drawing out accomplishes two things. First, it allows people the opportunity to express what they know on a vague intuitive level but are not able to articulate.

FIGURE 3.2. THE LADDER OF INFERENCE

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Source: Adapted from Chris Argyris, *Knowledge for Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 57.

It also allows the coach to understand the underlying patterns of thinking that govern the person's thinking process that might cause distortion when he or she begins to draw conclusions. One of the obvious traps is having frames of reference in our thinking that go unnoticed—for example:

- *Role frames*: “I am the boss, I have more experience, and therefore I am right.”
- *Thought frames or pet theories*: Seeing this situation as the one you were previously in and thereby thinking or doing the same thing.
- *Industry frames*: Old orthodoxies that inhibit inventive and effective thinking.
- *Personal mental models*: Rigid patterns of thinking or thinking based on unexamined assumptions or assumptions that may no longer be accurate.
- *Gaps in reasoning*: Conclusions ungrounded in data or jumping to conclusions.
- *Crooked attitudes*: Ways of looking at what happened based on blame, shame, or guilt, which get in the way of making accurate interpretations of reality.
- *Emotional or defensive reactions*: Reacting to what happened based on past hurts in a way that is intended to defend and protect yourself; may cloud your ability to see clearly.

It is generally an excellent practice for the coach to question everything that the coachee takes for granted. This starts with graciously, but provocatively, challenging all assumptions and inferences. Here are some good questions to ask:

- What led you to that conclusion?
- Could you walk me down your ladder of inference?
- What is your reasoning process?
- Do you have any data to substantiate that opinion?



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## PART TWO

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# THE JOURNEY TO MASTERFUL COACHING

Part Two begins with the goal of becoming a Masterful Coach and focuses on who you need to be and what you need to do to reach it. It deals with some basic questions first, like this one: Do you have the passion needed to take the journey to Masterful Coaching, as well as the basic talent and skills necessary to succeed? It frames coaching as a way of being, not just a technique, and emphasizes as Emerson said that who you are speaks so loudly that it drowns out what you are saying. The intention of this part is to provide distinctions, methods, models, and tools that will bring out your highest and best self in the coaching relationship and teach you the art and practice of coaching communication.

At a time when most people think the only qualifications you need to be an executive coach are a business card and a one-page Web site, Chapter Four shows you that the reality is different if you want to create a sustainable business. Do you have the gravitas needed to command the executive's respect? Do you have a track record of business results—or any results? Are you known in your circles as someone who is high on the emotional intelligence barometer? This chapter also lays out succinctly what is involved in the education of a coach and provides the Masterful Coaching 5 Levels of Competence so you can see how you are coming along.

Masterful Coaching doesn't come from within the printed page. Great coaches radiate an attitude that says: "I believe in you. We are going to go for this Impossible Future. We are going to win and shock the world." Great coaches don't focus on what's wrong, but on what's missing that can make a difference. They never belittle. Chapter Five helps you jettison your everyday way of being based on preferences, moods, and attachments to things turning out a certain way and empowers you to step into the Masterful Coaching way of being based on a total commitment to the person you are coaching. You will learn the 10 Masterful Coaching Come Froms—for example: "Stand in people's greatness" and "Speak from your commitment to cause people's success rather than your emotional reactions."

Chapter Six emphasizes that a coaching conversation is one in which we speak and listen with the intent of making a difference. A Masterful Coach quite frequently begins every conversation with this statement: "It is my intention that this conversation make a difference for you." You will also be introduced to some specific coaching methodologies, including the 7 Cap Coaching Conversation System and a formula for having a successful coaching conversation. We have found that just being introduced to these two methodologies allows people to start having incredibly successful coaching conversations.

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Masterful Coaching gives people access to a new kind of power: the power to make the impossible happen.

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In Chapter Seven, we explore a powerful fundamental that is the foundation for personal and organization reinvention: creating an Impossible Future requires transformational, not just transactional, learning. Here we continue to put forth the Masterful Coaching method. The triple loop learning model is introduced as a way to develop extraordinary leaders in the process of producing extraordinary results. This will help you to bring about fundamental shifts in thinking and attitude. You will also learn how to turn "rut" stories (stories that get people stuck) into "river" stories (which move people forward and free them to take powerful action.)

## CHAPTER FOUR

# BECOMING A MASTERFUL COACH

## Lead People to an Impossible Future and Change Their Lives

*I learned wisdom from all my teachers and  
teaching from all my students.*

BEN EZRA, SECOND CENTURY A.D.

It has been said that vision is an image that we carry within us as we march to the future. In becoming a Masterful Coach, the vision we need to carry within is an image of a Masterful Coach at work. Whether it is Herb Kelleher, CEO of Southwest Airlines, as he holds forth on the vision and values, cracking jokes, and telling tales at new employee gatherings, or John Wooden of UCLA, a private, humble, soft-spoken man rousing his basketball team in a pregame talk before their third national championship, or Ben Zander coaching music students in his master class, watching a Masterful Coach in action is pure poetry in motion.

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It's kind of fun to do the impossible.

Walt Disney

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Who do you need to be and what do you need to do to become a Masterful Coach? Watching a Masterful Coach at work, you see that although they stand in people's greatness and are consistent winners, they do not always fit our picture. For



example, it is one thing to hear Jack Welch of General Electric talk about giving feedback with near brutal candor; it is another to actually be in the hot seat like Jeff Immelt and feel the heat. It is difficult to watch Ben Zander in his master class coaching students with ruthless compassion to play Brahms, Bach, or Beethoven with passion without squirming sympathetically in your seat. In other cases, like John Wooden, the coach may be thought to be too empathetic about a player's failures by those who don't understand that sometimes soft is hard.

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There's always the motivation of wanting to win.  
Everybody has that. But a champion needs, in his  
attitude, a motivation above and beyond winning.  
Pat Riley, Celebrated NBA coach

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As I have said, coaching is expanding people's capacity to realize an Impossible Future and change their lives. One way to gain insight into this is to understand that with Masterful Coaching, there are always two games. There is the outer game, which is all about coaching talented people to realize an Impossible Future and win at the great game of business or whatever the game they are playing. Then there is the inner game that has to do with the fact that business, or any other game, can be the ultimate self-development and growth experience if played with heart and soul. In this game, the coach uses the task in front of people, whether building a shared vision, bringing a team together, mounting a project, or clearing a hurdle, as a way to catalyze people's development.

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It is not the will to win; it's the will to prepare to  
win.  
Bobby Knight, One of college basketball's most  
controversial coaches, yet a proven leader of  
championship teams

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While Masterful Coaches may not always be the boss or have the force of personality or physical prowess to dominate people's world, they win others over with their wisdom, compassion, and humor. Though they play a pivotal role in moving

teams from good to great and from worst to first, they recognize that a champion needs a motivation above and beyond winning. While Masterful Coaches are often held in high esteem for their accomplishments by those around them, they can have a humble attitude, seldom making any reference to anything they have accomplished. They often don't speak like John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., or Barack Obama, but get their powerful and profound message through in a matter-of-fact and sometimes incredibly low-key way.

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Coaching happens not in your speaking but in your listening.

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Masterful Coaches are wizards when it comes to being able to bring about personal and organizational transformation. It starts with recognizing that a strong team is made stronger by strong individuals. The job of the coach is to invite each individual to discover his or her own greatness. This involves standing committed to the person you are coaching, learning about his or her goals and aspirations, and then using a bit of magic to help this person discover and call forth who he or she needs to be and what he or she needs to do to make that happen. In my work as an executive coach, I don't just talk about goals and plans; I talk about the fact that there is a strong correlation between being a good business leader and being a good person. How else can you rally employees behind a vision, build a team of unlikely collaborators, or deal with irate customers?

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Shout praise. Whisper criticism.

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Masterful Coaches usually talk much less about winning than they do about being prepared for the big game—whether it's a billion-dollar negotiation for a company in Beijing or Bangalore, a significant presentation to the chairman of the board and executive committee, or a town hall meeting where you are going to articulate your vision to the troops. Masterful Coaches set the bar of excellence high, with both the outer game and inner game in mind, and they are tough and demanding of people in terms of getting them to stretch their minds and skills to reach it. And yet

they tend to be compassionate in terms of what people have to call forth from themselves to deliver.

They are masters in the art of giving talented people with big egos feedback that rips the blinders off without making them resentful. This is not just a matter of knowing what to say or how to say it, but in being able to convey just how much they believe in the person they are coaching. They know that great coaching occurs not in their speaking but in people's listening. As a result they consciously and intentionally frame what they are saying so people receive it as a gift, an opportunity to learn, rather than a threat or reason to feel invalidated. They say the one thing that can make a difference. If the people they are coaching don't start to succeed after several months, they don't say the person was wrong; instead they think they have somehow failed as a coach and then reflect on doing some things differently.

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You can't live a perfect day without doing  
something for someone who will never be able to  
repay you.

John Wooden

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No Masterful Coach gets the title by grabbing the crown away from the Pope like Napoleon did and anointing himself emperor, but by gaining the respect of coachees. When great CEOs, sports stars, and musicians talk about their coaches and mentors, they are often so powerfully moved that they remind us that coaching is one of the highest aspirations of what it is to be a human being. The bottom line is that if your goal is to become a Masterful Coach, it needs to be a true dedication, not just something you dabble at or a number of hours spent in a certification program. Second, you will no doubt need your own coaches, mentors, and a proven methodology for getting there.

## A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

Masterful Coaching is a journey, not just a destination. Whether you embark on the journey depends not on whether you are a leader, project manager, or individual contributor; it depends on whether you dare to see and meet the calling to make a

difference, whether in the life of one person, a group, or an institution. We admire others who make a difference, who have an impact, who are effective.

Perhaps our inspiration to take the journey to Masterful Coaching comes from these people. Each of us can remember a handful, but only a handful, of coaches, teachers, and mentors who touched our lives with new possibilities we didn't see before, who enabled us to achieve results that we never dreamed of or dared to imagine. They held up an honest mirror, one that led to a revelation of our own foolishness. They had conversations with us about the lessons we needed to learn about life, laced with a sense of humor.

The journey is driven by passion, commitment, and zeal. It calls for leaders who recognize that the highest leverage in the adventure of business (and living) is elevating their concerns to making an Impossible Future happen that makes a difference in the world. This can occur only if people let go of being the hero and being the center of the action and focus on developing the next generation of leaders in the process of getting the job done.

It involves recognizing that Masterful Coaching is a journey, not a destination. To be sure, the ideas, tools, and methods offered in this book provide a road map and the necessary where-withal to get you on your way; yet as with mastering anything else, it can take a lifetime to develop the necessary skills and capabilities. It involves dedicated study and practice, a continuous cycle of making progress, plateauing, striving, and reaching the next level—from individual to group, from group to organization.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF A MASTERFUL COACH

Whenever I hire people as executive coaches for Masterful Coaching or train people in the Masterful Coaching Certification Program, I tell them about what I believe the qualifications are. Because many of the leaders you will be coaching will be highly driven people, you either have to be that sort of person or be able to work with leaders in a natural way, bending but not breaking when they push back on you. Here are some of the most important qualifications. If you have three out of four, you can

generally work on developing the fourth and still be successful from the start:

1. *Gravitas*. Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell, and Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore have this in spades: the ability to walk into the leader's office and instantly command his or her respect, even if that person knows little or nothing about your qualifications or background.
2. *Proven track record of results*. If you are not a highly effective person, how are you going to make others highly effective with respect to the vision or big game they are playing?
3. *Proven track record of emotional intelligence*. A lot of the people you will be coaching have high IQ but low emotional intelligence, which is what gets them in trouble. This is something you need to bring to the table. It is important to help people work with negative emotions like anger and transform them into positive emotions like compassion.
4. *Pass the airport test*. You need to be the kind of person who if your and your client's flight is delayed, that person will enjoy spending time with you for the next three hours. It helps if you have an easy way of getting close to people, a good story to tell, and a sense of humor.

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A body can pretend to care, but a body cannot pretend to be there.

Texas Bix Bender, Humorist and author

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## CALLING YOURSELF FORTH

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I am going to be a Masterful Coach some day.

Robert Hargrove, 1975

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The first step in becoming a Masterful Coach is perhaps learning something about the principle of calling forth. Calling forth starts with asking the question: *Who do you want to be?* not just, *What do you want to do?* It is based on the notion that you have

the power to choose who you will be in the matter, as opposed to having that be determined by history. It involves declaring a new possibility, like being a Masterful Coach, and by standing inside that possibility, creating a new context for you to show up in the world. It involves speaking, listening, and taking actions from your commitment to bring out the highest and best in people rather than from your reactions.

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My ability to become a Masterful Coach was not based on any knowledge or experience. It came from my declaration. It was based on standing committed to the person I was coaching and being committed to transformation.

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Calling forth involves not only declaring a new possibility for yourself as a human being and taking a stand to be that; it also involves acting in a manner that will move the possibility to a reality. The journey to Masterful Coaching needs to be something you are passionate about, not just reasonably interested in. Talent is important, but talent is as cheap as table salt. You need to work hard and be willing to move through personal limitations that might get in the way.

When I decided I wanted to be a Masterful Coach, making my way in the world as a personal and business guru, I decided to make my debut in leadership seminars with a transformational twist. The invitation was the same: realize an Impossible Future and change your life. At the time, I was deathly afraid to stand up and speak in front of a roomful of people. However, I had such a burning desire to do this that I personally enrolled over fifty people in my first leadership workshop. I then went to work cobbling together a leadership program that would deliver on the promise of personal (or organizational) transformation, something I was not an expert in.

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I found that if I listened long enough, I was able to call forth from myself the insights that would help people achieve the impossible and change their lives.

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I stood up in the room and held forth, moving to the back of the room occasionally to catch my breath. (I was so nervous that it was hard to breathe.) I engaged each of the fifty people in that room in a dialogue, where I stood 100 percent committed to their greatness. I gave each person the gift of my presence with respect to their concerns. I made a discovery that day that if I listened long enough, I would suddenly come to a moment of true insight that allowed me to make a qualitative contribution to each person.

I had interviewed many gurus, Eastern and Western, in a previous life as a magazine editor and had acquired a bit of what the Buddhists call “crazy wisdom” (being colorful, dramatic, shocking, and wise). I found that by standing committed to the people I was coaching, as well as being committed to transformation, I was able to call forth from myself the ability to say something that would go beyond being entertaining or interesting and extricate them from the reality in which they had been lodged. The goal was to interact with people in such a way that was life altering.

Although I sometimes felt in engaging people in a dialogue that I was stumbling around in the dark without a flashlight, I would hang in there with people long enough until the lights came on in their eyes. I found that when I was eventually able to say something that would help the person in the front of the room learn powerful lessons in personal and organizational change, others in the group would learn from them as well.

At the end of the first day, one of the participants said to me, “I came here with a vision and with a problem looking for a concrete solution. You have given me something very different than I expected. You have given me a place to stand where I can be great rather than a prisoner of pettiness. You have given me, along with that, the freedom to be, as well as touched me with new possibilities and openings for action.” From that point on, my destiny and path forward were in front of me.

## THE POWER OF LANGUAGE IN CALLING YOURSELF FORTH

We create who we are in the world through the power of language, not just by accident of birth, circumstance, or conditions. As Martin Heidegger once said, “Words, like the chisel

of the carver, can create what never existed before rather than simply describe what already exists. As a man speaks, not only is the thing which he is declaring coming into existence, but also the man himself.”<sup>1</sup> Because you and I have the power to speak and listen, we have the power to make declarations about ourselves or the world around us that will create new possibilities for us, distinguishing ourselves from our history.

Tom Brady, the three-time Super Bowl winning quarterback of the New England Patriots, grew up in affluent San Mateo, California. He was part of a large family, and his older sister was a star softball player with a mean pitching arm. Little Tommy was known in those days as Suzie Brady’s little brother. One day at dinner when he was around twelve years old, he announced to his family that he was going to become a star NFL quarterback and a household name throughout America one day and that Suzie would be known as Tom Brady’s big sister. He made that declaration from himself out of nothing—not from history or any evidence that it was possible. At that time, he was on the baseball team and had never even played football.

The family had season tickets to the San Francisco 49ers, and Brady watched his idol, Joe Montana, in every game. His high school coach remembered Brady as not the best athlete he had coached, but the best football player; he had a fierce work ethic, working out three hours a day—the first to practice, the last to leave. In both high school and the University of Michigan, Brady often warmed the bench as a backup quarterback. He was drafted into the pros not in the first round, but in the sixth round, again as a backup quarterback. Interestingly enough, he used the power of declaration on Bob Kraft the first day he met him: “You are going to remember drafting me as a quarterback as the luckiest day in the history of the New England Patriots.” At that moment, Tom Brady didn’t have a shred of evidence to stand on.

Brady looked for opportunities to show his talent as well as mental and physical toughness during intersquad practice games, continuing with his tremendous work ethic. During a family vacation, Brady would drive sixty minutes back and forth to a gym to do his three-hour workout. When he got back from one of those trips, he saw his father about to pull steaks off the barbecue



and he said “Sorry, Dad, I have to finish my workout,” and then proceeded to jump-rope six hundred times. The moment of opportunity came when Drew Bledsoe was injured in the third game of the season and Tom Brady came in as backup. The rest, as we all know, is history.<sup>2</sup>

The moral of the story is you can declare new possibilities for yourself the same way Tom Brady did. You can declare that you are going to be a Masterful Coach, perhaps a household name someday, and in the process distinguish yourself from your history. Then, as Brady did, act consistent with that declaration and be willing to study, practice, and do the hard work necessary to make it a reality.

I have found the following three declarations very powerful for calling forth new ways of being as a leader or coach:

1. “What is possible is what I say is possible.” You create the future by looking at your dreams and declaring what is possible, not by staring at the wall in front of you and predicting what is possible.
2. “Who I am is the stand that I take.” Starting right now, stop drawing your identity from your history: CEO, lawyer, or consultant, for example. Start drawing your identity from your commitment.
3. “The stand that I take is to be a Masterful Coach and mentor and to take (for example, the following five actions . . . ) to make it a reality.”

## THE EDUCATION OF A COACH

Here is a story about Tom Brady’s coach and mentor, Bill Belichick, from David Halberstam’s 2005 book, *The Education of a Coach*, that will inspire you on your own journey to Masterful Coaching.<sup>3</sup> Steve Belichick, who played fullback for the Detroit Lions in 1941 and was an assistant at the U.S. Naval Academy from 1956 to 1989, taught his son, Bill, the vital lesson of due diligence. As Halberstam writes in the book, “It was a glorious environment for a kid who adored his father and the game of football. Future Heisman Trophy winners Joe Bellino (1960) and Roger Staubach (1963) were his heroes and thrillingly his friends.”

As the story goes, Bill Belichick, all of seven years old, was wedged into a corner, surrounded by Navy players, the outline of his slight frame barely visible in the flickering light. It's Monday night, and Steve Belichick mans the projector, taking the midshipmen through the plays of the coming Saturday opponent. The night before, Bill and his father had driven to the airport in Baltimore to pick up the tape.

On Tuesday night, provided he has done his homework, Bill will join the entire team assembled at the family home in Annapolis, Maryland, for a second film session. Steve makes comments on specific formations and tendencies, and the players, along with ever-studious Bill, take notes. By the time Bill was ten years old, he was asking intelligent questions about the safety's run-support responsibilities. Bill never complained that his father saw only one of his football games at Annapolis High School because he was always on the road on Saturdays; more than anything else, Bill looked forward to the one annual scouting trip on which he'd be allowed to accompany his father.

Belichick has always been a student of history and by winning four Super Bowls in four seasons with the New England Patriots, he has become a part of it. Only one man, the Steelers' Chuck Noll, has matched this feat as a head coach. Belichick, now fifty-five years old, has six Super Bowl rings, including his two as an assistant with the Giants, and he seems destined to add to that total.

## THE FOUR INGREDIENTS OF A GREAT COACHING EDUCATION

As you begin your own journey to Masterful Coaching, consider the most important ingredients for your education based on my experiences as an executive coach:

1. *You need to have the burning desire to become a Masterful Coach and the right "come froms."* I knew from an early age that I didn't want to be a doctor, lawyer or Indian chief. There was only one career that I could be both committed and passionate about, and it was to be someone who could make a difference

in life. That burning desire is the source of the Masterful Coaching vision, paradigm, and method. The journey to Masterful Coaching calls for those who know that the true joy in life is to bring people together to create an otherwise Impossible Future, while providing them with the ultimate self-development and growth experience. It entices those who have a deep belief that we all possess within ourselves, under all circumstances and conditions, the power to transform our own lives and the world around us. All of this adds up to the Masterful Coaching attitude, or “come from,” that radiates from you when you are working with people.

2. *You need to have a powerful, concise, step-by-step method that delivers results to bring to each engagement.* Many coaches have admitted to me that they have a newly minted business card and maybe a client or two; however, when they get into a coaching session, they feel as if they are stumbling around in the dark without a flashlight. You might take the approach of “fake it until you make it” for a few sessions, talking about business goals and leadership gaps, but sooner or later you or your clients will discover that you have exhausted your bag of tricks. The beauty of the Masterful Coaching method is that it has a proven power. It not only tells you who you need to be and what you need to do to be successful, it provides a powerful method to use.
3. *You need to scour the world for masterful mentors for how to think and interact with clients.* In coming of age, I had the opportunity to interview many gurus, Eastern and Western. These included Michio Kushi, Peter Caddy, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Mohammed Ali, Swami Muktananda, and Salvador Dalí. I learned how to create an aura of gravitas needed to win people’s confidence, as well to know when to be graciously provocative in discussing serious business matters or lighten things up by applying crazy wisdom. By observing leaders, like Werner Erhard, in personal transformation events engage people in a dialogue that resulted in people experiencing the freedom to be and finding new openings for action, I found that coaching often requires going beyond the normal social grease and really bringing people

up on the mat. From Stewart Emory, another transformational workshop guru, I learned to do this with a kinder, gentler style needed to work with executives.

I believe that as soon as you define the game as realizing an Impossible Future and winning at the great game of business (or whatever else your game is), developing domain expertise within a given community of practice is in order. I gained a great deal of domain expertise through decades of entrepreneurial leadership, as well as by working with CEOs and top executives. If you don't have a business background, the best way to gain what you need is to become a student of leading business gurus. Tom Peters, Gary Hamel, and Seth Godin all pack tons of domain expertise into their books and Web sites. Another tack is to take domain expertise in one profession or occupation and apply it to another. I didn't have any expertise in big government when I started working at the Pentagon, but I was able to apply my domain expertise in business. Clients found this very useful.

4. *You need to move from practice field to performance field with ease.* In training people for executive coaching assignments or in the Masterful Coaching certification program, I tell people that learning how to be a coach is 20 percent classroom and 80 percent practice. I make it clear that we going to spend a few days on the practice field (classroom), where we can learn the Masterful Coaching method without stress and pressure, and then move to a performance field, where we apply what we learn to producing leadership and business results with clients. I generally coach people before and after every major coaching session, creating either a physical or electronic dashboard to measure progress on both leadership and business challenges.

## THE 5 LEVELS OF MASTERFUL COACHING

In my work with developing coaches, we use 5 Levels of Competence as benchmarks. The Masterful Coaching certification process generally takes one year. Yet in practical terms, it generally takes three to six months to go from beginner to advanced

beginner, six months to a year to go from advanced beginner to competent, and one to two years to go to from competent to virtuoso. How long does it take to go from virtuoso to masterful? As my Japanese teacher, Michio Kushi, used to say, "Please discover for yourself." These are the five levels, starting with the highest:

1. *Masterful coach*. Coaches top executives on enterprisewide level to achieve Impossible Futures, winning in business, personal, and organization reinvention; creates a new tradition, becomes a legend.
2. *Virtuoso coach*. Coaches executives of business units to achieve leadership and business breakthroughs with skill and artistry; can certify others in the Masterful Coaching vision, mind-set, and method.
3. *Competent coach*. Meets all requirements of Masterful Coaching certification; coaches without supervision frontline business leaders on meaningful leadership and business challenges.
4. *Advanced beginner*. Can coach people competently using the Masterful Coaching approach with supervision; delivers inconsistent results on leadership or business goals.
5. *Beginner*. Uses some of the Masterful Coaching vocabulary but does not understand the paradigm or method deeply; can become a nuisance to colleagues or clients.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# COACHING IS A WAY OF BEING, NOT JUST A TECHNIQUE

Coaching Comes from the Heart,  
Not the Head

*Great coaching comes from the heart, not  
the head.*

HERB KELLEHER, SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

The Japanese have a word, *kokoro*, that has to do with perfecting one's inner nature. To be a great swordsman or tea master or classical Japanese Kojiki dancer requires both mastering the technique and perfecting the way of being that is consistent with the discipline: having a calm and centered inner spirit. A student learns as much from the master's quality of being as from the master's knowledge and technical skills. To be able to teach people in "the way" requires perfecting one's inner nature.

In the West, we tend to underestimate the importance of a person's way of being. We focus instead on his or her knowledge, skills, or techniques. Yet whenever people stand out in a particular domain, they are recognized as "being" a leader, "being" excellent, "being" creative, "being" effective, or "being" understanding.

It's no accident that in many spiritual traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism and the martial arts, the master teaches the student both the spirit and the standard practices of the domain. Those who are

able to embody the teacher's way of being, along with the skills and techniques, become part of the lineage. They become the next generation of masters, teachers, or coaches. It is their responsibility to pass on both the technical and mystical sides of the equation.

The Dalai Lama is a good example of a Tibetan teacher whose lessons may almost be commonsensical, but to those who are sitting in the Dalai Lama's presence, the lessons become powerful and penetrating, growing and developing within for years or even decades. I once attended a lecture with the Dalai Lama at MIT where someone asked how he defined compassion. He said it meant radiating a personal warmth and kindly attitude that seemed to fill the entire lecture hall, that compassion is experiencing other people's suffering as your own.

I didn't think much about the Dalai Lama or what he said at the time, but his presence and basic human wisdom grew within me like a learning enzyme and had a powerful influence on me over time. In fact, while I was once referred to by John Nelson, CEO of the Norton Company, as "not your kinder, gentler consultant," one of my main motivators as a coach is compassion for the suffering of the leaders I work with. It is their suffering in the name of a worthy goal or noble and mighty purpose that often draws me to them and elicits in me the desire to both support and challenge them.

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Think of the goal and then ask: Who do I need to be, and what do I need to do to achieve it?

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## THE POWER TO REINVENT YOURSELF

You may be thinking to yourself, "How will I ever develop ways of being, skills, and attitudes necessary to be a Masterful Coach?" particularly as you grew up in a very different kind of environment from Jack Welch of General Electric, Bill Belichick of the Patriots, or the Dalai Lama of Tibet. It may help to keep in mind something that Jacob Bronowski said in *The Ascent of Man*: "Man may be lower than the angels, yet he has a set of gifts which make him unique. He distinguishes himself from the other animals by his imaginative gifts. He makes plans, inventions, and

new discoveries by putting his talents together in more subtle and penetrating ways.”<sup>1</sup> Bronowski goes on to say that the greatest human inventions are not the wheel, the telephone, and the printing press but our ability to reinvent ourselves. This ability is what makes it possible to learn new ways of being.

I coached a general manager named Bill Nahil, who was smart and accomplished and had a reputation for being a monster of effectiveness. His boss told Bill, “I have to be careful what mountains I ask you to move because the chances are that you are actually going to move them.” The problem, according to the 360-degree feedback I received, was that Bill moved those mountains by dominating other people and by sheer force of argument and pressure, not through gathering talent and effective teamwork.

This was diminishing the size of the vision Bill could achieve and unknowingly preventing him from climbing the corporate ladder. I gave Bill this feedback and then heard from him about ten days later: “I totally want to change my management style so I can play a big game and realize an Impossible Future. I have figured out who I want to be, and I am going to need your help. I want to be a coach and teacher.” Over the next nine months or so, Bill made tremendous progress toward this goal.<sup>2</sup>

## ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU “BE”

Although we may be able to describe or explain what great leaders, coaches, or teachers do, the source of their actions often lies beyond such descriptions and explanations. To become a Masterful Coach, you first must ask not, “What do I do?” but “How do I be?” Is who you are an invitation for people to discover their greatness? Are you able to take a stand for an Impossible Future in the absence of evidence or proof? Is who you are all about teams? Do you radiate an attitude of winning?

Being is the context that shapes who we are in the world, as well as the way we think and interact with others. Being is sometimes thought of as intangible, abstract, or even ineffable, but it is actually quite real. Leadership is a matter of being a leader, not just having a position. Inspiration is a matter of being inspired. Producing extraordinary results is a matter of being extraordinary



and being results oriented. Fostering a great team effort in the face of competitive battle requires being a team player.

There is a difference between being a Masterful Coach and mentor who is totally committed to the people he or she is coaching and the Impossible Future they are creating together and going through the motions. As it has been said, a coach can pretend to care, but a coach can't pretend to really be there for people when the chips are down. To be sure, other people will be able to tell the difference, and they will either eagerly listen to what you are saying or start debating you as a result. The way we show up at any given moment and the way other people respond to us is always a result of some way of being that is currently unknown to us.

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Who you are speaks so loudly that it drowns out  
what you are saying.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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It's vitally important to understand that you and I have the power to choose who we are being in the world because we have the power to speak and listen. When we declare our commitment to the possibility of showing up as a coach, teacher, or mentor, that possibility comes into existence because we said it. The declaration of commitment does not automatically guarantee that we will show up as a coach and mentor, but it automatically does begin to alter our way of being and our actions.

Saying we have the power to choose our way of being in the world doesn't just apply to making a broad declaration about being a coach and teacher, but also applies to how we think and interact with the people we are coaching. Though we may be in a foul mood or exhausted and would prefer not to coach someone on any given day, we each have the power to call ourselves forth into the coaching session, based on the total commitment we have to the person we are coaching, and show up as a gift to the human spirit rather than a grumpy, hypercritical pain in the neck. Let's look at this further.

You can choose who you are being by committing to where you will come from. Each of us has an everyday way of being based on history, desires, good or bad moods, emotional reactions, and attachments to things turning out a certain way. This everyday

way of being can lead to big problems in a coaching relationship. For example, if you advise the coachee to play a bigger game and the response is, “This Impossible Future stuff is all crap,” your everyday way of being might be to take it personally and react in a way that may damage the relationship. Similarly, if the coachee agrees to take action on a to-do list about her vision and transformational goals but then does nothing, it is easy to get frustrated. Your everyday way of being might be to confront her in a heavy-handed way or try to please her by making it okay, both of which may be disastrous.

When I am about to enter into a coaching situation, I want to consciously and intentionally step out of this everyday way of being in the world and enter the zone of Masterful Coaching. There, my way of being is an expression of my commitment to the person I am coaching and the Impossible Future we are creating together. This is what is going to shape my speaking, listening, and actions rather than all the other stuff that could possibly get in the way and probably will. Being in the zone is all about having a place to stand and a place to come from that allows me to think and interact with the coachee in a powerful and profound way, regardless of how the coachee is showing up for me.

How do you get to be in the zone of Masterful Coaching? Try thinking of it this way: All you have in a coaching conversation is who you are—you at your best or worst. When you are in a coaching conversation, who you are speaks so loudly that it drowns out what you are saying. You can tell the client that you stand in her greatness, but if you get into a coaching conversation and how you are being with her is belittling her for not following through, that is the part of you that is going to come through, and she will react badly.

Each of us would probably love to show up in the world as an enlightened human being who always responds creatively rather than reacts automatically to other people’s idiosyncrasies. Yet all too often, we allow who we are in the world to be shaped by our history, old patterns, moods, reactions, and so on. Someone says a particular thing that really bothers you, and you react, every time and predictably, as if you were on automatic.

It is my belief, however, that the first step in entering the zone of Masterful Coaching and getting off your automatic pilot is to recognize that you have the power to choose your way of being in the world regardless of other people, circumstances, and events.

This comes from the power of your commitment and the power of language. You take a deep breath and tell yourself: “Who I am is the stand that I have taken to be a Masterful Coach totally committed to causing my client’s success. I am going to come from that stand in my coaching with people, not my moods and emotional reactions. I am going to make sure that my speaking, listening, and actions reflect this, no matter what.”

Again, the three declarations set out in Chapter Four will guide you in how to use the power of commitment and the power of language to leave your everyday way of being behind and enter the zone of Masterful Coaching:

1. What is possible is what I say is possible. I can be a Masterful Coach whose life is a gift to the human spirit.
2. Who I am is the stand that I take. I am going to stop having my way of being with people be determined by history and start having it be determined by my commitment.
3. The stand that I take is to be a Masterful Coach and have my way of being come from my commitments versus my reactions.

## THE 7 MASTERFUL COACHING “COME FROMS”

Once you take a stand to be a Masterful Coach, the next step in entering the zone of Masterful Coaching is to adopt the Masterful Coaching “come froms.” These are designed to give you a place to stand in any coaching conversation. They give you the power to leave your everyday way of being behind you and choose who you are going to be in the matter consistent with your commitment to being a Masterful Coach and to bringing out the highest and best in others. They allow you to adopt a particular perspective in a coaching conversation that will leave people inspired, empowered, and enabled regardless of other people, circumstances, and events.

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Your work is to discover your work. Once you  
discover your work, do it wholeheartedly.

Buddha

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You are about to hear about the 7 Masterful Coaching “Come Froms.” Yet there is one that is not listed here that underlies all of them. It’s hard to go through life without seeing all human beings struggling to realize their dreams and aspirations or trying to remove some kind of pain in their lives without seeing that there is a lot of truth in Buddha’s words, “Life is suffering.”

It’s my belief that the discovery of what it is to be a human being comes not from getting rich or a happy marriage or civilized behavior, but from the awakening of true compassion within oneself. As the Dalai Lama puts it, “Compassion is experiencing other people’s suffering as your own.” Once you have that awakening, your natural come from—whether in enterprise or in personal affairs—becomes to live your life in the wholehearted service of others. That’s why I agree with Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines who said that all great coaching comes from the heart, not from the head. You must care.

To me, this come from is what Masterful Coaching is ultimately about and may represent the possibility of Masterful Coaching in the first place. It is what prepares you to enter the journey to Masterful Coaching. It leads you to inspire others to achieve something impossible and change their lives. It develops in you the raging hunger to develop both the domain expertise in the great game of business (or whatever else) and the basic human wisdom needed to make a difference in people’s lives.

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The seven Masterful Coaching “come froms” are amazingly powerful.

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By adopting the 7 Masterful Coaching Come Froms and standing in my commitment to be a Masterful Coach, which gives me a place to stand in during a difficult conversation, I make a conscious decision that no matter what happens, these come froms will shape, limit, and define my speaking, listening, and actions:

1. A Masterful Coach stands totally committed to the person being coached.
2. A Masterful Coach stands in people’s greatness even when they fall from it.

3. A Masterful Coach comes from getting people to work backward from a vision versus forward from the past.
4. A Masterful Coach speaks from his or her stand versus reactions. Never belittle.
5. A Masterful Coach focuses on what's missing (the solution), not what's wrong (the problem).
6. A Masterful Coach is committed to honest feedback needed for growth and learning.
7. A Masterful Coach comes from the view that anything is possible, every situation is transformable, there is always a path forward, and the actions are up to you.

See these points in terms of having the power to fundamentally alter your everyday way of being and transform you into a Masterful Coach, possessed of those not-so-everyday ways of being that result in being able to help people achieve something impossible and change their lives.

## 1. STAND IN TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE PERSON

When I am in a coaching relationship, my number one come from is being totally committed to the coachee as a human being. I stand totally committed to his success as a businessperson and a person. I make his goals my goals, his agenda my agenda, his trials and tribulations mine—whether he is getting ready for a big presentation with the CEO, a business or talent review with the team, or on the way to the hospital because his daughter has dislocated her shoulder in the Pee Wee Soccer League. As it has been said, “A body can pretend to care, but a body can’t pretend to be there.”

Because my coachees know that I stand totally committed to their success, they give me a lot of permission when it comes to being able to praise them to the stars or give them 360-degree feedback that is so tough that it plunges them into the dark night of the soul. They seldom awaken from this night until something in them that is ugly is transformed into something beautiful.

The coachee, in most cases, has defined an Impossible Future and winning game plan that requires personal and organizational reinvention. Yet coaching to succeed is seldom a matter of

following a simple or obvious plan. It is a matter of figuring out what the coachee needs to do when, despite sincere and honest intentions, she hits a wall and is stuck with dilemmas, puzzles, and conundrums as to how to deal with it.

In most cases, it is not my résumé of leading thousands in personal transformation workshops, or the large number of executives I have coached, or careful thought given to my books that leads to an “aha” experience that allows them to break through whatever is stopping them. The truth be told, I often don’t know what the answer is that people need. However, I do believe it is more often than not coming from my wholehearted commitment to the person and the willingness to hang in there with him (usually by engaging in questions) that results in the fog of unknowing lifting unexpectedly and people coming to a moment of true insight.

## 2. STAND IN PEOPLE’S GREATNESS EVEN WHEN THEY FALL FROM IT

One of my basic come froms in life is to see the potential for greatness in people and for playing a bigger game that they perhaps don’t even see themselves. My interaction with people, whether I am working with a CEO in Cleveland, a turbaned taxi driver in Ottawa, or a waitperson in any number of Chinatowns throughout the world, is invariably the same. I ask people about how it’s going in their lives, usually to hear that despite their once high dreams and aspirations, circumstances have gotten them down and life is tough. Then looking for and affirming some spark of greatness in them—a hunger or yearning to be all that they can be despite their circumstances, a warmhearted, at-your-service attitude, intelligence beyond and out of the ordinary—I ask them to tell me about what kind of future they want to create for themselves going forward.

I once asked a good ole bloke of a taxi driver in London who was complaining about his near 24/7 scheduled week what else he could possibly do for a living. “After all, you have a lot of entrepreneurial experience,” I said, “and there must be a lot of other businesses you could get into.” The taxi driver turned around and, with utter resignation in his voice as we drove through

bustling central London, said, “I have thought about starting another kind of business, but all the good businesses have been taken up.”

Aghast, I replied, “I can see you are a great guy [he had made a lot of sacrifices for others]. Are you going to let your horizon of possibility be determined by this crowded, busy, hectic London street, with all the businesses being apparently taken up, or are you going to let your horizon of possibilities be determined by your innate human capacity for imagination and innovation?” Eventually the preyed-on taxi driver began talking about starting an Internet café for travelers to use, something that there were very few of at the time, and he got progressively more excited about it as he dropped me at the place of business where I was to do my coaching.

I was to meet with a CEO I was coaching, who was handsome, smart, and accomplished but tended to be arrogant and demonstrated it by calling one of his direct reports an idiot at the business meeting I was to observe. While my everyday self would have found it very easy to sit in judgment of this horrible fellow, I adopted the Masterful Coaching come from of standing in his greatness even when it wasn’t present and gave him some very straight feedback during one of the breaks: “Jim, you know I believe in you, but if you keep acting like that, all the work you have done on your Impossible Future and winning game plan will be for naught.” The CEO marched right back into the room after the break and in the most sincere fashion used some of the most powerful words there are: “I am really sorry.”

### 3. GET PEOPLE TO WORK BACKWARD FROM A VISION

When I am working with an executive, I see that who this person is at the outset is someone who is caught up in the daily grind of looking good, attending back-to-back staff meetings, talking about a vague vision for the business but worrying mainly about the next quarter, and talking about the need for real change but readily jumping to general improvement programs. If I engage with her in that level of conversation by getting her to set a few stretch goals, fill out some leadership 360-degree forms (tick the boxes 1 to 5), and maybe do a little team building, my impact on

her will be negligible. In order for me and Masterful Coaching to show up as providing value, I have to see who I am in a totally different way from the way she sees herself and come from a totally different place.

The place that I come from with people starts with getting them to declare an Impossible Future based on what they can dream or imagine rather than allow them to be tempted to define a predictable future, given industry orthodoxy and resources. Why is it that a company like General Motors that is almost a hundred years old blunders and loses \$48 billion dollars (as it did in the first quarter of 2008) and a small company like Facebook goes public after just a few years in business and gains new wealth to the tune of \$15 billion market valuation?

I tell people that the limiting factor on their capacity to declare and realize an Impossible Future may not be their boss or their budget but rather freeing their capacity for imagination and innovation from the well-greased grooves of history. Then I turn to questions like these: What's really possible and achievable for you and your company? If you had all of this company's resources at your disposal, what would you build that would change the world in your domain?

Once people declare an Impossible Future, my job becomes to stand in that future and get them to take action today to make it a reality. There is always a dance between getting people to attend to their Impossible Future and getting them to achieve their short-term profit objects. I tell them that this is not an either-or proposition but a both-and.

I have found that putting together a list of "have you's" before each coaching call can be useful in getting people to stand in the Impossible Future and take action in the present:

- Have you shared your vision of your Impossible Future at a town meeting this quarter?
- Have you enrolled one talented person or group in your Impossible Future this month?
- Have you met with a key influencer this week to gain political cover for your vision?
- Have you celebrated in the last week a small (or great!) milestone reached?



- Have you done something to make your Impossible Future a reality in the past three days?
- Have you in the past thirty days examined in detail your hour-by-hour priorities?
- Have you in the past week discussed “wow” (how to inject it into a project)?
- Have you in the past few days had a talk with an employee about a project’s next steps?

#### 4. SPEAK FROM A STAND VERSUS REACTIONS

I once heard the Dalai Lama asked, “Do you get angry?” He said, “Yes definitely, but I work with it so that it doesn’t get in the way when I am doing my preaching or teaching.” I think the same thing applies to being a Masterful Coach. We all come to a point in a coaching relationship where we feel either very disappointed or angry with the coachee about not keeping an appointment or not following through on a specific action regarding this person’s Impossible Future.

Yet when I am coaching, I always remind myself to speak from my stand to create an extraordinary coaching relationship and to cause the person’s success rather than my emotional reactions. My job as a coach is to bring out the highest and best in people. If I am standing in my commitment and speaking from a higher and best place in myself, then people will respond according to how they are treated. If I allow myself to speak in a way that brings out my lower and worst self, people again will respond in kind.

Speaking from a stand rather than one’s reactive emotions is not always easy. I can recall a time when I was furious with a client but decided to bite my tongue so as not to say something that might damage the relationship. When the conversation was over, my wife, who was privy to my frustrations and had overheard, said, “You did brilliantly on that call.” I told her that little did she know that I wanted to explode during most of the conversation.

If I am in a bad mood before a coaching conversation, I may call the person and say, “Look, I am not in a good mood today, and if it’s okay with you, I would like to postpone the call until tomorrow.” I use this time to get back to myself and my commitment so I can come at the conversation the next day from a place that will be positive and constructive.

## 5. FOCUS ON WHAT'S MISSING

One of the first things I do once I commit to a coaching relationship is what Benjamin Zander calls extending people an A (synonymous with standing in their greatness).<sup>3</sup> If they make mistakes, I give them feedback in the context of their greatness: "You already know I think you're great, but if you did some things differently, you could accomplish some great deeds and shock the world. Here's what they are."

I have found that what distinguishes Masterful Coaching is focusing on what's missing that, if provided, could make a huge difference, whereas a journeyman and novice coach tends to focus on what's wrong. As a great golf coach Jimmy Ballard once told me, "Anyone can find the fault; it's hard to find the cure." To find the cure, you have to stand for the person's success, have a sharp eye to distinguish the breakdown, and have enough domain expertise to know what's missing that, if provided, would produce a breakthrough.

I have found through long experience with coaching and mentoring that most people really do want to be great and are willing to work hard to realize their potential. If they feel the coach is standing for their success, they are usually willing to accept meaningful feedback and adjust their actions so as to be able to go to the next level. Nevertheless, most human beings hate to be made wrong and tend to shut down and become resentful if spoken to harshly or if feedback sounds like a personal attack.

On *American Idol* the contestants all aspire to go to Hollywood and become a pop star. After each performance, the first judge, Randy Jackson, composes himself and then says what the person did well in a supportive way, followed by challenging him or her to do better—for example, "Belt it out." Then Paula Abdul, coming from a kindly place, builds the person's spirits ("You look great") and then gently speaks about what's missing: "Let who you are shine through whatever the song is." Finally, Simon speaks and even though he may have something useful to say, it's usually not said in a constructive way. However, his saving grace is his great smile and ability to laugh at himself—a great candidate for Masterful Coaching certification!

## 6. COMMIT TO HONEST FEEDBACK

This come from follows right on the heels of the previous one. There are many times in professional coaching where you are faced with a dilemma: the coachee (or client) is proceeding with his Impossible Future and transformational goals but in the process is coming off in a heavy-handed or otherwise obnoxious way. You have found out that people can't stand the way he acts with them and are ready to sabotage him if he doesn't change.

Meanwhile, the executive himself thinks he is doing a fantastic job: "I am moving forward with this vision and making milestones every month. I am causing real transformation out there, and I am finally beginning to get some traction. Robert, you would be proud of me. I talked very straight to the people in marketing and production who were resisting. When you are going for a breakthrough, everyone has to play 100 percent, and you are in or out. I think they got the message loud and clear and are getting aligned."

At this point you have the unenviable task of telling the emperor that everyone can see he has no clothes. It's not so bad if you have had time to build up a strong coaching relationship, but if you are only getting started with the coaching, it's natural to be concerned that tough feedback could cause the relationship to unravel, especially when the person thinks he is doing what you asked.

It's easy to get caught in the defensive routine here of sending mixed messages and pretending they are not mixed: "You are doing well, but . . ." This can water down your message so much that it has no impact. The come from of a Masterful Coach at this point is something like this: "Joe, when we started working together, we said we are going to create an extraordinary coaching relationship. I told you that part of the 100 percent I would bring to the relationship was honesty. And you said part of your 100 percent would be committed listening, even if you disagreed. So now I am going to tell you some things, and this may be a difficult conversation."

## 7. TAKE THE VIEW ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

There are many times in a Masterful Coaching relationship when you talk to people about their dreams and aspirations and are

met with pessimism rather than optimism. The fact is that it's easy for people to get beaten by other people's circumstances and events and come to the conclusion that "dreams are for other people," or "Why bother?" or "It can't be done."

As a Masterful Coach, you need to come from a place that intervenes in all of that regardless of how much evidence the person has to support her self-limiting beliefs. That's why I always want to come from a place with people that will leave them feeling inspired versus resigned and ready to give up. And that come from is this: *Anything is possible. Every situation is transformable. There is always a path forward, and the actions are up to you.*

- *Anything is possible.* You are coaching someone who has a dream or aspiration of a business that grows, but she has been staring at a wall for a long time. On one level she wants to go for it. On another she believes she has tried everything. Her come from will be, "Give up," "Get out," or "Just struggle along." Your come from is, "Anything is possible if you think it is worthwhile." In most cases, with imagination and effort, people will learn to be more and achieve more than they ever thought possible. Dreams can be challenging, but people never become a failure until they fail to try.

- *Every situation is transformable.* The situation looks totally hopeless. The person you are coaching did something to sour a relationship and the big deal he has been working so hard to negotiate diplomatically has broken down into mere haggling. He comes from the point of view that it is all pointless, so it's time to pack up and go to the airport. As the coach, you come from the point of view that the situation is transformable and it's time to look at his options. It usually works out much better if the person picks up the phone, tells the other party how important this is to him, embracing the enemy and that person's views, rather than head for the bunkers and pretend to be above it all.

- *There is always a path forward.* You have been coaching a leader on an Impossible Future, and she has spent the past ten days preparing a presentation to the CEO and the executive committee—and then it doesn't go well. The CEO was distracted by an urgent message from his secretary concerning a board member. While most of the members of the executive committee

seemed to agree with your coachee's ideas and proposals, one member was obviously dead set against it. By this time, this person has probably met with the CEO and tried to put the kibosh on it. The coachee's come from is going to be, "This is a good reason to get depressed," so your come from has got to be, "There is always a path forward." Three questions help you find it: What's happened? What's missing that, if provided, would make a difference? What's next?

- *The actions are up to you.* There are certain things that coaches can do and certain things that they can't. The NFL coach can't get on the field and throw the ball for the quarterback. The conductor in the symphony orchestra can teach the violin section in rehearsal what's required for a great performance of Beethoven's Fifth, but can't stop conducting the orchestra in the middle of the performance and start playing the instrument the way it's supposed to be played. In the same sense, the business coach can be a thinking partner for the client in coming up with an implementation action plan, but the coach can't take the actions for the person.

## CHAPTER SIX

# COACHING HAPPENS IN CONVERSATIONS

## Speaking and Listening from a Stand Versus Moods, Reactions, and Attachments

*A human being cannot resist the temptation to express his personality and reveal himself; conversation gives him the opportunity.*

A conversation is a remarkable phenomenon generated between human beings. Wars are declared, grand social initiatives are promised, great scientific achievements are brought to fruition, and markets are created through a conversation—or rather through a network of conversations. When a new era dawns, such as the Industrial Age or the Internet era, the old ordinary conversation is interrupted and a new extraordinary conversation is inaugurated that provides new ideas, fresh insights, and exciting new possibilities.

We have also experienced extraordinary conversations that have had a profound and powerful impact on our lives—conversations that interrupted the old patterns and opened our eyes to new horizons. These are conversations where we have been touched with exciting new possibilities, gained a greater appreciation of our own potential, or come to a revelation of our own foolishness. They are conversations where we somehow left bigger than we were before and inspired to greater action.

We have all had those kinds of extraordinary conversations that return us to ourselves and our highest goals and aspirations. They have a certain spirit of light about them that is uplifting, and when such conversations happen, they seem truly magical. Yet these conversations often seem to occur by chance.

Masterful coaching lies in the ability to consciously and intentionally be able to create the climate for such extraordinary conversations. This book, and specifically this chapter, are about being able to discover and express your own ability to have such conversations with others on a consistent basis. It is about getting your hands on a powerful, repeatable, and proven technology that ensures that you will be able to have conversations with people that allow them to reinvent themselves and their organizations.

## COACHING CONVERSATIONS ARE SPECIAL CONVERSATIONS

Coaching happens in conversations—in business, sports, in the performing arts. These conversations are special in our culture and need to be distinct. A coaching conversation is not a conversation of chitchat, mere opinion, or advice. It is not one where people indulge themselves in gossip and rumor or cynical comments. It is not even a conversation where people set reasonable goals, make plans, and seek to deliver on them through their winning strategies. And it is not a conversation where people listen for what's wrong with others or sit back and play "here comes the judge."

A coaching conversation is one in which you are burning with intention to have an impact. It is a conversation where you are speaking and listening from a total commitment to cause that person's success. It is a conversation where you extend people an A (you see their greatness), even when they disappoint you or make mistakes. It is a conversation where you provide the kind of insightful feedback that rips the blinders off. It's a conversation where people see new possibilities and breakthrough barriers showing up in an entirely new way. And it is a conversation where people walk away feeling inspired, empowered, and enabled to act.

## COMMITTED LISTENING

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Masterful Coaches give people the gift of their presence—a high quality of time and attention.

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Although people think Masterful Coaching automatically involves speaking—giving advice or answers—it actually starts with listening. Masterful Coaches have a way of listening that we call *committed listening*. It starts with listening from a commitment to “give people the gift of your presence,” a high quality of time and attention. Yet it also involves listening from a commitment to bring out the best in people. This new way of listening is not transactional in nature, where people are given advice, tips, or techniques. It embraces but goes beyond all this and is transformational with respect to the person we are engaging with. Committed listening means listening from a commitment to the coachee’s greatness (highest and best self), even when the person is being a prisoner of pettiness and the rest of the world is fed up, disgruntled, and disgusted with him or her.

It involves listening from a commitment to unearth what people passionately care about and how that links into the extraordinary future they want to create for themselves and their organizations. It involves listening from who they are as a commitment and returning people to themselves, even when everything has fallen apart.

On a day-in, day-out level, committed listening involves taking into account that coaching is an activity characterized by a concern for the coachees. It involves listening to whatever the coachee’s concerns are: “Tell me what is really on your mind.” Is he upset with his boss? Muddled over a problem, a puzzle or dilemma, or confused? A good metaphor for the day in the life of an executive is a big ball of twine: a tangle of problems, dilemmas, puzzles, and emotional reactions. The coaching session is an opportunity to unravel it, and all people need is a place to start.

A Masterful Coach knows that committed listening is the foundation for all-powerful coaching. A Masterful Coach has a commitment that people are going to leave the conversation feeling freed up, clear, and empowered to act. Rather than thinking



that people need their answers, advice, or infinite wisdom, a Masterful Coach listens from the point of view that people possess within themselves the ability to resolve their upsets, do their own thinking, discover their own answers, and find the path forward.

For example, a person may say, “My boss is a jerk.” If you agree or disagree, the communication can get stuck, and the person either talks on and on or tries to justify his or her point of view. If you are willing to listen without agreeing or disagreeing, people will begin to see something that they didn’t see before, which allows them to disengage from their reactive thoughts or feelings. You might hear, “You know what? I have been reflecting on this, and my boss really isn’t that bad. I can see that I have been upset with him and that I need to sit down with him and get clear about a few things.”

It is much better for the coach to come to the table as a thinking partner rather than an arrogant know-it-all. There is power in the coach and coachee coming to the table with a clear idea of the problem (or dilemma) and having a conversation. In this way, they create a partnership that is about discovering the answers together. This often leads to gaining a broader, deeper view of the problem or dilemma, as well as arriving at solutions that never would have been attainable on an individual basis.

Masterful Coaches don’t just listen to what people are saying about what happened; they listen for the underlying beliefs, assumptions, and interpretations people make. Most people stand in a place that causes them to make arbitrary interpretations about people, situations, and events. For example, many managers draw their identity from coming out on top, being right, and getting power over others by listening for what’s wrong.

Thus, when someone makes a proposal with a good idea, instead of hearing what’s right in it and building on it, they listen for what’s wrong with it. Because coming out on top and being right represents a kind of payoff, this becomes an addictive cycle of interpretation that doesn’t support people in being all that they are or all that they can be. Coaching is then about breaking the cycle of these addictive interpretations so that people are freed up. The kind of listening that I am talking about is transformational in nature. Here is what Masterful Coaches listen for:

- Who people are as a commitment and acknowledge it, even when they may want to give up
- Who people are being in their listening that gets them in trouble—for example, “I’m right” or “I need to win”
- Addictive interpretations—for example, people who listen for what’s wrong
- Attitudes or behaviors that will get people in trouble
- Beliefs and assumptions people are taking for granted
- Where people have jumped to conclusions or have gaps in their reasoning

## COMMITTED SPEAKING

One of the other ways the coach creates an environment for transformational conversations is through committed speaking: speaking from a commitment to make a difference in people’s lives. If you have listened enough to people talk about their goals or problems, you will begin to understand the background against which they are standing and from which they see the world. For example, they may see the world from the point of view of a generative leader who transforms roadblocks into opportunities, or they may see the world from the point of view of a reactive manager who focuses on putting out fires.

Committed speaking involves speaking with the ruthless compassion necessary to penetrate illusions. At the same time, given the place where you stand as a commitment to being a Masterful Coach and the background that you come from, you will see things that the person being coached doesn’t see. Committed speaking means speaking from a commitment to making a difference—for example, saying something that helps people see something they didn’t see before that has the power to alter who they are being and what they are doing. This could take the form of making a distinction for a person (for example, being a generative leader versus a reactive manager) that expands people’s horizon of possibility, or pushing them to break the grip and excel beyond old paradigms, or ripping the blinders off with regard to their own counterproductive behavior.

Speaking to leaders in a way that produces an alteration can be a challenge. It is not just a matter of saying, “Look, to be an

extraordinary leader or to build an extraordinary business, you need to do something new.” It is more a matter of getting people to let go of an old act they strongly identify with, a personal (or business) winning strategy they have been successful with but which has become a limitation, or an incredibly righteous position about someone. People often say, “Why should I change this? It’s gotten me where I am today.” Altering a point of view like this is always an emotional process.

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You and I possess within ourselves the ability to transform who we are being at all times and under all conditions. This ability lives in our conversations, in our speaking and listening.

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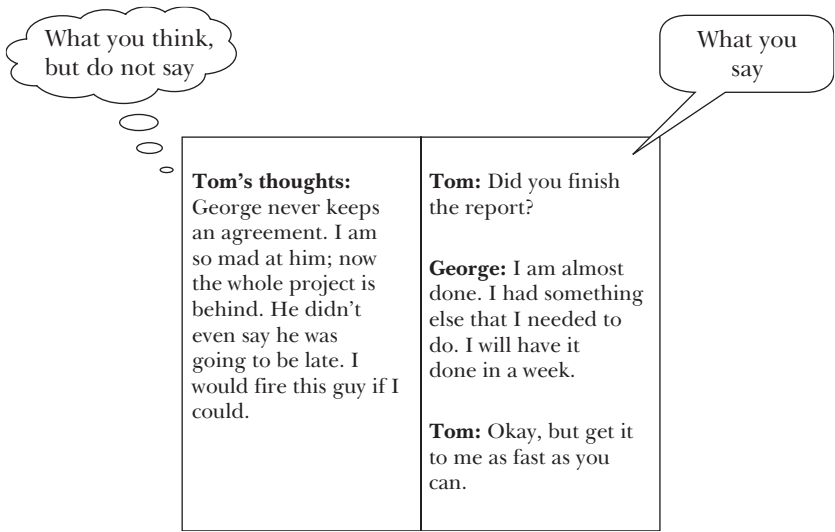
Committed speaking is also a matter of speaking with a kind of ruthless compassion that is necessary to open people’s eyes and penetrate their illusions: “Look, you have a choice. You can step into the space of being an extraordinary leader, creating an extraordinary business by being a contribution. Or you can choose to continue with your act of kissing up to the boss and your winning strategy of kicking down at direct reports. I know old patterns die hard. If you choose the former, I will support you 100 percent.”

## DISCUSSING THE UNDISCUSSABLE

Although most coaches sincerely intend to speak with candor and honesty or talk straight, they may become cautious in order to avoid being uncomfortable. This can sometimes lead to sending mixed messages that prevent others from receiving the information they need to correct their errors and to learn. This pattern is heightened if the other person reacts with hostility to sincere attempts to give meaningful feedback. If you alter your communication as a result of this, you become an accomplice to the individual’s, group’s, or organization’s defensive routines.

The reason we may be susceptible to doing this is that we have been conditioned to speak in ways rooted in certain social virtues: being nice, not upsetting people, minding our own business, and so on. One common organization defensive routine is

FIGURE 6.1. SAMPLE OF A LEFT-HAND-COLUMN EXERCISE



to make potentially embarrassing or threatening feedback that is needed for growth and learning undiscussable. A coach has to be willing to discuss the undiscussable.

Chris Argyris's left-hand column exercise is an excellent tool for learning to discuss the undiscussable in a way that does not create a blow-up in the relationship. Figure 6.1 is an illustration of the left-hand column exercise. A page is divided in half lengthwise, and on the right is everything that you said in the conversation and everything the person you were talking to said. In the left-hand column is everything that you thought but did not say. The idea behind the exercise is to become aware of what you have in your left-hand column that, if said, could make a difference in a coaching conversation.

## THE 7 CAP COACHING CONVERSATION SYSTEM

Masterful Coaches recognize that there are different types of coaching conversations and choose the type to engage in depending on what is unfolding in the coaching relationship. They may shift from one of these conversations to another in a coaching

session depending on what is occurring. This is called “dancing with what is occurring.”

There are seven distinct coaching conversations in the Masterful Coaching method. I have noticed that while Masterful Coaches use all seven, beginners or intermediates tend to get stuck in one type of conversation, such as giving answers or listening like a therapist. I have thus created the 7 Cap Coaching Conversation System to assist people in distinguishing the different coaching caps they may wear and to teach them how to develop the skills and capabilities to use these.

I have found that once people can distinguish among the seven coaching caps, they can become effective with using them fairly quickly. It is important to point out that for the most part, you don’t speak about these caps in your coaching conversation; you speak from them. Taking one cap off and putting another one on comes about as a result of your own external observations of your coaching interactions and your internal dialogue.

The seven coaching caps that follow will support you in drawing the distinctions among the types of coaching conversations they represent, as well as help you begin to act on them:

1. Declaring new possibilities cap
2. Thinking partner cap
3. Drawing others out cap
4. Reframing cap
5. Teaching and advising cap
6. Forwarding action cap
7. Giving honest feedback cap

Although these caps are numbered to provide a reference point, they are employed in a nonlinear way.

## CAP 1: DECLARING POSSIBILITIES

Masterful Coaches inspire people to pay attention to what they can declare, based on what’s possible versus what they can predict based on the past. There are always more possibilities than people may see for someone’s career, a company’s business model, or a path forward. People are blinded by their own lenses of perception, habits,

or industry orthodoxies. If this is the case, brainstorm alternative possibilities and select the best ones. Keep declarations focused: “I am committed to the possibility of . . . [putting a person on the moon or being the best leader in the company].

- Put this cap on when people show signs of resignation or say they have no choice but to pursue conventional options or don’t see a path forward.
- Take it off when people see infinite possibilities but can’t make any choices or when people can’t buy into the “what” because they don’t see a “how.”

## CAP 2: BEING A THINKING PARTNER

Leaders are often faced with problems, issues, and dilemmas to which there are no simple or obvious answers. As Einstein said, “The same level of thinking that got you into the problem won’t be sufficient to get you out of it.” If this is the case, find out whether the person would like a thinking partner. Begin by asking, “What do you think?” Then build on best ideas. Don’t hesitate to offer new ideas, fresh perspectives, and innovative solutions. Question what you both may take for granted to make sure you don’t jump to conclusions. Get the solution so it is 80 percent right, and then iterate.

- Put this cap on when the coachee is faced with human or business problems, dilemmas, or puzzles to which there is no simple or obvious answer.
- Take it off when people need to move from thinking to action.

## CAP 3: DRAWING OTHERS OUT

All too often people think that being a coach or thinking partner is about telling someone the answer. This can be a mistake because the coachee often knows more about the business than the coach does. Second, if you start by giving people the answers, you often wind up with a disempowered person who feels that he or she has nothing to contribute. Instead, start with the premise that the answer is within the person and your job is to draw it out

by listening for brilliance. Drawing out can also apply to putting feelings or reactions out on the table so they can be resolved.

- Put this cap on when you sense people have the seeds of a brilliant idea but are expressing it in an inarticulate or vague way, or when you feel you have been providing people good ideas and they are not responding, or when people feel misunderstood by you or others.
- Take it off when people are interpreting things in a disempowering way, have jumped to conclusions, or are making assumptions that cannot be validated by directly witnessable data.

#### CAP 4: REFRAMING THINKING AND ATTITUDES

This cap is useful after drawing people out. Good questions to ask are: “Will the way you have framed the problem give you the results you want?” “Do you really think you can shrink your way to greatness with this company, or do you think it’s time for a growth strategy?” This cap is the key to doing transformational work. How is the person seeing himself or herself (the role) now? How does the person need to see himself or herself differently? How is the person thinking about the problem? How does his or her thinking need to shift? What is the lens or filter through which the person speaks or listens? How does it need to change?

- Put this cap on when you pick up red flags like a wrongheaded way of looking at the problem or solution; limiting beliefs and assumptions about themselves, others, and the situation; crazy thinking; poor attitudes; or disempowering interpretations.
- Take it off when people have a more inspiring, empowering, accurate interpretation of reality or when they have the right mind-set on the problem or solution and are ready to get on with it or when you feel a how-to tip or technique is now appropriate.

#### CAP 5: TEACHING AND ADVISING

A coach is different from a therapist. The difference is that the coach often has a teachable point of view that he or she feels

passionate about and wants to communicate: “We need leaders at every level,” “We need excellence. Good enough isn’t good enough.” This cap is often put on to make distinctions that open up new categories in people’s minds. For example, a powerful distinction is that there is a difference between compliance and commitment. The teaching and advising cap is also used to offer practical advice. Give advice that is caring and candid, practical, wise, and well timed, meaning that people are open to hearing it.

- Put this cap on when you have a teachable point of view to put out to an individual or group, when making a distinction would create greater clarity or power for people, or when people solicit your wisdom or advice.
- Take it off when people start to debate everything you say or when you hear lots of “yes buts,” or when you feel you have made your point. Often at this time it is appropriate to try on the drawing others out cap.

## CAP 6: FORWARDING ACTION

Masterful Coaches focus on interacting with people with regard to their goals and problems in a way that takes them beyond an answer and brings them to a moment of true insight. They follow this by taking those insights and forwarding action. If you have come up with some powerful insights, the actions to take will usually fall out of them. I conclude almost every coaching session with a thirty-day action plan. The idea is to come from the point of view that there is always a path forward and let’s discover it. Focus on small, high-leverage steps that move the ball forward without overwhelming people.

- Put this cap on when people have had enough strategizing and theorizing and are ready to act, when they don’t see an opening for successful action, or when you have clearly identified what’s missing in the situation and the question, “What’s next?” is on the tip of your tongue.
- Take it off when doing the same thing better doesn’t produce different results. This could lead to putting on the declaring new possibilities cap and brainstorming alternative courses



of action, or putting on the reframing cap and looking at the issue from a new perspective or seeing where you have a blocked mental model.

## CAP 7: GIVING HONEST FEEDBACK

Most people have sincere and honest intentions with respect to results and in their relationships with others. Yet we all suffer from blindness. We cannot see ourselves as others see us, detect our strengths or gaps, or recognize the unintended consequences of our actions. Thus, putting on the giving feedback cap is essential to helping people become more aware. It is important to make sure that any assessments you make are based on witnessable observations, as opposed to arbitrary judgments. An assessment is just an opinion, but opinions can make a difference. Make a positive assessment first and a negative assessment second; finish with a commitment to review the feedback.

- Put this cap on when you are creating a leadership development plan and need to assess strengths or gaps, or when you have created business plans and people's actions are leading to unintended results in the business or with other people.
- Take it off when people are not open to feedback, or when it is time to get back into action.

## A SUCCESS FORMULA FOR POWERFUL COACHING CONVERSATIONS

I have discussed committed speaking and listening and introduced the 7 Cap Coaching Conversation System. Now let's put it all together. In our work, we have discovered a successful formula for having coaching conversations that is proven and repeatable. It starts with a set of generating principles and then moves toward a specific transformational technology. Think of the following generating principles as the background conversation playing in your mind, which you are continually bringing to the foreground of your conversation with the coachee:

1. Your passion and enthusiasm for the conversation matter.
2. The individual you are speaking with matters.
3. Who you are in the conversation matters. Are you coming from a stand for transformation or just trying to look good or please others?
4. Creating a shared context matters (“This conversation can have an impact”), as do being clear about the intended result and holding yourself accountable to delivering it—in other words, closing all escape hatches. Then apply this step-by-step formula for coaching conversations:
  1. Prepare for a successful coaching conversation. What are the purpose and goals? Who do you need to be? Who does the coachee need to be?
  2. Declare your commitment at the beginning of the conversation: “This conversation can have an impact. Here are the purpose and goals.”
  3. Dynamically use the 7 Cap Coaching Conversation System. Dance with what’s occurring. Decide which cap to put on and take off.
  4. Make sure the person leaves the conversation with greater clarity and power and with an opening for action. Check in, get feedback, and adjust. What’s missing that, if provided, will make a difference?

Let’s look at each briefly.

## STEP 1: PREPARE FOR EVERY COACHING CONVERSATION

Before every coaching conversation, center yourself by preparing powerfully.

- *Get clear on the purpose, goals, and intentions.* Take out a blank sheet of paper and write down the purpose of the meeting and your goals and intentions. For example, is it to challenge people to go beyond predictable goals and create an Impossible Future? Is it to break the grip of resignation by unearthing

people's passions? Is it to review the accomplishments of the past six months or follow up on a thirty-day action plan? List approximately five items.

- *Get clear on who you need to be in the conversation.* A coaching conversation is not a walk in the park. You not only need to think about who you need to be in the matter, but also be very grounded. Declare who you need to be in the matter, based on your commitment, and write down some positive affirmations about that—for example, “I am committed to this person and what he wants to accomplish.” “I am a committed speaker and listener who is able to address this person’s concerns.” “I am committed to a transformation and being a coach who can extricate people from the reality in which they are lodged.” This preparation helps to call yourself forth in a manner consistent with producing desired results.
- *Get clear on who the coachee needs to be.* You have to take into account that you may have a point of view about a person or you may hold some prejudices or carry a chip on your shoulder, which creates a context for how you speak and listen to people and consequently how they show up. Center yourself in who the person being coached needs to be in the conversation, so that the desired results rather than an obstacle can show up. Write down a number of declarations (affirmations) about the person that represent his or her highest and best self—for example, “Sam is committed to an extraordinary future and is committed to an extraordinary coaching relationship with me.” “Sam is really on the verge of a transformation, even though it may look otherwise.”

For the declaration to be powerful, it has to be true on some level, and you have to believe it.

## STEP 2: DECLARE YOUR COMMITMENT AT THE OUTSET

This can take the form of saying, “I am totally committed to having this conversation make a difference for you.” Let me give you an example. I am sitting in an executive conference room on the fifty-second floor of a New York skyscraper with Stanley Clarke,

senior vice president of Thompson Corporation PLC, a big financial services company. Clarke, a British expatriate in a dark gray Savile Row pinstripe suit, has called the meeting to discuss one of his vice presidents, Ben Bennett: "He has a serious leadership issue, and at the same time, he has a record of great results. However, I am strongly leaning toward removing him from his role." Clarke has spoken to Bennett several times about the leadership issue. "What incites me to a cool rage is that he won't acknowledge he has a leadership issue."

Just then the phone rings. It's David Korkosz of Masterful Coaching, who has been working with Bennett for three months. Korkosz has been asked for his comments on Bennett's progress. He thinks Bennett is transforming, but there is a negative listening for him in the organization due to years of his authoritarian behavior. Korkosz thanks Clarke for the opportunity to speak and then begins with a powerful declaration: "First of all, I'd like to say that we are all here because we are committed to the Thompson Corporation having extraordinary leadership and to being an extraordinary company."

This declaration of commitment is intended to create a sense of shared purpose that will support Clarke, Korkosz, and me in rising above any emotional reactions. Clarke sees where Korkosz is coming from, smiles warmly, and nods in agreement: "I'm interested in gaining your perspective." Next, Korkosz makes another powerful declaration: "I am personally committed to this conversation making a difference for you."

As David speaks these words, a light goes on in my mind, my ears perk up, and I come to the edge of my seat. *What a powerful way to begin a conversation*, I think to myself. Only a Masterful Coach who stands in the possibility of making a difference would ever think of beginning a conversation like that. It would never even occur to most people in corporations to begin a conversation in this way.

By making a public declaration of commitment that the conversation make a difference for the person, the coach creates a powerful new context that alters what's possible in the conversation. Coming into that conversation from that context immediately alters the coach's everyday way of being in the world.

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When you say, “I am committed to this conversation making a difference for you,” this stance alters your way of being, as well as your speaking, listening, and actions.

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Korkosz then speaks to Clarke’s listening without divulging any confidentialities. He provides insight into the fact that Bennett has acknowledged his leadership issues and is working hard to address them, even though the listening in the organization hasn’t caught up to it yet. Clarke then agrees to stand in the possibility that Bennett could be an extraordinary leader. Furthermore, he agrees to coach him on calling himself forth as such.

### STEP 3: PUT THE 7 CAP COACHING CONVERSATION SYSTEM TO USE

Make use of the 7 Cap Coaching System as you begin to have coaching conversations. Think about the purpose, goals, and intentions of the conversation and then about what kind of conversation cap you will need to put on to have that conversation. For example, if your purpose is to enroll people in the opportunity in coaching for them, as well as to think about their goals and aspirations, the first cap you might put on is a declaring new possibilities cap.

The next step is to use self-awareness as a resource to determine whether the kind of coaching cap you have on is working. If it is not, it is time to change caps. For example, if the coachee wants to express what is really on his or her mind and you are wearing the teaching and advising cap, the conversation will start to break down, and the person will start tuning you out.

It is also important to recognize when one cap has served its purpose and it is time to take it off and put on another. For example, it might be better to put on the cap for drawing others out and listen rather than continue to wear the teaching and advising cap after you have made your point. Then, after listening for a while and hearing people express a point of view that is laden with limiting beliefs and assumptions, you might choose to take off the drawing others out cap and put on the reframing

cap. Following that you might choose to put on the forwarding action cap.

#### STEP 4: MAKE SURE PEOPLE LEAVE THE CONVERSATION READY TO ACT

One way to judge the effectiveness of a coaching conversation is by how people feel when you are finished. People who are masterfully coached come away from the conversation in three ways:

1. They feel inspired by a new-found freedom to be who they need to be to get results as well as feel okay about the way they are.
2. They feel empowered by new possibilities that they did not see before that will make them more effective.
3. They see a clear path forward and are ready to jump into action.

Let's use a simile to describe this. People are like goldfish in the water. Just as the water is invisible to goldfish, people's environments are largely invisible to them. They don't see that given the corporate climate they are in, they have given up and adapted to the absurd. They don't see that their goals have slipped off the radar screen given the incredible number of demands coming at them. And they don't see that, given their master programs and winning strategies, they will never accomplish the results they want, no matter how hard or intelligently they try. They see what the others do to cause relationship issues, not what they do themselves. They feel frustrated, confused, and powerless. All of this constitutes the "water" in which they live.

The purpose of a coaching conversation is to extract people from the water by allowing them to become aware of it so that they can declare new possibilities for themselves and their company that take them beyond resignation, break the grip of winning strategies that are leaving them stuck or ineffective, or help them to address any issues in relationships that are causing them to suffer. Thus, when people go back to the water, they are clearer, freer, and more powerful, and their actions are more in line with where they want to go.

Coaches take people out of the water by providing a perspective that allows them to see things differently and act differently, “Let’s step back and put your relationship with the CEO [boss] in perspective. Is it that he doesn’t listen, or is it that you come to the table with a decision that he won’t listen to?”

They also pull people out of the water by making provocative statements or asking questions such as, “I like your business plan, but what beliefs or assumptions do you need to question that you have taken for granted?” They do it by returning people to themselves, their promises, and action when they are upset. They do all of this with wisdom, compassion, and humor for the lessons each of us needs to learn.

Finally, Masterful Coaches are good at getting feedback for themselves. They ask several times during the conversation, “Is this conversation working for you?” If the answer is “Yes!” and people are feeling fired up, have greater insight into their situations, and are ready to act, great! If the answer is no, the conversation isn’t working and people feel confused, stuck, or ineffective, don’t take it personally. Instead Masterful Coaches reflect on what’s missing that, if provided, will make a difference, and then they take a different tack. They repeat this cycle until they see the light go on in people’s eyes.

## WHEN YOU STAND COMMITTED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Taking a stand to make a difference with the person you are coaching shows up in a variety of actions. Here are a few.

- You prepare for the conversation. What can you say that will be life altering?
- You listen from the point of view that others have sincere and good intentions, even though their perceptions may be distorted or their thinking off base.
- You focus on your shared commitment to an extraordinary future rather than become a prisoner of pettiness: “We are all here for . . .”
- You listen for people’s authentic concerns and validate those concerns rather than sitting in judgment on them.

- If people see things arbitrarily or hold things in an unproductive or unempowering way, you don't make them wrong; you provide them with the background they are missing.
- You discipline yourself to put ideas (make distinctions) into people's thinking that will shift paradigms.
- You translate those ideas into actions that can be taken in the next thirty days.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# MASTERFUL COACHING IS TRANSFORMATIONAL Triple Loop Learning

*Nothing happens without personal transformation.*

In my view, most leaders need a Masterful Coach not so much to run the business and achieve a predictable future but to realize an Impossible Future. At the same time, on a more day-in, day-out, down-to-earth level, leadership coaching expands people's ability to accomplish what they need to. In either case, coaching gives the leader more power.

According to Tracey Goss, "Power is the velocity at which you take a possibility and turn it into a reality."<sup>1</sup> Yet the power to expand the magnitude of the goals you set and increase the velocity by which you achieve them can happen only if you are willing to participate in your own personal process of transformation. Masterful Coaches need to keep three guidelines in mind in doing transformational learning:

1. Because Masterful Coaching is transformational in nature rather than merely transactional information, people need to make a free and informed choice to participate.
2. People need to see that who they are as leaders is not solid but is fluid and pliant, in a process of becoming.
3. People transform who they are by surfacing, testing, and revising beliefs and assumptions that have been successful for them. This is always an emotional process.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING: LIFE AS A NARRATIVE

One way of looking at life is as a story that we tell about who we are. This story is our existential autobiography. As Jerome Bruner has pointed out, “The self is not a thing, but a point of view that unifies the flow of experience into a coherent narrative, a narrative striving to connect with other narratives and become richer.”<sup>2</sup> The way we tell our story about who we are or what happens to us in our lives and work is based not just on facts and events but on how we interpret things.

For example, you may think of yourself as a great leader because you are in an executive position in an organization, but in fact you are not leading at all and are just pursuing predictable goals and plans. Or you may believe that you are not a leader because of something that happened in the past that led you to conclude that you don’t have leadership qualities. Or you may think that when your boss calls you and asks you about what you are doing in your area, his intention is not to act as a thinking partner as he says but to meddle in your business.

It is important to understand that you and I do not just have a story; we *are* our stories. Our stories shape, limit, and define our way of being, the way we think, and the way we interact with others. It is by using our story about ourselves as a reference point that we create a logic for how to act in any given situation. Masterful Coaching involves helping people surface, question, and redefine their stories when the current story is called into question or breaks down.

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Some people enter our lives and leave almost instantly. Others enter and remain, forging such an impression on our hearts and minds we are changed forever.

Anonymous

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## THE BEST GIFT IS A GOOD EXAMPLE

George Jones is a manager of a Global 1000 telecommunications company in the Asia Pacific region. He has viewed himself as one

of the best and the brightest—a good leader and solid manager, yet not a real change agent who could carve out a new reality. He set a goal for himself and his group of \$500 million in earnings. He did the Masterful Coaching workshop and realized that while he thought this was a stretch goal that represented an Impossible Future he and others could be really excited about, it was actually a predictable goal that could be achieved by following his and his company's winning strategies.

He had not engaged a Masterful Coach before because of the story he told about himself: he could succeed based on his natural talent and ability without coaching and because he saw his goals as a stretch but within his grasp: "I don't need a coach to accomplish this. I can achieve it by being the leader I already know how to be and by doing what I and my organization already know how to do." He had also resisted coaching because he had viewed it as remedial. He had received feedback that although he was very bright, he tended to dominate the conversation with his views and opinions and needed to improve his listening skills.

Yet all of that had suddenly changed. According to Jones, "It came through to me so clearly that it would be much more exciting to me and to my organization to declare an Impossible Future that would require that I not only stretch my definition of my business but also stretch my definition of myself as a leader."

Jones was struck by a definition I had shared about the difference between a goal and a possibility: possibilities are a future to stand in and bring into reality by acting in the present. Leaders declare possibilities without evidence or proof that they can be realized and without knowing the path to the result—for example, "Man on the moon in ten years." By contrast, goals are something that we try to get to from the present based on past successes. Today's companies must meet their growth earnings goals or be penalized by Wall Street. As a result, many businesses automatically set predictable goals that will almost happen automatically.

Jones created a powerful partnership with a Masterful Coach from our Swiss office, Hans Peter Hartmann, and set an unreasonable expectation for himself and his business of a 15 percent increase in earnings per year. He declared this as a possibility that he would stand inside and take committed action to realize.

At the same time, he set some more conventional goals that he would report on to corporate and Wall Street analysts.

Jones knew that to reach this goal, he and his group would have to step into new territory. They would have to become game changers, to reshape the future of their industry, and game growers, to expand by creating new customers and increased share of wallet by acquiring more business from existing customers. This was distinctly different from doing what he and his company had always done as game players: being the fast, efficient, low-cost producer. As soon as Jones took a stand for the possibility, Hartmann began to work with him on the question, "Who do you need to be as a leader to realize this?"

According to Hartmann, "I knew that for Jones to deliver on this goal, he was going to have to be a different kind of leader. He would have to create a context wherein he invested in relationships with direct reports and others he wanted enrolled in the vision of the future, as well as develop the listening skills that would create a context where people came up with new good ideas and put them to use." Jones made a sincere attempt to alter his behavior in both of these areas and made some dramatic improvements in a short period of time.

Another area where Jones went to work was on his conservative nature, which sometimes got in the way of showing the excitement that he actually felt. So the coach also worked with him on expressing himself completely. Hartmann said, "It was essential that he break through his automatic self and learn to be the kind of leader who could excite and energize his organization. Showing excitement became a coaching project that we took on for the year. Some things take quite a bit of time to alter or change."

Next, Hartmann worked with Jones to shift his mental model of being a manager, from being a rule follower to being a rule breaker and rule maker who blazes a new trail not just for his company but his industry. The company produced a commodity, "telephone terminals," and the winning strategy was to "run the factories full" and "run them cheap."

To create the kind of gains in growth and earnings Jones was seeking would require creating an elastic business model grounded in core competencies but not constrained by them. Jones and his group ran a CollabLab to explore creating a more

innovative environment and specifically to explore ideas for business growth by expanding and creating new customers, as well as gaining greater share of wallet with existing customers.

The coaching continued over the course of the year with a view toward challenging and supporting Jones on staying centered on the Impossible Future he had taken a stand for, as well as who he had to be in the matter. This consisted of making sure the Impossible Future stayed a priority and that he did not get swept along by all the demands that come with running a big company.

Hartmann focused on supporting Jones as a leader to continue to inspire his organization to make the Impossible Future a reality. He focused on forwarding powerful action against the plan, honestly acknowledging breakdowns, and providing what was missing that would make a difference. To make a long story short, it was highly successful.<sup>3</sup>

## TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING

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Context is the background against which you are standing that shapes your perception of reality, identity, thinking, and behavior.

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Embedded in the story of George Jones are many of the guiding ideas, tools, and methods that we at Masterful Coaching use to coach leaders and managers at all levels. In the rest of this chapter, I take the implicit knowledge in this story and make it explicit so that you begin to apply it to your coaching relationships. I explore more deeply one of the most important guiding ideas behind this work, triple loop learning, a model that allows you to support people in reinventing who they are as leaders in the process of producing extraordinary results.

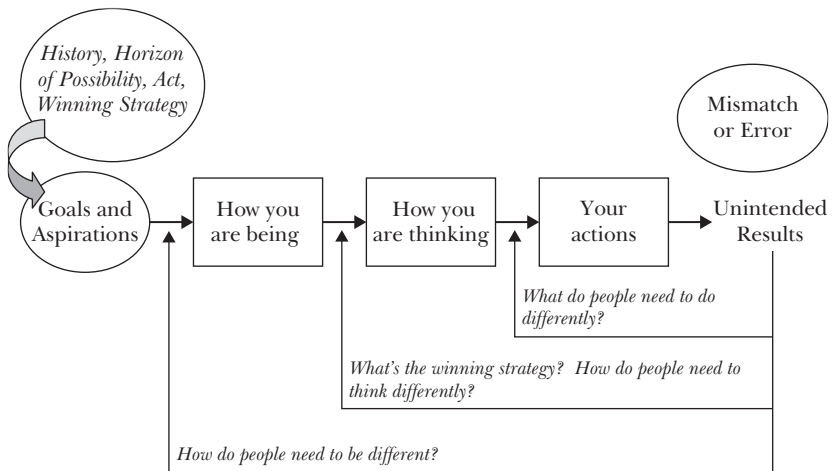
Triple loop learning lies at the core of Masterful Coaching method. It allows coaches to bring about breakthroughs for people and breakthroughs in results. It allows fundamental shifts in thinking and attitude. It provides the guiding ideas or mental models that shape how a coach thinks and interacts with people. People don't talk about guiding ideas in a coaching session; they speak from them.

The Masterful Coaching method starts with declaring powerful new possibilities for the business and then translating these into goals that take people beyond what they already think and know based on industry orthodoxies or experience. It also involves declaring new possibilities for the leaders in the light of what they want to achieve that take them beyond their old management styles. As leaders move from strategic planning to action, they inevitably produce unintended results in their relationships with others or their business dealings. Learning means correcting mistakes and producing intended results for the first time.

A Masterful Coach gets to the source of the breakdown and makes use of one or more of three learning loops: triple loop—altering people’s way of being; double loop—altering people’s mental models and thereby their thinking and actions; and single loop—tips and techniques. The coach provides people with meaningful feedback that allows them to see where their view of things or their actions lead to unintended results. Figure 7.1 is an illustration of the triple loop learning model.

Masterful Coaches are highly skilled not only in providing feedback that removes the blinders from people’s eyes, but also in

FIGURE 7.1. TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING



making new distinctions that open up new possibilities for them or allow them to think differently and act differently—for example, “Do you want to compete with your direct reports or be a contribution?” “Do you think you will reach your goals by being a rule follower, or do you need to become a rule breaker and maker?” These can be life altering.

## MASTERING THE DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS OF TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING

Certain definitions and distinctions are essential for getting started with Masterful Coaching and triple loop learning. The following distinctions make it possible for the coach and coachee to get on the same wavelength and have a more powerful conversation: (1) context, (2) history, (3) horizon of possibility, (4) winning strategy, (5) automatic self, (6) master programs, and (7) transformation. We explain the last first.

### TRANSFORMATION

Coaching people to create an Impossible Future requires personal and organizational transformation. Transformation requires intervening in who people are being (triple loop), which in turn influences their thinking (double loop) and behavior (single loop). The way you are being at any given time—an inspired leader or dull manager, excellent or mediocre, an activist or analyst—determines what is possible and not possible. When a transformation occurs, something powerful happens in who people are being that is beyond a mere change in behavior. The person who is there now was not there before; the person who was there before does not exist.

### CONTEXT

Context is the background against which people are standing that determines their perceptions of reality. This background determines what they see as possible and achievable, and from it they draw their identity and formulate their thinking and attitudes. Masterful Coaching is about intervening in the context so

as to produce a profound alteration. For example, a coach might be thinking: “What is the context that determines what people see as possible and achievable? How do I intervene in that context so that they can create an Impossible Future? What is the context from which they draw their identity that results in their ‘playing small’? How do I intervene in the context so that they show up bigger?”

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The context that you come into the world from is made up of your history, horizon of possibility, winning strategy, and automatic self.

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## HISTORY

Our context (background) consists of our history, winning strategies, and automatic self. We are all born into a certain historical community, grow up in a certain family, work in a certain industry, and experience successes and significant failures. All of this leads both individuals and companies to ways of being, attitudes, and behavior. Leaders typically get stuck in the one right way to manage based on their history—command and control, *laissez faire*, or something else. Companies get stuck being a “one-strategy wonder”: Xerox with photocopies, AT&T with long distance, Intel with chips. Masterful Coaching is about helping people distinguish themselves from their history so that they can stand free in the present and create a powerful new future.

## HORIZON OF POSSIBILITY

Our horizon of possibility is set by our personal and cultural history. What we see as possible and achievable is not just influenced by facts and events, but by the interpretations we make. For example, in coaching government leaders in Quebec, I observed that people did not aspire to the top leadership positions. When I asked why, they told me something to this effect: “My grandmother told me I was born to eat a small loaf of bread.” Companies have the same tendency to narrow their horizons of possibility as a result of limiting attitudes and beliefs they have



inherited. Masterful Coaching is about expanding people's horizons of possibility. This involves making powerful declarations and dismantling limiting beliefs and assumptions.

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Masterful Coaching is about intervening in people's context so as to produce a profound alteration in who they are being.

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## WINNING STRATEGY

Our winning strategy is the source of our success—and also the source of our limitation. Our winning strategy can also be a compensation for what we see as not possible—for example, “I’m afraid to lead, but I will follow.” “I don’t know how to grow the business, but I can cut costs.” Masterful Coaching often involves getting people to declare an Impossible Future that takes them beyond their winning strategy. This is different from trying to improve a winning strategy. To appreciate the distinction, ask yourself: What have I done so far to be successful? Where does that limit me in taking my success to the next level? Am I willing to put aside the success I have become in order to create an Impossible Future?

## AUTOMATIC SELF

Our automatic self includes automatic responses to dealing with risk, disagreement, conflict, and automatic ways of thinking based on industry orthodoxies. Our automatic self manifests as a result of our history, making sure that everything that we do is consistent with our personal (or company) winning strategy. It is important to understand that we don’t design our history or winning strategy, it designs us and the result is an “automatic self.”

## MASTER PROGRAMS

As human beings we inherit certain master paradigms that tend to shape, limit, and define our thinking and behavior. Table 7.1 illustrates our master paradigms, based on the work of Chris

TABLE 7.1. MASTER PARADIGMS AND THE ACTION STRATEGIES THEY PRODUCE

Master Paradigm	Action Strategy
Stay in unilateral control.	Pursue your own agenda.
Maximize winning, and avoid losing.	Unilaterally advocate your position; suppress inquiry but don't upset others.
Seek acknowledgment; avoid disapproval.	Look good, and try to please others.
Be invulnerable.	Act as if you know it all; don't show any emotions.
Avoid the appearance of incompetence.	Cover up mistakes, and cover up the cover-up.

Argyris.<sup>4</sup> Each one of these paradigms produces a variety of action strategies. These could also be looked at as generic winning strategies.

## THE PROCESS OF PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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Declaring an Impossible Future is the most powerful way to start the process of personal and organizational transformation.

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The fact is that our automatic self, horizon of possibility, winning strategies, and master programs are like a box, and once inside the box, leaders and managers, like all other human beings, cannot think or act outside it. It is not possible inside that box to create an extraordinary leader or an extraordinary future for the company. The only way to break out of the box is transformation, or triple loop learning.

Transformation is intervening in the context that shapes who we are being and therefore our thinking and our actions. In my experience, there are only two ways to alter the context, and both are valid. One way is to make a powerful declaration of possibility

that moves you beyond your history, horizon of possibility, and then standing inside that possibility. When people see a new possibility for themselves, they more readily embrace change.

The other way to intervene in the context has to do with shifting the perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions that constitute the context—that is, reframing mind-set. This is usually an emotional process. People don't just have their perspective; they become their perspective. They don't just have their beliefs; they become their beliefs. They don't just have their winning strategy; they become their winning strategy. Intervening in these, even with the best intentions, is likely to produce defensive reactions.

Although both approaches are valid, in my view the more powerful way to intervene in the context is to inspire and empower people to declare an Impossible Future that they cannot achieve through their automatic self, old winning strategies, and master programs. This work not only involves declaring an Impossible Future as possible, but encouraging people to take a stand for the possibility and transform it into a reality.

Coaching people to transform into extraordinary leaders usually means asking them to stop identifying with their automatic selves and start identifying with their Impossible Futures. A question we often ask leaders is: Who are you when you are taking a stand? An inspiring leader, an empowering manager, a coach and teacher? This usually involves people declaring new possibilities for themselves and again taking a stand for those possibilities.

Coaches then work with people through a process of strategic planning in action to actualize their Impossible Future. As they make committed attempts to perform, they produce unintended results. Coaching then provides ongoing feedback based on the triple loop learning. Use the following guide for deciding which loop to use:

- *Triple loop learning.* Is the issue a matter of intervening in the context that shapes who someone is being that manifests of the person's automatic self—for example, dominating versus empowering, suppressive versus innovative? Make new distinctions that shape the person's way of being.
- *Double loop learning.* Is it a matter of intervening in the mental models that caused someone to be blindsided by company or

- industry orthodoxies? Reframe mental models, and provide more empowering and accurate interpretations.
- *Single loop learning.* Is it a matter of people knowing who they need to be in the matter and what is required is an act of courage—getting them to jump into action and do something different? Give a tip or technique that guides people's actions.

## RUT STORIES AND RIVER STORIES

When engaging in a coaching conversation, rather than just talking about triple loop learning, a Masterful Coach asks, “What’s really on your mind?” They then listen to the stories that people tell, knowing that, as Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Everything you say reveals you.” The stories that people tell about everyday events often reveal the context that defines who they are, as well as their horizons of possibilities and the winning strategies that are the source of their success and limitations. They also reveal their arbitrary interpretations of the reasons for unintended results.

A Masterful Coach pays close attention to these stories and views them as an opportunity to foster personal transformation. There are basically two kinds of stories that people tell: rut stories and river stories.<sup>5</sup> Rut stories keep people stuck in old ways of being and old thinking patterns, which results in inaction. River stories are stories of personal growth and transformation, of growth and learning. Imagine that you are your story (or stories). To a great extent, what determines whether your story becomes, in Shakespearean terms, a comedy or a tragedy is whether you become enlightened and transform your rut story into a river story.

Let’s say you have a story about yourself that says you are a good leader who is authoritative and smart and likes winning. You pride yourself on taking the contrarian view and being right a lot of the time on people and business issues. You have also collected much of the evidence over the years that your approach works: “Just look at my results.” However, you also have received some coaching and 360-degree feedback from people at work that says you are a stiff, humorless dictator who always has to be right and make others wrong. Your son, by the way, also tells you you’re a jerk for always trying to ruin his life.

If you could look at that coaching feedback as an opportunity or gift rather than be crushed by it or become defensive (“They just don’t understand”), that might be the first step in transforming yourself. You might say to yourself, “There is something about my leadership style and my whole story about myself that is getting in the way.” You start to alter your point of view, seeing leadership in some way other than being an authority, being smart, always being right, and so forth.

Then one day you wake up and realize that you no longer have to draw your identity (self-worth) from being on top, from being right, or from needing to win. You can be influenced. You no longer need to have the answers; you can say, “I don’t know.” You can become an inquirer. You then begin to develop a new narrative about yourself that is about being a learning leader, about being an inquirer, about drawing others out, and with that, you transform your rut story into a river story.

## RECOGNIZING RIVER AND RUT STORIES

You’ll recognize rut stories when people talk about what’s happened and make interpretations about things that represent an inaccurate, disempowering, and distorted view of reality. Rut stories often come from giving up and saying, “Why bother?” in order to compensate for what’s not possible, from blaming others instead of owning up to unintended results and learning the lessons we need to learn, and from taking things personally that aren’t personal. These stories often have a self-reinforcing pattern.

River stories are generally those of personal growth, self-renewal, and transformation. When people tell a river story, they speak with clarity, authenticity, and vulnerability regarding their growth edges, learning places, and breakdown spots. These stories often reflect that people have had a revelation of their own foolishness, which has allowed them to learn the lessons they need to learn in order to take the next step in their lives.

How do you transform rut stories into river stories? How do you speak and listen in a way that penetrates collective illusions? How do you break the grip of defensive reasoning when its self-sealing logic is leading to disaster?

## TRANSFORMING RUT STORIES INTO RIVER STORIES

One thing is clear: transforming rut stories into river stories is not like a chat around the office watercooler. It involves engaging people in coaching conversations where you are dealing with them on at least three levels of human experience:

1. Strengthening people's intention to create something in their lives that is not just an extension of the same old story.
2. Surfacing, testing, and revising limiting beliefs and assumptions that lead to unintended results.
3. Using emotional energy as a source of transformation and letting go of physical blocks.

The following methodology will help you transform rut stories into river stories:

1. Recognize the rut story and interrupt it.
2. Break the grip of the story by making people aware of its self-sabotaging nature and unintended consequences.
3. Transform rut stories into river stories by enabling people to revise their interpretations and see things in a new way.

Let's look at these in detail.

### *Recognize the Rut Story and Interrupt It*

There are many times when people go on and on with a rut story. I've found that the key is to pay attention not just to the plot line of the story, but to the structure of interpretation that people bring to it. As soon as I see that people are looking at things crookedly in their minds or speaking in a way that reflects limiting beliefs and assumptions, I see a red flag that they are telling a classic rut story—for example:

- *The "I need other people's approval" story.* People may not broadcast this story aloud, but they often tell it to themselves, constructing a series of pretenses and defenses in order to look good or gain others' approval. The consequence is that the intention to look good often displaces the intention to be good (to perform and to create workable relationships).

- *The “I’m afraid to lose what I have” story.* This story is often told by people who put off their visions, dreams, and aspirations in order to seek or keep their security. They often complain that their lives are not satisfying, but at the same time, they create lots of reasons to justify standing still. Their intention to look good replaces the intention to be good. They play it safe and take no risks, and they cover up incompetencies, so no learning occurs: “We know what we’re talking about; we have twenty years’ experience.” Generally they are nonplayers in the workplace, even though they may look as if they are playing. The consequence is that they often spend their whole lives getting ready for everything to fall into place, only to discover that, like a seed, they have gone past their expiration date.

- *The “artful victim” story.* This story, probably the most common, involves people skillfully using defensive reasoning to create an open-and-shut case as to how other people or circumstances are doing them in. The consequence is that they often get stuck in this story, forfeiting their power to other people or the situation, and then they are unable to create what they want.

- *The “tranquilizing” story.* Whenever people do not achieve a result, are incompetent at a task, or do something that gets them into trouble, they usually come up with a set of reasons and excuses. The purpose of the explanation is to tranquilize them and make them feel better about themselves. The consequence is that they do not highlight their own incompetence (which leads to limited learning), errors are covered up (which leads to more errors), and reality is distorted (which leads to individual and collective illusions).

- *The “why bother?” story.* People who tell this story say that they cannot create what they want because their possibilities and choices are limited: “I don’t have the time.” “I don’t have the authority.” “It’s not in the budget.” Often this story is a cover-up for wanting to stay in their comfort zones or for not wanting to take responsibility. This often betrays an underlying attitude of resignation. The consequence is that people get stuck in this story and lose the ability to see the possibilities and options that are available to them.

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When I hear people telling their particular version of a classic rut story, I intervene aggressively: “Wait a minute. I think you are telling a rut story here and, in the process, digging a hole for yourself.” Intervening not only means interrupting the story in a literal sense but, more profoundly, speaking and listening with a strong intention to penetrate the illusions under which people may be operating. This involves breaking the grip of their existing structure of interpretation—frames, beliefs, and assumptions.

*Coach:* I am getting the impression that you are telling an approval-seeking story. It seems that you want to accomplish certain things that are very important to you, but it appears that you are designing your actions to be reasonable and nice and perhaps to make yourself look good rather than to create what you want.

*Coachee:* Well, maybe you have a point, but I need approval to get my goals accomplished.

*Coach:* Let’s dig into this. You say you don’t have enough time to create the strategic plan for your division because you are always in meetings. This could be an example of what I call a tranquilizing story—something you give as an explanation.

*Coachee:* Well, it’s true.

*Coach:* Do you really need to go to all those meetings? Let me make a provocation: Is the problem not that you can’t say no but that you use the meeting story to justify not having enough time to create your plan?

Your job as a coach is to point out the difference between a rut story and a river story, as well as teach people to inquire into and reflect on stories in a manner similar to that illustrated above. After a time, they intuitively understand whether their opinions, assumptions, and beliefs are going to help them produce the results they want: “Wait a minute. I hear myself telling a rut story. I’d like to step back and look at that for a moment.”

### *Break the Grip of the Rut Story*

Often when people are telling a classic rut story, they are not even aware of it. In effect, they are frozen into their story. At



this stage, you need to say something that creates a meltdown or unfreezes the story and creates readiness to change. By identifying and naming the story, you help people become aware of it. By making them more conscious of the unintended consequences of their stories, you set the stage for them to extricate themselves from them.

*Coach:* I hear you telling a “why bother?” and an approval-seeking story about your efforts to introduce a business concept incubator to spur innovation and growth and Six Sigma to improve processes. You say you are not sure the CEO supports it, and without that, you won’t get the resources or budget. You sound resigned and ready to give up.

*Coachee:* I could do something, but first I need to have the CEO’s approval as well as resources and support. I do feel like giving up.

*Coach:* Do you realize that if you give up, you automatically forfeit your ability to create the future that you want in the company or the difference you want to make?

*Coachee:* Yes, that is true, but I am blocked in.

*Coach:* There may be other ways to look at it. Instead of focusing on what you can’t do, why not determine if there is anything that you can do to enroll the CEO or to start small with the resources you have right now—something you can create now that might bring a success.

### *Create a River Story by Seeing Things in a New Way*

Coaching people to revise their stories often involves helping them see that they are the authors of those stories. They may not have freely chosen what happened to them in life or work, but they constructed what the story meant to them and thereby bear the consequences of it in their lives. It’s important to emphasize that people get stuck in their stories when they interpret who they are or what has happened to them and see things in an inflexible or rigid way. This leads to their being ineffective in their relationships or their actions, and to a great deal of suffering.

By coaching people to see who they are and their experience of what happened to them as partially a matter of their own interpretation, they free themselves from their stories. This involves using a technique called *fluid framing*. You might say, “How you see yourself or what happened is one possible interpretation. What are other possible interpretations that would be more inspiring, more empowering, and accurate?” This allows people to revise their stories and develop a new point of view about themselves, others, or the circumstances.

Another way to assist in revising people’s stories or being more flexible with their interpretations is to help them take a new look at their observations of what actually happened and the assessments they made about it. Observations are based on directly observable data; assessments are the judgments (inferences) made about those observations. Normally people do not distinguish between the two and get into trouble when they take assessments as fact, when in reality they are only interpretations. Assessments are often heavily influenced by the tendency to take things personally, blame others, or explain things away. Asking people to distinguish between their observations and assessments can help to put a crack in this structure of interpretation.

*Coach:* On what observations are you basing your assessment that the vice president doesn’t like you and doesn’t encourage others in his group to cooperate with you?

*Coachee:* I know they are under the gun to complete their own projects, but many of the people in the group come late to meetings.

*Coach:* Do you see that you went from that observation to the assessment that it was personal and to the conclusion that they didn’t want to cooperate? [Or “Is what you are saying about the other group a fact or an interpretation?”]

Once people begin to step back a bit from their stories, the next step is to generate alternative interpretations. Because your job as the coach is not to provide people with a better belief system than the one they already have, it is important that you encourage them to come up with a different interpretation.

However, it would be foolish to forsake your wisdom, intuition, and insight. If you want to offer advice, it is better to say something like, “I have a belief that . . .” or “One possibility might be that . . . What do you think?” rather than, “I think this is how you ought to look at it.”

*Coach:* How else could you look at this?

*Coachee:* I see that I have to include other people’s points of view a lot more in my reality.

*Coach:* What else?

*Coachee:* I also see that I tend to point a finger when something goes wrong rather than hold up a mirror.

Sometimes these everyday incidents can reveal the part of a person’s existential narrative that is most limiting but causes him or her to suffer. This work often opens up big cracks in the person’s master program and gives you the opportunity to do the inner healing work that needs to take place for personal transformation. As people expose their thinking, it’s important to give them permission to express their emotions.

Emotions can be a powerful source of transformational energy, and expressing them can help people to let go of a point of view that keeps them stuck, helping them to see something they didn’t see before. There are appropriate ways to elicit emotions, even though the cultural environment in business doesn’t always encourage it. The coach might say, “I welcome your emotions about this.” Another simple approach is to say, “Tell me about your emotions as you speak.” When people get things off their chests, they often drop defensive reasoning and the wall of arguments they have constructed to protect themselves. This can suddenly create an opening for moments of true insight.

*Coachee:* I have been holding a lot of this inside. Now that I’ve got this fear and anger off my chest, I am starting to see that I go to the table already assuming he won’t listen and thus I don’t put my ideas across. It’s important to acknowledge people for their vision, courage, and commitment as they open up new possibilities for themselves.

*Coach:* Your commitment to your extraordinary future and to personal and organizational transformation is really inspiring to me, and I am sure it will pay off in terms of results.

## THE MYTH OF ICARUS

In Greek mythology, Icarus, seduced by his own power after putting on wax wings, flies too close to the sun. As he does, his artificial wings melt, and he falls into the sea and dies.

There is a good lesson here for all of us that gets to the heart of this book. Like Icarus, many of us have great strengths that seduce us. These strengths often lead to our early successes, but eventually we become so enamored of them or overly reliant on them that we cover up our weaknesses or fail to recognize the need to change something that seems natural and right. To expose our weaknesses or change something with which we have been successful and then do something new is difficult, especially if we are full of pride. It requires a commitment not only to change but also to learning.

Coaching is having both the toughness and the compassion to skillfully intervene in people's learning processes. A successful coaching relationship is always a story of transformation, not just of higher levels of performance. It's a story that takes people beyond their immediate passion and pride and helps them to come to grips with the fact that to reach what is really possible and achievable for them, they must be willing to fundamentally question who they are, what they do, and why they do it.

To challenge and support someone else in his or her story of transformation goes beyond doing something for others and extends to ourselves. To have someone invite us to participate in his or her transformational learning process is not just an opportunity but also a gift—a gift to the human spirit. It's the opportunity to look up from what we are trying to accomplish and the mundane aspects of daily affairs and to see the hidden meaning behind all that we do. It's learning not only to recognize who other people are and what they are magnificently capable of but also to know ourselves at the same moment.



## PART THREE

# COACHING EXECUTIVES TO REALIZE AN IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE AND WIN IN THEIR BUSINESS

### *Twelve Months, Twelve Coaching Conversations*

*The Masterful Coaching 12-step model is a  
million dollar model.*

EDWARD CHOI, LEADER OF THE  
LARGEST COACHING COMPANY IN THE  
WORLD

The chapters in Part Three show you how to design a year-long coaching engagement with an executive and provide a road map to success. Why a year? Because it takes about a year to make something happen in a big organization (anything over five people), as well as to have a real impact on someone's leadership effectiveness.

The Masterful Coaching method set out here is based on three core components, and the Masterful Coach must learn to fully integrate them all. Figure P3.1 illustrates the method.

The first component in the method is the 5 Phases of Break-through. These phases give a map for how a twelve-month

FIGURE P3.1. THE 12 CATALYTIC COACHING CONVERSATIONS



coaching process unfolds and how to alter your coaching approach in each phase:

1. Formulation—Engage and inquire around goals and plans.
2. Concentration—Get people to jump into action.
3. Momentum—Don't let up! Understand the power of small wins.
4. Breakthrough—Scale up successes into a larger breakthrough.
5. Sustainability—Institutionalize success.

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Coaching happens in conversations in which we cocreate an Impossible Future with the coachee.

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The second component consists of the 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations. You will learn about each of the conversations in the next twelve chapters, which are designed to be a powerful and concise step-by-step model. The 12 conversations are:

1. Create an extraordinary coaching relationship.
2. Declare an Impossible Future that represents winning the great game of business.
3. 360-degree leadership feedback—an alteration, not just an assessment.
4. Mount a successful change insurgency; master the political chessboard.
5. Create a Source Document—a winning game plan.
6. Build a team of talented A players and engage them.
7. Executive time management—You = Your Calendar.
8. Execute—catalytic breakthrough projects.
9. Be a coach and mentor—the leader as coach.
10. Make great decisions and judgment calls.
11. Focus on the scoreboard; connect coaching to return on investment.
12. Executive life coaching—achieve nonfinancial wealth.

These conversations are the basis for your monthly conversations with the executive you are coaching. For example, in month 1, you will talk about creating an extraordinary versus ordinary coaching relationship. In month 2, you will talk about creating an Impossible Future. In month 3, you will talk about who the leader needs to be to reach the Impossible Future using the Masterful Coaching “360” process.

The first five conversations, which correspond to the formulation phase of breakthrough and the beginnings of momentum, usually go in a certain order, but after that, you are free to improvise. You are also encouraged to not only iterate on the same conversation the next month, but to loop back and forth from, let’s say, declaring an Impossible Future to executive time management.

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Wizardry is the power or effect that appears magical by its capacity to transform.

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It is not by accident that wizardry, the final component, is in the center of the wheel. Masterful Coaching on one level is about inspiring the leader to declare an Impossible Future, create a concrete plan, and carry it out right up to the last steps in a linear progression. Yet on a more profound level, Masterful Coaching is about engaging people in a transformational conversation that gives people the freedom to be who they need to be to reach their goal distinct from the person they have wound up being.

The wizardry section takes into account that transformation is a matter of distinguishing yourself from your history. One simple coaching tool is the leadership declaration: “I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being a real leader, for example]; I am committed to giving up . . . [just being a deal maker, for example].”

Each chapter in Part Three also provides some simple and powerful teachable points of view designed to help people transform who they are being and what they are doing in light of their objectives—for example, “Aspire to be great, not just good,” or, “The leadership style that got you to the predictable future won’t get you to the Impossible Future.”

As I tell people in the Masterful Coaching Certification Program, the process of becoming a Masterful Coach and using the Masterful Coaching method is 20 percent classroom and 80 percent practice. This book is your classroom for now. The method will come alive for you when you apply it to coaching real clients on real goals in real time and in real situations.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# COACHING CONVERSATION 1: CREATE AN EXTRAORDINARY COACHING RELATIONSHIP

### Thinking and Working Together

*Regarding your commitment to an Impossible  
Future and extraordinary coaching  
relationship, you are either in or you are out.  
There's no such thing as life in between.*

**Phase of breakthrough:** Building an extraordinary coaching relationship is in the formulation phase of breakthrough and takes place in month 1 of the coaching engagement.

Congratulations! You are about to have your first coaching conversation with your potentially new coachee. This conversation may start on the telephone and continue face-to-face. To create an Impossible Future, you need an extraordinary coaching relationship. In the normal course of events, the relationship between the CEO and her direct reports, a manager and his team members, a coach and a coachee are often rather ordinary. Such relationships produce routine, predictable results and rarely require people to leave their comfort zones. Yet when it comes to producing a creative, entrepreneurial, extraordinary result, you

need a relationship that is above and beyond the ordinary. This requires setting high goals and stretching people's minds and skills to reach them.

The ability of the coach to engage the person in an extraordinary coaching relationship requires an alteration of who people are being, not just figuring out things to do and pitfalls to avoid. The executives or rising stars you are about to engage in a coaching conversation with are most likely people who draw their identity from being fiercely independent, highly accomplished, and the smartest person in the room. Yet they may sense on a vague, intuitive level that they have unrealized potential and have hit a wall that they will not be able to break through without help.

The conversation you are going to engage the person in is one where you invite him to stand inside the possibility of drawing his identity from pursuing his highest personal and organizational ambitions by surrendering the big ego and allowing himself to be coached for a while. It is important to also understand that while he may be legitimately interested in exploring the possibility of coaching, the whole idea may seem a bit foreign to him at first. Seen in this light, the commitment to create an extraordinary coaching relationship is a transformational act, not just a matter of working out the details.

## THE SPEED OF TRUST

One thing that can make a difference in building an extraordinary relationship is the speed of trust, the title of a book by Stephen Covey.<sup>1</sup> Often it takes a while for the coaching relationship to get off the ground. This is not only because executives are used to being on top and having all the answers, but they are usually not used to being coached and may be struggling in the role of coachee.

The other reason that the coaching relationship takes off slowly is that trust has not yet been established. As one executive told me, "I don't care if the president of the United States has recommended you. I don't know you yet." The speed of trust is the one thing that changes everything. It affects both the willingness of the top executive to shift from knowing to learning, as well as getting the unknowns about you out of the way.

You increase the speed of trust by declaration:

1. Tell the coachee that once you take on an assignment, you look at it as a sacred commitment and you will stand totally committed to his success.
2. Declare that from the first moment you meet, everything that the coachee tells you will be strictly confidential.
3. Tell him you will go all out to help him deliver on whatever he has to deliver on.

The speed of trust depends not just on making these declarations but on being true to them. In every coaching relationship there is a moment when trust is established and the relationship becomes a joy to both the coach and the coachee rather than an issue. If you make all of these declarations and still feel that trust is an issue, it is time to discuss the hippopotamus under the table to see if you can clear a path forward.

## A COACHING TALE

Richard W. Severance is the vice president of ConocoPhillips Downstream North America, a refining and marketing group, the third largest oil company in the world. “Severance,” as he calls himself, is a charismatic, good-humored, sharp-as-a-tack Texan who looks a mite like a younger Tommy Lee Jones and sounds a mite like him too. When Severance struts into the Marlin Room, the *sancta sanctorum* named after the company’s founder, you have no doubt who the leader of this business is. He fills the entire space with his presence, which is true grit. I met Severance the morning after one of his monthly management meetings, or “staffing missions” as he calls them.

When Severance got wind of the power in creating an Impossible Future in the Masterful Coaching course, he talked to me about being his executive coach, and I told him, “Thanks, but it’s got to be a big enough game. I’m not interested in doing remedial leadership.” I carefully select every coaching client I work with on the basis of who the person is and what he or she is up to. He said, “No, don’t you worry about that. You and I are going to create an Impossible Future to be proud of.”

We agreed on a focus for our Masterful Coaching partnership of creating an Impossible Future for ConocoPhillips Downstream. It involved both dramatically affecting business performance through growth and innovation and transforming the prevailing climate of resignation in the company brought on by endless cost cutting into a climate of opportunity.

I saw Severance as a bag full of possibilities—the kind of person who not only has vision but can rally large numbers of people and make something happen. Severance is generous and warmhearted, but his view of a shared vision and an aligned organization could be likened to sitting around the campfire and pondering what trail to follow the next day with a group of trusted hands, and then the next morning proclaiming, “Well, we’re burning daylight. Let’s go.”

Severance had some warts as a leader—he was dismissive of those who are “all hat and no cattle” or people who “talk big but don’t do big,” and was bull-headed at times—but these seemed small compared to the possibilities. Over the coming year, the role of master and student changed many times. I was to learn as much from him as he from me. In setting the bar very high for himself, he also set the bar high for me as a coach to take my craft to the next level. An e-mail he sent me said, “Hargrove, I intend to set the bar around here so high you have to go back to school.”

I told him that for all this to work, we had to create an extraordinary coaching relationship and each of us had to be 100 percent accountable for it. I explained to Richard that it is one thing to declare an Impossible Future and game plan; it is another to keep people focused on it. The job of the coach is to stand in the Impossible Future people want to create and get them to take action to make it a reality. This requires the coach to have access, which can sometimes break down when schedules get busy. A good sign is when the coachee calls the coach on his or her own. Bad signs are when the coach winds up chasing the coachee.

“Richard,” I said, “I know you are a busy guy, so I am going to ask you to pay me in advance so that the coaching never gets pushed to the back burner. If you miss even one meeting or phone call, I am going to take the money and go home.” Severance laughed, and we were off to a good start. We then set up a schedule for an executive coaching relationship for the next

year: we met once a month and talked on the phone every Monday morning at 7:00 A.M.<sup>2</sup>

I thought this was an intense schedule, but I now believe that it is not intense enough, and it might relegate the coach to playing a consultant role. It is my belief now that if you are coaching an individual to realize an Impossible Future, the coach has to be on the playing field more often than not. While meeting once a month and talking once a week on the phone is a good rule of thumb, I suggest that you look at the Impossible Future you are going to create together and design a coaching schedule that is appropriate.

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An impossible dream is a complete moment in the lives of clients—an experience in which they are tempted to commit substantial time and resources to creating an extraordinary coaching relationship.

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## OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the conversation is to build a coaching relationship where the coachee has more at stake than he can afford to lose. This is done in the context of people being aware of their personal and organization aspirations. The conversation sets the stage for an extraordinary coaching relationship by both coach and coachee gaining clarity of the goals and expectations of the coaching relationship and committing to being 100 percent accountable for it.

## WALKTHROUGH

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Create chemistry by being in relationship to people rather than trying to get related.

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### ESTABLISH CHEMISTRY AND RAPPORT; FIND OUT THE PERSON'S DREAMS, ASPIRATIONS, AND FEARS

This conversation is about how to achieve an extraordinary coaching relationship needed to realize an Impossible Future and win in business. The first step is to meet with the coachee

and seek to establish chemistry and rapport. Keep in mind that in contrast to giving a speech to a big audience, which requires being charismatic and dynamic, coaching requires being charming and disarming, down-to-earth, matter-of-fact.

Instead of bragging about how great you are or your coaching process is, get to know your client's dreams, aspirations, and fears. The best way to establish any relationship is to be interested versus be interesting. A good principle to follow is having an 80/20 question-to-talk ratio. A good way to get people in sync with you fast is to inquire:

- Please tell me about your background.
- What is your current job?
- What are your immediate goals and problems?

These simple and obvious questions engage the coachee. You are looking to create an opportunity for this person to share what is really in his heart or on his mind. You want to create an opening for him to let down his guard and be vulnerable with you. Until the coachee shows vulnerability, the coaching relationship tends to get stuck in limbo.

## HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND WHAT COACHING IS AND IS NOT

The next step is to discuss the five myths of coaching, which helps people understand what coaching is and isn't. For example, I explained to Severance that I liked working with leaders on an Impossible Future rather than in a remedial way. Severance, like most other business leaders, bought right into this because it's positive. However, he said, "By the end of this, I may need some remediation." The five myths of coaching are:

- Coaching is for winners, not losers.
- Coaching is about Impossible Futures, not leadership lobotomies.
- Coaching takes place in the domain of accomplishment, not therapy.

- Coaching happens around a real-time goal, with real problems, and in real situations.
- Coaching requires a robust relationship—like a coach, not a consultant.

### ASK: WHAT IS THE OPPORTUNITY IN COACHING FOR YOU?

Now that you have used the five myths to define what coaching is and isn't, you are ready to take a major step toward enrolling people in a coaching relationship. You do this by asking: "What do you see as the opportunity in coaching for you?" Instead of telling them what you think they could get out of it, or what I refer to as "spilling your candy on the desk," let them build their own vision. It is important to take some time here and be patient, as people may have never considered a question like this before.

If people struggle with that question, I unabashedly tell them some success stories that they will be able to identify with. I also use some Masterful Coaching statistics in a way that speaks to their personal and organizational ambitions—for example: 70 percent of executives who engage with Masterful Coaching report that they get one or more promotions within one to three years; 85 percent report a dramatic difference in their leadership effectiveness, validated by repeat 360-degree feedback; and 80 percent report a dramatic difference in business performance—often to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Some success stories might help people see the opportunity in coaching for them:

- The CEO of Mars wanted to have his business grow from \$3 billion to \$5 billion. The coach said, "You can do it alone, but it might take you decades. What would it be worth to you if I can get you there in three years?"
- I asked an executive vice president which one of his official goals he was passionate about. He told me, "To tell you the truth, I am not passionate about any of these goals. I want to become CEO and transform this company." He then remarked, "I think I'd be better with you than without you."



- One vice president who was barely on the radar screen at corporate told me, “I want to be the best leader in the company.” He got three promotions in the next four years as a result of coaching.

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For the coaching relationship to be extraordinary, each person has to buy in 100 percent.

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## CLARIFY GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

There is a good chance at this point that the executive gives you a, “Yes, I want you to be my coach,” kind of response. The next step is to clarify goals and expectations. For example, I explained to Richard Severance that in order to achieve an Impossible Future, we couldn’t settle for an ordinary coaching relationship. We had to achieve an extraordinary coaching relationship. I also explained that to create an extraordinary coaching relationship, we each had to bring 100 percent to it. My 100 percent meant I was going to be totally committed to him as the person I was coaching over the next year. I was going to stand in his greatness even when he showed up like a black cloud at meetings, which he often did. Furthermore, I said we were going to cocreate an Impossible Future together, one that we both felt we had a lot at stake in. Finally, I explained I would be tough on occasions in holding him to account, but also compassionate.

Richard’s 100 percent encompassed coming up with an Impossible Future he could be passionate about and had a lot at stake in. It also meant putting aside his big ego and allowing himself to be coached for a while, as well as expecting to be held to account on keeping promises around his leadership and business challenges. It meant giving sufficient attention to his Impossible Future and making sure he created enough time on his calendar to create it.

Make sure that people are ready for this kind of coaching relationship and in accord with the goals and expectations.

## GET COACHING ON THE CALENDAR

Coaching can easily drift to the back burner given the demands on an executive’s time. You need to create a structure that

ensures that it will happen. My usual practice in executive coaching is to meet once a month and talk weekly on the telephone. I have found it is better to set up a specific and regular time—for example, talking at 7:00 A.M. every Monday morning.

### FROM TIME TO TIME, ASK, “HOW ARE WE DOING?”

Many people in executive roles have not had the experience of being coached since high school or college in sports or performing arts programs. As a result, coaching can take some getting used to. If at times over the course of the coaching relationship, you feel the person is not into it, take a time-out and say what I did to another CEO, Fredrico Bussandri, from Bell Telephone: “Fredrico, we said we were going to create an extraordinary coaching relationship. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being high, how would you rate it?” Fredrico, unruffled, said he would give it an eight. I replied that I would only give it a three. He looked shocked.

I explained that the reason I would only give it a three was that I always had to call him: “Fredrico, you never call me, and this is a red flag for problems in a coaching relationship.” I also explained that we had created an Impossible Future and winning game plan, but that he seemed to be paying only lip-service to it while continuing with his old winning business strategy. This conversation was somewhat awkward, but was effective in getting the relationship on track. To be a Masterful Coach, you have to be obsessed in some way.

### THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Stand totally committed to the person you are coaching.
- Invite people to discover their own greatness and play a bigger game.
- Reset people’s mind-set. Make sure they understand the Masterful Coaching Paradigm.
- Coaching is winning people over; be interested versus interesting.
- Make sure people have something personally at stake in the goal.
- Imagine an extraordinary relationship; define your 100 percent and your coachee’s 100 percent.

- Get coaching on the calendar with a monthly meeting and a regular coaching call.
- If the chemistry isn't good, suggest another coach.
- If the person says, "My boss told me I have to have a coach," probe the reasons.
- If the person doesn't have big goals and enough at stake, back off.
- Don't let coaching be ad hoc; schedule it.
- Don't pretend things are better than they really are; discuss the undiscussable.

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

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You and I have power to transform our lives  
under all circumstances and conditions.

Werner Erhard, Transformational thought leader

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Just asking people to consider the possibility of shifting from drawing their identity from being a lone wolf who is smart and accomplished to drawing their identity from pursuing an Impossible Future by being joined in partnership with a Masterful Coach is an act of wizardry in itself. Yet what do you do when, despite your sincere and honest intentions, the coaching relationship hasn't caught fire, even after several months?

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Our way of being is usually the source of  
intended results.

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When a transformation occurs, the person who is there now wasn't there before, and the person who was there before doesn't exist any more. At Masterful Coaching we have pulled together a number of guiding ideas, tools, and methods to facilitate this kind of learning. I find it useful to start with the triple loop learning diagram displayed in Figure 7.1. The goal in this case is for a person to stand 100 percent committed to creating an extraordinary coaching relationship, which is reflected in every fiber of his

being. The unintended result is that the person is either subtly avoiding coaching or overtly avoiding it like the plague.

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We have the power to choose who we are being  
and produce intended results.

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It is easy to question people's commitment to the coaching relationship, but more often than not, this will backfire. It works much better to acknowledge their commitment to cocreating an Impossible Future together. Then point out the issues at hand—for example, “You and I have committed to an Impossible Future, and some important things have been accomplished. But I have been noticing lately that you tend to spend most of our coaching sessions talking about what you have done well and little time looking at what you need to achieve or have not been able to achieve, what might be missing, and seeing how you might learn something new in order to achieve it. I don't think that you are taking advantage of the coaching. Also, it is becoming harder to get on your schedule or get a phone call returned.” I might add that when these kinds of issues emerge, it is usually a result of some way of being that the person is unaware of—for example, “I have observed you with others and in our own relationship that you often come across as if you have your act together and have all of the answers. Yet I believe that to get the most out of the coaching and create your Impossible Future, you need to drop that and show up more as an inquirer and a learner.” To get people to reflect, continue by asking: “Are you aware of that? How do you see it?”

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You coach people to transform themselves  
through the power of language.

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## TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

The job of a coach is to inspire, empower and enable people to call forth who they need to be in the matter and to free them up from the person they have wound up being. Wizardry is about

interacting with people in such a way that produces a real transformation, not merely a change in form. Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are unknown to the person at this moment.

After people become aware of limiting ways of being, I often use the leadership declaration to catalyze an alteration. The declaration is based on three premises: you and I have the power to transform our lives; we have the power to choose who we need to be in the matter rather than be limited by the person we have wound up being; and we can transform ourselves through the power of language.

### **Leadership Declaration: The Power of Language**

1. What is possible is what I say is possible.
2. I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being a great leader joined at the hip with a Masterful Coach].
3. I am committed to giving up . . . [being a lone ranger, the smartest person in the room].
4. Opportunities to be in action in the next week . . . [meet with my coach and have a second conversation on creating an extraordinary coaching relationship].

### **DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR**

Let's say your coachee makes a leadership declaration like the one above, but based on his story, he is now talking about the fact that he has little time for his Impossible Future and coaching, and you can tell the relationship is still not really on track. As a Masterful Coach, I have had to listen to people tell me their stories, usually that of being a competent victim—"my boss this," "my direct reports that," or "I am a victim of my calendar." In most cases, I pay less attention to their story than to the underlying mental models. My goal is to help people shift not just how they are being, but the mental models that will lead directly to a transformation of their behavior. To do this, I ask questions designed to penetrate their illusions: What do I know about this? What do you need to learn?

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEWS

Another method we use in transformational learning is a teachable point of view (TPOV) that often comes in the form of a distinction—for example:

- Looking good is different from being good.
- What got you here won't get you there.
- You have either the reasons or the results.
- You can show up in the world as making a lot of complaints, or you can show up as making a request.

These TPOVs spoken at a teachable moment have the power to alter people's way of being, thinking, and actions. Perhaps some of the following TPOVs will help in coaching people through these conversations:

- A coach stands in your greatness even when you fall from it.
- To realize an Impossible Future, you need total commitment to creating an extraordinary coaching relationship. You're in or you're out. There's no in between.
- For the relationship to be extraordinary, you have to give your 100 percent, and I have to give my 100 percent.
- The relationship doesn't take off until both people show vulnerability.
- Masterful Coaching involves making unreasonable promises and requests and honest feedback.

## CHAPTER NINE

# COACHING CONVERSATION 2: DECLARE AN IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE

## One That Represents Winning at the Great Game of Business

*You create an Impossible Future by working  
backward from your imagination rather  
than working forward from your past.*

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation takes place in the formulation phase of breakthrough, typically in month 2 of the coaching engagement.

Coaching is about cocreating an Impossible Future with the coachee that, if achieved, would be life altering. This conversation is about engaging the coachee in a conversation about what an Impossible Future or big game would be for her. It is not taking the convenient approach and defining the Impossible Future in terms of “being the biggest and the best” in her industry. How dull and boring! It is getting the leader to dream an impossible dream based on the difference that she and her organization would passionately like to make, a difference that will have earth-shaking consequences in her domain.

The starting point for an Impossible Future is not managerial projection—taking what you did last year and then setting

a stretch goal or target that represents doing a whole lot better. The starting point for an Impossible Future is what you can dare to dream or imagine, even though you don't have all the resources in place and have not figured out the answers right up to the last steps. An Impossible Future does not come about as a result of enthusiastic dreamers, chasing pie-in-the-sky with a lot of talk and not much action. It comes about as a result of passionately committed leaders who take a stand for an impossible dream and then set in motion the forces of talented people and radical innovation to make it happen.

Here are some of my favorite examples of an Impossible Future:

- JFK: Man on the moon in ten years.
- Nelson Mandela: End apartheid in our lifetime.
- Ronald Reagan: Tear down that wall, Mr. Gorbachev.
- Minister Mentor Lee of Singapore: From third world to first in two decades.
- Steve Jobs: Change the world with the personal computer.
- Fred Smith of FedEx: Twenty-four-hour delivery, absolutely positively overnight.
- Herb Kelleher of Southwest Air: Air travel that allows grandparents to attend Little League baseball games and graduations in far-off parts of the country.

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We are living in an era where the gap between  
what you can imagine and what you can  
accomplish has never been smaller.

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Today's CEOs of most big companies grew up in the age of progress, not the age of turbulence or disruptive innovation. Thus, we are much more likely to see the CEO as a steward who takes a product or service that was an exciting new possibility back in the 1930s (cheap cars, home phone service, vacuum-packed coffee) and merely dusts it off and polishes it up. Yet does anyone really want a Chevy anymore? Does it matter to you if you have AT&T phone service for your home? Do you really want to drink a weak cup of Folgers coffee? What happened?

Today, the cumulative effect of nonlinear change is interrupting nonlinear history and in the process threatening to



displace many incumbents. The tiny innovator with a nonlinear vision of an Impossible Future, an “empire of a dozen minds,” and the ability to come up with whole new business concepts—game-changing solutions (experiences) that amaze, surprise, and delight customers—often have a big advantage over the huge incumbent with a linear stretch goal who is unable to think beyond products, getting those productivities up, and increasing market share by a tenth of a percentage point. The innovators are creating a unique offering that blurs the line of brand, products, and experiences and often has a life-altering impact.

The results of this can be startling. The fifty-something tax accountant who used to put on a suit and drive a Mercury Marquis to work today dons black leather and drives his Harley Davidson pretending he is James Dean. Instead of everyone drinking Folgers on their way to and from home and office, they have discovered Starbucks, where they can find a refuge and an assortment of delicious coffee drinks. Instead of every good American having AT&T long distance service, everyone has access to SKYPE and, as they use it, they are transformed into global citizens.

Having said all that, it’s still hard for me to imagine talking to a client of a typical big company about declaring an Impossible Future that involves using their company’s resources to change the world without getting into a very pedestrian conversation to the effect of: “Why should I set an Impossible Future based on my imagination, when all I have to do is make some occasional incremental improvement in order to make my predictable goals this year [or what my boss will or will not allow me to do, or whether or not it’s in the budget]?”

And for every Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, and Guy Laliberté of Cirque du Soleil, there are tens of thousands whose imaginations just fall into the well-worn ruts of history. Furthermore, the likelihood is that you are going to wind up coaching one of those people. They are less likely to have been thinking about a vision that requires radical change than thinking about a vision that is based on continuing along the same path they have been on for a decade or more. Usually it’s a path that includes things like the death spiral of cost-cutting, information technology improvements, reengineering, and Six Sigma.

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New hires at Google are asked, "If you had all of Google's resources at your disposal, what would you do to change the world?"

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Your job as a coach has got to be to inspire and empower people to think creatively, dream the impossible dream, become a revolutionary who brings about dramatic change, be both a dreamer and a doer. You are going to have to remind them that they possess within themselves the ability to create a possibility or opportunity that will work for them within their current company or perhaps outside it. You are going to have to show them through stories and examples that they can be a revolutionary, that they no longer have to be a vassal in the long march of history.

For those who say, "But I have three kids in college," you need to be able to respond effectively. It has been my experience that with many people, the limitation on their ability to create an Impossible Future is not the boss or the budget but something in their own minds. Most people in big companies act like the elephant who was tethered by a chain stake as a baby for three months and today doesn't even dream of moving because the chain is still there even though there is no stake.

You need to encourage these people by saying, "It's fun to do the impossible"; "Whatever you can imagine, you can accomplish"; "It's amazing what can happen if you focus less on the hierarchy and more on what you could accomplish with talent, the transformational power of new technology, and by relying on social networks." If people are worried about what the boss is going to say, encourage them to go to their boss and say that they will be working on an Impossible Future with their coach and want to know the boundary conditions: "What's inside the bounds?" and "What's outside the bounds?"

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What are you going to do with your one wild and precious life?

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If they are not a CEO or business unit leader or other leader with enterprise or business unit-wide power, they can still realize an Impossible Future and change the world in their own domain.

Perhaps they can focus on gaps in the marketplace and develop a new product prototype in a year that will delight customers and alter their perceptions of what's really possible. Or turn their information technology department that was once a cost center into a professional service firm for internal and external clients that becomes a profit center within six months. Or take a line of business sold only through third-party distributors and getting it up on the Web to sell directly to customers.

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We stand facing the fifth kind of society, the dream society.

—Rolf Jensen, *The Dream Society: How the Coming Shift from Information to Imagination Will Transform Your Business*

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## OBJECTIVES

The objective of this conversation is to engage people and inquire about what might be an Impossible Future that is based on their personal and organizational goals and aspirations. Your job as a coach is to support the coachee in imagining what might be possible, even to think in ways that she has not thought of before, to come up with an Impossible Future that she is so passionate about that she is willing to reinvent herself to achieve it.

## WALKTHROUGH

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CSX declared an Impossible Future of a super-fuel-efficient train engine that would run at juggernaut speed. CSX trains now go 450 miles on a single gallon of fuel and can travel up to 200 miles per hour.

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## FIND OUT PEOPLE'S PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Walking into an executive's office and asking people to take a stand for an Impossible Future based on their imagination, not

their past, and then asking them to jump on the reinvention roller-coaster sounds like a tall order. And it is. It is my observation, however, that tall orders are usually accomplished when the executive is passionately committed to the biggest personal and organizational ambitions, and one of my first lines of inquiry is to find out if she has them. If she does not have any personal ambitions, she won't have enough passion to learn the powerful lessons in personal and organizational change that will be required.

### ENROLL PEOPLE IN THE IDEA OF COMMITTING TO AN IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE

I tell the coachee in this conversation that while in the normal course of events, most people determine what is possible by looking at history, industry orthodoxy, and immediate circumstances, the Masterful Coaching approach is totally different. It starts with looking at your soul and gaps in marketplace at the same time and daring to conjure an impossible dream—What if? If only . . . Wow!!!—while the everyday approach to deciding what's possible and achievable starts with paying attention to what we can predict—for example: “We are going to grow this year by 10 percent, eke out a 6 percent profit, or, alternatively, we are going out of business.” The Masterful Coaching approach starts with paying attention to what we can declare: “We are going to be the future of this domain by imaginative solutions that represent rule-busting, profit-producing innovation.”

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IDEO, the Silicon Valley design firm, takes on impossible projects from clients: delivering water to developing countries, eliminating infant blindness.

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Today almost every country in the world is still grappling with many age-old problems: freedom from want, affordable health care, good schools, and good neighborhoods. In almost every industry or line of business, there are huge problems and huge opportunities to realize an Impossible Future, opportunities to make a difference in your domain. N. Murthy had a dream to start a company that would provide middle-class prosperity to the

educated people of Bangalore. He started with a loan from his wife of two hundred and fifty dollars and an innovative business concept for a software company that leveraged the power of the Internet and cheap telecommunications. A decade or so later, his company, Infosys, has changed the game of software development and employs over fifty-five thousand people.

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You coach people to achieve the impossible by ask them to focus on what they are willing to declare versus what they are willing to predict.

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I use the following three declarations and the power of language in creating the vision versus predicting it:

1. What is possible is what I say is possible based on my dream, not what history, others, or circumstances seem to allow.
2. Who I am is the stand that I take, not my age, job, résumé, or company.
3. The stand that I take is . . . [for example, I passionately want to come up with a game changer that makes an earth-shaking difference in this domain].

## ENGAGE PEOPLE IN AN INQUIRY OF THEIR IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE

Now I begin to engage with people about an Impossible Future that represents winning in their business. This usually means engaging and inquiring with them in a low-key, matter-of-fact way. It is important to get them to stand inside each one of the questions that follows rather than go through them like a checklist. If you are willing to engage and inquire, asking questions and patiently drawing people out, they will quite often go beyond answers and come to a moment of true insight. There is a way of engaging in questions, a way of inquiring, that has the power to alter people's way of being, shift mental models, and transform behavior; that way of inquiring is what we call Masterful Coaching:

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Whatever you can dream you can accomplish.

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1. What is the shifting business context that will usher your company from the age of progress to the age of breakthrough? (talent wars, China, India, Mexico, emerging new technologies?)
2. Given rising customer needs and expectations, what is an enormous strategic opportunity? (global warming, \$4 a gallon gas, high cost of health care?)
3. What is an Impossible Future for you and your company? What would you like to achieve, if only it were possible, with regard to the above?
4. Imagine what is missing that, if provided, would produce a breakthrough. Dream up whole new domains of possibility—as Apple, eBay, and MySpace did—not just another “me too” product.
5. What difference do you so passionately want to make that you would be willing to reinvent not just your organization but your entire self?

It's this last question that is quintessentially important to being able to accomplish wizardry, the magic of transformation. I know that if the person passionately and wholeheartedly commits to an Impossible Future that not only represents winning but is in the service of others, she will be willing to do the hard work of personal and organizational transformation. I know it will make my job as a coach much easier, for the moment she commits, it will create a pull from the inside out for her to tackle both leadership and business challenges, rather than me having to push that from the outside in.

### THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Define an Impossible Future based on imagination versus history.
- Define an Impossible Future that represents winning in business.
- Define an Impossible Future in the wholehearted service of others.
- Translate the Impossible Future into two to three business challenges first; then create a corresponding leadership challenge.

- Avoid Impossible Futures like “being the biggest and the best.”
- Avoid letting the Impossible Future be a mere stretch goal.
- Avoid letting the Impossible Future be a general improvement program like mergers, Six Sigma, or information technology programs.

Today almost everyone in the world would like to achieve something impossible and change their lives, but they somehow feel bound to other people’s wishes, circumstances, and events. This conversation is really an opportunity to inspire and empower not just your coachee, but everyone you run into. Preach and teach the message you have heard here, and you will discover that it’s a soul-satisfying experience.

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are currently unknown to the person.

### LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being a revolutionary who creates the Impossible Future by working backward from my vision].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [being a plain vanilla manager who works forward from the past].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [asking my boss what’s in bounds, out of bounds].

### DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- What I know about creating an Impossible Future is . . . What I need to learn is . . .
- The way I am looking at what’s possible and achievable is . . . The way I need to look at it differently is . . .
- What I currently think about my personal and organizational aspirations is . . . The way my thinking needs to change is . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- It is fun to do the impossible!
- Whatever you can imagine, you can accomplish.
- Work backward from your dreams, not forward from your past.
- Think beyond products to innovative business concepts.
- Use the transformational power of new technology wisely.
- Don't obsess about the boss. Use social networks to connect to resources.
- The gap between what you can dream and what you can achieve has never been smaller.



## CHAPTER TEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 3: 360-DEGREE LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK

## Go for an Alteration, Not Just an Assessment

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation takes place in the formulation phase of breakthrough, usually in months 2 and 3. Sometimes it goes into the fourth month.

Once I engage with someone in a coaching relationship, I stand in his greatness, even when he falls from it. I make sure people know that I accept them the way they are and are not. They don't have to "make it" with me; they already have. Having said that, I also tell people that (to paraphrase Einstein) the same level of leadership that got them to a predictable future won't take them to an Impossible Future, or, as I have already said several times, "What got you here as a leader won't get you there." In the typical situation, there is a leader who has risen to the top of the company by being a good politician but who hasn't really stood for anything except more of the same. The second case is the smart, accomplished leader who got to the top of the corporate ladder by climbing over a lot of bodies and now, in order to reach his vision, must learn to collaborate.

I always tell people that Masterful Coaching is not just about setting high goals and making sure you are on the right road; it

is transformational in nature, not merely transactional. You can get tips and techniques from a book, but when a transformation occurs, the person who is there now wasn't there before, and the person who was there before no longer exists. It sounds good, but if the coachee has been successful with their old winning strategies, it won't come easy.

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The Masterful Coaching approach to 360-degree feedback is transformational and controversial.

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The issue is how to transform leaders who are smart and self-confident, especially in a corporate environment where a person's shortcomings are largely made undiscussable. I mentioned before that in the earlier part of my career, I led personal transformation seminars with over thirty thousand people. The approach I took was to inspire people to declare new possibilities for themselves so they would not be limited by the person they wound up being. To get people to break the grip of old paradigms, I sometimes needed to be highly provocative.

Although this approach worked well in public seminars where people could be more or less anonymous, it backfired in private seminars within organizations (where colleagues were present) due to organization defensive routines, such as self-justification, face-saving moves, and making potentially embarrassing feedback needed for growth and learning undiscussable. The result was that I was forced to reduce the vision of what this work was about, which left a sour taste in my mouth. It wasn't until I began doing one-to-one executive coaching that I was able to return to doing transformational work.

First, the executive coaching relationship is one where people have the experience that you are standing in their greatness, even if they fall from it, which gives you the space to be either tough or compassionate. Second, the stage for doing transformational work is set in the first session with the question, "What is an Impossible Future you so passionately care about that you are willing to reinvent your entire self?" Third, in doing this work, I stumbled on a powerful and unique approach to doing 360-degree feedback that has a totally transformational impact.

The Masterful Coaching approach, which is sometimes considered controversial, is such a world apart from doing 360-degree feedback based on computer tick sheets and check boxes that it is almost unrecognizable. It consists of in-depth interviews, open attribution of the feedback, nonaggregated verbatim comments, and little reliance on a report of any kind. The approach is not only proven and powerful; it has been designed in just this way with the goal of transformational learning in mind, not just a few behavioral tweaks or attitude adjustments.

Let me answer a few questions that are probably on your mind:

- Yes, we get permission for open attribution of comments.
- No, in 99 percent of the cases, this does not inhibit people from speaking the truth.
- Verbatim comments are more powerful than aggregated ones.
- We attribute to people the capacity to receive potentially embarrassing feedback needed for growth and learning, yet always test that attribution.
- Engaging with the coachee in a dialogue one interview at a time makes written reports largely irrelevant.

There are a lot of 360-degree feedback assessment instruments out there, usually based on computer tick sheets. The goal of these is to produce an assessment with a focus on corporate leadership competencies like: “Is a great leader,” “Works well with others,” “Communicates effectively,” “Takes risks.” And then a box from 1 to 5 is checked. Yet all too often, this becomes a numbers game. I am not saying that people don’t derive some value from such psychological assessments, but just how valuable is it to know that you got a 4.1 on leadership, a 4.2 on teamwork, and a 3.9 on effective communication?

It is my belief that most of these assessments on the market today are not connected to anything like an Impossible Future or producing results that really matter to people, but are just another dangling leadership development initiative. They were ordered up by human resource managers who see development as a separate activity from performance and people in the field of psychology, which is typically defined as the study of behavior and mental processes. Study may lead to understanding, yet as a wise man once said, understanding is the booby prize.

The issue is that most people hawking 360s (and there are tons of them) don't distinguish between a mere assessment and an alteration, or even that such a thing is possible. An incremental behavior change or attitude adjustment is all that is expected. Leaders are marched off to the corporate university, given an assessment, and what they are left with is a report with all kinds of statistical analysis. What they don't have is an alteration.

Perhaps the reason that the Masterful Coaching approach is so different is that my field is Impossible Futures, winning, and human transformation, not psychological assessments or mere understanding. The goal is to leave people with the freedom to be who they need to be to realize their Impossible Future and to exert the power to break the grip and excel beyond old patterns that have become counterproductive.

We start with the Impossible Future or transformational goals, not a list of homogenized corporate leadership competencies. Second, we ask people: How do you need to transform as a leader to reach these goals? Do you think it will be an incremental change or radical change? Third, we take them through the Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback interviews with the goal of producing a real alteration.

This Masterful Coaching approach is probably the fastest way to become a real guru ever discovered. I've found that just playing back each interview, which usually contains some hot feedback, is utterly transformational. First, it unfreezes the executive's noble certainty about what a great leader he is. Second, it gives him the motivation to change by realizing that instead of reaching his goal, he will probably get hit by a bus. Third, it leaves him with the freedom to be who he needs to be. People are often left with an "aha" experience. I hear things like: "I need to be a leader, not just a deal maker. Gosh!" or "People see me as getting results, but not having a vision. I never knew that."

## A COACHING TALE

This is one of my favorite coaching stories. It involves Jim "Mad Dog" Nokes, executive vice president at ConocoPhillips. In our first coaching session, Jim showed me the goals he was about to hand to his boss, Archie Dunham, chairman of ConocoPhillips.

"Truth be told," I said to Jim, "these goals look pretty good, but which one of these are you passionate about?"

Jim started scratching his stomach, obviously uncomfortable, and suddenly got up and left the room. *This could be over*, I thought to myself. He came back a few minutes later and said, "Robert I am not passionate about any of these goals. My real goal is to become CEO and transform the company."

Delighted that he would have something really at stake in the coaching relationship, I said, "That's great, Jim," and asked about what the transformed company would look like: "To accomplish those goals do you think it's going to require a change in who you are as a leader?" Jim said, "Undoubtedly so." I then asked, "Jim, do you think it will take an incremental change or a radical change?" Jim replied, "It is probably going to take a radical change." I asked him why, as he seemed like a pretty good leader already. "Robert," he said, "that's because you haven't seen me be an asshole yet."

I told Jim that I would do some 360-degree feedback interviews and find out just what kind of leadership alteration would be required to reach his goals. It is always fun doing this kind of feedback, which involves meeting and greeting a lot of very interesting people and engaging them in a candid conversation. I interviewed a dozen or so people and got some great insights.

However, it was the interview with the chairman of Conoco-Phillips, Archie Dunham, that gave me an insight that I knew would not only hit Jim right between the eyes, but would also have the power to rip the blinders off. Archie told me, "Jim prides himself on getting results and he always delivers, even though he uses negative tactics like fear and intimidation. What he doesn't know is how to create a positive vision for the company going forward into the future. He also doesn't know how to create a real spirit of teamwork where he empowers people and extends trust to them. If he wants to become CEO, he needs to learn these things, or it won't happen until hell freezes over."

When I went back to have a meeting with Jim about the feedback, he greeted me at the door of his office and said, "Give me the bad news." I said, "Let's get right to the bottom line. Here is what Archie said about you, and it is about 100 percent confirmed by other people." Jim was taken aback. His leadership

winning strategy was all about getting results. It was what got him to be a top executive in the fourth-largest oil company in America. He now realized that unless he somehow transcended certain behavior, he would never become CEO.

He looked at me and said, “I need to make a radical change in my leadership style,” and he cemented the coaching relationship by saying, “I know I will be better with you than without you.” I told him, “Jim, I think I can offer you a powerful assist in taking your leadership to the next level.” Jim later confessed that at the time when I told him that, he thought I was not being straight. He later realized that from that conversation forward, the transformation was under way.<sup>1</sup>

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this conversation can be expressed in these three key principles of the Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback:

- Unfreeze: Give Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback with ruthless compassion to induce uncertainty in the coachee’s current leadership approach.
- Change: Motivate people to change by connecting unintended results to their way of being, thinking, or behavior and the consequence of that to achieving their Impossible Future.
- Refreeze: Teach new ways of being, and practice them.

## WALKTHROUGH

### SET UP THE 360-DEGREE INTERVIEWS

In the first meeting with the executive, get a list of ten people he would like you to interview to get feedback from on his leadership. These should be people who are close enough to the person to interact and see how they work. Include the person’s boss, peers, and direct reports. For each person, get from the executive the person’s name, relationship to him and position in the organization, phone number, and e-mail address.

The executive should send out an introductory e-mail asking these people if they would spend about forty-five to sixty minutes

answering questions about him to see how he is doing in terms of leadership. The coach or the executive's secretary should get the calls on the calendar.

You can do the interviews in person or on the phone. If you want to build up a relationship with the person you are interviewing, do the interview in person if feasible. Otherwise a telephone interview is okay. Meeting people is an opportunity to build the relationship to advocate for the coachee later or develop new clients in the organization.

## DO THE INTERVIEW

Introduce yourself, your company, and Masterful Coaching, and tell the person you have been brought in as coach to help [name the person] on his leadership and business challenges, and part of the process involves gathering meaningful 360-degree feedback. Ask if there are any questions.

Here are some other important pointers for the interview:

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- *Address the confidentiality question.* Tell people that the power of this process lies not in coming up with a summary report, but in the coach going over each interview with the executive in order to see the patterns in the feedback. Tell those you interview that their comments will be attributable to them unless they say otherwise, in which case they will be confidential. If they want to make a confidential comment, it can be put in a special section.

- *Provide the reasoning behind the open style of feedback.* One reason for this open style feedback is that we want the executive who receives the feedback to be able to explore it further in conversations with the individuals who give the feedback. Also in some cases, the feedback might make it clear that the two people involved need to "complete" their relationship, that is, resolve issues.

- *Get people's okay on attribution.* Make sure that you get an okay from interviewees with regard to the fact that they understand the feedback will be open and their comments will be attributable. In 95 percent of cases, this is not a problem.

- *Tell people to speak with good intent and be brutally candid.* Having said that, remind them that for feedback to be powerful, it must be

based on valid information. You would like them to speak with good intent, but with complete candor and 100 percent honesty. If people put powdered sugar over their comments to soften the blow, the feedback won't be based on valid information or won't have the necessary impact to cause the coachee to alter his thinking or attitudes.

## ASK THE QUESTIONS

Start by asking some warm-up questions: "What's your strongest impression of [name]?" or "How does [name] show up for you as a leader [contributor, commanding, and so on]?"

Then go on to the following eight questions, which we have found to be very powerful:

1. What has this person accomplished?
2. What do you see as this person's possibilities?
3. What are this person's strengths?
4. What is this person's winning strategy? (A winning strategy is a strength that becomes a limitation.)
5. What are this person's gaps? Biggest blind spot?
6. Does this person have any attitudes or behaviors that could be a derailer or cause him to wreck his career or plateau in it?
7. What new attitudes and behaviors would make this person more successful in his current job? That is, what are the most important development steps?
8. What do you see as this person's next most appropriate job?

Draw people out, and clarify their responses. You might be amazed at how many people have the same response to the questions. As you go through the list of questions, you may need to clarify them or ask follow-up questions to draw people out. For example, "If you were Jay's coach, what would you tell him about this?" Take notes as you listen if possible.

One of the most important principles in providing feedback is to make sure that it is based on valid information. To validate a strong comment from previous people interviewed, you may ask the person you are interviewing additional questions—for example, "I got some feedback that Jay needs to be more visionary [or a change agent, or any attribute]. Do you agree with this?"



## ANALYZE THE FEEDBACK

The executive coaching process is done in the context of the Impossible Future that the person wants to create. Can he achieve his personal and organizational aspirations with what he knows today and with who he is as a leader today? We have found that to reinvent your business, you need to reinvent yourself at the same time. To be sure, you will be able to do this only if you are willing to take on what looks impossible, and to do that means putting at risk many of the things that have defined and contributed to your success in the past.

- In the context of the future that this person wants to create, step back, look over the feedback, and notice the picture that is coming into view. What patterns or underlying issues are emerging? What is coming into focus? What will make it difficult for this person to achieve his Impossible Future? Where does he need a breakthrough in his way of being? The best way to review the feedback is to read each interview, and as you do, underline points that seem insightful and interesting. Reviewing the feedback in this way will help you gain your own insights into the person and prepare you for providing the feedback.

- Looking for patterns and themes is a very important aspect of analyzing the data. Some examples of patterns might be that the person is strong on hierarchy and command and control and less strong on working collaboratively. Another might be that someone is good at setting visions and goals and less skillful at driving these through to completion. Yet another might be that the person shows more ability in planning and designing projects and is less skillful in relationship areas: investing in relationships, listening, giving feedback, and coaching others.

- Clarify two or three areas that you believe the person needs to transform and think about what you can say to the person that will have an impact. What will help him to be a better leader as well as to create his Impossible Future? What is the thread that goes through what everyone is saying? What ways of being, thinking, and behaviors will help him to achieve his Impossible Future, and what will not? What is the thinking that might be causing him to act in a certain way? Usually there are two to three things that people need to change to achieve their organizational and personal aspirations.

## CONDUCT THE FEEDBACK COACHING SESSION

Stand in people's greatness, even when they fall from it. It is good to start the feedback with a sincere statement like this one: "You're great, and the feedback validates this. At the same time, there are two to three areas that if you paid attention to, you could conquer the world." If the person has really gotten himself in trouble, you may prefer a different approach: "Jay, I think you are great, and I need to give you some tough feedback in the context of your greatness. If you don't get this message that people want you to get and make some changes, you may be in danger of losing your job."

Being able to hear the feedback takes great courage, so it is important that you prepare the person. I tell coachees that feedback is just an opinion but they can still learn from it. I encourage them to just let the feedback wash over them rather than debate it or react to it.

Provide the feedback with a strong intention for personal transformation, yet in a matter-of-fact manner. I know going into the 360-degree feedback sessions that for leaders to reach their Impossible Future, they are going to need to transform something major about themselves. I get the message across by the common themes and key points I underline in the transcripts from the interviews. I also use humor to lower the intensity level. I might say, "Three people said this about you," then jokingly add, "I like to say that if two people call you a horse, saddle up!"

## PROVIDE THE FEEDBACK

Review the list of people who you did the interviews with, and emphasize that those who spoke with you really wanted to make a contribution to the person.

The recommended approach to providing the feedback starts by mentioning the two to three main points that you as a coach have gotten from gathering and analyzing the feedback. Recall what you jotted down earlier: "You need to be a leader versus deal maker," or "You need to delegate more and coach more," or "You need to extend people an A and extend trust to others." Give the person a few minutes to talk with you about these points.

Now start reading the 360-degree feedback from each person. Take the time to read aloud the points you have underlined. Point out similarities in the comments and differences.

It's important for people to come to a decision to change in the light of the feedback based on an internal commitment to do so rather than coercion. The internal commitment model is an excellent way to guide your thinking and actions in both preparing and delivering feedback: giving people valid information allows them to make a free and informed choice to change and generates an internal commitment to do so.

## CREATE A LEADERSHIP ROAD MAP

Let's look at this in the context of the three key Masterful Coaching principles stated earlier:

- *Unfreezing.* The power of multiple inoculations helps to unfreeze people's noble certainty in their current leadership approach. It usually takes me two or three sessions to cover all ten interviews, and I build that into the fee. If there is any tip I can offer, it is to cover no more than three or four interviews in a session if possible.
- *Changing.* Pick one or two areas for improvement. Most 360-degree assessments give a laundry list of leadership faults to change. The Masterful Coaching approach is more Zen-like. We just put the feedback out there, ask people to let it wash over them, and then rather than tell them what to do to take their leadership to the next level, let it occur to them. The key is for coachees to help people to make the connection between how they are showing up as a leader and the unintended results they are getting, especially in the context of the Impossible Future they are committed to.
- *Refreezing.* Somewhere in the 360 process, I ask people if they want to change and if they want my help in doing so. If this is the case, I generally work with them on identifying one or two areas to work on, such as standing for something or collaborating. Then we look for opportunities coming up in the near future on their calendar to take action around them.

## FOLLOW UP

The Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback process depends more on the conversation the coach has with the person than a written feedback report. However, as conversations disappear, a one- or two-page written summary on strengths and areas of improvement can be useful.

Tell people you will be following up regularly. It's been proven through research that 360-degree feedback is most powerful when there is follow-up. I usually follow up once a month on both the business and leadership road map. Look for opportunities to be in action that are coming up in the next month.

I recommend doing a second round of 360-degree interviews six months later (if you are still working with the client) with half as many people and half as many questions—for example: “What progress do you think Jay has made since we did the 360? What areas does he still need to work on?”

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

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Ask yourself: How am I going to make this a transformational conversation?

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The Masterful Coaching 360-degree feedback process is all about wizardry. Nevertheless, the process is simple, powerful, and effective. Just follow the steps I have given over two or three sessions, and you will see the coachee transform right before your eyes. The beauty of the process is that you don't have to fully understand how it works for it to work. It just does.

## TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are unknown to the person at this moment. The feedback will give you a lot of data about how people need to transform. I suggest closing out the feedback with

a leadership declaration. After people make the declaration, tell them you will follow up in your monthly coaching sessions. Be prepared to do that.

### LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- What is possible is what I say is possible.
- I am committed to the possibility of . . . [a new way of being, thinking, behaving].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [old ways of being, thinking, behavior].
- Opportunities to be in action with respect to my leadership declaration in the next thirty days are . . .

### DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

Pay attention to how people respond to the feedback, which will indicate if their mind-set is going to get them in trouble. Are they responding with the attitude of, “I consider this feedback a gift,” or are they responding defensively: “Those people don’t know what they are talking about”? If the latter is the case, the following questions for resetting mind-set may be useful.

- How I am seeing this feedback is . . . The way I need to see it differently is . . .
- What I am thinking about this feedback is . . . How I need to think differently is . . .
- What I know about being a good leader is . . . What I need to learn is . . .

### TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

Negative signs are people dismissing those who provided the feedback, saying things like: “I have heard all this before.” If that is the case, remind the person of his goal, as well as of the two to three main points that came out in the feedback, particularly things that could get in the way of reaching the goals. Then provide appropriate teachable points of view:

- Feedback is just an opinion (assessment), yet we can learn something from it.
- Instead of debating the feedback, let's look at what we can learn from it.
- It's natural to react when you get feedback. Feel free to express your emotions around me at any point.
- You can't argue with people's perceptions of how you show up.
- Look at what the patterns are with respect to how you show up: your thinking, attitudes, behavior.
- Try to understand your background, history, horizon of possibility, or winning strategy that drives a particular characteristic or attribute.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 4: MOUNT A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE INSURGENCY

## A Transformational Goal Requires Eating Radical Change for Breakfast

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation is part of the concentration phase of breakthrough and takes part in months 3 or 4, as appropriate to the situation of the person you are coaching.

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*Dream. Imagine. Explore. Rebel. Invent. Create.*

*Transform. Pioneer.* Do these words describe what you do?

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The coach in this conversation confronts people with the obvious: in order to realize an Impossible Future, they need to be able to bring about revolutionary change. This can raise a few issues for the person being coached. First of all, as people with revolutionary ideas get to the CEO level or business-unit level, they often become traditionalists and start guarding the status quo. As one manager told me, “I have been put in charge of a company with a good brand name, and I am afraid I am going to break it.”

Another issue is that people hesitate to make any big moves out of concern whether others at higher or lower levels will either get on board or get in their way. I've seen people spend months preparing a PowerPoint presentation to show the boss.

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Today, your job is change.

Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor under Bill Clinton

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The job of the coach is to stand in people's Impossible Future and hold forth. You've got to be able to bring about revolutionary change to reach your goal and win at the great game of business. You can't simply maintain the status quo because somebody from India or China or Brazil is always coming with a cheaper product, or there's a technology breakthrough that alters the customer's perception of what's possible, or the supply chain or distribution channel dramatically changes. The same argument applies at every level of the organization.

It used to be that most executives modeled themselves after the CEO as steward who polished Grandma's silver: maintaining the status quo through competitive benchmarking and incremental improvement. Executives today have to operate much more like the CEO as entrepreneur and recognize that their job is change. The reason is that in a disruptive age, built to last, competitive benchmarking, and continuous improvement are far less important than built to change, radical innovation, and discontinuous change.

A decade or so ago, CEOs like Jack Welch of General Electric, Larry Bossidy of Allied Signal, A. G. Lafley of Procter & Gamble, and William Weiss of Ameritech, sensing change on the horizon that could send their companies into a tailspin, decided to launch a management revolution. They showed that in any business, leading the revolution starts with an analysis of the new work context and the recognition that radical change is the organization's best response to its challenges. The next phase has to do with creating an Impossible Future and realizing it by working backward from their imaginations rather than forward from the past. The final phase has to do with making the change sustainable by altering the rewards and recognition system.



Today, if you are a big incumbent, given the pace at which the business environment is constantly transforming, you can't wait around for a CEO to declare an Impossible Future and give everyone permission to be a change agent. You can't afford to obsess too much about whether the boss will give you permission for your revolutionary new business or if there is a budget for it. You have to think in terms of rebelling and mounting a successful change insurgency. If coachees seem scared by this, ask them to take heart. This conversation will inspire and empower you to cut a path through the wilds of radical change.

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You don't have to be at the top to be a change insurgent; you can be a change insurgent from wherever you are.

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You have ample opportunity to mount a successful change insurgency that alters the course of history, whether you work in a big company that is an incumbent or small company that is an upstart. While leaders like Jack Welch, Larry Bossidy, and A. G. Lafley became legends by mounting change insurgencies with programs like GE's Work-Out and Six Sigma, the leaders of smaller companies like Apple, Google, and Whole Foods Markets have proven to be successful change insurgents by imagining an Impossible Future and leveraging talent and radical innovation based on nonlinear ideas.

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Some people dream about things the way they are and ask why. Leaders dream things that never were and ask why not.

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## THE WEAPONS OF CHANGE INSURGENTS

Change insurgents may be rebels who have a vision of helping their business grow by positively altering the status quo with a new good idea, but they are usually not belligerent and don't undermine social stability. Their weapons are designed to capture people's hearts and minds with a new idea, fresh approach, and innovative solution. Their weapons are not intended to blow something up or tear something down.

## WEAPON 1: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AT THE TOP TO MOUNT A CHANGE INSURGENCY

One of the most important lessons to pass on to the coachee is, “You can mount a successful change insurgency from wherever you are.” In the old economy, leadership was another way of saying “formal authority.” In the new economy, leadership comes not from a position on some ladder, but from the capacity to come up with innovative business concepts and execute. This means that change insurgents can and should be everywhere. As Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* has written, there should be a good to great flywheel in every department of the company.<sup>1</sup> For example, instead of finance, information technology, and supply chain being a cost center, you can transform them into professional service firms (PSF) that make a profit.

## WEAPON 2: WORK BACKWARD FROM A VISION VERSUS FORWARD FROM THE PAST

Tell the coachee that being a successful leader and change insurgent starts with the ability to recognize pressing human needs and take a stand that a difference can be made. Imagine an Impossible Future and then work backward from the vision rather than forward from the past to get there. Use your imagination, not just your domain expertise, to come up with the game-changing products, life-altering services, and breath-taking experiences that would make it possible to achieve it. For example, Fred Smith of FedEx did this when he said “24-Hour Delivery, Absolutely, Positively, Overnight.” First he had the dream; then he figured out how to do it.

## WEAPON 3: MASTER THE POLITICAL CHESSBOARD

Lincoln, FDR, and Ronald Reagan all knew that an Impossible Future requires not just a good game plan but also mastering the political chessboard. Ask the coachee to draw an organization chart and identify the opposers and supporters of the idea. This can be an eye-opening experience that leads to brainstorming ways to get supporters to help build a shared vision or remove obstacles to empower change. I have learned that rather than waste time trying to convince opposers, it is better to co-opt them

through a “coalition of the willing.” A small pilot, rapid prototype, or catalytic breakthrough project that results in a success is often the best way to win over the opposition.

#### WEAPON 4: GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO CUSTOMERS TO GAUGE THEIR EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS

The person you are coaching needs to get out from behind their desk and spend time getting close to customers in order to understand their rising expectations and unmet needs. Getting close to the customer also allows people to gauge the competition and detect the next competitor. They are likely to pick up hints from companies in other industries that are dealing with the same customers. The opportunity is to come away asking: What’s missing that, if provided, could surprise, amaze, and delight customers? This is what Larry Page and Sergey Brin did before they came up with the idea of the Google search engine, and it is what John Mackey did before he came up with the idea of Whole Foods Market.

#### WEAPON 5: USE THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Successful change insurgents are excellent at suggesting business concept innovations, as well as developing innovative new solutions that change the game forever. Yet in many cases, their success comes from recognizing the transformational power of new technologies to erase the status quo and bring about the introduction of a new order of things. CEOs like Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com, Jeff Taylor of Monster.com, and Meg Wheatley of eBay deserve a great deal of credit for coming up with innovative business concepts. Yet in each case, their ability to come up with an enterprise that mattered was largely a function of leveraging the transformational power of a new technology.

#### WEAPON 6: BEING A CHANGE INSURGENT IS A TEAM SPORT

Change insurgents are not the brilliant CEOs with a thousand helpers. When leaders set out to solve complex problems in politics

or business, the tendency is often to recruit the highest-ranking members of the organization. However, to bring together the most effective team, leaders should focus not on rank but on how well-connected participants are within their sectors and within other networks and industries. Identifying such people isn't easy. Finding them requires not compiling a list but making a map: a diagram of key influencers and the webs of relationships through which tasks are accomplished and resources flow. The most effective people aren't mavericks; they work the system, enlist others, sell their ideas upward and outward, and grab good ideas from others.

### WEAPON 7: CHANGE INSURGENTS RECOGNIZE THAT SMALL CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECTS CAN FERMENT BIG CHANGE

If the coachee says, "But the leaders of this company don't want change; they believe in the plan and incremental improvement at best. Furthermore, political action is impossible," you have two choices. The first choice is to tell her to reduce her vision; the second is to present an alternative possibility based on the idea that nothing succeeds like success—for example, "Why not get people who are willing to participate in a small pilot, build a rapid prototype, or engage in a catalytic breakthrough project?" I have found that quick wins spearhead a breakthrough and create the opening for a larger breakthrough.

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You can choose to be a leader and change insurgent or a foot soldier in the long march of history.

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### OBJECTIVE

The goal here is wizardry again. How does someone become a successful change insurgent? The message to the coachee is starting right now to stop seeing herself as the kind of leader who is a steward of the status quo and instead see herself as a revolutionary leader and change insurgent. The objective is also to reset mind-set. People need to stop thinking in terms that you need to

be president of a country or CEO of a giant corporation or business unit leader to be a successful change insurgent. You need to start thinking in terms that you can be a successful change insurgent from wherever you are.

The fact is that although top-down power is useful in bringing about authorized change, a better or different version of the status quo, and providing people with security through police, armies, or bureaucratic rigmarole, it is never enough to bring about the introduction of a new order of things. Remember FDR's attempts to stack the Supreme Court to clear the way for his economic bill of rights. Remember Hillary Clinton's failed attempt to bring about universal health care. Remember all the times you tried to railroad through your pet project.

Your job as a coach is to pull off a bit of wizardry where the coachee recognizes the futility of top-down power and embraces the power of powerlessness. At that moment, the individual starts to realize that it's possible to lead without authority and fully embraces being a change insurgent. She seeks the power of offering an inspiring vision and empowering values that mobilize support from below. She builds unlikely coalitions by focusing on interests and building common ground rather than focusing on stuck positions. She shows the power of small wins in building the capacity for larger change through hot projects, rapid prototypes, and pilots.

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Well-behaved women rarely make history.

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## WALKTHROUGH

### DISCUSS PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL CHANGE INSURGENTS

Becoming a successful change insurgent starts with standing in your Impossible Future or transformational goal and asking: Who do I need to be? What do I need to do to take this possibility and make it a reality? One way to engage people in this conversation is to tell stories about your favorite change insurgents from political history, business, the sciences and arts and their characteristics. These leaders exemplify the seven characteristics of change insurgents:

- Lord Nelson: Civilized in externals, savage at heart
- Lincoln: Charming, disarming, incredibly good natured, empathetic
- Lincoln: Setting revolutionary goals, pursuing them in evolutionary steps
- JFK: Creating an Impossible Future working backward from imagination
- FDR: Brilliant at building common ground between conflicting parties
- Ferdinand de Lesseps: Keeping going in the absence of results
- Herb Kelleher: Cracking jokes and having fun

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Nobody gives you power, you just take it.

Roseanne Barr

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## TEASE OUT DISTINCTIONS OF BEING A CHANGE INSURGENT

Creating an Impossible Future requires bringing about transformational change. To do that you have to stop seeing yourself as putting on a suit and going to work where you please the boss, obey corporate regulations, and preserve the status quo. You need to see yourself as a revolutionary standing at the barricades of the status quo, with the strong winds of change blowing at your back. It's critical to make the distinction with people that you don't need to be a CEO to lead a change insurgency; you can lead from wherever you are:

- You can be a change insurgent; it starts with empathizing with pressing human needs and wants.
- You become a change insurgent the moment you declare an Impossible Future; work backward from your vision versus forward from your past.
- You don't have to be at the top; you can be a change insurgent from wherever you are.
- You are close enough to the customers to know what they want and to detect the next competitor.
- You love business concept innovation and know the revolutionary power of new technology.

- Being a change insurgent is a team sport; you know how to connect, enlist others, and work the system.
- Change insurgents practice good self-management.

## SHARE STORIES ABOUT CHANGE INSURGENTS YOU ADMIRE

In my executive coaching, I rely on a whole list of stories about change insurgents to illustrate skills and attitudes required. I include some U.S. presidents (Washington, Lincoln, and FDR) and people from business (Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Herb Kelleher). I also have great stories about change insurgents in science like Sir Isaac Newton, Louis Pasteur, and Nicolo Tesla who realized an Impossible Future despite fierce opposition. So far we know that change insurgents have vision, master the political chessboard using the transformational power of technology, and so forth. Yet one of the most important aspects of being a successful change insurgent that we have not addressed is self-management.

There was a story on the radio that I love about Martin Luther King Jr. before his famous “I Have a Dream” speech that illustrates this. The night before his speech, King got a call from President Kennedy asking him not to make the speech. He decided he would make it anyway, but was feeling nothing but doom and gloom and that the race situation in America was his worst nightmare. On the day of the speech, he asked a gospel singer who traveled with him to sing a song that reflected his dark mood. After she sang, he began to speak about the “nightmare,” and he started losing the audience. The gospel singer who was sitting behind him passionately yelled out, “Martin, tell them about the dream. Tell them about the dream.” This was enough to get Martin Luther King to pull himself together, and the rest is history.

## COACH PEOPLE TO CREATE THEIR OWN STRATEGY FOR MOUNTING A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE INSURGENCY

You have coached people to know that in order to realize their Impossible Future, they are going to have to bring about

transformational change. You have taught them both the personal characteristics and distinctions of being a change insurgent. The next step is to help them create their own strategy for bringing about real change. Discuss each of the following questions with the coachee and create a to-do list, as well as a list of things to avoid.

- What are the pressing human needs and wants you want to affect? What are the rising expectations and needs of customers, employees, and society?
- Imagine an Impossible Future or transformational goal you want to achieve. Have you created a vision and game plan and put that into a Source Document that will allow you to communicate it to everyone?
- What are you doing to build a team of talented “deviants” capable of revolutionary change? Who are the top professionals in your domain or rising stars you would like to enroll?
- Working backward from vision, what’s missing that, if provided, would make a difference? A new idea, fresh approach, or radically innovative solution?
- What can you do to leverage the power of new technology? Think beyond products to business concept innovation. Have you gotten your entire business up on the Web?
- Master the political chessboard. Create an organization chart, and identify the opposers, supporters, and neutrals. What requests can you make to get supporters to spread the vision or empower change by removing obstacles? How can you win over or co-opt neutrals or opposers?
- How could you use the power of small wins to build the capacity for larger change? Create a coalition of the willing, and get them to participate in a small pilot, rapid prototype, and catalytic breakthrough project. Nothing succeeds like success.
- What opportunities do you have to connect and collaborate with other change insurgents? Stoke revolutionary fires in every department. Encourage catalytic breakthrough projects that take the organization to a different place. Connect the dots between projects.



## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are presently unknown to the person.

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Ask the coachee to make a leadership declaration with regard to being a change insurgent:

- What is possible is what I say is possible.
- I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being a successful change insurgent].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [being a foot soldier in the long march of history].
- Openings to be in action are . . .

### DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- What I know about being a change insurgent is . . . What I need to learn is . . .
- The way I see being a leader or change insurgent today is . . . How I need to look at it differently is . . .
- The way I am thinking about being a leader or change insurgent is . . . The way I need to think differently is . . .

### TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- The whole strategic context for business has changed.
- Your job is change, not preserving the status quo.
- Forget top-down power; use the power of powerlessness.
- You can't realize an Impossible Future without change.
- You don't need to be CEO to be a change insurgent.
- You can be a change insurgent from wherever you are.
- Master the political chessboard starting with mapping it.

## COLLECT BACKUP STORIES

The best change insurgents are generally monsters of effectiveness when it comes to execution. Collect stories of successful change insurgents to provide people as examples. One of my favorites is Steve Jobs, who in his earlier years as the enfant terrible of Apple would take on a project like building the first Macintosh and operate like a monomaniac on a mission. He wanted the design of the Mac to be insanely great. He once had people rip out the circuit panels of the Mac and replace them with different ones because he didn't like the colors. He created pride with his team in doing this, giving everyone a chance to literally sign the inside of the computer.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# COACHING CONVERSATION 5: CREATE A SOURCE DOCUMENT OR WINNING GAME PLAN A Blueprint for the Future

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation is part of the formulation phase of breakthrough and happens in month 3 or 4 of the coaching engagement. The iteration of the Source Document as the leader gets input from team and other people may take several months following the initial conceptualization.

I am sitting with my coachee, John Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics of the United States, and all his direct reports in a conference room at the Pentagon that looks like a scaled-down version of the United Nations General Assembly. We are going over his Source Document, which contains his Impossible Future and winning game plan for transforming the U.S. military. Young, showing slides from the Source Document, briefs the group saying that just as a transformation was necessary to move from the age of fascism to the age of communism, today another transformation is needed to move from the age of communism to the age of terrorism.

Young spells out his vision, “Defeat Any Enemy on Any Battlefield,” as well as his plans for building a robust toolbox for the

men and women who put on the cloth of the nation—on limited taxpayer dollars. Favorite themes that came out of his discussion with me as his coach are “think-outside-the-box-innovation in developing state-of-the-art weapons.” Other themes are “jointness and interoperability of weapons systems for the Army, Navy, and Marines,” and “Run the military like a business with the goal of saving \$15 billion in a single year.”

One by one, his direct reports, some of whom are Senate-confirmed appointees and who first encountered the Source Document some months ago, stand up and present the progress they are making with their part of the implementation plan. You can see from their high spirits and enthusiasm that they have not only bought into Young’s vision; they have jumped into action. So have tens of thousands of others who have attended “all-hands meetings” on the Source Document and been asked to create a line of sight from it to their goals and objectives for the year.<sup>1</sup>

## OBJECTIVE

In this session, the objective is for coach and coachee to cocreate a Source Document for the Impossible Future that has been declared: a blueprint for the future. A Source Document is the leader’s declaration of intention to call forth an extraordinary future. The idea is to come up with a magnificent manifesto in the form of a written artifact that gives everyone in the organization a shared place to stand. It provides in one place not just a fluffy mission statement with a bunch of platitudes, but a winning game plan for dealing with the forces at play.

There is a considerable amount of wizardry involved in creating a Source Document. First, executives see in working backward from the Impossible Future that their current winning strategies and current orthodoxies will not be sufficient to get them there. They are going to have to unleash the forces of talented people rather than hold them in check. Second, they realize they are going to have to change the game by doing something radically innovative as opposed to continuing with things like competitive benchmarking and incremental improvement.

There is another element of wizardry that involves what happens to the CEO or leader in the process of creating a Source

Document that may be overlooked. In the case of John Young, I saw him transform in the process of creating the Source Document from a deal maker and monster of personal effectiveness to a visionary leader and monster of organizational effectiveness.

Let me tell you a coaching tale. As you will recall from Coaching Conversation 2 in Chapter Nine, Richard Severance, vice president of ConocoPhillips North America, decided on an Impossible Future of creating an inspired, high-performing organization that would be the best in the oil industry and the most innovative. This all represented a big change. Transforming a climate from one of resignation to one of inspiration was going to prove to be a Herculean task. ConocoPhillips was a second- or third-quartile performer. As far as innovation was concerned, one employee told me, “I get hit over the head every time I come up with an innovative idea.”

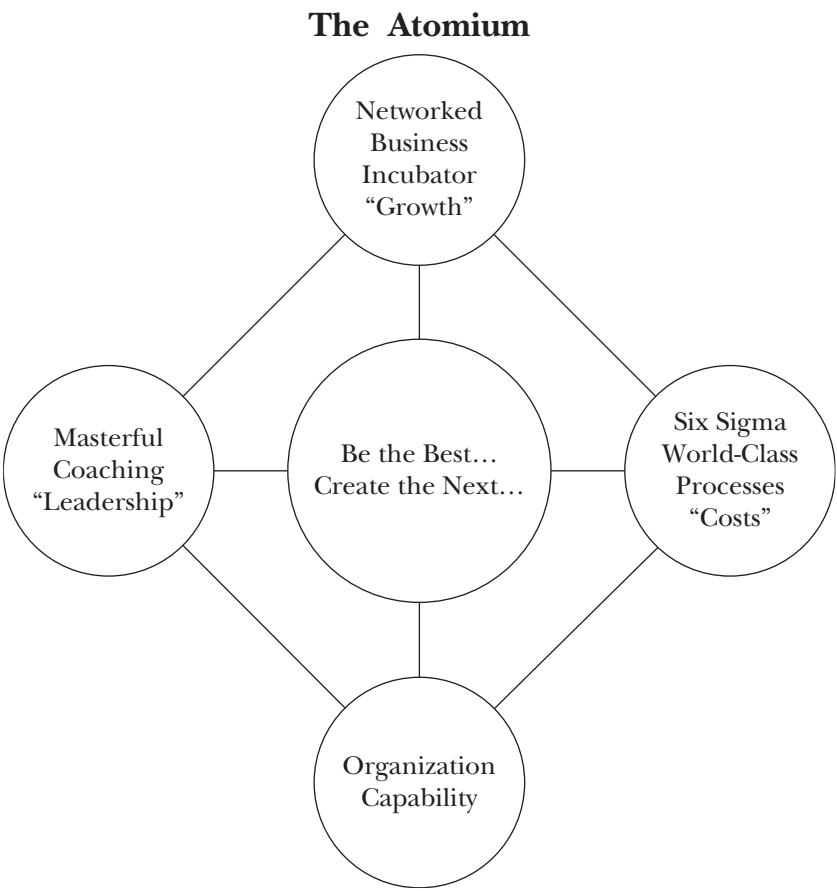
Severance and I sat in the conference room outside his office one day engaging in a dialogue that involved working backward from the vision so as to take mere possibility and make it a reality. Together we acted as thinking partners in creating a structure for fulfillment that would take into account all the missing pieces that needed to be put in place. We set one ground rule for the conversation: not spend a lot of time addressing what was wrong with the company. We would focus instead on what was missing that, if provided, would make a difference.

One of the first things we discussed was some sticky language that summarized the direction we wanted to take the company, in addition to the idea of building an inspired high-performing organization. It was “Be the Best [top quartile performance], Create the Next [develop alternative business models and fuel technologies].”

Built into the vision was a billion-dollar challenge (increase in profit) along with some BHAGS—Big Hairy Audacious Goals. Figure 12.1 illustrates the structure for fulfillment that we came up with. It included some powerful change initiatives such as a business concept incubator, a Six Sigma quality program, and, of course, Masterful Coaching based on the idea of the leader as coach rather than “order giver,” as it has been in the past.

The structure for fulfillment included creating a cadre of extraordinary leaders by providing Masterful Coaching to

FIGURE 12.1. THE JOURNEY TO CREATING THE IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE



each of Severance’s direct reports, as well as team-based Action Coaching for their teams. Where the executive coaching is used to develop a vision, the team-based Action Coaching is used to ensure its execution. The program proved to be powerful and effective in producing leadership, business, and team breakthroughs with real return on investment.

We also set up a quarterly all-hands session, called strategic forums, to provide a place for leaders at all levels to discuss the changing context of the oil industry and the strategic issues like

“beyond petroleum,” as well as give talented young people an opportunity to put forward innovative ideas. The leaders who came up with the most promising ideas were given lots of encouragement and enough resources to launch a small pilot or rapid prototype.

My role included not only supporting Severance in keeping the different dimensions of the Impossible Future at the top of his agenda, but also in taking bold and powerful action. One of my first jobs was to help him take this structure for fulfillment that we had worked on in his office and create a Source Document that would be put out at twenty-five or so town hall meetings.

I also acted as cheerleader: “Man, that Impossible Future presentation was great!” I provided further coaching and feedback to address breakdowns and provide what was missing. One potential breakdown we observed was that to source the Impossible Future, we needed to have generative leaders at every level—people who could “recreate the sourcing”—in other words, the vision and teachable points of view. We needed leaders who were coaches and teachers.<sup>2</sup>

## WALKTHROUGH

### TALK ABOUT WHAT A SOURCE DOCUMENT IS

Tell the executive you can have great conversations about what your vision of the Impossible Future is, as well as how to realize it, but conversations disappear. A Source Document is an artifact of these conversations, and all the iterations that have taken place, sometimes over many months, become a blueprint for the future.

As the Source Document is communicated throughout the organization, it allows leaders to mobilize people to take a stand for an extraordinary future. It also enables people to realize the Impossible Future by providing the necessary strategies and major milestones, guiding principles, key initiatives, methodologies, and actions in one place.

This document sets out both the “what” and the “how” of the new future. Often individuals and groups spend lots of time looking at the “what” and not as much getting alignment about the “how.”

The “what” is the vision that tells the team how the company will win, major goals, and milestones. The “how” refers to the guiding principles and methodologies.

The Source Document includes these components:

- *Your vision of the Impossible Future.* The vision should address the stagnating conditions that are producing the pent-up frustrations of customers, employees, and stakeholders—for example: “Our company will implement an exciting game-changing strategy of . . . and triple our revenue in three years, breaking out of the no-growth morass that has been a source of discouragement for all of us.” The Hunger Project Web site, which has an Impossible Future of Ending World Hunger, starts with: “In a world awash with food, 20,000 people a day die of hunger.”
- *Strategic intent, which defines winning in the business.* This refers to the audacious goal or final milestone that shapes goals and plans, actions and decisions. Here are some examples of a strategic intent:
  - “A democratic South Africa and the end of apartheid”
  - “A world without hunger”
  - “Changing the world with the personal computer” (Apple)
  - “Beat Nike” (Adidas)
  - “The world’s favorite airline” (British Airways)
  - “Make the big TV news broadcasts irrelevant with 24-hour news” (CNN)
  - “A billion in revenue”
- *Teachable points of view, which define the desired corporate culture.* Talk to the leader about his teachable point of view for winning in this business and in business in general. For example, John Young has a teachable point of view in support of the vision of “Defeat Any Enemy on Any Battle Field,” including “Jointness and interoperability,” “Run the military like a business,” and “Talent wins.”
- *Key goals and milestones.* Set milestones for five years, three years, eighteen months, and so on. Then set three measurable goals every year that tell everyone what needs to be done—for



example, “In 2009, we will grow the business, increase profit 10 percent by reducing costs, and hire the best talent.”

- *Key change initiatives.* Once the vision, strategic intent, and goals are set, people need to see their way through to getting there. Change initiatives are longer term than tactics and involve lots of people in the organization. Ask: What can you do to spearhead a breakthrough? Examples are innovation labs, Six Sigma quality, leveraging the Internet, going international, and creating a leadership pipeline.
- *Methodologies.* To reach goals or make change initiatives successful, it is helpful to adopt proven methods—for example, brainstorming sessions where you come up with ten ideas for growing the business by \$50 million; lean manufacturing for reducing cost and complexity; and talent reviews, which are written performance reviews in service of creating a leadership pipeline.

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Technicolor language gets Technicolor responses.

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## DRAFTING THE SOURCE DOCUMENT

Think and work together with the coachee with the goal of coming up with a first draft of the Source Document. The draft at this point should be very broad brush, as the executive will meet with the leadership team to get their thoughts, flesh it out, create alignment, and gain ownership of the Impossible Future. The draft should include these components:

- *An inspiring statement at the beginning.* This statement serves to bring people together around a purpose larger than themselves. Example: “We the people . . .” or “We are all partners in creating a powerful new future for this company based on a passion for growth.”
- *Current conditions you want to change.* Example: “We are a company of talented people, strong financial resources, and strong core competencies. Yet in recent years, we have not been able to break out of the no-growth morass.”

- *Vision of the Impossible Future. Be brassy and bold.* Declare an Impossible Future possible and take a stand to realize it: “We are going to create an inspired, high-performing organization with a passion for growth,” or “We are going to grow our business exponentially, multiply our profits, and win the talent war.”
- *Strategic intent. What we mean by winning.* Set an audacious goal or final milestone that excites and energizes people and stirs competitive drive. Examples: FedEx: “Absolutely, Positively 24-Hour Package Delivery”; Lexus: “Beat Benz”; Canon: “Beat Xerox.”
- *Teachable points of view. Reset mind-set.* A teachable point of view is a guiding principle to reset mind-set consistent with winning in the business: “Increase Share of Stomach,” Roberto Goizueta, Coca Cola; “Design in the soul of a product,” Steve Jobs; “Only the Paranoid Survive,” Andy Grove. Ask the person: “What are the three most powerful lessons you have learned in business to date, as well as the recent ‘aha’ experiences you’ve had regarding your current situation?” Then create three to five teachable points of view.
- *Goals and major milestons. Big hairy audacious goals.* What are five-year, three-year, two-year, and one-year milestones? Name three goals to focus on for the next year that tell everyone what really needs to be done—for example, growth, productivity, and talent. Repeat this exercise each year.
- *Change initiatives. Be a transformational agent.* To create the next generation of leaders, build a business concept incubator and introduce Six Sigma quality.
- *Methodology.* Strategic planning in action—face reality, set high goals, and provide what’s missing that will make a difference.

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

When a leader takes his Impossible Future, defines a winning game plan, creates an inspiring and empowering Source Document, and then communicates it to hundreds or even thousands of people, it is a transformational act for both the leader and the organization. John Young shifted from being a deal maker

and monster of personal effectiveness to a leader and monster of organizational effectiveness. Richard Severance shifted from “leadership from on high” and “the black cloud” to a “visionary leader who was inspiring and empowering to all who came into contact with him.”

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

An Impossible Future doesn’t just happen, it needs to be “sourced.” It needs leadership in both the conception of the Source Document and putting it out into the world and executing it. If there is a breakdown in one of these areas, start asking how people need to be different, think different, and act different. Asking the coachee to make a leadership declaration may help.

### THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- What is possible is . . . [what I say is possible].
- I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being an extraordinary leader who creates a strongly sourced organization].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [getting distracted from my Impossible Future or being a victim of my calendar].
- Opportunities to be in action are . . .

### DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

If the person doesn’t seem to be passionate about the Impossible Future and Source Document, listen to what his mind-set is about it, which will often show up in theses sorts of reasons or excuses: “I am not a passionate person,” “I have too many other things on my plate,” or “I have delegated this to my number 2 person.”

- What I know about sourcing a vision is . . . What I need to learn is . . .
- The way I am looking at this now is . . . How I need to see it differently is . . .
- This is how I am thinking about it now . . . This is how I need to change . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

The following points may be useful in resetting mind-set and altering behavior:

- It is not what vision is; it is what vision does.
- Think backward from the vision.
- Create a Source Document; conversations disappear.
- Don't just run the business; create the business.
- A vision doesn't just happen; it needs to be powerfully sourced.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 6: BUILD A TEAM OF TALENTED A PLAYERS

## Engage People in Playing the Big Game

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation occurs in the concentration phase of breakthrough. In the formulation phase you have set your Impossible Future and created a winning game plan and a Source Document. Now it is time to evaluate your team as to whether it can make the Impossible Future a reality. This typically takes place in month 5, but may start as early as month 4. Again after the formulation stage, you engage in the conversations in an organic way, bringing to the table what is needed and wanted.

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Busy Executives Fail to Give Recruiting and  
Engaging Talent Attention It Deserves.

Headline in the *Wall Street Journal*, January 21, 2007

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Leaders create an Impossible Future, change the game, and offer solutions and experiences that surprise, amaze, and transform perceptions of what's possible. It may sound as if I am singing the same song, but the only way you can do this is with stupendous talent. I'm with Jack Welch on this one: excellence takes building

a team of A players. You aren't going to reach a transformational goal or solve a vexing business problem with a group of B's and chronic C's. I have found that while talking about A, B and C players may sound like Social Darwinism, it's a good way to engage the coachee in a discussion about whether the right people are on the bus and going in the same direction.

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We are living in an age of talent, creativity, and intellectual capital added.

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There is a second dimension to this conversation. Not only do you need to recruit talent; you need to engage talent. It is one thing to talk about your company ambition and how it requires transformation, but the only way you can even get started with that is if you can engage talent. It is not just about signing bonuses, six-week paid vacations, and an executive chef, but about giving talented people something to do that is a gift to the human spirit and makes the world a better place.

Which one of these goals do you think would be better for a company like Toyota to engage talent with: a small car that was environmentally friendly for under three thousand dollars that people in India or China who have never owned a car can afford to buy, or offering two new credit cards to increase brand awareness and enable customers to make purchases?

## PURSUIT OF TALENT NEEDS TO BECOME AN OBSESSION

The key in this conversation is not to immediately fire half your staff or change your business model in keeping with saving the world, but to have the coachee say something like, "The scales fell from my eyes. I need to become much more of a connoisseur of talent if I am going to reach my Impossible Future and transformational goals. Furthermore, I going to have to build a team of A players and create an environment where talented people no longer feel shut down and stifled but feel they have a voice in the company and the freedom to express their creative ideas."

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A Toyota executive in charge of a big ambition and transformation noticed that his most talented people were not engaged. “Where’s the wow?” he asked himself.

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The fact is that while most busy Fortune 500 company leaders talk about talent, they spend little time on scouring the world for the A players who can give them the leverage to realize their Impossible Future or in engaging talent they already have. Many of our workforce policies were developed in the 1930s when people hired to manage big factories or work on the assembly line were pretty much considered replaceable parts and jobs were structured around B and C players. As a manager in Norway once told me, “You don’t have to be talented and smart in order to do this job.”

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The magic of Google is its ability to instill a sense of creative fearlessness in people of doing something that will rock the world.

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Contrast that to a company such as Google, which hires the most talented people on the planet and then instills a sense of creative fearness in them, even now with sixteen thousand employees. A friend told me that when you visit the Googleplex in Mountain View, California, the place looks like the usual “hieroglyphs-on-a-wall, write code until sun up shop with standard-issue Wii in the downshift lounge,” yet there is a difference in the air—the spirit of the place. Talk to Googlers at different levels and departments, and it comes through clearly. Whether they’re designing Google searches for the blind or cooking gourmet food for their colleagues, these comrades feel that their work can change the world. That feeling doesn’t show up at 99 percent of the other companies where managers get consumed in the day-to-day world of back-to-back meetings, PowerPoints, and budgetary realities.

## ENGAGING TALENT, CREATING A GREAT GROUP

You might recommend to the coachee Warren Bennis’s book *Organizing Genius*, which provides lots of powerful and concise

insights into the virtues of becoming a talent maven and building a fully engaged team.<sup>1</sup> According to Bennis, it is not great leaders alone who realize a great dream but great groups, and it has been this way throughout history. When you ask people who painted the Sistine Chapel, what comes to most people's minds as the correct answer is Michelangelo. But it was Michelangelo plus thirteen terrific artists and a crew of two hundred that painted the Sistine Chapel. It almost goes without saying that working in the holy city and providing a mural that would awe millions for centuries would be able fodder to engage the most talented artisan. It might be worthwhile discussing Bennis's points for building a great group that are outlined in Chapter Nineteen.

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Whatever I can imagine, I accomplish.

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## OBJECTIVE

As always, there is a need for wizardry in this conversation. How do you transform an executive from someone who merely fills the slots when someone quits or dies into a connoisseur of talent? Once people make that transformation, a lot of the whats and the hows become self-concluding, and people are on their way.

The goal of this conversation is for the coachee to get the idea that to meet her audacious goals and change agenda, she needs a team of talented A players who are fully engaged. The question you will probably run into in discussing this is: "Just what is your definition of a talented A player versus a B or chronic C?" To be sure, being in the presence of a truly talented person at work can be almost mesmerizing, yet not all talented people are A players. An A player possesses all of the tangible factors—smart, accomplished, and reeks of competence. Yet in my experience, many people at the top of a "BigCo" have these tangibles, and although they are not to be discounted, I don't think they are the differentiating factor.

I think what separates the A's from the B's, whether in business, sports, or the arts, are a lot of intangibles: substance, emotion, attitude, execution. A's demonstrate a tough-minded commitment to play at 100 percent, and when the chips are on the line, to calling



forth themselves into the situation in a way that changes the game and brings out the best in those around them. Furthermore, they don't do this just on the first day on the job; they do this when they are stretched and exhausted and the breakthrough project they have been working on nears completion. Here are the differences between A, B, and C players:

<b>A Players</b>	<b>B Players</b>	<b>Chronic C Players</b>
Consistently demonstrate extraordinary leadership and consistently perform in extraordinary ways	Embody the leadership values of the organization and meet performance requirements	Usually inconsistent on either the leadership values or performance or both

Once people understand the difference between A, B, and C players, the objective becomes to look at the Impossible Future and make an honest assessment of the people on the team. "Is this team going to make it?" This inquiry leads to noticing any gaps and developing strategies to fill them. While I like Jack Welch's strategy of coach, redeploy, or release, the Masterful Coach approach places much more emphasis on coaching and is based on the idea that a great leader's (coach's) first response, no matter what the situation, is always to think about the individual concerned and how things can be arranged to help that person experience success.

If gaps can't be filled within the team, talent mavens like Larry Bossidy, former CEO and Chairman of Allied Signal, get personally involved in recruiting rather than relying exclusively on headhunters and human resources to do the legwork. Bossidy is known to have personally made reference check calls before interviewing an applicant, so he could have a meaningful conversation. He also held annual talent reviews for a solid month each year in which he would hold each manager personally accountable for the leadership development and performance of every one of his or her direct reports.

A final objective in this conversation has to do with making sure the talent you have is fully engaged and works as a team. In

this conversation, whether it occurs in one session or over several months, the coach needs to work with the coachee, and possibly the team, in addressing any undiscussable issues that could be in the way of effective teamwork within a group, a cross-functional team, or social network.

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The team with the best talent usually wins, but talent doesn't always guarantee winning.

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## WALKTHROUGH

### TALK ABOUT THE NEED FOR A PLAYERS TO REALIZE AN IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE

Greet the coachee and discuss whatever is on her mind. At this point in the coaching process, there are bound to be emergent issues. The following questions are very useful: “What’s been accomplished? Issues and dilemmas? What’s missing? What’s next?” I often act as a thinking partner and sounding board, asking questions and drawing people out. If I listen long enough, I generally see something missing in her particular perspective that if she saw it, would make a difference. After spending a half-hour or so on this, gently redirect the conversation to the topic at hand.

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Most business leaders think in terms not of hiring great talent but filling a slot.

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Make the case that in order to realize her Impossible Future, she is going to have to consciously and intentionally create a team of A players rather than just default to whomever happens to be around. I am speaking about the most talented professionals in the world, as well as young, bright, talented people looking to make their reputation on a catalytic breakthrough project. In nine out of ten cases, the light will come on in people’s eyes—“Aha! You are right. In order for me to reach my transformational goals and organizational aspirations, I am going to need A players on my team.” I often ask the coachee

to cite five A players she has known and the attitudes that distinguished these people. Here are some of the attitudes that constitute an A player:

- People with substance, attitude, and execution
- People who take the lead, then shift and collaborate
- People who have mental and emotional agility
- People who are willing to show vulnerability or ask a dumb question
- People who play 100 percent every day as if their life depended on it, because it does
- People who bring power and velocity to goals, from weeks to minutes
- People who are game changers when chips are on the line
- People who do their job by wholeheartedly calling forth their potential in service of others

### CREATE AN ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE EXECUTIVE'S TEAM AND NOTE THE A'S, B'S, AND C'S

Take executives through the simple exercise of asking them to draw a chart of their direct reports and the rest of their organization, including up to twenty to thirty people. As the coachees put this out on the whiteboard, they almost automatically have insights about the level of talent in the organization and start making comments. If this happens, ask a few questions to draw them out. The next step is to ask them in a low-key, matter-of-fact, unthreatening way to identify the A's, B's, and C's on their team.

In some cases, the results of this exercise can be quite startling. I was coaching Marcel Prunaiche, the regional manager of the Washington Group in Eastern Europe, an engineering and construction firm, who had the job of reaching business growth of 50 percent over a two- to three-year period. He had only a handful people with any leadership background and many young talented people without a lot of experience.

It became obvious in a flash to Marcel after looking at the diagram that the biggest problem was that the people on his team

in key leadership roles were not A's, but at best B's, and in some cases C players. I asked him how he was going to take the young talent on his team and groom people to be top engineering and construction people if those who were supervising them were below par.

Marcel flushed for a moment, but without wasting a breath proceeded to launch into a conversation about how to attract A players on a limited budget. Though this may have felt like a unique problem to Marcel, it's the same problem that every CEO faces in a nonstop war for talent. Marcel's response was that he had to figure out a unique strategy for recruiting top Romanian engineers who had left the country to work in other parts of Europe for higher wages.

### CODEVELOP A TALENT STRATEGY

Marcel asked himself what would make the Washington Group, the best place to work for the people he wanted to hire. It turned out that the key was not just salary, but the pride that every Romanian takes in owning a home. Marcel arranged with the corporate office to offer not just an attractive salary package, but home loans to Romanian engineers if they would agree to repatriate. The strategy worked like a charm: within nine months or so, Marcel had recruited a team of A players. One note of caution: it's sometimes better to get a second or third opinion before making any important personnel decisions. You may want to bring in a trusted colleague or HR person to validate your views.

On one level, this coaching conversation will be revelatory to people: "I have one A, and one B, and nine C's on my team." On another, the conversation will often confirm what people have felt for a long time and either haven't wanted to admit or have made it undiscussable to avoid making themselves or others uncomfortable. In this situation, your job as a coach is to get people to stop putting up with the situation or making halfhearted attempts to change it and encourage them to discuss the undiscussable with others. There are many ways they can do this, but rather than barging into Joe's office and saying, "You're a turkey," assist them in setting up a process for having a meaningful conversation with people.

One of the things this A, B, C assessment might bring up is that the coachee has not been doing very much coaching.

## DO A LEADERSHIP REVIEW

A leadership and performance review is one of the best ways for people to initiate a coaching relationship, as well as to get at the undiscussables. A simple but powerful way to do this is on a single sheet of paper. On one side, write people's strengths; on the other side, their areas for improvement. The next step is to set up meetings where people engage in the kind of conversation needed to provide meaningful feedback. Remind people that one key is to stand in people's greatness, even when they fall from it: "Sara, I believe you have the potential to be great at what you do, and I am going to give you some feedback in the context of your greatness." It is important to discuss the undiscussable, whether in person or over the phone.

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You must care.

General Melvin Zais

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Say, "If you are genuine, people will generally receive the feedback as a gift rather than become defensive. If you can't genuinely talk to people like this, then you might consider making some tough people decisions that could involve redeploying or releasing the person." I have found that as long as the boss thinks of the person as an A player, the person will grow, develop, and eventually succeed. By contrast, if the boss, despite her best efforts to stand in people's greatness, defaults to holding the person as a chronic C, there is no way that person can succeed, no matter how sincerely or intelligently he or she may try.

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Never belittle!

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With many relationships between leaders and their talented team members, misunderstandings can fester that lead to an unwanted exodus of valued people. Keep in mind that there is a time in every relationship, whether personal or professional, that a three-minute phone call would have avoided setting off a

downward spiral in that relationship that would have resulted in a complete rupture.

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The leaders of Great Groups love talent and know where to find it. They revel in the talent of others.

Warren Bennis

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## THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

Ask the coachee:

- Did you personally get feedback in the last year from a coach or mentor on how you are doing on attracting and engaging talent?
- Have you in the last month reframed your group's vision or main goals so as to make people feel that they are on a mission to change the world?
- Have you personally conducted a leadership talent review of each team member in the past quarter where you discussed the undiscussable, as opposed to smoothing things over?
- Have you asked the people in your group in the past month: "How free do you feel to disagree with me privately and in public meetings?"
- Have you stopped a team meeting and asked, "How do you think we think and interact together as a team?"
- Have you acknowledged one small gesture of cross-functional cooperation in the past month?
- Have you gotten personally involved in recruiting talent in the past week rather than sloughing it off to HR or headhunters?

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are presently unknown to the person.

## THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being a connoisseur of talent in pursuit of my Impossible Future and creating an A player in every job. I am committed to being a coach].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [settling for less than an A player and just filling slots].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [conduct a leadership talent review; have a development plan for each person].

## DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- What I know about is . . . [creating a team of passionately engaged, talented A players]. What I need to learn is . . .
- The way I am looking at the B's and C's on my team today is . . . The way I need to look at this differently is . . .
- The way I think about creating a team of A players today is . . . How I need to think differently is . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- People are more important than a strategy.
- We are living in an age of creative intellectual capital added.
- Pursuit of talent needs to be an obsession.
- Commit to a talented A player in every key job.
- Extend people an A wherever possible. Coach B's to become A's.
- No one can succeed whose boss holds him or her as a chronic C.
- A great group is one where each person is encouraged to discover his or her own greatness.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 7: EXECUTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT Don't Add Before You Subtract

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation usually comes in the concentration or momentum phases of breakthrough in months 6 or 7, but it would be wise to have it when you see the executive not putting the time and attention needed to realize the Impossible Future.

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Get the Impossible Future on your schedule.

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People have now created an Impossible Future and a Source Document, which means they are ready to jump into action. Right? Well, not necessarily. Despite their sincere and honest intentions, executives with a full calendar may find little time to work on their vision, given how little discretionary time they have. As one executive told me, “Robert, when I sit down over dinner with you and talk about the Impossible Future, I get very excited and we create a lot of great things to do. Then when I get back to the office, reality sets in and I am faced with an incredible number of demands coming at me.”



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Don't add before you subtract.

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One of the biggest dangers of being a coach is adding a lot of great trimmings to people's plate when it is already full. Keep in the back of your mind as a coach the principle, "Don't add until you subtract"; in other words, before you add something to people's plate, you would be wise to help them find ways to take something off it. In this conversation, I try to help people get control of their time and their life not through traditional time management techniques but by trying to get them to think about their job differently.

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Most executive don't distinguish between what they do that makes a difference and what they do that is merely important.

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I do this by helping them make some powerful distinctions. For example, most people don't distinguish between the things they do that really make a difference and the things they do that are either important or trivial. In this conversation, I try to get them to see that it is very important to open a new category in their mind called "making a difference" that is entirely separate from the category of "the merely important or trivial." The stuff in the make-a-difference category usually involves their Impossible Future and the people they need to spend at least 30 to 70 percent of their time with.

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Do one thing every day that scares you to death.

Eleanor Roosevelt

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How you get people to create the opportunity to spend more time on the things that make a difference is by taking some of the important and trivial things off their plates. Interestingly enough, while people want to make a difference, they often have a lot of attachment to things that fall into the important or even trivial categories and can resist letting go of any. We do a simple but powerful exercise in this conversation that helps people reset their priorities and free themselves up.

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Try to hold two pumpkins down in the water. As  
you hold one down, the other pops up.  
Chinese proverb on too many priorities

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## OBJECTIVE

One of the objectives of this conversation is for people to spend more time on the things that make a difference rather than the trivial or important. The coach faces danger here: striking an appropriate balance between getting people to focus on their Impossible Future and getting them to focus on short-term profit and growth objectives. Jack Welch was once asked, “Should a manager think short-term or long-term?” His response was, “You can’t just think long-term or you can’t just think short-term. You have to do both.”<sup>1</sup>

However, it is not always an easy call. I once made a mistake in coaching an executive named Bill whose boss, George, wanted him to create an Impossible Future and get out of his comfort zone. George wanted him to set stretch goals, and Bill wanted to follow his usual winning strategy of “underpromise, overdeliver” (and secure your bonus). In this case, Bill did make great progress on his Impossible Future, but he did not make his yearly production goals that he was reporting on to corporate, and as a result, neither Bill nor his entire team received their bonus that year.

It is important for the coach not to fall into the trap of too much focus on the Impossible Future or the trap of too much focus on worrying about the next quarter. You have to do both, and if you do so, the coachee will admire and respect you for it. You will come off not just as a random talent developer, but as both visionary leader and inspired profit mechanic. This is often a matter of dancing back and forth between two sets of questions: “What have you done about your Impossible Future today?” and “How are you doing against your plan for the year?”

It is my experience that while executives often get excited about their Impossible Future for their organization, you often discover a month or two later that despite their sincere and honest intentions to make it happen, it’s gone to the back burner. This conversation is about intervening in the tendency executives

have to drift back into the daily grind. This conversation involves presencing people's goals and resetting people's mind-set so as to alter their focus. It involves making three or four powerful distinctions and then applying them by taking a close look at their calendar, usually an eye-opening experience.

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You need to focus on the Impossible Future *and* short-term profit objectives—not either-or but both-and.

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## WALKTHROUGH

### CHECK IN

Start each session by checking in on last month's goals and action items, and end up by checking out with an emphasis on next month's to-do's.

### TALK ABOUT BALANCING FOCUS BETWEEN THE IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE AND SHORT-TERM GOALS

I once did a great off-site meeting with Rene Jaeggi, CEO of Adidas, and his team on their vision in the Black Forest in Germany. As we left the hotel, Jaeggi told me, "I'm ready for bear" (Nike). About a week later, he called me and told me with some dismay: "Robert, I've been sucked back into the monster"; he meant back-to-back meetings, budget reviews, and labor disputes. I had a long talk with Jaeggi about striking a balance between focusing on his vision and all the demands of the day, which seemed to have an impact. I emphasized, "Don't add before you subtract."<sup>2</sup>

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Your job is to create the business, not just run the business.

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### DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CREATING THE BUSINESS AND RUNNING THE BUSINESS

For most managers, the difference between creating the business and running the business is all a blur, which is reflected in the

ineffective use of their time. Interestingly enough, leaders like Jeff Immelt of GE, Larry Page and Sergey Brin of Google, and Phil Knight of Nike spend the vast majority of their time creating the business, whereas most managers spend the vast majority of their time running the business. These leaders see their job as taking their business to a different place rather than managers whose jobs is coordination and control. They don't forget about the importance of good management, but delegate a lot to others.

### DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE, AND THE TRIVIAL OR IMPORTANT

Once people have these two distinctions in mind, you need to give them some practical help. This is where you make the eye-opening distinction that allows them to see that they spend very little time on things that make a difference and lots of time on things that are important or trivial. The underlying issue is that they don't even have a separate category in their mind for time spent making a difference from time spent on the important stuff. As a result, everything for them is important.

The following practice and reflection assignment is a powerful way to nail this distinction and get people to shift their priorities and use of time. Ask them to bring to the session their calendar for the past three months printed out on a piece of paper. Go over every key task, staff meeting, or business trip that shows up on the calendar, week by week and day by day. Ask them to mark which category each activity falls in: MAD—makes a difference, IMP—important, or TRIV—trivial. It takes a little time to go through this, but the impact is huge.

People begin to see that they were almost totally unaware of how little time they spent on things that matter and how much time they spent on merely important and trivial things. Furthermore, they realize that they were unaware that they were unaware and typically feel moved to do something about it. The interesting part comes next when you say, "You probably want to add more things that fall into the category of making a difference, but please remember the principle: don't add until you subtract. Let's look at some of the important things that you might want to take off your plate."

People often have some resistance to this out of peer pressure or force of habit, but you have to gently nudge them to break through it. For example, when I was coaching Greg Goff of ConocoPhillips, who worked in London as head of the European regional office, he told me after going through three months of his schedule that he was embarrassed about how little time he spent on things related to his Impossible Future and how much time he spent on the seemingly important things.<sup>3</sup> Another benefit of the calendar exercise is a much greater awareness of who people spend their time with, not just what they spend their time on.

For example, although Greg didn't have time to meet with this executive committee on the implementation plan, he discovered that he spent a full day a month driving across London to have lunch with industry bigwigs, like Lord John Brown of British Petroleum, and then driving back, having been thoroughly bored by the proceedings. Yet when I urged him to drop the meeting, he told me that his former boss had told him that he had to go to these meetings because Tony Blair might show up (as he did in the days of the English gas crisis) or you might need Lord Brown's help in a pinch.

I told Greg that he ought to consider delegating this; he initially resisted, but when I followed up a month later (a good idea), he had done so. This freed up one day of time to spend with his executive team on their Impossible Future and implementation plan. This time served to jump-start their Impossible Future.

One closing thought is that executives have to carefully manage not only their time but their attention. There are five attention tracks, and managing them all represents a real balancing act:

- Focusing one's own attention
- Attracting the right kind of attention to oneself
- Directing the attention of those under one's oversight
- Maintaining the attention of one's customers and clients
- The attention of one's family and friends.

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He who grieves does so most for wasted time.

Dante

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## THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

The following questions help people become aware of where they spend their time:

- Have you created a top ten list of personal goals and priorities for the Impossible Future?
- Have you gone through your calendar quarterly to see if your goals match time spent?
- Have you consciously and intentionally taken something off your plate before adding something to it?
- Have you said no with dignity to a request to attend a regular routine meeting?
- Have you in the past month delegated an important task that you usually handle?
- Have you in the past two weeks taken a key internal customer to lunch?
- Have you in the past week visited a key customer in the field?
- Have you in the past three days invited a family member to a special dinner or event?

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are currently unknown to the person.

### THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to . . . [the possibility of being a monomaniac on a mission].
- I am committed to . . . [giving up being a people pleaser and going to every meeting].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [delegate three key meetings to a trusted staff person].

## DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- The way I am looking at the use of my time today is . . .  
The way I need to look at it differently is . . .
- The way I am thinking about what meetings I need to attend is . . . The way I need to think about these differently is . . .
- What I know about executive time management is . . . What I need to learn is . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- Think long term (the Impossible Future and changing the game) and short term (the immediate profit objective).
- Strike a dynamic balance between creating the business and running the business.
- Focus on working on the business (Ray Kroc: McDonald's) rather than working in the business (John Doe: Doe's Donuts.)
- Leadership time management; focus on the things that make a difference versus the important or trivial.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 8: EXECUTE CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECTS Spearhead a Breakthrough

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation first takes place after creating the Source Document, usually in the concentration phase in months 4 or 5. You will continue to revisit this conversation in momentum until you reach breakthrough.

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We have a strategic plan. It's called doing things.

Herb Kelleher

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Now that you have created your Impossible Future and Source Document, it's time to jump into action. This coaching conversation is based on the idea that coaching is not just about strategic planning in a Source Document, but actually making change happen. It's obvious that you can't realize an Impossible Future or transformational goal all at once. Like unraveling a big ball of string, you need a place to start. One way to do that is through small, high-leverage wins that build the capacity for larger change.



While preparing to write this chapter, I came across a fascinating and intriguing example of this in David McCullough's *John Adams*.<sup>1</sup> The founding fathers of the United States had a vision of building a new nation that was to be a democratic republic: by the people, of the people, for the people. Yet to realize the vision, they needed to deal with the fierce opposition they faced from King George and the rest of the British, who thought of the founders not as patriots but as terrorists. John Adams was good not only at revolutionary strategy but also at execution. On his way to the Second Continental Congress, Adams wrote a to-do list in his diary: (1) an alliance to be made with France and Spain, (2) powder mills built in every colony, (3) a declaration of independence.

Given the Impossible Future that the founding fathers stood for, that one item on John Adam's list, a declaration of independence, is a superb example of a small, catalytic breakthrough project that created the capacity for larger change. The Declaration of Independence led directly to the shot heard round the world at the battles of Concord and Lexington. It also rallied people throughout the land to fight and win the Revolutionary War, and it eventually led to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution and the birth of a new nation.

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Jump-start your Impossible Future with catalytic breakthrough projects, prototypes, demonstrations, and pilots.

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## OBJECTIVE

All too often when people look at a big vision or goal against the background of the current reality, they feel overwhelmed by the discouraging complexity of the situation. At that point, they either reduce the vision and pull back in order to return to their comfort zone, or they get bogged down making elaborate plans and preparations whose effect in most cases is not to spur action but paralyze it.

The objective of this conversation is to inspire and empower the coachee to remain steadfast in commitment to her Impossible Future and to bypass elaborate planning and preparations in favor of a bias for action. The fact is that when you are going for an Impossible Future, there is no simple or obvious plan, and the path

to the result is largely unknown. The goals and priorities in your Source Document usually point in the right direction, but they are not designed to tell people what to do right up to the last step.

I have found that extraordinary leaders plan more intuitively than obsessively. Just as Adams did, they look at the Impossible Future they are standing for, engage in robust dialogue about the whats and the hows, and then somewhere in that process have a brilliant flash of the obvious. This usually results in a short list of small, high-leverage to-do's that become the basis of the catalytic breakthrough projects used to spearhead a larger breakthrough.

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Execution is nothing but a robust dialogue into the hows and whats, while holding people accountable for results.

Larry Bossidy, Former CEO and chairman of Allied Signal

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## WALKTHROUGH

### TALK ABOUT THE POWER OF SMALL, HIGH-LEVERAGE WINS

I usually coach people at this point on looking for ways to jumpstart their Impossible Future. Again, I place the emphasis on not getting overwhelmed by the grandeur of the vision but on bypassing elaborate planning and preparation. Once the “what” is clear, often the “how” is to do it. Having said that, I start talking to people soon after about the power of small, high-leverage wins that build the capacity for larger change.

Sometimes they ask, “How can I realize an Impossible Future through small wins alone?” The answer lies in choosing small, high-leverage wins that spearhead a breakthrough and create an opening for a larger breakthrough. I have often found that accomplishing a ninety-day catalytic breakthrough project rallies people and builds momentum, and it also often brings into view what the next step is—something that wasn’t visible before.

### PROVIDE EXAMPLES

I try to give some examples of a catalytic breakthrough project. For example, John Young, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for

Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, had an Impossible Future of transforming the military by building a robust toolbox suited to fighting global terrorism. One of the hot issues that has come up during the Iraq War is that Americans had to drive around the streets of Baghdad in vehicles that lacked the necessary armor to protect them from land mines going off in the streets.

Young was confronted with having to develop a new armored personnel carrier called MRAPs (mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles) that would protect people in harm's way and had to be done fast and on a limited budget. In the normal course of events, a contract for armored personnel carriers goes out to at least three government contractors. Each company then produces a finished tank, plane, or armored vehicle that is ready to roll off the assembly line. The issue is that three companies developing an armored vehicle in a soup-to-nuts development process takes too much time, tripling the real development costs.

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Bypass elaborate planning and preparations. Go for a result now!

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I suggested the idea of doing a hundred-day catalytic breakthrough project on this, as well as another idea called rapid prototyping. Each government contractor was to be given some pin money to develop a competitive prototype of an MRAP in four to six months. The government would then make its buying decision based on these low-cost prototypes rather than full-blown production models. The winner would be given the necessary resources to get into full-scale production fast. As it turned out, the catalytic breakthrough project for the MRAPs worked brilliantly, and at record time and cost. When Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and others saw how well it worked, he ordered that all programs be done through competitive prototyping.<sup>2</sup>

Here are some examples of catalytic breakthrough projects:

- *A breakthrough drug.* A big European pharmaceutical company wanted to introduce a new breakthrough drug into Southeast Asia to eliminate blindness, but the only way to achieve it was through its Australian organization, which had the reputation

of being too fat and complacent to take up the call. A Master-Level Coach was sent to Sydney and designed two catalytic breakthrough projects: the first to introduce the new drug into Singapore, the second to change the perceptions the Europeans had of the Australians. The model was then used in other countries for marketing the new drug.

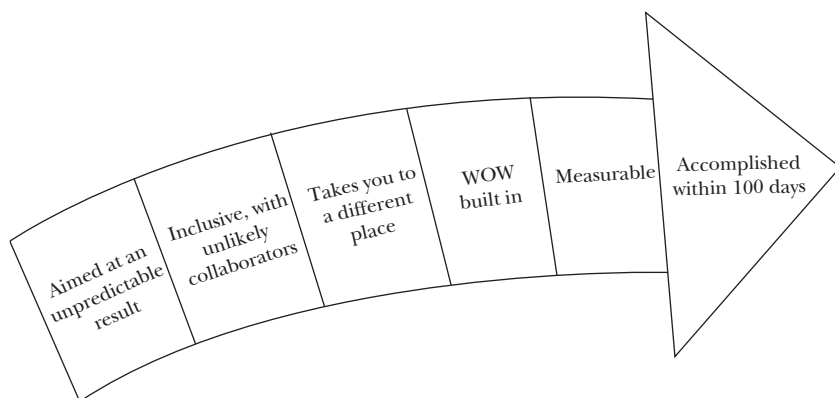
- “*One More Euro.*” ConocoPhillips decided it wanted to increase its sales from refining and marketing operations by \$1 billion. One of our Masterful Coaching coaches, Thomas Zweifel, inspired the group to launch a catalytic breakthrough project, “One More Euro,” which was used to increase sales in gas stations and convenience stores by offering game-changing products like fresh bread, gourmet microwave meals, and high-quality wines.<sup>3</sup>
- *Six Sigma.* Secretary Young, with the Impossible Future of transforming the military, had a teachable point of view of running the military like a business. I suggested trying Six Sigma, which I had learned about in my work with Richard Severance. Young did a Six Sigma pilot with one group. It was so successful in eliminating complexity and waste that within the next year, almost three hundred Six Sigma Black Belts were trained in the Navy and thousands of projects started. This was also so successful that it caught Secretary Gates’s attention, and he issued a mandate to implement Six Sigma across the military.

## PROVIDE PEOPLE THE CRITERIA OF A CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECT

Once you give the examples, provide the criteria for catalytic breakthrough projects. According to Thomas Zweifel, of the Swiss Consulting Group, a catalytic breakthrough project has certain characteristics (see Figure 15.1):

- Aimed at an unpredictable result
- Inclusive, with unlikely collaborators
- Takes you to a different place
- WOW built in
- Measurable
- Accomplishable within a hundred days

FIGURE 15.1. CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECTS:  
A SPEARHEAD FOR BREAKTHROUGH



### TEASE OUT A CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECT

One way to help an individual or team create a catalytic breakthrough project is to engage in a dialogue using any of the following questions:

- Working backward from your vision of your Impossible Future, what are all the missing pieces that need to be put in place?
- To jump-start your Impossible Future and change the game, what would be one or two quick wins? Define a concrete goal or result.
- What can you do to get positive feedback early on, allowing you to expand the project's scope?
- Write out a one-page plan for the project; what can you do that is specific, measurable, achievable, radically innovative, and tangible (SMART)?
- Who would be on the catalytic breakthrough project team? Include unlikely collaborators.
- Is this catalytic breakthrough project loaded with WOW factors that make people thrilled to play? If not, how could you build this in?
- What can you do with existing resources, existing readiness, and existing authority?
- Is there a change program already in place that you can amplify?

## REVIEW CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECTS FOR CRITERIA

Once people set a catalytic breakthrough project, go back and see if the criteria apply. If some aspect of the criteria is missing, ask how you can build it.

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You can't behave in a calm, rational manner.  
You've got to be out there on the lunatic fringe.

---

## THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Don't reduce your vision of the Impossible Future.
- Don't get bogged down by the discouraging complexity of the situation.
- Don't obsess about strategic planning or any other kind.
- Stand in the future you want to create and ask, What are the missing pieces that need to be put in place? Come up with a to-do list.
- Define a catalytic breakthrough project, and work backward from your dream rather than forward from history.
- Establish a specific, measurable goal that takes you to a different place.
- Create a team that includes "crazies" and far-flung collaborators.
- Get going right now, and produce a positive result, a success, that leads to a widening circle of successes.

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are currently unknown to the person. Is someone's need to be in unilateral control getting her to want to reduce the vision? Is someone's penchant for strategic planning getting in the way of taking action to jump-start her Impossible Future

## LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to the possibility . . . [of being not just a dreamer but a doer. I am committed to being a monster of execution].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [being the kind of person who always obsesses about the plan, needing to know all the answers right up to the last steps].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [I will meet with my team this week and set up a catalytic breakthrough project].

## DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- How I am looking at the execution of my Impossible Future is . . . How the way I am looking at it needs to change is . . .
- The way I am thinking about my Impossible Future and execution is . . . How I need to think differently is . . .
- What I know about execution . . . What I need to learn is . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- Leaders love standing inside a gap; they love the mess.
- When you are going for an Impossible Future, the path to the result is unknown.
- In a world of nonlinear change, catalytic breakthrough projects are more important than planning.
- A breakthrough project is based on an unpredictable result.
- A breakthrough project takes you to a different place.
- Don't start a project where you are likely to get negative feedback early on.
- Encourage excellent failures; punish mediocre successes.
- Fail forward. Learn fast. Let mistakes be stepping stones to learn from.
- Look at what you can do with existing resources, readiness, and authority. "This is what we have all been waiting for."

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 9: BE A COACH AND MENTOR The Leader as Coach

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation typically takes place in the momentum phase, months 6 or 7 or 8, depending on when the executive needs to coach people to achieve the Impossible Future. It might be important to revisit this conversation in sustainability, as the executive tries to institutionalize a coaching program, making it a part of how they do business.

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The biggest hurdle in going for an Impossible Future is leadership lag.

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In order for leaders to make headway toward their Impossible Future and transformational goals, they need to develop leaders at every level. Nine times out of ten, the biggest problem in reaching a transformational goal is not the lack of a winning game plan but leadership lag—the gap between identifying a strategy and finding the leaders with the right skills and capabilities to champion it. In the normal course of events, companies have leaders who can deliver on predictable goals as promised and occasional linear improvement. What’s missing are leaders who can reach breakthrough goals through nonlinear innovation.



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Top leaders recognize that there is a talent war raging outside their windows and coaching is the most powerful way to build a team of talented A players.

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Top CEOs realize that with a raging talent war, coaching leaders around a stretch assignment related to the Impossible Future is the fastest, most powerful way to fill the leadership pipeline with people who can have an impact. I tell people I work with that what fascinates me is the fact that the best CEOs in the world—Jeff Immelt, Larry Bossidy, Jeff Fettig of Whirlpool—spend 80 percent of their time coaching, while most of the people I have come across spend less than 8 percent of their time on it. I always wonder aloud, “Am I missing something?” This usually leads to a conversation about how the executive I am speaking with can get as personally and methodically involved in coaching as the people mentioned above.

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Jeff Fettig, CEO of Whirlpool, coaches each of his direct reports monthly and mentors four talented rising stars quarterly for a year.

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To inspire leaders to take off their top-down hat and put on their coach’s hat, I often tell stories of leaders who have used coaching not only to develop leaders but also to accomplish their business objectives. For example, Jeff Fettig, CEO of Whirlpool, uses coaching to develop world-class leaders at all levels in service of Whirlpool’s Impossible Future. The vision is to build brand value in Whirlpool’s iconic brands, like KitchenAid, by unleashing the inner designer in employees, as well getting innovative new products into the pipeline. In 2005, they achieved \$14.3 billion in revenue, up almost 10 percent, largely as a result of the coaching program.<sup>1</sup>

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We have a great model based on putting young talent in a job they are not quite ready for yet, and letting them develop in it.

David Binkley, Executive vice president  
of global HR, Whirlpool

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Fettig believes that the leader is a talent developer, visionary, and profit mechanic, in that order. The design of the coaching and mentoring process at Whirlpool is that Fettig coaches all of his direct reports on their performance and, to some extent, their leadership development. At the same time, he mentors four other talented rising stars: one each in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Each of these people leads a business, needs to build a great group, and has the equivalent of a catalytic breakthrough project that he or she is championing.

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The ROI from the coaching program is  
incredible compared to the investment we made.

David Binkley

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Whirlpool has developed a great coaching model based on taking talented people who aren't quite ready for a big leadership job and developing them inside that job with coaching that is based on Whirlpool's business vision and performance goals. The mentoring program is largely focused on the person's development. Fettig makes use of a 360-degree talent assessment provided by an outside company. Each month Binkley meets with Fettig (who does his due diligence before each coaching session) to brief him. He comes to the table with leadership teachable points of view, as well as pertinent business insights. Fettig seldom, if ever, cancels a coaching meeting. Doing that, he believes, sends a wrong message.

## OBJECTIVE

In this conversation, get people to take their leadership-from-on-high hat off and put on the hat of the leader as coach and mentor. For example, make the shift from: "Do it or I will fire you and find someone else to do it," to "Let's think and work together to build an Impossible Future." This is largely about a shift in who people are being, not just a shift in management technique.

Another objective is to get people to see that there is a difference between paying lip service to coaching and actually walking your talk. The acid test is what goes onto the calendar. I often tell people: You = Your calendar. The calendar provides telling clues

as to whether he is the typical top-down manager who pursues his own agenda, kissing up and kicking down, or whether he is the kind of leader who revels in attracting, developing, and deploying talent. The goal by the end of this conversation is to get executives to put coaching of direct reports and key people on their calendars—let’s say a minimum of thirty hours a month.

In this conversation, you want to provide the executive with some of the whats and the hows of coaching. Coaching is a way of being, not just a technique, and you don’t have to try to become a Masterful Coach if it is where you are already coming from. Give people some of the Masterful Coaching come froms—for example, “The coach stands in people’s greatness, even when he or she falls from it”; “Coaching is about achieving something impossible, not leadership lobotomies”; “Coaching is about challenging and supporting people.” If business leaders are looking for guiding ideas, tools, and methods with which to coach direct reports, the *Masterful Coaching Fieldbook* is an excellent resource.

If people are looking for a good coaching model to start with tomorrow, the following GOAL model of coaching is very useful.

**Goals:** Define leadership and business challenges in the service of an Impossible Future. The goals should be unpredictable and take people to a different place.

**Observe current reality:** What are the difficult facts and circumstances that need to be overcome? What’s not working?

**Assess:** What’s missing? Stand inside the gap between vision and reality. Assess what’s missing that, if provided, could make a difference.

**Learning and feedback:** Provided as people make a committed attempt to perform; the motto, “Fail frequently, learn fast.”

## WALKTHROUGH

### START THE CONVERSATION BY FINDING LEADERSHIP GAPS

Initiate this conversation by talking about people’s Impossible Future and transformational goals and where their team has any leadership gaps. Emphasize that although we would all like to recruit star players from other companies, this is like trying to

recruit top pitchers like Andy Pettitte from the New York Yankees or home run hitters like David Ortiz, “Big Papi,” from the Boston Red Sox. Coaching players from the inside is often the best way to fill the leadership gaps and build a team of A players.

## HAVE PEOPLE ANNOUNCE THEIR INTENTION TO BEGIN COACHING THE TEAM

Encourage coachees to proudly tell people in the organization that they have been working with a Master-Level Coach for the past several months and have been working hard to alter their leadership style (for example, from cop to coach). This is a good way for them to announce their intentions to begin coaching the people on their team, as well as to create a coaching culture in the organization.

It is also good to encourage coachees by telling them that while they may not have ever been formally trained as a coach, one of the best informal trainings that anyone can get is to have had the opportunity to work with a Master-Level Coach. My experience is that this not only provides an exemplary role model but a personal experience of the Masterful Coaching approach.

## REVIEW THE MASTERFUL COACHING APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Take some time to review with the executive the 5 Masterful Coaching Guiding Principles, the 10 Masterful Coaching Come Froms, and the GOAL model of coaching. While there are a lot of ways for people to initiate a coaching relationship with their direct reports (such as the annual performance review), one good way is for the client to bring the team together for a team strategy session to iterate on the Impossible Future and Source Document. This is a good way to introduce the idea of building a team of A players through coaching and mentoring. Emphasize the importance of the executive spending some face time with each direct report.

## STRUCTURE THE COACHING SESSIONS

The executive tells people, “I am going to ask everyone on the team to create a leadership breakthrough and a business breakthrough

for the year in service of the Impossible Future, transformational goals, and major milestones. We will then meet once a month collectively to discuss our winning game plan for reaching these and the progress we are making—or lack of it.” Also have them tell people that in addition to these monthly meetings, there will be a one-to-one session (monthly or bimonthly) in person or over the phone.

### *Monthly Sessions*

One of the secrets of Masterful Coaching is to set up a ground rule where people are asked to stand for each other’s success, which tends to alter the posturing and defensiveness that goes on in most team meetings and leads to more meaningful conversations. A second secret is to give people the chance each month to get into the hot seat and discuss several questions: What’s been accomplished? What are the issues and dilemmas? What’s missing? and What’s next? Although the leader’s role is to be the coach, the most important job for this person is to ask a few questions and draw others out. Once people begin to request coaching by opening up and putting their real issues on the table, the wisdom of the team takes over, others begin to provide feedback, and people often are led to a moment of powerful insight.

### *One-on-One Coaching Sessions*

The one-on-one session is a way for the boss to give potentially embarrassing feedback needed for growth and learning or discuss hot or controversial issues with the coachee. It is also an opportunity for the coachee to invite the boss to be a thinking partner in solving a big issue or problem. One good way to get started with these sessions is to recall the conversation on building a team of A players and bring out the one-page talent review with strengths on the front of the page and areas for improvement on the back. I would address both the leadership breakthrough and business breakthrough in every coaching session.

Here is the way to use the GOAL model for coaching team members on their business breakthroughs:

- *Goal.* The coach asks the coachee to stand in the Impossible Future or big game: “Imagine accomplishing a goal in your

domain [marketing, supply chain, IT] that may look impossible but, if it could be done, would be a real breakthrough.”

See if you can create conditions of satisfaction for meeting this goal that are based on things like innovative design and ROI.

- *Observe current reality.* What is the gap between this goal and where the company, business unit, or work group is today? What are the facts about current business performance? What are the biggest problems that have to be solved to reach this goal? What are the difficult facts and circumstances that need to be overcome? What’s wrong with the current situation?
- *Assess what’s missing that, if provided, would produce a breakthrough.* Look at the goal and consider all the pieces that need to be put in place to achieve it. On a superficial level, what’s missing could be just simple things like more staff or resources. On a more powerful and profound level, what’s missing represents a new idea, fresh approach, or innovative solution. This could become the basis of a catalytic breakthrough project.
- *Learning and feedback are provided as people make a committed attempt to perform.* Once people identify the pieces that need to be put in place, ask them to make a list of things to do, and then do them. Some of these may look as difficult as climbing Mt. Everest, and others may look like jumping over a six-inch high fence. The job of the coach is to become a grounded observer of how the coachee thinks and interacts. Pay attention to unintended results people are getting. Then ask yourself: How does this connect to their way of being, thinking, or behavior?

And here is the way to use the model for coaching team members on their leadership breakthrough:

- *Goal.* Ask people to stand in the Impossible Future and their business breakthrough and imagine who they are going to have to be and what they are going to have to do as a leader to reach it—for example, “I am going to have to be a leader who takes a stand that a difference can be made and who is willing to operate in the domain of creativity and risk.” The kind of leadership breakthrough we are looking for is a quantum leap into the future, not merely linear improvement on the past.

- *Observe current reality.* The leader is free to rely on his or her own opinion, but I have found that some kind of 360-degree feedback process can be pivotal in getting an objective view of how the person being coached is showing up as a leader today—for example: “The need to look good often displaces the desire to perform”; “The need to be a people pleaser often gets in the way of authentic communication”; “The need to avoid risks and play it safe makes it difficult to set breakthrough goals.”
- *Assess what’s missing that, if provided, could make a difference.* I once asked a billionaire CEO who had been through executive coaching what one of his direct reports needed to make a leadership breakthrough. His answer: “Executive coaching.” I asked him again, looking for more specifics, and he said the same thing: “Executive coaching.” A third crack at the question yielded the same result. Truth be told, executive coaching is the fastest, most powerful way to achieve a leadership breakthrough.
- *Learning and feedback are provided as people make a committed attempt to perform.* In the normal course of events, coaching and 360-degree feedback will yield a leadership development plan. I focus not just on key strengths and areas for improvement, but on helping people break the grip and excel beyond their winning strategy from the past—for example, making the shift from deal maker to leader, from bulldozer to collaborator, from knower to learner. It is important to mention at the end of every coaching session that you will be following up on this again soon, which serves to create a climate of breakthrough and accountability.

## THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- The coachee tells people that he is working with an executive coach so as to plant the seeds of a coaching culture.
- Hold a team strategy session where you invite people to iterate on the Impossible Future and winning game plan.
- The coachee invites direct reports to engage in a coaching relationship intended to build a team of A players.
- Coach people to create a business breakthrough first and a leadership breakthrough second.

- Hold a team coaching session and one-on-one coaching sessions monthly.
- Get coaching on the calendar to avoid having coaching be ad hoc.

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Unintended results are usually the result of some way of being, way of thinking, or behavior currently unknown to the person. Does the 360-degree feedback say that the person is a power freak who is unwilling to take off the command-and-control hat? Has the person put on the coaching hat, only to be seen as insincere?

### THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to . . . [the possibility of being a Masterful Coach and teacher who expands people's capacity to create an Impossible Future].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [being a top-down command-and-control manager—"Do it or I will fire you and find someone else to do it!"].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [At the next team meeting, call a time-out and ask, "How am I doing as a leader and coach?" Instead of going through the motions at the performance review with your staff, use it as a genuine coaching opportunity].

### DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- The way I am looking at my job as leader and manager today is . . . How the way I am looking at this needs to change . . .
- The way I am thinking about what a leader or manager's job is . . . How my thinking needs to change . . .
- What I know about the leader as coach . . . What I need to learn . . .



## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- Coaching is about expanding people's capacity to achieve the impossible and change their lives.
- Extraordinary leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results.
- A coach is a grounded observer: "Everything you say reveals you."
- People set goals and start to drift; coaching is intervening in the drift.
- Coaching is management-by-follow-up.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 10: MAKE GREAT DECISIONS AND JUDGMENT CALLS Wisdom Versus Intelligence

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation takes place typically in the momentum phase of breakthrough or whenever an executive is faced with an issue and dilemma that needs a decision.

Whether you are talking about presidents of nations, CEOs of corporations, Major League coaches, or wartime generals, leaders are remembered for their best and worst decisions and judgment calls. Steve Jobs will long be remembered for his steadfastness around the decision to make great design the soul of Apple products when it was tempting to jump on the PC bandwagon. In New England, Bill Belichick, coach of the Patriots, will be remembered for the decision he made in the 2008 Super Bowl to go for it on the fourth down with thirteen yards to go rather than kick a field goal, which would have allowed the Patriots to beat the New York Giants.

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The unintended consequences of seemingly unimportant decisions are often not obvious.

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Coaching people to realize their Impossible Future and transformational goals will inevitably lead to the need for the executive to make good judgment calls and important decisions. It is not important that the coachee make great judgment calls on every decision, but it is important that she make great judgment calls on the decisions that really matter. The most important decisions are:

- People decisions: Who to let on or off the bus.
- Strategy decisions: Whether to head off in a bold new strategic direction or stick to the tried and true.
- Crisis decisions: The coach can play a pivotally important role in helping leaders identify these decisions, make the right choices, and implement them.

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It's not hard to make great decisions when you know what your values are.

Roy Disney

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One of the most important things a Masterful Coach can contribute is to support people making decisions with good character. Having good character is a matter of having good values, a strong moral compass, and knowing right from wrong. I have often been in situations where I had to coach the leader in the throes of a dilemma. Leaders always are faced with two choices: Choice A, self-interest and ego, or Choice B, doing what's in the best interest of the organization and society.

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An expert is someone who has succeeded in making decisions and judgment calls simpler by knowing what to pay attention to and what to ignore.

Edward de Bono, British physician,  
author, inventor, and consultant

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Although leaders often talk about making the call the way a referee or umpire makes a call in sports, the fact is that making a judgment call in business is a process that requires a great

deal of thought because the judgment call can have far-reaching consequences for many people. Jake Down, CEO of Bayer, is an example of a leader who might have benefited from calling in a Masterful Coach as a thinking partner before deciding to leave a potentially dangerous drug, Trasyolol, on the market. As it turned out, over twenty-two thousand people may have died because of taking this drug.<sup>1</sup>

Noel Tichy, of the University of Michigan, says that great leaders have an algorithm for making judgment calls, but cannot always make it explicit. Leaders don't make good decisions because of a succession of "aha" moments; they make them by engaging in a three-phase process:

*Phase 1*, the preparation phase, where leaders sense the need to make a judgment call and begin to name and frame the issue.

*Phase 2*, which involves developing alternative possibilities, getting to the heart of the matter, and making the right choices.

*Phase 3*, about executing and making adjustments along the way. It is important here to engage with the team as to why the call is important and get the team's input.

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Good decisions come from experience, and  
experience comes from bad decisions.

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## FOUR KEY ROLES THE MASTER COACH CAN PLAY

An Master Coach plays four key roles in coaching someone to make great judgment calls and effective decisions:

- *Scout the territory to enable the executive to recognize the winds of change and the time of decision.* Executives often see the world through the rear-view mirror, mistaking where they have been for where they are going. One unorthodox role that a Masterful Coach

can play is to do research that helps the executive develop foresight about the future of the industry so they know when it's time to make a decision. For example, as of this writing, Microsoft made a \$48 billion offer to buy Yahoo after MySpace decided to have Google rather than Microsoft handle its only advertising because Google had a higher search volume—135 million versus MSN's 35 million. The time for Microsoft to make a decision to enter the search business should have been much earlier.

- *Be a thinking partner to name and frame the decision.* Your job as a Masterful Coach is to act as a thinking partner around decisions, naming and framing the decision or dilemma in a way that gets to the heart of the matter. For example, a reputed advertising genius, George Lois, was asked to be on a small team of people to come up with an advertising campaign to sell the Volkswagen Beetle just after World War II. George's boss kept calling him and asking if he had made any progress and the answer was always no. Finally after some time, when the boss asked, "Do you have it?" Lois answered, "Yes." "What, the solution?" the boss asked. "No, the problem. How to sell a Nazi car in a Jewish town." This led to the famed VW Bug ad campaign.<sup>2</sup>
- *Mobilizing and energizing the team.* Most executives tend to be highly reactive, particularly in a crisis, and as a result of jumping to conclusions, incomplete data, and not consulting the right people, they tend to make decisions too quickly. During the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) crisis in the early 2000s, the CEO of Yum Brands, owner of KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), had a gut instinct reaction to take chicken off the menu. He talked to his staff, however, and found out that deep-frying chicken at high temperatures kills all bacteria. Instead of deciding to stop selling chicken, he placed a sign "cooked at healthy temperatures" on all orders. Chicken sales actually went up. Your job as a coach when you see the executive jump to conclusions is to slow the conversation down to check reasoning or data, as well as to solicit input from others. This may result in needing to redo the framing.
- *Getting the leader to execute and make adjustments along the way.* When it comes time to execute a decision, leaders can sometimes waffle on pulling the trigger for fear of losing the approval of others, or they go back and reevaluate their decision and get stuck in analysis paralysis. The role of the coach is

to be able to help separate the substance of their decision and take action on it, and not get stuck refining the fine points ad nauseam. It is easier to make adjustments along the way than it is to have it perfect from the beginning. Leaders may not be able to do a turnabout on their calls, but they have the power to adjust their course during execution if they are committed and open to feedback and learning.

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this conversation is to get the executive to talk about what's happening in the organization or world and, in so doing, discern the need to make any big decision or judgment calls. The objective is to spend some time focusing in on three key areas where a judgment call may be impending—people, strategy, or looming crisis areas—and then to act as a conversation partner in exploring these based on the four points above. Finally, the goal is to make sure that people make decisions with good character, a strong moral compass, and a clear sense of right and wrong.

## WALKTHROUGH

### INTRODUCE CONVERSATION ABOUT MAKING DECISIONS

Introduce this conversation by saying that part of your role as a coach is to offer a powerful assist to the coachee in realizing her Impossible Future by facing up to and making great judgment calls. You might kick off the conversation by telling her that we all make thousands of decisions in our lives. Most of the decisions are trivial in nature and have little consequence one way or the other, like deciding what kind of car or house to buy. Other decisions have huge consequences in terms of the rest of our lives, like deciding who to marry or to stay in a certain industry after it runs out of gas.

### ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE ABOUT MAKING GOOD JUDGMENT CALLS

Get people involved in the conversation by telling stories about some of your own best and worst judgment calls. If you as a coach are willing to show some vulnerability in this area, you will find

that the coachee usually responds in kind. After you have shared a few best and worst stories about judgment calls made, ask her to do the same. The stories that she tells will reveal her character and teachable points of view about making decisions. Ask more questions to draw out whether she has good values, a strong moral compass, and a clear sense of right and wrong. Ask questions to determine what she would be willing to do if her job or company was on the line and what she wouldn't be willing to do.

### LIST BIG CALLS THAT THE COACHEE FEELS SHE WILL HAVE TO MAKE

The items in this list should be in the following three categories:

- *Making effective people decisions.* Ask the coachee what tough people decisions he is contemplating and the dilemmas they pose. If you could name and frame the dilemma in one sentence, what would it be? Tell stories to stimulate the conversation. For example, after Hewitt Packard (HP) fired the charismatic Carly Fiorina, someone whose background in sales did not equip her to run a huge company, they had to find a replacement. They named and framed the decision around whether to find another visionary leader like Fiorina or someone who could pull the operation together so it truly functioned as a whole. They chose Mark Hurd as CEO, a good operator who understood the HP culture. Interestingly enough, Hurd executed many of the strategies that Fiorina put in place.
- *Making great strategy calls.* The best executives have an intuitive sense about when they need to make a big call or rely on a network of trusted colleagues to tell them change is in the wind and they need to respond. When Lou Gerstner took over IBM, known as Big Blue, managing it was like trying to teach an elephant to learn the foxtrot. Gerstner had to make a strategic decision as to whether to reestablish IBM as the biggest and the best computer company or go in a new direction. He chose the latter, converting IBM from a computer company into a professional service firm, aimed primarily at helping small business with the potential for radical innovation and

growth. He sold off IBM's PC division to Lenovo in China and spun off other divisions as well.

- *Sweating out crisis decisions.* Ask people to talk about what crisis decisions could potentially emerge on the horizon and what kind of compass they might use for handling them. If it came down to choice A (self-interest) versus choice B (doing what is in the best interest of the organization and society), what would they do? Again telling stories is useful. For example, Pfizer was faced with a problem of selling Lipitor, its cholesterol-reducing medicine, in the face of cheaper generic drugs. It responded with a TV spot that featured Robert Jarvik, the inventor of the artificial heart, and sales rebounded as a direct result. His inventing prowess aside, when it was reported that Jarvik isn't a licensed cardiologist and is not into rowing as the ad would suggest, a scandal erupted. The CEO of the company decided to pull the ad despite soaring sales to protect the company's reputation.

## THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Scout the territory for insights into the new work context so as to alert the executive that it's time to make a decision.
- Be a thinking partner in framing and naming a decision; write the dilemma in one sentence.
- Brainstorm many decision alternatives, and settle on the best one.
- Mobilize and energize the troops. Slow the conversation down and get the executive to get input from trusted colleagues, which may lead to redoing the framing.
- Get the decision 80 percent right, and then execute. Adjust the other 20 percent along the way.

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are currently unknown to the person. Is the coachee suffering from the consequences of not knowing when it



is time to make a decision or judgment call? Has she made a mistake in naming and framing the decision, which has resulted in inability to get people to buy in and execute?

### THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to . . . [the possibility of being an effective decision maker versus getting stuck in analysis paralysis].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [putting off decisions to avoid losing].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [I am going to face up to a key people decision this week].

### DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- The way I am looking at a people decision I am facing is . . . How the way I am looking at that decision needs to change is . . .
- The way I am currently framing a strategic decision is . . . [better high-margin products]. How the way I am framing the decision needs to change . . . [by transforming the company into a professional service firm].
- What I know about making crisis decisions is . . . What I need to learn is . . .

### TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- Your destiny is determined through your decisions, not your circumstances.
- In one sentence, name and frame the dilemma presented by the decision.
- Management manages by making and implementing decisions.
- Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach.
- Your legacy, good reputation or bad, is the sum total of your decisions.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 11: FOCUS ON THE SCOREBOARD

### Connect Coaching with ROI

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation takes place usually in the concentration or momentum phase of breakthrough and is a useful conversation to have after the person has set goals and catalytic breakthrough projects.

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The number one question CEOs and HR managers have with respect to coaching is, “Where’s the beef?”

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I have spoken to dozens of CEOs and HR managers and vice presidents of talent about coaching, and while many have brought executive coaches into their organization, there is one question everyone asks, usually word for word: “Where’s the beef?” This is typically followed by saying, “We have used an increasing number of executive coaches over the past few years, but the question that we are all asking now is: What’s the return on investment?” In some cases, as with CEO Jeff Fettig of Whirlpool and David Binkley, executive vice president of global HR, the ROI from their coaching program in terms of leadership development and business performance has been incredible. In other cases, it has been much less so.

This conversation is about how to set up the goals and objectives of the coaching relationship from the beginning in a way that allows you to make a stunning ROI claim at the end. It starts with defining an Impossible Future and transformational goals, not just in terms of qualitative issues, like being a market leader, innovative design, or total quality management, but also in terms of bottom-line results. Every time we do a coaching program, I want to be able to say that the program either made or saved the company money far in excess of the amount of money that was invested in it.

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We pretty much stuck with the Masterful Coaching approach, and it made the company hundreds of millions of dollars.

Oil refinery manager

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For example, we did a combination of executive coaching and team-based action coaching with a oil refinery manager by the name of Fred Stiers. The amount of money invested in both of these programs was probably in the hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of eighteen months. At the time, it probably sounded like a lot of money to the people involved. I had the opportunity to interview Fred several years later in reference to the role that the leader plays as a coach for the *Masterful Coaching Fieldbook*.<sup>1</sup> Fred's comment made my day: "We pretty much stuck to the Masterful Coaching approach, and it made the company hundreds of millions of dollars. It also had a big impact on leadership development and teamwork."<sup>2</sup>

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Coaching involves making sure each person on the team has a big game to play in the business transformation effort while staying focused on the scoreboard.

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The fantastic ROI happened by design rather than by accident. Fred had asked each of his direct reports to stand in the Impossible Future and create a business challenge based on transforming a particular aspect of refinery operations (for example, energy utilization, refinery up time, and lost profit opportunities). He then asked each manager to create a scoreboard based on a key metric related to the improvement effort. He met with people

once a month to make sure they were focused on their significant business and leadership challenges but also that they were focused on the scoreboard. They used both physical and electronic dashboards to track this.

## OBJECTIVE

This conversation is about getting the coachee to set leadership and business goals for the coaching that can be measured in terms of real ROI. You want the CEO and executive vice president of talent to be able to have bragging rights to the effect that they invested in coaching some of their top professionals and rising stars and the impact was huge. For example, coaching John Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, one of the goals was to run the Pentagon like a business. The metric was \$15 billion in savings in one year. The method was training hundreds of Six Sigma Black Belts and starting thousands of Six Sigma projects.<sup>3</sup>

The objective of this conversation is also to coach the person to take the Impossible Future and transformational goals and make sure there is a scoreboard in public view as well as a game clock. When Jeff Immelt became CEO of General Electric, he boldly declared an Impossible Future that the company would achieve 15 percent organic growth every year. One of the goals was to transform the company from a mind-set of growth by acquisition to a mind-set of growth through innovative new products every year. In one year, GE created a high-definition CT scanner that reduced radiation exposure by half, reinvented the best-selling CF34 jet engine for the booming Chinese aviation market, and came up with a hybrid locomotive that cuts emissions by 50 percent.

The goal is also to impress on the coachee that the presence of a scoreboard not only tells whether he is up or down, but allows him to make adjustments according to the feedback he is getting. I recall Tom Brady saying in a big game with the Indianapolis Colts, "I looked at the scoreboard a little before half time and noticed that we were falling behind. I told myself that I absolutely needed to do something to score and take control of the game before going into the locker room." If there wasn't any scoreboard in sight, Brady might have kept playing without the necessary intensity to turn the game around, which he did.

While Masterful Coaches make sure that people are sufficiently focused on the scoreboard with a view toward winning at the great game of business, they don't focus on the scoreboard obsessively. In fact, research shows that obsessing too much about what the scoreboard says in terms of profits and growth can lead talented people to have anxiety attacks. The fact is that you cannot control what the scoreboard says at any given time. What you can control is whether you are sufficiently focused on the key registers of success for making the scoreboard go up. These include setting bold goals with key metrics for winning, as well as intangibles like playing 100 percent, teamwork, and learning from mistakes.

## WALKTHROUGH

### INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF ROI ON THE COACHING WORK

Introduce this conversation by showing that you are committed to the Masterful Coaching work you are doing with the person, producing some significant ROI for this person and the company. You would like the coachee to start thinking about how he would measure ROI in terms of leadership development and business performance. You also talk to him about the idea of taking his Impossible Future and transformational objectives and creating some kind of scoreboard that allows him (and you) to keep track of how he is doing. This conversation is really about four key disciplines of execution:

- Focus on the goals that are wildly important.
- Create a compelling scoreboard.
- Translate bold goals into specific actions.
- Hold the coachee accountable all of the time.

### CREATE A SCORECARD THAT IS RELEVANT

The following questions can help you to create a scorecard that is relevant to the Impossible Future and transformational goals. Coachees rate themselves from 1 to 5 on how they are doing in each of the following areas, with 5 being high:

- How am I doing with respect to making the Impossible Future at the center of my agenda?

- Am I translating the transformational goals into catalytic breakthrough projects and key actions?
- Are others saying that coaching has made a dramatic difference in my leadership and managerial effectiveness?
- How am I doing with respect to shifting from a red ocean strategy where we compete in the competitive, existing market space to a blue ocean strategy that takes us to uncontested waters? Is business concept innovation flourishing in my organization?
- How am I doing with respect to building a team of A players in every key role in my domain? Am I spending 50 to 80 percent of my time coaching and mentoring?
- How am I doing with respect to working with my coach to deliver culture change to the organization?
- How many innovative new products are in the pipeline with the potential to change the game? How many innovative products are on the way to a customer? What is the percentage increase of organic growth?
- How many Six Sigma Black Belts have we trained? How many Six Sigma projects are underway or completed? What are the net savings?
- How are we doing with respect to profitable and sustainable business growth? What do last quarter's and this quarter's results show? What impact has coaching had on this?
- What would customers say about how we stack up to the best, like FedEx, IBM, and Starbucks, as a professional service firm?
- Does each of my direct reports have a goal for making a dramatic difference in the business? Have they identified the registers of success or key metrics? Am I coaching to these?
- How has my coach been doing at holding me accountable for all of the above, all the time?

### THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Focus on wildly important goals and key priorities.
- Create a compelling scorecard by focusing on what matters.
- Translate goals into key metrics and key actions.
- Hold people accountable for everything on the scoreboard.
- Review the Masterful Coaching scoreboard once a month.

# WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

## TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU BE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are currently unknown to the person. Does the person have a way of keeping score on how well he is developing as a leader? Does he pursue the Impossible Future without a scoreboard, key metrics, or key actions?

## LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to the possibility of . . . [being a dreamer and a doer with a practical scoreboard].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [chasing my Impossible Future as if it is pie in the sky without a compelling scoreboard and without focusing on the registers for success].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [create a compelling scoreboard with my coach over the next two weeks].

## DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- The way I am looking at keeping score today is . . . How I need to look at it differently is . . .
- The way I think about creating a scoreboard is . . . How my thinking needs to shift is . . .
- What I know about creating a compelling scoreboard and translating goals into key metrics and actions is . . . What I need to learn is . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- Vince Lombardi asked, “If winning isn’t everything, why do they keep score?”
- Don’t obsess about the scoreboard; obsess about the key actions that have an impact on it.
- Focus on the key registers for success, like 100 percent effort, teamwork, and attitude.
- What gets measured gets done.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

# COACHING CONVERSATION 12: EXECUTIVE LIFE COACHING Achieving Nonfinancial Wealth

**Phase of breakthrough:** This conversation usually takes place in the later part of the coaching engagement, after you have seen how the coachee operates—possibly in the momentum, breakthrough, or sustainability phases in months 10 to 12.

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A fool dreams of wealth; a wise man dreams of happiness.

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Thus far, you have been coaching executives on their Impossible Future for their company. This conversation has to do with coaching them to create an Impossible Future for themselves—not just as a businessperson but as a whole person (a complete human being). By and large, the aspiration and motivation of the executives I have worked with are power and financial wealth. This conversation is about helping to alter their motivations and aspirations so that they achieve a different kind of power: nonfinancial wealth. It is all about enriching their lives with the things money can't buy.

If you are an executive in a global company today, the chances are almost 50 percent that you have an extreme job. An article in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2006, “Extreme Jobs: The Dangerous Allure of the 70-Hour Workweek,” says that in addition to long hours, executives with extreme jobs deal with the additional



performance pressures that range from delivering higher profits to 24/7 client demands to grueling travel schedules and constant jet lag.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, many seem to exult in the creative stimulation and big paychecks that being a knowledge worker brings them, ignoring the havoc caused to their health and families. This conversation in a nutshell is, “Get a life!”

## A COACHING TALE

Lawrence is a top executive in his forties, and word has it that he’s a decent guy to work for. However, he’s got a big P&L to move and a big merger negotiation to carry out, which leaves him feeling as if he is always in a pressure cooker. As an executive in a major oil company with global reach, he loves being part of helping developing countries take off. He takes his hundred-hour work weeks, weight gain, and insomnia as self-inflicted rather than as imposed by the boss. When he gets home at night, he is so exhausted, he is virtually incapable of having any conversation with his wife, and he hasn’t been able to attend one of his kid’s soccer games in months.

Lawrence has achieved financial wealth in his twenty-plus-years of corporate life that King Midas would have envied. He makes more than \$500,000, with \$10 million in stock options he can purchase at a deep discount at age fifty. He has \$15 million in the bank and a generous retirement plan, which includes long-term health care. Lawrence has succeeded wildly in conventional terms, but as Yeats said, pushed to the extreme, “things fall apart, the center cannot hold.” Last month he had a falling out with his father for canceling yet another weekend visit, and he had to fight to reschedule his daughter’s parent-teacher meeting because of a last-minute business trip.

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Wealth is the ability to fully experience life.

Henry David Thoreau

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In the past several months, I have had conversations with Lawrence about achieving nonfinancial wealth, a concept introduced to me by Edward Choi, chairman and CEO of a coaching company in Korea. It started one day when I went out for dinner

with Lawrence in a posh Salt Lake City steak restaurant. He said to me, “Robert, you made an off-the-cuff remark at one of our coaching sessions to the effect of ‘beware of trading in your aliveness in order to earn a living.’” That comment, he said, had touched him: “Robert, I believe that is exactly what I’ve done, and I am meeting with you here tonight to make sure it’s not too late to correct it.”

Lawrence explained that he had spent a huge percentage of his life trying to figure out how to look good for his boss so he could get a promotion or a raise in pay or, alternatively, dealing with his own need to achieve. He had read an article on success that explained that the more successful you are at work, the bigger the jobs and assignments you attract, which takes more and more time away from anything resembling a personal life. “My relationship with my wife is troubled because I am always at the office. To avoid having to face her disapproval, I tend to work longer and longer hours.” He added, “My son asked me the other night, ‘Dad, why do you have to work all the time?’”

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We make a living by what we get, but we make a  
life by what we give.

Winston Churchill

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He emphasized, “I’ve got lots of money in the bank, but what I have done to reach it has cost me dearly in terms of my aliveness. Robert, please talk to me more about what you mean when you say nonfinancial wealth and how you get there, because I feel close to insolvency in that area.” I explained that according to Choi, *wealth* has come to mean an abundance of items of economic value or the state of controlling or possessing such items, and it encompasses money, real estate, and personal property. There are hundreds of books on how to get wealthy in these terms, from *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* to *How to Be an Instant Millionaire* to *Think and Grow Rich*. Yet few books address the issue of creating nonfinancial wealth, the things that money can’t buy: a great family, wonderful friends, and robust health.

Lawrence asked if this was all about balancing work and personal life. I answered, “Yes—and no!” I explained that I had spoken to dozens of friends and clients over the years with extreme

jobs about the importance of balancing work and personal life, but it hadn't helped that much. The reason was that people with extreme jobs tend to be so caught up in the dangerous allure of work and so totally monocentric that it didn't matter. The real issue is not trying to balance work and personal life by going up and down on a seesaw, but rather being dual-centric, which means creating goals and aspirations in both areas.

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Your wealth is where your friends are.

Titus Marcus

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If a person has an Impossible Future of achieving power, financial wealth, and making a mark at work, it sounds like an incredible thing. Yet if one has an extreme job, it is a matter of time before this kind of monocentric approach to the business of living backfires in a string of bruised relationships, a poor sex life, or, worse, a heart attack. The turning point is to create an Impossible Future around achieving personal mastery and nonfinancial wealth, the things that money can't buy and which represent being dual-centric. I told Lawrence, "You only get one ticket to life and it says 'Admit One.' Period! It doesn't give you any money-back guarantees, and if you screw up, the big corporation in the sky doesn't care. Only you do."

Lawrence appeared to grasp what I was talking about and seemed determined to give it a go. He said, "If I understand what you are saying, it is not just important to have an Impossible Future or big game in business that I play 100 percent at, but also an Impossible Future or big game in my personal life. If you are a sane human being, you have to have goals and aspirations in both areas. In fact, if I am hearing you correctly, an Impossible Future in business can enrich your personal life and vice versa."

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It is health that is real wealth, not pieces of gold and silver.

Gandhi

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I then got into a conversation about what nonfinancial wealth would look like and feel like for Lawrence. As with most other people I have talked to about this, it is different for each person.

Lawrence stumbled around at first because this way of thinking was so new to him, but then he identified a few things that really mattered to him. For example, he wanted to have a wonderful feeling with this elderly father, starting with telling him how much he loved him; he wanted to have a deep, intimate, satisfying relationship with his wife; he wanted a closer relationship with each of his kids; he wanted to go on a hunting trip with his friends to Alaska. Most of all, he wanted to blunt the sharp edge that had gotten into his speaking and listening with both family and staffers. He wanted to become a much more compassionate and tolerant human being.

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Imagination unbound!

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## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this conversation is to help extreme leaders with extreme jobs “get a life” before it is too late. It is aimed at the 75 million baby boomers who will be leaving the workplace and want to do something besides retire and play golf in Florida for the rest of their lives. It is also aimed at leaders and managers in their thirties and forties who, in their quest for success, often blur the distinction between personal life and work life.

The conversation approaches this age-old issue with a triple loop and double loop learning approach that is much more powerful than merely offering people prescriptions like: “Leave work earlier,” “Take your vacations,” “Go to your kid’s science fair,” and so on. Everybody already knows these things, so why doesn’t everybody do them? The goal is to get people to think of themselves not just as businesspeople, but as complete human beings who want to live life to the fullest.

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I have always believed that the purpose of the corporation is to be a blessing to the employees.

Boyd Clarke, Chairman of the  
board and director at QLT Inc.

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The goal is also to reset people’s mind-set from being monocentric (referring just to work) to being dual-centric (referring to

work and personal life). The aspiration is to get people to be “two-headed.” Let’s create an Impossible Future that results in financial wealth and power through work that gets their creative juices flowing. Then let’s create an Impossible Future around achieving nonfinancial wealth made up of the stuff money can’t buy.

One final thought: at the end of the day, there is no such thing as work life and personal life; there is just life. The Masterful Coach’s job is to inspire, empower, and enable people to live life to the fullest.

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Wealth is not gained from perfecting the known,  
but from seizing the unknown.

Kevin Kelly, Author of *New Rules for the New Economy*

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## WALKTHROUGH

### ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN EXTREME JOB

Engage coachees in a dialogue about the joys and dangerous allure of having an extreme job. Then discuss their aspirations and motivations that drive the willingness to do things like cancel a family dinner because the boss drops a project on them at 6:00 P.M. that is needed on the West Coast by 7:00 A.M. the next morning. It is okay to be a bit provocative: “Money, power, and creative stimulation aside, do you really want to be so busy that you are essentially working three jobs or don’t have a spare moment?”

If it is appropriate, you might want to talk to coachees about what kind of havoc this is creating with their health and their family and friends. It may also be useful to talk about the financial wealth they have achieved, as it may not have dawned on them that they have made more money than they ever could spend.

If that is the case, why not coach, cajole, or provoke them to acknowledge that they won the game of financial wealth or are close to it and that it is time to create the next game: the game of nonfinancial wealth? They may want to continue to work eighty hours a week, but if they don’t, it won’t be as a result of deep-seated financial insecurity.

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Courtesies of a small and trivial character are the ones which strike deepest in the grateful and appreciating heart.

Henry Clay

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### ASK: WHAT WOULD BE NONFINANCIAL WEALTH FOR YOU?

Next get people to use their imaginations to figure out an Impossible Future in terms of nonfinancial wealth. Remind them about the importance of being dual-centric. Make it okay for them to include things like having a job that provides creatively challenging and meaningful work. Bringing growth infrastructure into developing countries may indeed give them a kick. At the same time, how would they like to include in their quest for nonfinancial wealth things like traveling to India to meet the Dalai Lama, pursuing their passion for fly fishing in Wyoming, painting watercolors on the Seine, or attending Verdi's operas with their spouse at the Met.

Once you present some ideas to stimulate their imagination, slow the conversation down and ask, "What would nonfinancial wealth be to you?" To draw people into this conversation, I often tell a story about a Harvard professor who teaches a course on happiness that over fifteen hundred students sign up for every semester. His research shows that happiness is rarely the result of material wealth, that is, possessing all the symbols and goodies and toys. Happiness is more often than not a function of what's happening in people's relationship to themselves and others.

Don't be surprised if you hear things like, "Instead of being a black cloud and looking critically at what a staffer does on a PowerPoint presentation or at the cannelloni that my wife makes for dinner, I would like to leave each person in a better space than when I found him or her." Or "I would like to be a kinder, more tolerant person, whether I am dealing with a potential joint venture partner in a high-intensity negotiation or standing in the service bay at my car dealer." Or "I would like to be much less judgmental when it comes to my elderly father."

## LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO BE IN ACTION SOON

Insight without action is a fool's game. Ask people to look for opportunities to be in action within the next thirty days. Tell them you will follow up in a month's time. In the follow-up, celebrate all wins. Where people have not kept their promises, avoid making them wrong. What's missing is a powerful question to ask at this time. It is predictable that the person under stress and pressure reverts to old patterns of behavior, and it may take some months to make a change. Your job as a coach is to bring up her commitment. Ask: "What happened? What's missing? What's next?"

## THINGS TO DO/PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Write a one-page manifesto of what *nonfinancial wealth* means to you and what you are going to do to realize it.
- Avoid just saying, "I found my balance. I love my work; it's not a job, but a lifestyle."
- Remember the movie *Bucket List*? Write a bucket list of things you would like to do before you die.
- Go on a spiritual pilgrimage: Saint Peter's in Rome, the Temple of David in Jerusalem, Mecca, or a retreat with the Dalai Lama.
- Make a list of bruised relationships you would like to heal, and tell these people, "I am really sorry!" Include those with parents, old colleagues, and forgotten friends.
- Figure out how you can leverage your leadership skills or competency in your domain to do something in the wholehearted service of others.
- Do something for your health: a cooking class in Chinese, Japanese, or Thai cooking, or an exercise class three times a week. No excuses!

## WIZARDRY: THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

### TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING: ALL YOU HAVE IS WHO YOU ARE

Your job as a coach is to connect unintended results to ways of being or thinking that are presently unknown to the person.

## THE LEADERSHIP DECLARATION: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

- I am committed to . . . [the possibility of being a whole person who achieves nonfinancial wealth—getting the effort and struggle out of living].
- I am committed to giving up . . . [just being a businessperson in an extreme job and pretending that's all there is].
- Opportunities to be in action . . . [meet with my coach on this next week and don't give it short shrift].

## DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING: THINKING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

- How am I looking at attaining wealth today? How does the way that I am looking at it need to change?
- How am I thinking about wealth today? How does my thinking about it need to shift?
- This is what I know about creating wealth . . . What I need to learn is . . .

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW

- A blinding flash of the obvious: create nonfinancial wealth.
- Distinguish between being monocentric around work and dual-centric in life.
- There is no such thing as personal (work) life; there is just life.
- You = Your calendar. We become whom we spend time with.
- Make a list of things to do to achieve a dynamic balance in your life, and do them.
- The last word. There is no last word!





## PART FOUR

# MASTER CLASSES WITH ROBERT HARGROVE

A master class is a class given to students of a particular discipline—music, drama, painting—by an expert of that discipline. The difference between a normal class and a master class is usually the structure. In a master class, all students and observers listen as the master works with one student at a time. The student, typically an intermediate or advanced player, performs a single piece that he or she has prepared.

The master interrupts to give advice on how to play it, often providing his or her teachable point of view—“play with passion”—as well telling stories about the composer. The student is asked to play the piece again, and the master interrupts as he or she sees fit and coaches repeatedly until the student breaks through and plays the piece with perfection.

I had the opportunity to sit in on a master class at the New England Conservatory of Music with Benjamin Zander and was not only very inspired; I saw it as a marvelous format to do coaching in a group. Most of the students were already technically proficient, and Zander’s main task was to get them to break through the fear of making a mistake so they could play the music with passion and become a great musician.

Zander was both professional and provocative, challenging and supportive, tough and compassionate. I remember him telling one cello student, “The way you are playing that Bach piece right now could land you a seat in a symphony orchestra making fifty thousand dollars a year, as well as a nice little house with a white picket fence and a nice little wife and 2.5 nice little kids.”

“However,” Zander said provocatively, “Bach didn’t write that piece for someone like that; he wrote it for the glory of God.” Zander instructed the student to play the piece again, and something miraculous happened. The student broke through just being a great technician and became a great musician. I have to admit that Zander was so tough in holding his line that as I watched, I was literally squirming in my seat.<sup>1</sup>

It struck me that this could be a great format to coach executives. The idea I had was to bring a group of executives together and coach them one person at a time on a particular topic they were dealing with in front of the group—for example, how to break out of the no-growth morass, how to recruit and develop top talent on a budget, how to shift corporate culture.

Each person would say how he or she was handling a goal or issue and honestly acknowledge any breakdowns. The coach, in this case, would draw people out, question what they take for granted, and provide them with advice by way of a teachable point of view (stories, metaphors, analogies)—for example, “If you want to break out of the no-growth morass, you have to create an innovative strategy that takes you into uncontested territory. Stop trying to compete in overcrowded markets.” At a certain point, participants in the group who have similar jobs are free to kick in ideas, which facilitates team learning.

The chapters in Part Four provide both a master class for your development as a coach and material for conducting a variety of different master classes with a coachee or group of coachees on a topic. These master classes build on the 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations and drilling down deeper into some of the issues that may come up.

### *The Master Classes*

- Secrets of Great Groups: Become a Masterful Facilitator
- Creative Collaboration 3.0: How to Coach People to Deal with Strategic Dead Ends, the China Price, Customers Jumping Ship
- Jump on the Reinvention Roller Coaster: To Reinvent the Organization, First Reinvent Yourself

- From Defensiveness to Learning: How to Recognize and Disperse Defensive Routines with Individuals or Groups
- Provide Meaningful Feedback: How to Give Feedback That Rips the Blinders Off Without Making Them Resent You
- Teaching New Skills and Capabilities: Move Between Performance and Practice Fields
- Creating a Coaching and Mentoring Culture: Look for Openings Rather Than the Big Bang
- Coaching Small Enterprises: Get People to Race Up the Value Chain and Wallop Wal-Mart
- Build a Super-Successful Coaching Practice: Lesson 1: How to Get Clients
- Get People to Bring Their Whole Selves to Work: Give Them an Opportunity to Make a Difference



## CHAPTER TWENTY

# SECRETS OF GREAT GROUPS

## Become a Masterful Facilitator

*Never doubt that a small group of dedicated people can do something to change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

MARGARET MEAD

It seems that every leader at the top I have ever worked with talks about the executive team. Yet in most cases, “the team” is a euphemism for a bureaucratic configuration of direct reports or political contrivance: “go along to get along.” It’s a rare occasion that the team emerges into a small group of dedicated people who actually do something to change the world.

## THE ERA OF THE GREAT MAN IS OVER

This master class is about how to coach a leader at the top who wants to realize an Impossible Future and sees (even though the charismatic images of the leader as John Wayne, Indiana Jones, or “I Am Legend CEO” surround us) that the leader who exudes integrity, is the best and the brightest, and single-handedly saves the day is a thing of the past. The fact is that there is an alternate reality based on what a group can do.

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None of us is as smart as all of us.

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Throughout history leaders who were not so charismatic or legendary, often without conscious intention, have created great

groups that accomplished something new or extraordinary. This includes such people as John Seeley Brown of Xerox PARC and his team who invented the personal computer; Charles Garfield, who was the leader of the team that put the first man on the moon; John Wooden, the Wizard of Westmount, who led the UCLA basketball team to eleven straight national championships with a soft-spoken, self-effacing style.

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Great groups of talented and gifted people accomplish much more than any of the talented gifted people in them could accomplish individually.

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According to Warren Bennis, who wrote *Organizing Genius* (1998), great groups have certain characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Yet one characteristic stands out: the ability of a leader to pull together a group of talented people who accomplish much more than any talented individual could accomplish individually. While a great group does collaborate, it tends to be with an intact team versus the kind of wide-open nature of scientific collaborations on genome theory, collaboration on software programs like Linux, or even bloggers who are leading collaborations around improving a targeted company's products or customer service. Take time with the leader you are coaching to go through Bennis's list of the characteristics of great groups in order to tease out the distinctions for them and get them to see how their executive team stacks up:

- Every Great Group has a superb leader.
- Great Groups and great leaders create each other.
- The leaders of Great Groups love talent and know where to find it.
- Great Groups are full of talented people who can work together.
- Great Groups think they are on a mission from God.
- Every Great Group is an island—but has a bridge to the mainland.
- Great Groups see themselves as winning underdogs.
- Great Groups always have an enemy.
- People in Great Groups have no distractions.

- Great Groups are optimistic, not realistic.
- In Great Groups, the right person has the right job.
- The leaders of Great Groups give each person the freedom to discover their own greatness.
- Great Groups always deliver a product.
- Great work is its own reward.

## THE MASTER COACH'S ROLE IN TRANSFORMING HOW GROUPS THINK AND INTERACT TOGETHER

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Why is it that the individual IQs of the group members average 130, while the collective IQ is about 13 as evidenced by the quality of their dialogue?

Why is it that so many people in groups espouse team learning but have defensive routines that cancel out teamwork?

Why do we criticize others before we even try to understand them? Speak instead of listen?

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We have seen what it takes for a Masterful Coach to inspire an individual to invent an Impossible Future, have an impact on the person's thinking, and begin the process of organization reinvention. Yet to realize an Impossible Future, a Masterful Coach must also have an impact on how people in groups think and interact together. This involves coaching people to be able to engage in a high quality of dialogue that builds shared understanding that perhaps leads to something new.

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In most executive teams, the same five people have the same conversation.

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Let's imagine a typical monthly meeting of the executive group in your company. First, imagine that the person at the top has made a really arbitrary decision that has ticked off the others and has created an undertone of cynicism among them. Second, it's a meeting with the same five people who have met for the past



three years. Inevitably they have the same old conversation; rarely is there a new conversation with fresh insights. Third, defensive routines, like making hot or controversial issues undiscussable, are widespread. All of this tends to lower not just the level of team work but the collective intelligence of the group.

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Reimagine your weekly meetings as something wonderful.

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Now let's reimagine that typical monthly meeting as a truly awe-inspiring event. The leader at the top has dramatically shifted the statement-to-question ratio: "Here is how I see it. Tell me how you see it differently." Second, it may be the same five people, but with the inclusion of others with an interesting point of view that doesn't subscribe to the same old orthodoxies. Third, instead of the IQ of the group resembling dumb and dumber due to various defensive routines, all of a sudden it is as if you invited Einstein, Mozart, and Abraham Lincoln to the meeting.

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Focus on the whats, such as goals, and the hows, the way the group thinks and interacts.

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Coaching a group to transform the way it thinks and interacts starts with getting people to engage in robust dialogue, not on just the whats, like goals and plans, but the hows—how the group thinks and interacts together. Instead of making the facts undiscussable that the CEO dominates the meeting, the team members send mixed messages about cooperation and pretend that they are not mixed, or that some members have shut down, the first step is often to discuss the undiscussable. Throw out some thought-provoking question like these: "What's your experience of sitting in a typical meeting with this group?" "What works about our conversations with each other? What doesn't work?" "What's missing?"

## ENCOURAGE ROBUST DIALOGUE

Physicist David Bohm wrote that there is a difference between discussion and dialogue. In a discussion, people's intention is

to advocate their own views and beat down others' views, which often leads to an incoherent conversation. In a dialogue, the intention is to gather divergent views and perspectives so as to build shared understanding (or construct a shared mental model), which perhaps leads to something new. Bohm described a dialogue as a "free flow" of meaning in the group, whereby people give their opinions but at the same time are willing to be influenced by others.<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS

In coaching generative leaders and teams that are up to something to engage in powerful conversations, I introduce the difference between dialogue and discussion. Building on this, I also introduce a new model: collaborative conversation. A collaborative conversation has the spirit of a dialogue in that it brings together divergent views and perspectives in a free and open exchange, yet it is much more focused. It is not just a process of building shared understanding but also a process of shared creation. Its purpose is to reach a goal, solve a problem, or discover something new.

### DECIDE THE GOAL OF THE CONVERSATION AND THEN EXPERIMENT

Although Edison, Einstein, or Mozart won't be at the next meeting you facilitate, there are some conversational recipes you can use to unleash the power of group genius. As I suggest in the chapter on collaboration, it's a good idea to start dialogues with a one-sentence definition of the problem at hand—for example: "How do we break out of the no-growth morass?" "How do we get rid of the stifling corporate controls and create a culture of innovation?" "How do you provide middle-class prosperity to people with software design degrees in a poor city in India?"

The next step is to experiment with different conversational recipes. Here are a few that I like.

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*Conversational Recipe 1: Geniuses Look at Problems from a Variety of Different Perspectives*

Geniuses expose themselves to leading-edge work in a wide variety of fields. As a result they are able to look at a problem in numerous ways. By contrast, most people in groups tend to get locked into a particular solution or cause. When you see this happening, your goal should be to slow the conversation down in order to get people to consider their situation from a variety of views and perspectives. One tactic is to ask thought-provoking questions: “Have you read a fascinating and intriguing article from a totally different field that might have some bearing on the problem?” “Have you thought about inviting a ‘newbie’ or ‘freak’ to the meeting who could offer a radically different perspective?” “How about looking at this problem in the opposite way?” If all else fails, ask people to stop and take a break: “Let’s take a ten-minute break and come back.”

*Conversational Recipe 2: Generate Wild Ideas*

It is important to generate new views and perspectives so as not to get too caught in brainstorming from within the box of the same old orthodoxies. Once you do that, don’t be reluctant to get the group to apply brainstorming techniques to generate more and then better ideas. I also like the idea of generating wild ideas that push people to think creatively and not be hemmed in by orthodoxies. It is important to list the ideas on a whiteboard or flip chart so as to have a record of the conversation that you can use to build on when it comes time to take the next step. (For guidelines on brainstorming, see Chapter Twenty.)

*Conversational Recipe 3: Geniuses Juxtapose Different Ideas and Come Up with Novel Combinations*

In the normal course of events, geniuses don’t come up with original ideas; rather, they combine ideas in a way that leads to breakthrough solutions. For example, Steve Jobs and his design team came up with the idea of the iPod not by inventing a new technology but by combining the ideas of an MP2, music, and then video downloads, and a CD store with licensed deals to music companies. Once a group brainstorms a variety of solutions

to a problem, have them try to combine them rather than just pick one. Stimulate people with questions like: “How could you do both A and C?” “How could you gain the benefits of both A and D while minimizing the risks?”

*Conversational Recipe 4: Geniuses Make Their Ideas and Thoughts Visible Through Drawings and Sketches*

I was facilitating a group on building a shared vision in a mini CollabLab called “Cabin in the Woods.” The company had done very well in the past, and the CEO, who was near retirement, didn’t want to create a vision that invalidated all he had accomplished in the past. I started by talking about the idea that the company had created an Impossible Future and big game in the past around operational excellence. “However,” I told the group, “now the scoreboard says that you have won the game, and it is time to create the next game.” I could see that the CEO bought into this idea and I began thinking of an image that would allow him to celebrate and express that. I looked out the window at the mountains outside and saw one peak close up and another close behind it. The perfect image: the vision had to do with “Climbing the Next Peak Through Innovation.”

*Conversational Recipe 5: What Would Midas Do?*

When people finally come up with a breakthrough solution, they often celebrate by patting themselves on the back. The next thing you will probably hear is that it is not in the budget, which often leads to abandoning the idea when it can still be used. A good question to ask if this happens is, “What would Midas do?” As you will recall, Midas was the ritual king who refused to let money put a kink in his plans in part because he had an almost infinite wealth as everything he touched turned to gold. Asking “What would Midas do?” can have a transformative effect. First, it gives people renewed determination to go out and find the money they need to implement their solution. Second, it gets them focused on what they can do to start implementing with the resources available to them.

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## HOW TO BE A SKILLED FACILITATOR OF COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS EVERY DAY

### CONTRACT: CREATE A FRAMEWORK FOR FACILITATION

A key point in facilitating collaborative conversations is to develop a contract with the group so as to have clear expectations. Contracting involves clarifying the mission of the group, your role as a facilitator, and the nature of the intervention. This kind of contract is really a verbal agreement that states explicitly how the skilled facilitator and group are going to work together. For example, there are two different kinds of facilitation. You might ask, “Is the group more interested in basic goal-oriented facilitation or developmental facilitation?” Basic facilitation is helping a group to produce a desired outcome, agree on its objectives, make an important decision, and iron out conflicts. Developmental facilitation involves helping the group learn to think and interact better, as well as achieve desired outcomes.

Developmental facilitation usually involves a deep learning cycle in which group members inquire into the nature of group thought and behavior. It also involves creating practice fields where people experiment with new ideas, tools, and methods, such as fluid framing, dialogue, and the Ladder of Inference. My experience has been that this kind of intervention requires working with a group from nine months to a year.

### ESTABLISH THE GOVERNING VALUES

Once you are clear about the nature of the facilitation, the next step is to establish the governing values and ground rules. The facilitator can be more effective for the group if both are operating from the same governing values and ground rules. At Masterful Coaching we introduce people in groups to a set of four governing values that provide a basis for improving the way they think and interact together:<sup>3</sup>

- *Sharing of valid information.* People need more than arbitrary opinions and assumptions on which to base a discussion. They

need the speaker to provide valid information that can be supported with examples.

- *Free and informed choices.* This applies to agreeing to the objectives of the meeting, the methods of inquiry, and any changes in thinking and behavior.
- *Internal commitment to outcomes.* This means that each person feels personally responsible for the decisions that are made because they are intrinsically compelling or satisfying.
- *Learning is as sacred as results.* A meeting is not over until the group has learned something from it.

You might uphold the governing value of valid information, for example, by encouraging group members to share all relevant information. Or you may encourage people not to simply accept what others say at face value, but to test all opinions and assumptions by asking, “How do you know that?” In this way, you become a role model for the group members and teach them to be cofacilitators of the conversation.

## ESTABLISH THE GROUND RULES

Introduce a set of ground rules for collaborative conversations and ask the group to follow them. “I always explain to people that if they choose not to operate by the core values and ground rules,” says Roger Schwarz, author of *The Skilled Facilitator*, “I will operate by them anyway, because I believe they work. If people have a problem with that, then I tell them maybe they’ve got the wrong guy for the job.”<sup>4</sup>

The following ground rules are especially useful for making effective decisions in situations where the group is trying to reach high-performance goals, introduce change, or deal with complex issues or problems:

### *Ground Rules for Effective Groups*

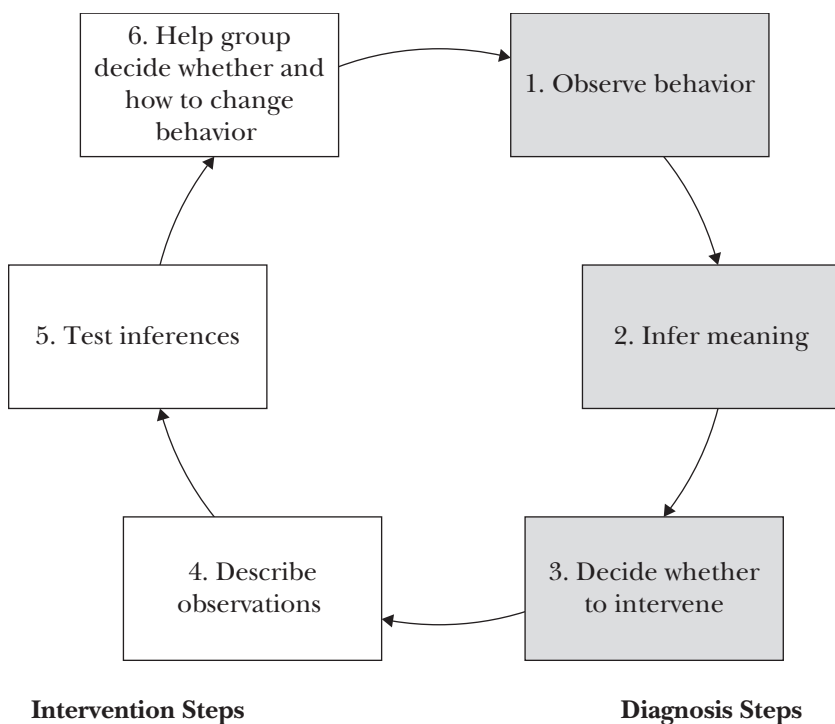
1. Test all opinions, assumptions, and inferences.
2. Share all relevant information.
3. Use specific examples, and agree on what important words mean.
4. Explain your reasoning and intent.

5. Focus on interests, not positions.
6. Combine advocacy and inquiry.
7. Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements.
8. Discuss undiscussable issues.
9. Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed.

## USE THE DIAGNOSIS-INTERVENTION CYCLE

The intervention cycle has two phases: diagnosis and intervention (Figure 20.1). The diagnosis phase consists of observing behavior, inferring meaning, and deciding whether to intervene. It is

FIGURE 20.1. THE DIAGNOSIS-INTERVENTION CYCLE



Source: Used with permission of Roger M. Schwarz. From *The Skilled Facilitator* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

important to avoid jumping to conclusions, making snap judgments, or projecting your own pet theories onto the group. In the intervention phase, carefully observe what's happening in the group, drawing inferences only from directly witnessable behavior. Think about what you want to say before intervening so as to promote learning versus defensive reactions. Remembering these points will keep you out of trouble.

It is important to intervene to improve the way the group thinks and communicates when you see that (1) the group is rushing ahead to the next topic and it's obvious that there has not been enough shared understanding built on the last topic; (2) people are advocating a position but discouraging inquiry about the reasoning process by which they came to that position; (3) people are saying things and their meaning is not obvious, or what they are saying is confusing or not understood by other people in the group; (4) people are dancing around issues or making them undiscussable; or (5) the conversation is going too fast and there isn't time to question people's reasoning processes. When you see these things, interrupt the conversation with one of the following:

- "I think we need to slow the conversation down a bit here."
- "Let's do a deep dive on this topic."
- "What are the data on which you based that conclusion?"
- "When you said . . . , what did you mean?"
- "Is the group really addressing the issues that are on people's minds?"

## ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BALANCE INQUIRY WITH ADVOCACY

I have seen executives struggle with various issues in attempting to engage their groups in a richer quality of dialogue, for example, forgetting about the importance of bringing people with divergent views and backgrounds to the table or being reluctant to disagree, which prevents the clash of different views that light creative sparks. Yet by far the biggest single issue that executives struggle with is balancing advocacy and inquiry.

In normal business discussions, people tend to advocate their positions in order to win and discourage inquiry into them.



For example, an executive may have fallen into the habit of saying, “I have decided this, and I really don’t want to discuss it.” If he were attempting to balance advocacy and inquiry, he might begin this way instead: “Here is what I would tend to decide, and here are my reasons. Now tell me how you see it differently.” Or a member of a group might say, “Here’s how I see the problem. My reasoning is . . . How do you see this situation differently?”

The same advice applies to listening. Normally people listen through a stream of assessments: “That’s nuts,” “I fully agree,” “That’s wrong,” or “I like that.” The context in which they make these assessments is one of guarding their perspective or holding onto their opinions and assumptions. If our goal is to balance advocacy and inquiry, then we listen by trying to understand what another person is saying and by having the courage to step into his or her frame of reference.

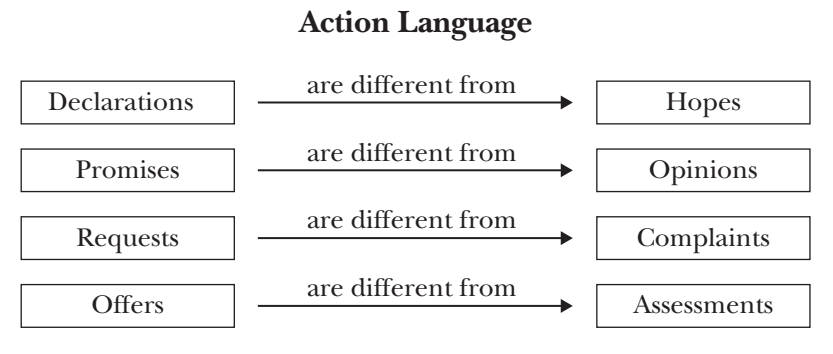
One of the reasons that people often resist collaborating is that they do not want to be influenced or be changed by understanding what others have to say. The idea of suspending one’s opinions and assumptions and stepping into someone else’s frame of reference is a daunting one. Although this reluctance is understandable, mental rigidity, egocentric thinking, and resistance can lead to a group’s demise.

## COACH PEOPLE TO USE ACTION LANGUAGE

One of the ways that a coach can encourage collaborative conversation is to elicit powerful commitments from people, while at the same time creating a context wherein they are expected to honor their word.

It is important that these promises and requests be explicit. Often when people listen, they think they have a promise when really what they have is an “I’ll try.” Or they think they made a specific request when actually it was vague and fuzzy. When coaching people, help them make a distinction between a promise and an “I’ll try,” between a request and a complaint, and between an offer to do something and an opinion on how things should be done. If you hold people accountable to making explicit promises, requests, and offers and to living their word, you will not only encourage action but help others to learn and grow. Figure 20.2 illustrates action language.

FIGURE 20.2. ACTION LANGUAGE TO BUILD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING



### FIRST AND FOREMOST, BE A TEACHER

It is also effective to provide the group with a set of guiding ideas, tools, and methods that empower them to have a collaborative conversation. I have found the following helpful:

- *Check in and check out.* At the beginning of each meeting, check in by asking each person to take a moment and say what's on his or her mind that could be distracting. Check out by asking people to say what they are left with from the meeting.
- *Hold a meeting without an agenda.* Occasionally have a meeting without an agenda to build a community feeling. Give people a chance to tell stories about who they are and what the project means to them.
- *Use self-awareness as a resource.* Ask yourself, "What am I trying to achieve by this conversation?" "What is on my mind?" "Am I willing to listen and to be influenced?"
- *Balance advocacy with inquiry.* Question: "What led you to that view?" "What do you mean by that view?"
- *Build shared understanding.* Ask: "When we say the word . . . , what are we really saying?"
- *Explore impasses.* Ask: "What do we agree on and disagree on? What does this impasse tell us about differences in basic assumptions?"

Giving feedback to the group rather than singling out an individual can often be more effective and cause less reaction. In

any case, it is important to give feedback in a way that does not promote a favorite game called “kill the facilitator.” Feedback can also be given outside the group to individuals whose behavior is having a negative impact on the group or to individuals whose influence or actions could help move the group forward.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

# CREATIVE COLLABORATION 3.0

## How to Coach People to Deal with Strategic Dead Ends, the China Price, Customers Jumping Ship

How does the United States compete with China and India? How do insurgent companies wallop incumbents like Wal-Mart, SAP, or ExxonMobil? How do support functions and cost centers keep from getting outsourced? How do millions of tiny Web businesses, hawking goods in a bloody price war, get a foothold that allows them to achieve sustainable profits and growth? Although I am sure many people would think I am naive or simplistic, I think I have found the answer (or at least parts of it).

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So you think you've found the answer: game-changing innovation, great customer experience, transforming your support functions to professional service firms.

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The first part of the answer is to race up the value chain from selling raw materials to products, to services, to experiences, to dreams. The second part has to do with making the leap from being a support function or cost center that irritates customers to a professional service firm that mesmerizes them. The third part has to do with recognizing that in a world of discontinuous change, the only way to cut it is through discontinuous

innovation. We see so many examples today of BigCo's blundering and SmallCo's achieving new wealth as a result of radical game-changing innovation.

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Think again! None of that will happen without the Missing X Factor.

Robert Hargrove

*Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration*

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Brilliant answer? Dumb? You decide. Yet each part of the answer depends on a Missing X Factor, which is going to be a crucial discipline for this century. It is called "Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration," the title of one of my books and the subject of this master class.<sup>1</sup> I discovered a powerful and profound insight in writing this book: given change, complexity, and competition, the era of the legendary CEO who figures it all out from the top is over. So is the era of the single solitary genius who has a eureka moment in a lab in the woods and comes up with an innovative product or service. Strategic resilience, nonstop innovation, and creating great customer experience are social activities that come when people connect and collaborate.

## COLABOR VERSUS COCREATION

Everyday basic collaboration, whether it occurs in a garage, lab, or customer service department, is about practical problem solving. The coachee is most likely to ask, "Just how do you define *collaboration*?" First, the basic idea for collaboration comes from the word *colabor*. Basic collaboration is about everyday, down-to-earth, practical problem solving. It involves people with different backgrounds thinking and working together to come up with creative solutions to practical problems not attainable on an individual basis—for example, resolving an irritating customer service issue through a collaboration of service representatives, customers, technicians, bloggers, and so forth. This may lead to one-off solutions for the customer, but may not lead to reinventing the customer service department or company.

Not-so-everyday advanced collaboration is about the act of creation and world-shaking innovation. On a more advanced

level, collaboration is not about collaborating but about cocreation. It involves bringing far-flung collaborators together around a compelling goal or problem and engaging in a dialogue that elicits an interesting juxtaposition of ideas and perhaps leads to something new. Collaborations often result in creating something that never existed before and can often have profound implications. For example, the Wright Brothers collaborated on the invention of the airplane, Edison and his team collaborated on the invention of the light bulb, Steve Jobs and “The Woz” collaborated on the invention of the PC, and the Beatles collaborated on a new generation of popular songs.

### COLLABORATION REQUIRES LEADERSHIP

Most of us tend to believe in “the great man theory of history”—the charismatic individual on the white horse who alters the course of history. Yet in many cases, great leaders are not the smartest or most talented; rather, they are talented individuals who come together as a great group to accomplish something extraordinary. For example, when many people think of the birth of our nation, Washington crossing the Delaware or Jefferson writing the Declaration of Independence comes to mind. However, it was many people working together, each taking the lead in his or her own area of expertise, who established, as Joseph Ellis says in his book *American Creation*, a set of ideas and institutions that became the blueprint for political and economic success for the nation-state in the modern world. It is my observation that there is this kind of organizing genius behind every great collaboration, whether it happens in a garage, laboratory, or recording studio.<sup>2</sup>

### WHEN UNLIKELY COLLABORATORS CONNECT AROUND GOALS, CREATIVE SPARKS ARE LIT

In the early years of the United States, the village banker, blacksmith, and baker would gather at the local tavern to swap ideas about local problems. Yet the creative sparks that were lit and resources at hand were so limited that the pace of innovation was slow. With the invention of the steamship, railroad, and telephone,

the number of connections between far-flung collaborators began to increase and, with it, the pace of innovation. Today with millions connecting and collaborating on the Internet, innovation is taking off at warp speed. Leaders who want to realize an Impossible Future can't just wait for creative collaboration to happen in a random way; they need to make sure that the company Web helps talented people connect by design. Reaching the vision often requires the conscious act of bring extraordinary combinations of people together in one room to collaborate on specific goals or problems.

### COLLABORATION DEPENDS ON CREATING SHARED SPACES

In his book *Serious Play*, Michael Schrage makes a brilliant point that collaboration depends on “shared spaces” that allow people to think and work together: a blank canvas, a cocktail napkin, a blog, a prototype of a new shopping cart. For example, Pablo Picasso and George Braque had different views of modern art, but decided to pick up their brushes and collaborate using the shared space of a blank canvas; the outcome was Cubism. Schrage says there is a direct correlation between shared spaces and collaborative behavior.<sup>3</sup> I watched a movie of three IDEO design teams charged with inventing a new supermarket shopping cart in seventy-two hours. People talked “collaboration,” but it wasn't until they started working on the prototype that collaborative behaviors emerged.

### COLLABORATION IS MORE ABOUT PEOPLE THAN TECHNOLOGY

Collaboration has always been about people thinking and working together more than technology and organization. The Declaration of Independence was not the work of one leader, but a brilliant collaboration of leaders whose technology was no more than a quill pen and whose organization was no more than a common cause. James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the secrets of DNA by twisting pieces of aluminum into the double helix. The Beatles collaborated on the album *Norwegian Wood*, which had twelve hits, using basic recording equipment in one all-night recording session.

With a billion people connecting on the Internet, collaboration is multiplying like rabbits on espresso. “The nearly 1 billion people online worldwide—along with their shared knowledge, social contacts, online reputations, computing power, and more—are rapidly becoming a collective force of unprecedented power. For the first time in human history, mass collaboration across time and space is suddenly economical.”<sup>4</sup> Today millions are making the shift from “the power of I” to “the power of we” in large part due to connecting on the Internet and making use of the collaborative spaces found on it: forums, blogs, Wikis. It is revolutionizing how decisions are made, the way research and development are carried out, and how customer service is managed.

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A fundamental shift in power is taking place as people reach out and touch the Web.

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It used be that the CEO and his court controlled not just the board but which vassals could collaborate with whom, with unwritten rules like “don’t violate the chain of command,” “don’t get out of your lane,” and “stick to the knitting.” Today if the CEO’s decisions are all wet, he or she is likely to hear about it publicly through rebellious bloggers who don’t want their jobs or stock price frittered away. At the same time, the boundary of the corporation is blurring as talented project managers reach beyond HR to the Web to recruit top freelance talent from anywhere and everywhere. Finally, customer vigilantes with blogging power are forcing not only whole companies but whole industries to reinvent themselves: airlines, PC makers, and cell phone carriers are favorite targets.

## COLLABORATION 1.0; COLLABORATION 2.0; COLLABORATION 3.0

Today people talk about Collaboration 1.0 and Collaboration 2.0. The difference? Collaboration 1.0 was about moving people; Collaboration 2.0 is about moving bits. In Collaboration 1.0, if you wanted to collaborate, you had to walk down the hall, hold a big off-site meeting, or get on an airplane, or maybe send an e-mail. The headaches of time, distance, and jet lag made bringing people



together a daunting task. Today all you have to do to begin to collaborate is switch on your laptop, set up a blog on your R&D project or internal Wiki on marketing issues, and start inviting people to engage in some serious play. People don't have to travel to communicate and collaborate with you, and they can do so according to their own schedule.

Collaboration 3.0 is a hybrid of a serious happening and new shared spaces. After I wrote my book on collaboration almost a decade ago, I designed a process called a CollabLab.<sup>5</sup> This is an innovative solutions environment that proved to be highly effective at unleashing the power of group genius as it applied to coming up with Blue Ocean Strategies, inventing new products with game-changing potential, reinventing customer service, and marketing breakthroughs.

The CollabLab is not your typical business off-site meeting, but more like serious play or a happening. It provides a wonderful shared space for people to connect, share ideas, and collaborate, often resulting in exciting, thrilling, breakthrough solutions. Compared to the normal "set-and-get" process that usually happens in seminars, the CollabLab is a highly participative process where people are literally jumping out of their seats. Collaborative behaviors emerge as people brainstorm strategies, build rapid prototypes, and develop models.

The first CollabLabs were Collaboration 1.0 and later moved into the beginnings of Collaboration 2.0 by using proprietary shared spaces like Lotus Notes. Today the CollabLab is a 3.0 hybrid. It combines what can be accomplished when you bring talented professionals together to creatively collaborate in an environment that naturally gives rise to breakthrough thinking and eureka moments with the kind of follow-through that is possible through the shared spaces of the Internet. It's the dynamic combination of these elements that makes it possible to take a big idea from concept to prototype and from there to completion.

## GIVE PEOPLE THE EXPERIENCE OF A COLLABORATION THEY WILL NEVER FORGET

I am standing in the Forest Pines Hotel Conference Center in the Humberside area of northern England. A group of street dancers

called the Eurhythmics is drumming on plastic buckets as they stomp their feet and whip the crowd into a frenzy. Greg Goff, managing director of ConLim, who has on occasion met with Tony Blair to discuss energy prices, steps out from behind the scenes with two large poles in either hand. He and the Eurhythmics start pounding in a percussive rhythm to a quarter beat. Changing the game, changing the game, changing the game, changing the game—until the crowd is roaring.

This is the beginning of a two-day CollabLab with the theme of “The Customer: Changing the Game.” The CollabLab gives people the experience of having a powerful collaborative conversation around a specific issue or opportunity that results in the process of shared creation. The power of the CollabLab is not in the coach providing the group answers, but in the constant pulling apart of perspectives and putting them back together again in new configurations.

## THE COLLABLAB COMPRESSES TIME AND ALTERS HOW A GROUP THINKS AND INTERACTS

The CollabLab is nothing like a yearly strategic planning and budgeting meeting. Nor is it a presentation by a Big Eight consulting firm with hundreds of PowerPoint slides, nor is it a typical three-day training program. In the CollabLab, an extraordinary combination of people is gathered together to discuss a goal or problem in a fast-paced, powerful process that is stimulating, engaging, and profound. For example, you might bring together veteran executive vice presidents and young high flyers, M.B.A.s and technology geeks, marketing experts and engineers, anthropologists and software designers, research scientists and artists, salespeople and customers. The group is not there to talk about routine business or plan what each will do separately after the session. The goal is to create something together during the session that didn’t exist before.

The serious play that happens in the CollabLab could involve inventing a Blue Ocean Strategy that gets the company out of competing in a bloody red ocean, dream up advertising campaigns complete with mocked-up ad copy; develop rapid prototypes

of game-changing products, exciting new services, or customer experiences; and reinvent channel partners or customer service processes from a blank sheet of paper.

Part of the power of a CollabLab is that people achieve goals in a few days that would normally take weeks or months. This is made possible by masterfully coaching the process and skillfully employing its seven accelerators:

1. *A big significant goal.* Pick a goal that inspires commitment and collaboration. A one-sentence problem statement keeps the discussion focused.
2. *Research.* Advanced topic research allows the coach to introduce information that reveals possibilities and breaks paradigm paralysis.
3. *Juxtapositions.* Juxtapose multiple talents and perspectives in the event so as to light creative sparks and unfreeze biases.
4. *Focused dialogue.* Define the problem so as to generate possibilities, design a solution, and do a deep dive.
5. *Tools and techniques.* Use brainstormers, metaphors, rapid prototyping, the Ladder of Inference, and toys.
6. *Rapid prototypes.* People create something together in the session versus talk about what they will do later.
7. *Seven iterations.* Each iteration takes half as long and doubles the output of the previous iteration.

The coach works with a design team to define the topic of the session, pick attendees, and design the exercises. For example, in an exercise called “Back to the Future,” people are asked to imagine that it is now 2010 and a reporter from a major business journal is coming to interview them because they have become a totally inspired organization. The company has transformed from [fill in] to [fill in]. They have launched a product revolution in their industry and their customers love them. How did they do it?

The coach must also design and orchestrate the process so that people in groups are able to bring order to the wider range of possibilities. One way to do this is by asking them to create a set of solution specification criteria to provide a platform for designing a solution that becomes the basis of effective action. The intention is that everyone leaves the CollabLab with a fully developed

collective work product, as well as an action plan to test it, and get feedback from which they can do another iteration.

## THE MASTERFUL COACH'S ROLE IN A COLLABLAB

Most companies set stretch goals but often fail to reach them. The reason is that they have a confining network of mind-sets, policies, rules, and regulations that they are caught in. The role of the Masterful Coach is to creatively, collaboratively, and iteratively unleash the collective intelligence of the group.

This might involve doing some research on what's happening on the fringes of their industry and thus introducing new ideas that jar loose paradigms and allow the group to discover a much wider universe of possibilities than would otherwise be considered for solving the problem at hand. For example:

- Starbucks, Home Depot, and FedEx came up with Blue Ocean Strategies that made the competition irrelevant. What could be an enormous strategic opportunity for your company?
- "I have learned that the best companies in your industry run their R&D process, marketing, customer service in this way [fill in the blank]. How do you do it? Why do you do it that way? What constraints would be in the way of shifting your approach?"
- "I have learned that your customers hate hearing the words, 'We don't do that' from your sales reps and salespeople. How about, 'Here's how three leading companies eliminated those words from their vocabulary. How could you do even better?'"

The coach's role not only involves designing and orchestrating exercises according to a fairly intense schedule, but observing what is happening in the group, making assessments, and intervening appropriately. For example, to ensure that the group's biases don't prevent certain people or points of view from being listened to, the coach might add an exercise that helps people to "step inside my frame of reference." Or the coach may also introduce additional tasks to make sure the group doesn't come to closure too early. Or he or she may move the group along when there is nothing further to be gained. This role means acting as a coach one minute, then a scribe, then an artist, then a Socratic questioner.

## THE COLLABLAB PROCESS: A THREE-STEP MODEL

I vividly recall one CollabLab I did with the Estée Lauder cosmetics company with the purpose of reinventing the brand so as to increase market share and sales. I spent two weeks researching the history of the company, including its dynamic founder, Estée Lauder. I spent time hanging out in Filene's department store in Boston, Harrods in London, and some key boutiques in Paris. And I saw why the brand needed to be reinvented. For the most part, the Estée Lauder cosmetic sections of the stores were seldom visited by women under forty-five or fifty. What I still needed to learn was why this was the case.

I started off the CollabLab by showing a film of Estée Lauder, who was a woman of today if ever there was one. She was an ambitious entrepreneur, as well as a great wife and hard-working mom who saw cosmetics as way to bring a little luxury into her own life and those of other women. After showing this film, the group began to discuss the undiscussable.

First, they discussed that the company had an autocratic management style and that they had never dared to open their mouths before. The executive vice president who sponsored the event encouraged people to continue to speak out, which led people to open up. There were a lot of strong feelings that Elizabeth Hurley, the model in all the brand's ads, was not someone they believed most women could identify with: "She looks like she rolled out of bed looking glamorous and sexy without any makeup on at all."

This introduction to the CollabLab was just the beginning of two days of insightful, rigorous, creative, and inspiring conversations that launched reinvention of the Estée Lauder brand. I will go further in the Estée Lauder story as well as the ConLim story as I introduce the CollabLab process.

The CollabLab is based on a number of conversational recipes that provide both a metastructure for the whole event (usually two to three days) and other conversational recipes that are used to stimulate the best creative and analytical thinking from both individuals and the group. The CollabLab process varies, yet is in large part an amalgam of three to four conversational models I

discovered in writing *Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration*. The model I like best is based on the “Scan, Focus, and Act” model introduced by the Meta-Systems Group in 1983 and developed by Matt Taylor and Gail Taylor into a conversational process.<sup>6</sup>

In preparation for the CollabLab and going through the phases outlined below, it is crucial to work with the sponsors of the event to come up with a one-sentence definition of the problem or opportunity. In general, edgy is better than fuzzy and leads to generating new possibilities. In the ConLim Europe CollabLab, for example, the strategic goal was to double the business (which included fourteen hundred gas stations throughout Europe). The problem statement was “One more euro” [per customer visit].

In the Estée Lauder CollabLab, the problem statement was simply, “Put a new face on the brand” (and reflect that in all the advertising and in store merchandising). In some CollabLab sessions, the original problem statement dissolves as new perspectives are gained and a new one is created:

*Phase 1: Scan to learn and create options.* As people discover new possibilities through a rapid Web-based discovery process, they naturally begin to discover new possibilities.

*Phase 2: Focus on the best solution.* People focus on the best solutions at hand and then come up with a design solution with WOW: a PC design, ad campaign, or customer experience, for example.

*Phase 3: Act.* Execute by building a rapid prototype, scale model, or pilot. People learn to collaborate as they work in shared spaces.

*Phase 4: Feedback and iteration.* Do a sanity check. Take prototypes to the next level. Keep collaborating on the topic through blogs, Wikis, and other shareware.

## PHASE 1: SCAN

People in the group broaden their perspective by creating a rich shared information pool and then explore a wide range of options. Once the problem statement is clear, the next step is to discover alternative possibilities for solving it. This starts

with scanning the horizon with the view to seeing the issue from as many different perspectives as possible. Companies on the fringe of your industry might be a source of ideas, or you might look to leading competitors in your own or unrelated fields, or observe customers' shopping habits to detect unmet needs and wants.

Soon people find themselves in a richly diverse shared information pool that interrupts the old conversation they have around the office every day, which leaves them with few options. This leads to a new conversation in which alternative possibilities and fresh insights begin to emerge. To accelerate this part of the process, we use brainstorming, based on the premise that the best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas. It's important to point out that if the generating possibilities process is too short, the brainstorming will tend to get stuck in the same old boxes.

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Generating possibilities starts with scanning the horizon to learn about portents of change in your industry, your competition, and your customers.

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In the Estée Lauder CollabLab, we broke the group of thirty or so people into three subgroups. One team began brainstorming possibilities for putting a new face on the brand. The group came up with a large list of fascinating and intriguing names of possibilities for new models. Another group came up with possibilities for a new ad campaign that would appeal to younger women. A third group began brainstorming in-store counter displays.

By contrast, in the ConLim CollabLab, the group started from the premise of "one more euro" (per customer visit to a gas station) and addressed this issue: "While I am here, I might as well [fill in the blank]." The brainstorm generated ideas that started with banking services through ATM machines that not only dispensed money but also lottery tickets and locational services such as directions to local stores and restaurants. Then came ideas like an optometrist corner and Disney toys for cranky kids in the car. And finally they offered a slew of convenience items that would

create a warm, inviting ambiance: freshly baked goods right out of the oven, fresh flowers, gifts, wine, fruits and vegetables, even steaks and chops.

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The majority of design solutions developed earlier are discarded in favor of those that meet a set of specific design criteria and that have WOW!

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## PHASE 2: FOCUS

In this phase, people begin to focus on those possibilities that will result in the best resolution of the situation. The majority of possibilities generated in the previous phase are discarded in favor of those that will become part of a design solution. This is done by asking a group to come up with a set of solution specification criteria (usually three to five) that they will build a solution around. The design criteria must express people's desires and needs, as well as constraints.

Designing a solution that meets desires and needs but also addresses limitations sets up a creative tension that produces new ideas, fresh approaches, and innovative solutions. The Conoco CollabLab, identified these solution specification criteria: (1) "one more Euro," (2) new offerings that were compact (the Conoco Jet stations had limited square footage), and (3) a solution that combines high tech with high touch. Soon people began thinking in terms of a mini-mall that sold gas rather than a gas station that sold convenience items. Freshly baked goods, flowers, wines, and toys became part of this model, as did the ATM machine with locational services. At the same time, many other items were discarded, especially those that took up a lot of space.

In the Estée Lauder CollabLab, the group settled on a four-point set of solution specification criteria for reinventing the brand:

1. The solution needed to build off the strength of the brand's heritage (as inspired by the film of Estée Lauder).
2. It needed to put a new face on the brand that younger, married, working women with children could identify with.



3. It must emphasize not just luxury but also a certain quality of life.
4. It must be executable.

The group created many possibilities for putting a new face on the brand in the brainstorming sessions and covered the walls of the room with photos. With the solution specification criteria in hand, the surprise choice the group came up with was Aerin Lauder, granddaughter of the founder.

Like her grandmother, Aerin was not only entrepreneurial and a working mother with a bent for luxury, but someone other women could look at and think, “That’s me.” (A year after the CollabLab, Aerin’s name or photo showed up in almost every issue of *Vogue*. She appeared on *Harper’s* best-dressed list, and *W Magazine* called her a “fashion muse.”) Along with the new brand image represented by Aerin Lauder came ideas for new advertisements, new products like a perfume called Intuition (representing the essence of a woman), new counter displays, and new distribution channels such as boutiques that the company would never have considered before.

### PHASE 3: ACT

The next step after developing a conceptual model of the solution is to begin to take action by creating a rapid prototype. This means designing, building, and testing a prototype in physical reality. Rapid prototyping is about acting when you don’t have the answers, using whatever resources and materials are at hand.

For example, the first PC mouse trackball came from a designer who had gone to a local grocery store and bought a butter dish for \$1.50. It seemed to the designer like an ideal container for placing your hand over and rolling a ball around in. A good example of how rapid prototyping can apply to strategy, not just to products and services, comes from Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon.com. One day sitting in his office, he read that the growth of products and services over the Internet for the next five years would be 2,500 percent. He quit his cushy job on Wall Street and told a moving company to pack up his things.

He wasn't sure where he wanted to set up his office, so he told the movers to head west.

He called the movers one day later to tell them to drive to Seattle, where there were lots of high-tech workers. He scribbled the name of the company on the flight out, originally "Cadabra," as well as various items he could sell over the Internet: books, tapes, and electronic gadgets. Within three days, he designed a rapid prototype of a test Web site using a simple program he had bought in a computer shop. He discovered by trial and error that books were the way to go, and the company was off and running.

Rapid prototyping is a great way for a group to see whether they have truly built a shared understanding of a solution. For example, each person in a group may have a design for a beautiful car, but only when they start to build a scale model are they able to build a shared understanding of what beauty means, or determine whether the different parts of the car that each has worked on truly function as a whole. Finally, rapid prototypes can lead to accidental genius. Watson and Crick discovered the secrets of DNA not in an ivory tower, but by playing around with spiral-shaped metal sculptures.

In the CollabLab, this third phase usually involves asking the group to build a quick prototype in the form of a three-dimensional working model. We ask people to do this whether the task is designing a new strategy, a new brand campaign, or a new product or service. Although the initial response to this is varied, it isn't long before the group takes up the task with enthusiasm. One of the things that moves matters along is that the CollabLab design team has usually raided the local hardware store, toy store, or newsstand and assembled some interesting items with which to get the group going on the model.

At Estée Lauder we provided scads of magazines and foam construction materials so the group could design camera-ready ads, build display counters, and model distribution channels with wires. In the Conoco CollabLab, we provided Tinker Toys and Legos and told the group to construct the gas station (the mini-mall of the future) in two feet by three feet of space.

I am always struck by how people show up in a CollabLab session as they participate in this process of shared creation. They are brought back to the playful and creative days of their

childhood when they made snowmen, built forts, and created dolls and dollhouses. Instead of the bored expressions and glazed-over eyes you see in most management trainings, people's eyes light up as they see the possibilities they have brainstormed come to life in three-dimensional form. At Estée Lauder, people were literally jumping out of their seats with enthusiasm as they designed a slew of prototypes. Soon these were appearing in magazines ads, store displays, and distribution channels with great results.

## COACHING IN THE COLLABLAB

Some of the most important work of the coach in the CollabLab happens before people come together, doing the research and development of the program, along with helping to define the problem. In the CollabLab, the coach needs to focus on setting up the context of the day as well as the conversations. Then the coach needs to focus intently on moving the process along at a fairly rapid pace.

It is helpful that the coach have the mind-set that building shared understanding best happens bit by bit. All too often, when people are given an assignment of coming up with a new strategy, process, or product, more often than not they try to perfect a solution without soliciting enough feedback along the way or soliciting reviews incrementally. When others finally see the results, it could be either a joyous surprise or a depressing day. This is why in the CollabLab, we “iterate, iterate, iterate”!

Coach people not to come to conclusions too early and to build shared understanding in stages. For example, encourage them to create a rough PowerPoint presentation of the new marketing campaign or show a rough sketch of the product or a wire model of a new value chain, and then use these to right the course before it is too late.

Get into the mind-set of coaching a quarterback who is facing a two-minute warning the moment people start a new project. For example, instead of coaching the group to throw a long ball, coach them to grind out a few yards, passing to the sidelines to stop the clock. Make sure the team is aligned in the huddle about the game plan. The idea is to keep the momentum, the

energy, and the collaborative conversation going each step along the way. The coach also provides tools as needed to move the process along. The following brainstorming guidelines capture the spirit and pace of the CollabLab. Post these in six-inch letters in the CollabLab room:

1. *Create a one-sentence problem statement.* Create a problem statement that is well honed. Edgy is better than fuzzy.
2. *Create playful rules.* Encourage wild ideas. Go for quantity. Be visual.
3. *Number your ideas.* “Let’s try to get a hundred ideas.” “Oh, I like idea number 6.”
4. *Build and jump.* Build on ideas by developing them. Connect ideas so as to lead to new possibilities.
5. *Bring in toys.* Go to a local toy store and find interesting toys or gadgets that can provide a spirit of play for the event, as well as serve as metaphors that stimulate creative thinking.
6. *The space remembers.* Create a “knowledge wall” for the best ideas. Connect and merge ideas as the session goes on.
7. *Do some energizers.* These can be group icebreakers or something physical like tossing a ball around the room to bring the energy level up.

## COACHING QUESTIONS

These are the top ten “Have You’s?” for getting started with collaboration.

- Have you recognized that your Impossible Future most likely will depend on creative collaboration? Cite some examples.
- Have you not just put words like *innovation* in your company vision and values statement but also the word *collaboration*?
- Have you identified a big goal or problem that can be solved only by bringing far-flung collaborators together?
- Have you acted as an organizing genius in bringing talented, unlikely collaborators together to light creative sparks?
- Have you bashed bureaucratic barriers to collaboration? Name a few things that you have done in this regard.

- Have you recognized someone in the past week in your area for a single act of cross-functional excellence?
- Have you become a blogger? Do you blog with both employees and customers as if your company's life depended on it?
- Have you created simple tools and shared spaces for employees to engage in collaboration? Does every office have a whiteboard and markers?
- Have you set up your corporate Web site in a way that makes it easy for employees to blog about pivotal business issues: marketing, sales, service?
- Have you set up a system of internal Wikis (research library) in support of a game-changing new product in the pipeline?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

# JUMP ON THE REINVENTION ROLLER COASTER

## To Reinvent the Organization, First Reinvent Yourself

*Today is the day to declare an Impossible  
Future and jump on the reinvention roller  
coaster. This is the hour of the unexpected.*

Great organizations set the agenda: Sears, GM, Toyota, The Gap, The Limited, Wal-Mart, Tesco, P&G, 3M, Intel, IBM, Apple, Nokia, Cisco, Dell, MCI, Sun, Microsoft, Google, Schwab, GE, Southwest, Ogilvy, Netscape, Virgin eBay, Amazon, Sony, Amgen, BMW, CNN, YouTube, Facebook, Nike—to mention only a few.

Yet sooner or later almost every great company, despite its sincere and honest intentions to be the best it can be, ceases to set the table and instead becomes somebody else's lunch. Think Sony versus Apple, Ford versus Toyota, IBM versus Microsoft, Marks & Spencer versus Tesco, Sears versus Wal-Mart, Netscape versus Google, The Pentagon versus al-Qaeda. At that point, the leaders of great companies either stick to the winning strategies of the past, which often turns out to be a death spiral, or they stop, step back from the heat of the action, and reinvent the organization.

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The impetus to declare an Impossible Future and reinvent the organization or public institution can come from paying attention to pressing human needs and wants.

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It is my observation that there are perhaps three kinds of reinventions:

- Type I reinventions: Rising needs and expectations of customers or the public. Example: The fact that 48 percent of Americans don't have access to adequate health care shows that the managed health care system has broken down and needs to be reinvented.
- Type II reinventions: A new competitor fresh from the niche is about to make you irrelevant. Example: Andy Grove of Intel—"Only the paranoid survive"—recognized that the competition in the microchip business was so fierce that Intel had to reinvent itself or go out of business.
- Type III reinventions: The emergence of a new work context.

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Your Impossible Future can also come from recognizing that your business model is running out of gas and someone or something is about to eat your lunch.

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This master class is designed to teach you how to coach leaders in three phases of the reinvention:

1. *The wake-up call*: Getting leaders to face reality and recognize the crucial moment in time when it's important to break with the past and jump on the reinvention roller coaster
2. *What's the plan man?* Designing the Impossible Future and reinvention process that will deliver on it
3. *Implementation*: About execution, always the most important job of the business leader

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It is not the strongest of the species that survives nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.

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Charles Darwin

Finally, you can't help but notice that most reinventions, whether they start with a creative entrepreneurial leader and a blank sheet of paper or a CEO of a BigCo with an eraser, seem to

have certain dynamics: a leader who has a vision, magnetism, and sense of destiny—Jack Welch, Steve Jobs, Lou Gerstner of IBM; a business concept innovation—Monster.Com, Amazon.com, Infosys; the transformational power of new technology—Monster, Amazon, Infosys; or the ability to involve others in a purpose larger than themselves.

The master class applies to the leaders of big organizations with billions in physical assets that represent the hard shell of past experience who are wedded to a winning strategy from the past, as well as to small upstarts that are wedded to a single product or service offering.

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Reinvent or die!

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## THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF REINVENTION

Let's discuss some of the key principles of organizational reinvention to guide our thinking and actions in coaching leaders to reinvent themselves and their organizations:

1. The first step toward an Impossible Future is to face reality.
2. The person at the top must make "leading the reinvention" the big game.
3. In order to reinvent the organization, you must reinvent yourself first.
4. Come up with a vision of the reinvention and a teachable point of view to shift mind-set.
5. Leaders generate action by being milestone fanatics.

### PRINCIPLE 1: THE FIRST STEP TOWARD AN IMPOSSIBLE FUTURE IS TO FACE REALITY

Why is it that kings, presidents, and CEOs often live in a self-sealing bubble, sticking to the old ways and rejecting the new despite the evidence that it's all falling apart? At Masterful Coaching, we talk to people about the importance of having a dream, but also about the importance of facing reality, often providing the nudge that leads them to the reinvention paradigm. This starts with taking



them through the “what’s so” process: Is top talent defecting in droves? Are customers frustrated with not just the company but also the whole industry? Is a new competitor with an innovative business concept or powerful new technology straight from the niche about to make you irrelevant? The inescapable conclusion is “Reinvent or die” and “Out with the old; in with the new.”

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Has top talent stopped playing with passion? Has your business model run out of gas? Have you become irrelevant to your customers?

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### *Execution*

Bring the executive team together and spend a full day on the “what’s so” process. Post answers on flip charts around the room. Keep asking: “Anything else?”

- What’s been accomplished here lately? Create a list of “feel-good” accomplishments.
- What are the hard facts versus the rosy interpretations? Talent wars? Profits? Growth?
- What has changed in the business landscape? What should we be paranoid about?
- What is the new competitor’s business model? How does ours need to change?
- What are the customer’s rising needs and expectations? Biggest frustrations with our industry?
- What’s working and not working?
- What’s missing that, if provided, can make a difference? (Not “What’s wrong?” but “What’s missing”? Think solution, not problem.)

## PRINCIPLE 2: THE PERSON AT THE TOP MUST MAKE “LEADING THE REINVENTION” THE BIG GAME

Your job as a coach is to instill the guiding principle that Impossible Futures that represent a shift don’t just happen; they take leadership. Leaders of the reinvention must therefore make it the big game, not just something else on their plate. Leaders

like Jack Welch, Larry Bossidy, and Joel Klein spent 70 percent of their time on it. Leaders must play it as if their life depends on it, because in a lot of ways it does. It takes masterful leadership to play the reinvention game because no matter how good a plan is, each step you take to reach your goal will create support from the forces of change and opposition from the forces of nullification.

### *Execution*

Ask these coaching questions to shift mind-set and move the action forward:

- Are you up for an Impossible Future that is as tough as climbing Mt. Everest?
- Are you ready to blow up your business model?
- Are you ready to get behind radical change? List three examples from the past.
- Are you ready to take on the monster of transforming corporate culture?
- Are you ready to continue your day job, plus add a night job?

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Be the change you want to see in the world.

Gandhi

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### PRINCIPLE 3: IN ORDER TO REINVENT THE ORGANIZATION, YOU MUST REINVENT YOURSELF FIRST

It is relatively easy to coach people to come up with a vision of an Impossible Future and need to reinvent the organization. The tough part is getting them to see that they need to reinvent themselves first. For example, Jim “Mad Dog” Nokes, president of a big oil company, told me he wanted a growing business, empowered leadership, and nonstop innovation. The difficulty was getting Jim to see that his tendency to default to his own top-down leadership style and winning strategies, “Run full, run cheap,” under stress and pressure was a major obstacle. That’s why I always tell people I coach, “The first step in a dramatic organizational change program is obvious: dramatic personal change!” Masterful Coaching and meaningful 360-degree feedback can be a powerful catalyst in this process.<sup>1</sup>

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Leading a reinvention is an act of creative destruction that elicits maximum concerted human potential in the wholehearted service of others.

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### *Execution*

Ask these coaching questions to shift mind-set and move the action forward:

- Have you told ten people how passionate you are about this Impossible Future?
- Are you willing to totally reinvent not just the organization but also yourself? Have you looked in the mirror and seen something ugly?
- What are the most important governing values for the reinvention? Where is the biggest gap between the values you espouse and the things you actually practice?
- Are you open to receiving 360-degree feedback? Who are the people you want to put on the list?
- What do you personally need to stop doing? Start doing?

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Leaders offer a vision, a teachable point of view, to create a shift in context that automatically alters the content.

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## PRINCIPLE 4: COME UP WITH A VISION OF THE REINVENTION AND A TEACHABLE POINT OF VIEW

When Michael Bloomberg became mayor of New York City in 2002, the city's school system was about to flounder on the rocks. Math and science scores, as well reading, were 30 percent below the national average. Bloomberg hired Joel Klein as educational chancellor with a mandate to "Transform Education in NYC." The transformation process? It involved a teachable point of view: Accountability, plus empowerment, plus competition = Reinvention. Klein, empowered to shake up the system, held principals accountable for test scores and shut down over sixty schools. He created positive competition by making school scores

public, resulting in more parents spending more time tutoring their kids. By 2005, there was a dramatic improvement.<sup>2</sup>

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Think “Share of Stomach” vs. “Share of Market.”  
The enemy is coffee and tea, not Pepsi.

Teachable points of view of Roberto Goizueta,  
former chairman of Coca Cola

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### *Execution*

Ask these coaching questions to shift mind-set and forward action:

- What is your reinvention objective or transformational goal?
- What is your teachable point of view about success?
- Have you communicated your big game and teachable point of view with every breath you take?
- Have you generated a new conversation about the vision and teachable point of view that exists independent of you as the originator?

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Impossible future = Sum of projects/milestones  
= Sum of projects/accountability = Rapid review  
and commitment to the truth.

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## PRINCIPLE 5: LEADERS GENERATE ACTION BY BEING MILESTONE FANATICS

Creating an Impossible Future requires not just a vision but a reinvention plan and powerful action. This could mean coaching the leader to set major milestones and three priorities for the year for every group—for example: growth, innovation, and Six Sigma. It could also involve catalytic breakthrough projects with game-changing potential. A team at Nike decided to reinvent the business in the face of strong competition from Adidas by blurring hot new products and mesmerizing retail events. A team at Sony, weary of hearing how the iPod trumped the Walkman, started a WOW project based on setting the standard for high-density CDs. The coach’s job is to get people to take action rather than dwell on mistakes. Keep asking: What happened? What’s missing? What’s next?

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Create three priorities for this year for every department and corresponding catalytic breakthrough projects.

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### *Execution*

Use these coaching questions to shift mind-set and forward action. When breakdowns occur, look for what's missing rather than who is wrong:

- Are you leading your reinvention through teachable points of view, stories, and your own example?
- Have you created a list of milestones? Are you a milestone fanatic? Give some examples.
- Are there three priorities for each department to set goals against (for example: innovation, leverage the Internet, or go international)?
- Have you asked the most talented people in every department to initiate catalytic breakthrough projects in the service of the reinvention?

## FURTHER ADVICE ON REINVENTION

### COACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS

1. Get leaders to pay attention to human needs and wants not addressed by current institutions or business models—for example: health care, fuel economy, or immigration.
2. Engage the leader in a dialogue about the fact that reinvention is an amazing opportunity, not just a threat. Think Jack Welch of GE, Fred Smith of FedEx, and N. Murthy of Infosys.
3. Discuss the difference between taking a stand for the reinvention and playing 100 percent versus the great programmatic fallacy of just bringing on a program.
4. Ask people to come up with a vision of the reinvention that alters perceptions of what's possible and reframes thinking. Stop thinking like a bank; think like a customer.
5. Brainstorm how you can achieve your transformational goals with an innovative new business concept or powerful new technology.

6. Every reinvention means changing minds. You change minds with a teachable point of view you share, the stories you tell, and the life you lead.
7. Talk to people about the fact that reinvention often requires tough decisions: shutting down sixty schools or laying off thousands, for example.
8. Talk to people about alignment of wholes, not just the parts. Hold all-hands meetings with direct reports on the reinvention, and then ask them to hold all-hands meetings with their teams.
9. Be a milestone fanatic. Offer rapid reviews of catalytic breakthrough projects and engage in truth telling.
10. Keep asking: What happened? What's missing? What's next?

### EXAMPLES OF REINVENTION TO DRAW FROM

- The Pentagon's "The enemy—from Fascism to Communism to Terrorism"
- Instant infrastructure: "GE Becomes a General Store for Developing Countries"<sup>3</sup>
- UPS—Big Brown's New Bag: from shipping boxes to synchronizing the world of commerce
- FedEx—From truck driver to customer experience director (via drivers)
- Nike—From product to blur of brand and mesmerizing retail experiences
- "Club Med," said CEO Jean-Marie Dru, "is more than just a 'resort'; it's a means of rediscovering oneself, of inventing an entirely new 'me.'"
- Bloomberg Services—from consulting Fortune 500 CEOs on financial data to head coach and mentor capitalist of new businesses
- RE/MAX—from just another real estate office to a life success company
- From managed health care to consumer-driven health care—Reggie Herzlinger, Harvard Business School
- From organization support functions that are cost centers and bureaucratic drags to professional service firms and profit centers

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW USED BY LEADERS OF THE REINVENTION

- Up the value-added ladder—raw materials to goods to services to solutions to experiences
- “In 1933, Thomas J. Watson Sr. gave a speech at the World’s Fair, ‘World Peace Through World Trade.’ We stood for something, right?”—Sam Palmisano, chairman and CEO, IBM
- “Dare to be insanely great.”—Steve Jobs
- “Ask yourself: What is impossible that I am going to do today?”—Guy Laliberte, founder of Cirque du Soleil
- Trumpet an exhilarating story.
- “If you can’t state your position in eight words or less, you don’t have a position.”—Seth Godin, “Permission Marketing”
- “Think share of stomach, not share of market. The enemy isn’t Pepsi, it’s coffee and tea.”—Roberto Goizueta of Coca Cola
- “What can UPS/Brown do for you? (Never say we don’t do that!)”—Mike Eskew, CEO
- “Innovate or die.”—Jeff Immelt, GE
- “Win through design.”—David Kelly, Ideo
- “Think like a business.”—John Young, Under Secretary of Defense, Pentagon
- Cost cutting is a death spiral.
- “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”—Gandhi

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

# FROM DEFENSIVENESS TO LEARNING

## How to Recognize and Disperse Defensive Routines with Individuals or Groups

*It's like an attic in a one-hundred-year-old house that's never been cleaned, full of old baggage.*

IBM MANAGER, ON WITHHELD COMMUNICATION  
IN COMPANIES

Why do executives often preach teamwork but act in a dictatorial way without even being aware of it? Why do many managers come to the big meeting and advocate their views in order to win, yet are careful not to upset others whom they are trying to beat? Why is it that project leaders with sincere and honest intentions and a reputation for high integrity cover up mistakes rather than admit them?

This strange, often bizarre, and frustrating behavior that happens in groups was expressed well by a cartoon I saw in the *Economist* a number of years back. It showed a group of smiling, sophisticated executives sitting around a conference table discussing an important issue. Under the table were dozens of beasts of a demonic nature with hostile glares, sharp teeth, long nails, swords, and shields that would have made fitting gargoyles for any medieval castle.



While most managers intend to do a good job, they often invest a great deal of energy in what Chris Argyris calls defensive routines.<sup>1</sup> This can be very debilitating for people. “I believe we suffer every day, in every single business meeting we go to,” says Peter Senge. “Part of us is getting killed, is really getting torn apart. We can’t talk about it, we can’t even name it.”<sup>2</sup> Yet what can we do?

As one practitioner told me, “The despair that many managers feel about being unable to have an authentic communication where they discuss the undiscussable, talk about problems openly, and overcome the game playing that goes on in most groups is the same as the despair a peasant in a third world country feels trying to overcome his poverty.”

## DEFENSIVE THINKING AND BEHAVIOR FOR AVOIDING THREAT AND EMBARRASSMENT

For many people, defensive reactions are almost second nature. As economist John Kenneth Galbraith said, “Faced with the alternatives between changing one’s mind and proving there is no need to do so, just about everybody gets busy on the proof.”<sup>3</sup> Chris Argyris defines a defensive routine as whatever an individual or group does to avoid situations that are embarrassing and threatening—which at the same time does not eliminate the source of the embarrassment or threat.

Before the terrorist attacks on 9/11, many in the U.S. intelligence community sensed al-Qaeda might attack but kept their thoughts to themselves to avoid embarrassing their bosses. When people collude with colleagues to avoid talking about hot issues, defensive routines become routinized into organization-defensive routines. People may be able to protect themselves against being yelled at, censured, or punished, but the price they pay for this in terms of aliveness, personal growth, and learning is enormous.

The result is that people develop “skilled incompetence,” producing errors as a result of automatic behaviors that they carry out with skill and dexterity. They resist learning because it exposes their incompetence, yet at the same time, they remain incompetent and are blinded to this because they are unaware of their defensive behaviors.

## WHAT A MASTERFUL COACH CAN DO

One way the Masterful Coach can make a difference in breaking through the posturing and defensiveness that occurs in most organizations is to recognize and dispel it by bringing it to the light. This means finding a way to help people talk about things that they generally make undiscussable to avoid being uncomfortable. For example, people may try to appear as though they are in agreement even when they are not to avoid a blow-up.

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Conversation is the most sublime of human experiences.

Goethe

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One of my favorite examples of breaking through organization defensiveness is the story of when Thomas Labrecque, then-chairman and CEO of Chase Manhattan Bank, summoned his top twenty-four company leaders to a three-day conference without an agenda, there was a great deal of anxiety about what would happen. Is he angry? Frustrated? What's this going to be about? What the participants found out was that they were being invited to what would later be called a "happening."

Labrecque, a thirty-year Chase veteran, knew what could happen when too many things in the organization become undiscussable. So before he solicited the views of the executive vice presidents about a mission statement, Labrecque started by asking the participants a key question: "What are the issues we haven't addressed with one another?" He told them he didn't see the point of leaving the room until these issues were addressed.

Labrecque and an outside facilitator told the group members that the first thing they were going to do was to rate and then discuss their ways of working with one another. They would then break into groups and rate and discuss their own management skills. The members of each group would critique their colleagues' assessments of themselves. It soon became clear that the group members profoundly distrusted one another.

Significant differences exploded among the different business unit leaders, not only about how people perceived themselves, but also over the direction in which the company should

go and how it should get there. It was obvious that a raft of defensive routines had been built up over the years. Some executives had built elaborate strategies for protecting their turf, including office spaces that were barricaded with electronic glass doors and had three or four armed security guards.

According to one source, “I got a call on the first day of the program from my boss. I asked, ‘How’s it going?’ He said, ‘It’s a bloodbath. We had better pack up now and get back to the office before all hell breaks loose.’ He did call back, however, the next day to say that things had really turned around.”

Another person said, “It’s not that we don’t like one another; it’s that we don’t innately trust one another based on some things others have done; and we have never talked about it before. Seeing just this was a real eye opener.” Many issues that came up were controversial. In most cases, after some initial hesitation, the company leaders began speaking to one another.

In subsequent months, the executives successfully hammered out a new vision, organization structure, and compensation system. According to one executive, “Those were the days that changed Chase.”<sup>4</sup>

## THE SOURCE OF DEFENSIVE ROUTINES

According to Argyris, the defensive routines by which people operate in most groups are rooted in a master program, or what he calls “Model I Theory-in-Use.” The master program tells people to (1) pursue their own purpose, (2) stay in unilateral control of themselves and the situation, (3) maximize winning and avoid losing by advocating their position, (4) be invulnerable and suppress emotions, and (5) avoid the appearance of incompetence by covering up problems and bypassing errors. The master program leads to a whole pot full of defensive behavior. Here are some of the most frequently used defensive routines:

1. The Big Three: heavy-handed tactics, pleasing, or avoiding
2. Suppressing dilemmas by accepting tranquilizing moves and discouraging testing of assumptions
3. Advocating one’s position in order to win and avoiding inquiry while not upsetting others

4. Making issues that represent a threat or a potential embarrassment undiscussable
5. Using fancy footwork to pretend that problems are not that big or to deflect blame
6. Covering up errors and then covering that up
7. Withdrawing and distancing oneself from problems in order to maintain high morale

In many organizations, most people are aware of the defensive routines at play, but they don't dare to name them or talk about them. It's like pretending that the emperor has clothes, even though everyone knows he's stark naked. Instead, people seek and extend support for their defensive routines in order not to be exposed. Yet so that people do not have to feel that they are acting unethically, they often cover up the cover-up by saying things like, "Think positively," "We don't want to have a blow-up in the group," or "You have to be diplomatic." The result is a climate of resignation, escalating error, and an unmanageable organization.

## STRATEGIES FOR ELIMINATING DEFENSIVE ROUTINES

For years I had been asking myself: "How do you sort out the spaghetti?" I talked with Chris Argyris and some of his former students, Bob Putnam, of Action Design Associates, and Roger Schwarz, author of *The Skilled Facilitator*.<sup>5</sup> According to Bob Putnam, there is a dilemma facing anyone who seeks to do this work. On the one hand, defensive routines are so pervasive that they are taken for granted. On the other hand, the very ways of thinking and acting that create defensive routines also prevent people from engaging productively in the learning activities that are necessary to change those ways of thinking and acting.

Sustaining a learning process in the face of this dilemma requires at least four steps:

1. *Establish a compelling link between the current dysfunctional leadership and team behavior and business results.* For example, the

senior managers of a manufacturing company recognized that ineffective strategic decisions were due to rivalry among the leaders of different divisions. If members of the group do not see a compelling link to business issues, few are likely to commit themselves to the learning process. Thus, in most cases, it makes sense to begin with business issues that are causing difficulty and identify whether defensive routines are a key barrier to progress.

2. *Encourage people to see that despite good intentions, they often produce unintended consequences due to lack of awareness.* People are most aware of their own good intentions, of the poor results they seem to be getting, and of what other people are doing to contribute to these results. However, they are often unaware of other people's good intentions and of how their own actions contribute to poor results. This can lead to misunderstanding of motives or actions as well as to unintended consequences. The key is to help each party see how his or her actions contribute to unintended results.
3. *Enable people to see that it is possible to learn to think and act in ways that reduce defensive routines and increase effectiveness.* One thing you can do is to make it okay for people to disagree in the group. Said one client, "It used to be, 'You disagree; oh no!' Now it's 'You disagree; it's okay.'" You might say to your group, "Let's see if we can build shared understanding by understanding each other's thinking and data." Another good tactic is taking the list of defensive routines above, posting them on the wall at your next team meeting, and then asking people to discuss them openly.
4. *Create a frame for intervening through the governing values and ground rules.* It is important to establish governing values and ground rules before you begin to work with people. As Schwarz says, "This gives me a frame to work from and allows my facilitation skills to be effective. It also gives the participants a different frame to operate from than the 'master program.'" (See Exhibit 23.1.)

At the same time, helping people break the grip of the old models can bring up emotions; thus, it is important to contract with the group about how deep you are going to go. The net

## EXHIBIT 23.1. CONTRASTING MODELS FOR DEALING WITH UNDISCUSSABLES

MODEL I	MODEL II
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm separate and pursue my own agenda.</li> <li>• Seek unilateral control of myself and others.</li> <li>• Maximize winning by advocating my position, yet not upsetting others.</li> <li>• Be invulnerable by suppressing feelings and covering up errors.</li> <li>• Manage impressions to be acknowledged and avoid looking incompetent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm related and build shared vision.</li> <li>• Be committed to the cause; inspire commitment in others.</li> <li>• Balance advocacy with inquiry into others' views.</li> <li>• Learn from mistakes and see how I contribute to my own problems.</li> <li>• Being good allows me to look good.</li> </ul>

*Source:* Based on the work of Chris Argyris.

effect of this kind of intervention is transforming posturing and defensiveness into learning. Once these four steps are taken, you have created the readiness to work with the group. There are a variety of ways a facilitator can intervene with the group to move people beyond defensive behavior.

## BOB PUTNAM ON FACILITATING DEFENSIVE ROUTINES

Bob Putnam was kind enough to spend some time with me talking about what he had learned working with Chris Argyris and with clients in his own consulting business about intervening in organization defensive routines. According to Putnam there are three levels of intervention.

### THREE LEVELS OF INTERVENTION: BYPASS, NAME, AND ENGAGE

**Putnam:** Suppose you are at one of a series of meetings to review the strategic direction of a company. The head of one line of

business argues, “Where we have a competitive advantage is in my line of business. That’s where we should invest.”

The head of a different line of business says, “We may have an advantage there, but it’s a dying business. We’ve got to invest in growth areas.” Others are silent, but past experience gives you reason to believe that several of them may be thinking: “There go Bill and Charlie again. We’re never going to get past their prejudices.” You think this episode illustrates a defensive routine that reduces the group’s effectiveness. You would like to help. What might you do?

If your objective is to help the group make progress in today’s discussion of strategy, you might choose to bypass the defensive routine. That is, you might craft an intervention that improves the quality of the immediate discussion without naming or engaging the underlying defensive routine. For example, recognizing that Bill and Charlie are both advocating their positions but not inviting inquiry into them and have jumped to conclusions along the way, you might say, “When you say it’s a dying business, what are the data you are selecting to reach that conclusion?” Later you might ask, “How do others read that data? Do you reach similar or different conclusions?”

If your objective is both to help today’s discussion of strategy and also to lay the groundwork for altering the defensive routines that prevent the group from working effectively, you might name the pattern without engaging it. For example, you might say, “Bill and Charlie, I think that you are both advocating your views, but I’m not hearing any inquiry into the reasoning behind your views. When you say it’s a dying business, what are the data you are selecting to reach that conclusion?”

If your objective is to alter the defensive routine, then it is necessary to engage the defensive routine. The price of engaging is that the conversation shifts away from strategy to how members of the group are interacting. You might say, “I hear each of you advocating your view and I don’t hear any inquiry into the reasoning behind each view. I’m also thinking that each of you has made the same argument before; we didn’t make progress then, and I doubt we’re making progress right now. Let me check—do others see the same, or do you differ?”

Depending on what other members of the group then say, you might follow up by asking Bill or Charlie, "When Charlie [or Bill] was making his case, what was it that you were thinking but not saying?" As the inquiry continues, it may be possible to identify a pattern. The group members will then be in a position to design corrective action so they no longer are stuck in the pattern. The conversation that is stimulated by engaging interventions also surfaces assumptions that had been undiscussable and makes it possible to test their validity. Done well, engaging defensive routines can help members of a group experience the possibility of genuine team learning.

### THE CONTROLLED BURN

**Putnam:** Once in the early stages of working with a management group, we developed a metaphor that I think is useful for enabling people to discuss the undiscussable without causing a blow-up. We were in the midst of discussing a policy issue when a senior member of the firm interrupted somebody else, who became quite upset. The person who had been interrupted said, "Wait a minute. I've got to stop and say that you keep doing that, and it makes me angry." This went on for a couple of minutes. Then someone across the table said, "That explosion seemed to come out of nowhere. It was like a finger snap turning into a firestorm. This little thing blew up."

I asked, "How can a finger snap turn into a firestorm? It happens when there is a lot of dry tinder. What occurs to me is that we should take a half-hour or so and do some controlled burns." The idea of a controlled burn is to deal with an issue that might otherwise lead to an incendiary situation in a slow and controlled way. The objective is to do some work, gain some insight, and then go back to the agenda, not to change someone's personality or make everything all better.

In order to facilitate a controlled burn, I take an active role in asking people to look at the different sides of the issues. This involves asking individuals to give examples, checking to see if others recall the example differently, and inquiring into how people are thinking and feeling both at the time and as we



now talk about it. We develop a shared understanding of the dilemmas each person experiences and how these tangles occur. Often members of the group start to understand one another better and identify what each might do differently in the future. Whether they will in fact be able to act differently gets to the next issue, that of longer-term learning.

## DEVELOPING LEARNING CAPACITY: PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE FIELDS OR ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVITIES

**Putnam:** It's important to discuss the "what" in a group, such as goals and plans, but also to discuss the "how," how a group thinks and interacts. It takes year or so for a group to develop self-sustaining team learning capacity. Of course, this varies depending on how diligently people practice and on the difficulty of the issues they face. I recommend a combination of practice and performance fields. *Performance fields* means while you are having a budget meeting or regular staff meetings. *Practice fields* means time set aside to reflect and practice. I find that it is vital to do both and to have each activity inform the other.

For example, in one organization, the business task is developing strategy. Online sessions are designed to make progress on this task. The practice field sessions are scheduled in which people can reflect on interactions that have been difficult, introduce concepts and skills, and practice using them. Then at the next performance field session, members try to use what they have learned in order to make better progress on the strategy task.

## METAPHORS, TOOLS, AND METHODS

One of the things that can be enormously helpful to a coach or facilitator in intervening in group defensive routines is to have a package of guiding ideas, tools, and methods. Bob Putnam uses three basic tools: the left-hand column, the Ladder of Inference, and advocacy and inquiry. These are generally introduced in an offline session or practice field and then put to use in online sessions or regular business meetings.

### *The Left-Hand Column*

**Putnam:** The left-hand column comes from a format that Chris Argyris developed. Participants write, in advance, a short case based on an episode that illustrates the kind of difficult situation that they would like to manage better. They divide a page or two in half, and in the right column they write what they and others actually said. In the left column, they write what they were thinking or feeling but did not say. The left-hand column shows what people treat as undiscussable and the right-hand column shows how they design behavior to deal with the undiscussable dilemmas. (See Figure 6.1.)

I encourage people to begin to say some of those things in their left-hand columns. It is important that people speak and listen with good intent so as not to damage relationships. As people make public their reasoning or data, it becomes possible to build a shared understanding, as well as for group members to think and interact better together. It also becomes possible to recognize and disperse defensive routines that have been kept undiscussable until this point.

### *The Ladder of Inference*

**Putnam:** The Ladder of Inference is a simple model of the steps in our reasoning as we make sense of what is happening in order to take action. (See Figure 3.2.)

The Ladder of Inference is placed on top of a pool of data consisting of everything that people say and do. Our reasoning processes begin with selecting what we will pay attention to and treat as important. That goes on the first rung of our ladder. For example, I might focus on Jack's coming late to a meeting. Then we move to the second rung of the ladder by interpreting or making meaning of what we have put on the first rung.

I might think, "Jack doesn't treat this meeting as important enough to be on time." We might go through several interpretive steps. This is done almost instantaneously, without testing our assumptions. Then we draw a conclusion such as "Jack is not a team player." Finally, we take action based on our reasoning process. I might not invite Jack to be a member of the next group I form.

The first lesson of the Ladder of Inference is that people automatically jump high on the ladder. People are so skillful and

quick in their reasoning processes that they do not notice intermediate steps in their thinking or whether they have forgotten to test their assumptions along the way.

This is fine and necessary, but it gets people in trouble when they deal with others who have reached different conclusions based on different assumptions. What usually happens when people disagree is that they climb to the top of their respective ladders, hurl conclusions at one another, and explain the other's wrong-headedness by attributing nasty motives. This raises people's defenses.

Facilitating this interaction to bring defenses down involves helping people learn to notice that they have jumped high on the ladder and made attributions or evaluations that are not necessarily true. One way of facilitating here is to ask for examples on which people have based their inferences: "Joe, what was said or what happened that led you to believe that Charlie was blaming you?" "Joe, what did you mean by what you said?" Another approach is to teach people to use this and other tools themselves, "Bill, you are so high on the ladder you need an extension."

### *Advocacy and Inquiry: A Tool for Productive Conversations*

**Putnam:** Advocacy and inquiry are concepts for understanding how people interact. People can create better opportunities for learning from diverse points of view by combining advocacy and inquiry. However, just putting together a statement and a question is not sufficient. If I say, "That's a stupid idea. Do you want to wreck the deal?" I have both advocacy and inquiry, but I am not promoting learning. It is necessary to combine high-quality advocacy with high-quality inquiry. "What's your doubt about this deal?"

The Ladder of Inference is one of the keys to crafting high-quality advocacy and inquiry. People seek to advocate their views by communicating not only their conclusions, but also the data they select and the steps in their reasoning. People inquire not to sway others to their points of view, but to discover how others move up and down their own Ladders of Inference. And people encourage others to help them see gaps in their reasoning. (See Figure 23.1.)

FIGURE 23.1. BALANCING ADVOCACY WITH INQUIRY

<p>High Advocacy/High Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate: conclusions, data you select, steps in your reasoning</li> <li>• Inquire to discover steps and gaps in one another's reasoning</li> </ul>	<p>High Advocacy/Low Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating your views but not inquiring into others' views: "What we've got to do is cut costs!"</li> </ul>
<p>Low Advocacy/High Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking questions but not revealing your views: "What costs do you have in mind?"</li> </ul>	<p>Low Advocacy/Low Inquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silent withdrawal</li> <li>• Not revealing your views or questioning others' views</li> </ul>

## ROGER SCHWARZ ON ELIMINATING DEFENSIVE ROUTINES

In my conversation with Roger Schwarz, he expressed some excellent ideas on facilitating groups, which serve as a good summary. He named four things he does as a facilitator that produce results in helping people move beyond defensive behavior:

1. Help people examine defensive thinking and behavior.
2. Ask questions that surface and test assumptions.
3. Help people see the unintended consequences of their behavior.
4. Help people learn to change their assumptions and redesign their actions.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

# PROVIDE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

## How to Give Feedback That Rips the Blinders Off Without Making People Resent You

*A Masterful Coach is someone who can walk into a situation and see things that others do not see, giving people penetrating insight into the situation.*

When I talk to managers about declaring an Impossible Future, some look at me as if to say, “This is madness.” Perhaps it is, but rest assured there is method in my madness. In one sense, inspiring leaders to declare an Impossible Future is about taking their business to the next level. In another sense, it is merely a ploy for talking about what I really stand for: personal and organizational transformation.

I start the conversation like this: “Look, realizing an Impossible Future may require you to declare some new possibilities for yourself as a leader, as well as give up old patterns.” Then I add something like this: “I am not saying that you are not a good leader already in terms of the kinds of the game you are currently playing or that you have to change. I am just saying that once you put a stake in the ground for the Impossible Future, it’s a whole new game, and you may need to transform who you are as a leader. Let’s get some 360-degree feedback and find out just how.”

## AN ALCHEMICAL CHAMBER OF PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

It is amazing to me how even the most brilliant executives, full of self-confidence from repeated success, who have never fundamentally questioned their leadership style for any reason, blithely accept the train of logic that says in order to achieve an Impossible Future, they must transform who they are as leaders. In so doing, they have unknowingly stepped into an alchemical chamber of personal and organizational transformation. What happens in this alchemical chamber is well described by Kurt Lewin as unfreeze, transform, refreeze.<sup>1</sup>

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Throw the desired leadership attributes in the wastebasket, along with the hallowed 360-degree forms.

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The first phase of the transformation model involves interacting with the leaders in a way that unfreezes their noble certainty in their leadership and management style. The secret here is ripping the blinders off so that people see themselves as others see them—for example, “You want to become CEO, so you drive your organization to get results. The chairman knows you can get results but questions whether you can positively motivate your organization.” The goal is to provide feedback with enough impact that people drop their “I’ve got it all together act,” become vulnerable, and begin to hold themselves in question. This makes them transformation ready.

The second phase is to be able to transform who people are. It is the context (background) that produces people’s way of being and the behavior described by 360-degree and other feedback. The secret to this phase of the transformation process is to intervene in the context that is getting the person in trouble. This involves three steps: (1) pondering all the feedback you have received about the person; (2) distinguishing the context that shapes their being and actions in language; and (3) distinguishing a new context, for example, being a generative leader versus a controlling manager, being a collaborator versus a lone ranger, or being action oriented versus an analyst.

The third phase of the transformation process, refreeze, requires leaders to integrate the new context that you have provided them so that it becomes an experience, not just an intellectual exercise. For example, if you have coached someone that she needs to show up as a generative leader rather than a cost-cutting control freak and she is switched on by the idea, the next step might be to ask her to stand in a commitment to being a generative leader and begin to imagine how she is going to be different, think differently, and act differently in the future. It might also involve study and practice. (Learning new skills and capabilities are discussed in the next chapter.)

## A METHOD FOR UNFREEZING, TRANSFORMING, AND REFREEZING PEOPLE'S LEADERSHIP STYLE

I can think of no more effective tool for initiating this three-phase leadership transformation process than the 360-degree feedback that is done according to the Masterful Coaching method. It is particularly important to the unfreezing of people's leadership style to provide feedback that both builds on strength and demolishes certainty. Yet at the same time, the feedback process also focuses on the context that the person is coming from that is leading to unproductive behavior, as well as identifying new skills and capabilities to be developed.

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Interview people about the leader's strengths and gaps on a 360-degree basis, drawing out in-depth insights.

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What then is the secret of Masterful Coaches when it comes to providing meaningful feedback? Let me answer that question by sharing my experience of coaching others in the Masterful Coaching organization. As I mentioned in Chapter Ten, the Masterful Coaching method begins with throwing such things as lists of desired leadership attributes and 360-degree interview forms in the wastebasket. Instead, we ask coaches to interview at least ten people on a 360-degree basis on the person's possibilities,

strengths, gaps, blind spots, derailers, next developmental steps, and so forth. After they have done so, our coaches usually visit with me in preparation for their feedback session with the client.

The first question I ask is something like this: “You have all this wonderful feedback about this person. Now let me ask you a question: What are you going to say to this person that will have a life-altering impact?” It is quite often the case that people don’t have an answer. What they have instead is a thick pile of papers with a lot of information that describes the person’s attitudes and behaviors.

In most cases, people will then begin to summarize the information they have gathered in terms of a few patterns that have emerged: “Sheila is command-and-control oriented, doesn’t listen, doesn’t trust people” and so forth. I say, “That’s interesting, but in reality, all this behavior is a symptom. I am interested in root causes. Imagine yourself sitting down with Sheila and giving her all the feedback you have gathered. Then ask yourself this question: What can I say to Sheila that goes beyond making a report? What can I say that will actually make a difference?”

## A COACHING TALE

One of our coaches, David Korkosz, was coaching a leader at a high-tech company whom we will call Bill Farley. The 360-degree feedback on Farley revealed that he was a very smart guy with a big brain, a big bravado, and even bigger ego. He was in many ways a very personable guy, with sharp political instincts, who had a tendency to kiss up to the boss and kick down at the troops.

He tended to take up most of the space pontificating at meetings with his direct reports, claiming most good ideas as his own and making sarcastic remarks when people disagreed with him. He was very good at selecting talented people and delegating to them. He spent a good deal of the day doing things like reading the *Wall Street Journal*, having lunch, and going to meetings with higher-ups to report on his department’s efforts. Korkosz was preparing to have his feedback session with Farley and was wondering what he could say beyond laying on all the feedback he had gathered that would make a difference.

He then picked up a copy of music conductor Ben Zander’s book, *The Art of Possibility*, in the airport bookstore on the way to



the coaching session.<sup>2</sup> Zander had written quite poetically about the story of his life, most of which he had spent trying to be successful, usually by competing with others in his environment. Zander had a great teacher who at one point led him to make a distinction between being a successful competitor and being a contribution. The result was that Zander turned his life around 180 degrees. He became a great teacher who was concerned with liberating the greatness in others rather than trying to establish his own greatness.

David was moved by what he had read in Zander's book and decided to begin his 360-degree session by reading from it. He told Farley, "I want to read you something to set the stage for our talk today," and then he read some moving passages about the difference between being successful and being a contribution. Bill Farley was visibly inspired by what he was hearing; Korkosz now had his full attention.

"Bill," he said, "I can see that you are moved by the possibility of being a contribution and that is powerful, but I also want to tell you that today you are not showing up as a contribution, not at all." David continued, "Now I would like to give you the 360-degree feedback from your boss, direct reports, and even your wife." Korkosz read the feedback he had gathered word for word, without adding anything to it by way of inference or taking anything away. There were several occasions during this time when Farley's eyes welled up in tears.

Bill Farley had stepped fully into the alchemical chamber of transformation and had undergone the unfreezing of his leadership style, as well as initiated its transformation. "I am already a successful person on many levels," he acknowledged. "I don't need to go around anymore trying to be successful by competing with others. I am declaring my commitment to be a contribution." He also committed himself to showing up differently, particularly with his direct reports: "I am going to stop taking up all the space trying to show I'm great and create much more space for others around me to be great."<sup>3</sup>

David Korkosz knew at this moment that Bill Farley had transformed the context that shaped his ground of being from competition to contribution. The question he asked himself next

was: “What kind of coaching program could we design that would support Farley in integrating and sustaining this transformation?” or to do what Lewin called *refreezing*.

These musings led to designing a personal breakthrough project for the next year with special emphasis on how Farley was going to act around his direct reports. At the same time, Korkosz recognized that he would not be there to observe how Farley was showing up on a day-to-day basis. This kind of coaching would be necessary, both for acting as a cheerleader when Farley succeeded and also for calling him on his act when he allowed himself to backslide into the old winning strategies, attitudes, and behaviors.

According to Korkosz, “I knew there was something missing in terms of a means of getting day-to-day feedback on how Bill was showing up.” Korkosz came up with a brilliant idea—just what was missing that would make a difference. He decided to appoint two to three people around Bill as his “official deputy coaches,” who could give Bill feedback on an ongoing basis. It worked marvelously.

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Provide feedback that makes a difference

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Let’s review the 360-degree feedback process that we illustrated in Chapter Ten.

- Interview the players to obtain 360-degree feedback.
- Analyze the findings by looking for patterns.
- Separate root causes (where people are coming from) from symptoms (problematic behavior).
- Ask yourself, “What can I say that will make a difference?” Write this in one or two sentences.
- Think of powerful, creative, and effective ways to deliver the feedback.
- Ponder: What will unfreeze people’s certainty in who they are being as leaders? What distinctions can you draw that transform who people are as leaders? What can you say or do to allow people to refreeze or integrate this?

## GUIDING IDEAS FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

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You see, but you do not observe.

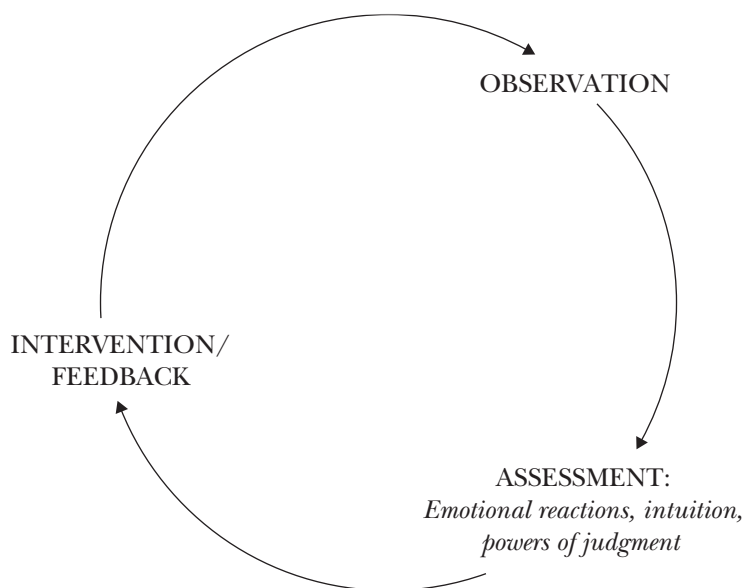
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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It is important for a Masterful Coach to provide 360-degree feedback not only at the beginning of an engagement but also on a regular basis. The feedback process follows an intervention cycle of (1) making observations, (2) making assessments and diagnoses, and (3) deciding when and how to intervene. A good principle to follow is to speak with good intent. At the same time, talk straight without avoiding or sugarcoating your message. First, take a moment to focus on the person before speaking. When you give feedback, speak slowly. This gives you time to integrate your intuition and intellect in saying things in a way that will make a difference. Figure 24.1 shows this cycle.

FIGURE 24.1. FEEDBACK CYCLE

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## DECLARE YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE PERSON AT THE OUTSET

This is so the person sees the feedback as an opportunity, not a threat. I always begin a feedback session by declaring my commitment to the person and how much I believe in him or her—for example, “I am totally committed to your being a powerful leader in this company who makes a big difference. Furthermore, I totally believe in all that you are as a leader today and all that you can be. There are just one or two small things that are missing from your leadership approach I would like to talk to you about. If you could make some progress in these areas, there would be absolutely nothing to stop you.” In general, the things to give a person feedback on are (1) future potential, (2) general and specific performance, (3) attitude and behavior, and (4) patterns of self-deception.

## PRESENT PERSONAL GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS TO CREATE PULL FOR THE FEEDBACK

As I have said many times in this book, supporting people in articulating personal or organizational aspirations they can passionately engage in not only serves the purpose of stretching people, but also creates the pull for feedback and learning. This is far more powerful than the push approach based on listing company leadership attributes and identifying and filling gaps. A way to begin is to say, “In order to create the powerful new future that you want, you need to be open to feedback and learning. Are you in a place where you would consider some honest feedback a gift?” Sometimes introducing anxiety is necessary to get people’s attention: “I know that you want to make a difference on the team. Here is what I see you doing that is getting in the way and that could derail the team.”

## MAKE ASSESSMENTS BASED ON OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

A big part of the role of a coach is to observe people’s behavior and make assessments that become the basis of coaching comments. It is an important part of the integrity of the whole coaching process that the coach makes assessments, based not just on

subjective experience but also on witnessable data. The coachee will also be more likely to embrace the feedback if you can back it up with specific examples. Instead of saying, “You have great potential as a leader,” and leaving it at that, give examples of three things that indicate that great potential. The same applies to giving critical feedback. Instead of saying, “You tend to dominate your direct reports and shut them down at team meetings,” share your observations of where and when the behavior occurred. Ask people to confirm your assessments. Perhaps they have different assessments, with different examples.

### CONNECT HOW PEOPLE ARE SHOWING UP TO UNINTENDED RESULTS

One of the messages I often give leaders and groups is that the problems that they are facing are usually directly related to their thinking and behavior rather than something in the organization. Typical feedback to a leader might be, “I know you have a sincere and honest intention to realize the vision. However, it isn’t being realized, and there may be a few ways that you are contributing to this. My sense is that there is something in your thinking or behavior that is getting in the way.” I then illustrate this with some examples. This is a chance to bring triple loop learning into the 360-degree feedback process: “How do you think you need to be different, think differently, or act differently?”

### DEVELOP TRANSFORMATIONAL METAPHORS THAT TRANSFORM WHO PEOPLE ARE

Rick Hamm, president of Conoco Refining and Marketing Europe, was a wonderful southern gentleman—a steward of the company’s legacy—but not that entrepreneurial. After he took the Masterful Coaching workshop, I worked with him to develop a vision of dramatic growth in his business (doubling its value). He went forth with the vision across Europe and began to inspire his minions. Yet my observation after a few months was that his winning strategy was keeping him from bringing it to pass.

One day I had a conversation with him that went like this: “Rick, you are starting to show up for me like a gentleman farmer, lord of the manor type, who like a good steward peruses his vast estate with his dogs, treating workers with indulgent kindness,

and giving the occasional instruction that a fence or two be mended.” A few of his direct reports had told me that he never made a powerful request or demand of them. Rick’s response was that he liked the values of being a gentleman farmer. In fact he told me something to the effect of: “I like to talk the part, dress the part, act the part.”

“It’s fine,” I said, “to have the values of a gentleman farmer, like good stewardship, integrity, and fairness, but you are never going to reach your goals if you keep operating at an agrarian pace and don’t set higher expectations of people.”

I knew I had hit a bull’s-eye when he immediately started talking about the importance of having more “impact” and reaching a much higher level of “velocity.” He then came up with a contrasting metaphor on his own: “I want to be much more like the Scarlet Pimpernel, an English nobleman during the days of the French Revolution who, although a gentleman, would go into situations quickly, have an enormous impact, and then leave; go in, have an impact, then leave; and so on.”

#### ANNOUNCE TO PEOPLE: “NOW I AM GOING TO BE PROVOCATIVE”

A Masterful Coach deliberately makes provocative statements to jar people from their everyday view of the world and get them to see things differently. For example, most people have had the experience of going to a big meeting intending to take a stand for real change, but then caving in to gain approval from someone else in the group. In a case like this, I might give feedback to empower the person to take a stand: “And now I am going to be provocative. If you compromise half of what you want today and half again tomorrow, you will have nothing left of what you believe in by next week.” By announcing that you are going to be provocative, people get the message but tend not to take it personally or resent you for it.

#### PENETRATE ILLUSIONS, REVEAL PATTERNS OF SELF-DECEPTION

Many people are not aware of their own possibilities and potentials and unknowingly make themselves small. I once did a coaching program for a German company, Adidas, whose sourcing

office was in Hong Kong. The seminar included expatriate managers and local Hong Kong Chinese. I noticed that the Chinese frequently referred to themselves as “just small potatoes.” I told them, “Even a small potato can make a difference.” I also told them that their “small potato act” was a way to avoid having to take responsibility. The group resisted the feedback at first, but it later led to a groundbreaking discussion with the expatriate managers, who had reinforced the locals’ “small potato” self-image while blaming them at the same time.

### FOCUS ON WHAT’S MISSING, NOT ON WHAT’S WRONG

Almost anyone can walk up to any person or group and say what’s wrong or who is at fault. The most difficult thing is to give feedback in a way that will improve people’s ability to perform in the future. Figuring out what’s missing usually comes from observing breakdowns, separating causes from effects, and pondering for a while until a creative idea comes to mind. Pat Riley, while coach of the Los Angeles Lakers, was in a championship playoff game with the Boston Celtics. His players felt intimidated by the legendary Celtics’ general manager, Red Auerbach, who was famous for tricks such as turning off the air-conditioning in the visiting team’s locker room, as well as by the fact that they were in a strange and hostile town. Riley knew his team could win if he could make them feel at home. He came up with a brilliant idea: he went out to a store and bought every member of the team huge, plush pastel towels. He reasoned that you only get pastel towels at home. The Lakers swept the series and won the championship.<sup>4</sup>

### PRAISE PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY ARE, NOT JUST FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

You can have the biggest impact with people by acknowledging them for who they are and their unique qualities of excellence. The clues to who people are, however, are often revealed in the things that they do. To acknowledge someone, a coach might say, “I want to acknowledge you not only for the work you put into that great presentation, but also for your personal commitment to excellence. Here are some specific examples . . .”

## USING ACTION MAPS TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK IN GROUPS

There is also a method for providing feedback for groups. Here we are focusing especially on how people think and interact in a small-group setting. A coach is highly useful in situations where group dynamics take over because when this happens, a group rarely has the ability to observe itself. Observing groups tends to be much more complicated than observing individuals. All too often, people who seem bright, intelligent, and committed to learning as individuals wind up in a group whose collective intelligence seems less than that of the individual and where defensive routines and antilearning patterns take over. The results can be frustrating, strange, and even bizarre. The six-step methodology presented and discussed next will help you to provide meaningful feedback to groups:

1. Interview and observe key players.
2. Pay attention to the nature of people's responses to individual and collective illusions.
3. Design the group feedback using an action map.
4. Provide feedback to the leader.
5. Provide feedback to the group.
6. Have a dialogue with the group on what will make a difference.

### *Step 1: Interview and Observe Key Players*

When coaching a group, it is necessary to get a sense of the big picture, as well as the small one. One way to do this, whether you are group leader or outside coach, is to interview and observe the key players, asking them for their views about what is happening in the group. Doing the interviews tells you a lot about the underlying patterns that define the group situation and allows you to make observations about the individuals. Some useful questions for the people in the group are as follows:

- Do the group members have a shared vision of what they are creating together? What is your personal vision for the group or organization?



- What type of team, organization, or community do you want to develop?
- How would you describe how the group members think and interact when they meet? What, if any, breakdowns do you see?
- What are people's relationships like in outside meetings? What do they talk about in the hallways? What's working and not working?

*Step 2: Pay Attention to the Nature of People's Responses to Individual and Collective Illusions*

As you listen to people give their opinions, you can gain insight into the underlying beliefs and assumptions that govern their behavior. As you listen, ask questions that determine the governing values that the group preaches and help you find out where behavior is inconsistent with these values. Inquire with openness and candor about counterproductive behavior:

- What are three norms that people in your group would say are important—for example, being authentic, balancing advocacy and inquiry, being action oriented?
- What inconsistencies do you see between what people say and what they do? How is this a matter of group dynamics? How is it a matter of individual behavior?
- Where do you see behavior going on that is counterproductive?

*Step 3: Design the Group Feedback Using an Action Map*

The ways people think and interact in groups are complex and present puzzles and problems. Now that you have done the interviews, it is important to analyze and organize the findings in a way that reveals powerful insights. One vehicle I have found for providing meaningful group feedback is an action map. It consists of five categories: (1) context or background, (2) the managerial frames that are the basis of decisions and actions, (3) dilemmas and puzzles, (4) action strategies, and (5) unintended results. Figure 24.2 shows an example of an action map.

The tendency is to oversimplify what is happening in a group with a pet theory: "There is no shared vision," "We're too pie-in-the-sky," "The group is a plane without a pilot," or "Everyone has crawled into their bunkers." In many cases, these comments are

FIGURE 24.2. SAMPLE ACTION MAP

Context/Background			
Increase market pressure	Company not integrated, run like small businesses	Main customer becoming competitor	Loss of money past three years
Frames			
<i>Demands</i> A marketing breakthrough Design and engineering excellence Collaboration–functional structure	<i>Constraints</i> One year to do it or be sold to bigger company Separate product divisions Increasingly complex problems in market	<i>Mental Models</i> Engineering, manufacturing mentality Entrepreneur versus team Local versus global	
Dilemmas or Puzzles			
<i>No Obvious Solutions</i>  How do we expand manufacturing? How do we break into new markets?	<i>Polarized Views</i>  We should use a team approach to increase sales. We should keep separate product divisions and not hurt business.	<i>Embarrassing/Threatening Situations</i>  If I confront division heads, they will blow up; if I don't, we can't solve problems. If I become a team player, I might lose my job.	
Action Strategies			
Cover up and bypass hot issues Make unilateral decisions	Keep thinking private; no public inquiry into dilemmas Don't rock the boat	Make results look good, even if they're not Camouflage mistakes	Make attributions; do not test them Secretly collaborate against leader
The First Order of Breakdown			
People feel bewildered, frustrated, and in the wrong place	People assume others had nasty motives	Crazy behavior from pressure of dilemmas	
The Second Order of Breakdown			
Issues made undiscussable; no shared understanding	Group becomes dysfunctional; adopts self-protecting and antilearning attitude	No questioning of self-sealing logic or assumptions, no new possibilities	
The Third Order of Breakdown			
Organization unmanageable due to camouflaged operational issues	A piecemeal, fragmented approach to new product development	Key opportunities missed; lose time in turnaround	Crises and overdependence on the leader

based on untested assumptions. In using action maps to give feedback to groups, you have to adapt the presentation according to your situation. Are you an insider or outsider? If you are an outside coach, as I am, you might want to present your findings to the leader of the group first.

*Step 4: Provide Feedback to the Leader*

Start by giving feedback to the leader about his or her behavior and the impact that it is having on the group. The key is to help the leader see that despite a sincere and honest intention to do a good job, he or she might be contributing to the group's problems. Show with specific examples where the leader's attitudes or behaviors are leading to unintended results. Getting the commitment of the leader to change creates the space for others to commit to change.

*Step 5: Provide Feedback to the Group*

After presenting the feedback to the leader, present the feedback to the group. Start by advising the group that some of the information might be potentially embarrassing or threatening and requesting that they adopt an attitude of learning rather than automatically reacting and becoming defensive. Then go through the action map, illustrating it with as many examples as possible. Be especially emphatic where the group is making topics undiscussable, as well as where they are showing bypass and camouflage tactics. After the presentation, ask people: "Where do you agree and where do you disagree with what I have said?"

*Step 6: Have a Dialogue with the Group on What Will Make a Difference*

After looking at the feedback, have an open dialogue with the group focused on what is missing and what can be provided that will make a difference. The following recommendations are examples of what is missing that would make a difference:

- A session to clarify that the vision is based on a strong business case as well as what matters to people
- Seeing impassés as opportunities for breakthrough thinking, which requires rigorous inquiry and dialogue to come up with solutions and build a shared approach

- Doing more work in overcoming defensive routines, starting with all the things made undiscussable, for example, using a left-hand column exercise to help people speak with more openness and candor. (See Chapter Six for more on the left-hand column exercise.)

## IN CONCLUSION

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The most intolerable state is the absence of acknowledgment.

William James

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Giving high-quality feedback has more to do with caring enough about people to tell it like it is than it has with having a particular skill or technique. On the one hand, it involves having the generosity of spirit to acknowledge people for who they are and what they are capable of. In my experience, people are starved for praise—not just praise of their accomplishments but for who they are as human beings. On the other hand, generosity of spirit includes being willing to have the tough conversations with people. Remember to praise publicly and criticize privately, and most of all, to do it with heart.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

# TEACHING NEW SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

## Move Between Performance and Practice Fields

*Knowing “what” is different than knowing “how.”*

WILLIAM ISAACS, *DIALOGUE: THE ART OF THINKING TOGETHER*

One of my fundamental premises is that a Masterful Coach is first and foremost a teacher. Being a great teacher means not only inspiring people to take a stand for an extraordinary future but expanding their capacity to achieve it. I see coaching as the most powerful vehicle available for teaching people to develop new skills and capabilities, much more so than the typical three-day training program. The model that I use is goal oriented and situation specific. It is similar to a ski or golf lesson where people learn by doing—teach a little, practice a little, provide feedback and learning (repeat) until the new skill is ready at hand.

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Teaching new skills and capabilities is a matter of study and practice.

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What is the source of skill? If you look at the people you know who are masterful at something and look behind what’s easy to see, you start to observe that a high level of skill development is a

complex phenomenon. Mastery at anything is often much more a way of being, something that a person seems to embody, than a set of tips and techniques. I once saw a T-shirt in Tortola that expressed this very well: “It is who I am; it is not attitudes and behaviors.”

People who are highly skillful at a particular domain usually operate from a balance of theory and practice. Every great golf or ski teacher, for example, has a theory of “the perfect golf swing” or “the perfect turn.” This theory is not something abstract, but becomes a mental map for being able to take effective action. Teaching any business skill, such as effective communication, is a matter of providing a solid set of guiding ideas (synonymous with theory), as well as teaching people to master the fundamentals of the skill—learning by doing. For example, two fundamentals of effective communication are committed speaking and committed listening.

## A METHODOLOGY FOR BUILDING NEW SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

Let’s look at a four-step methodology for teaching people new skills and capabilities (see Figure 25.1). It is based on the transformational learning process, which calls for reframing people’s mind-sets and then building new skills (see Figure 25.2).

### STEP 1: LABEL THE MISSING SKILL AND TELL WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

One of the most important phases in the process of coaching people to develop new skills is labeling the missing skills. Until people can distinguish these missing skills by putting them into words, they will not be able to act effectively—for example, “We need to develop the skill of coming up with game-changing ideas to regenerate our company [and industry]. This is key to coming up with fundamentally new products and services.”

The act of putting an idea into language has generative power. It announces a new domain of practice that is different from everything else that people are doing. Also, if the idea is expressed powerfully and precisely, it helps refocus people’s

FIGURE 25.1. METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING NEW SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

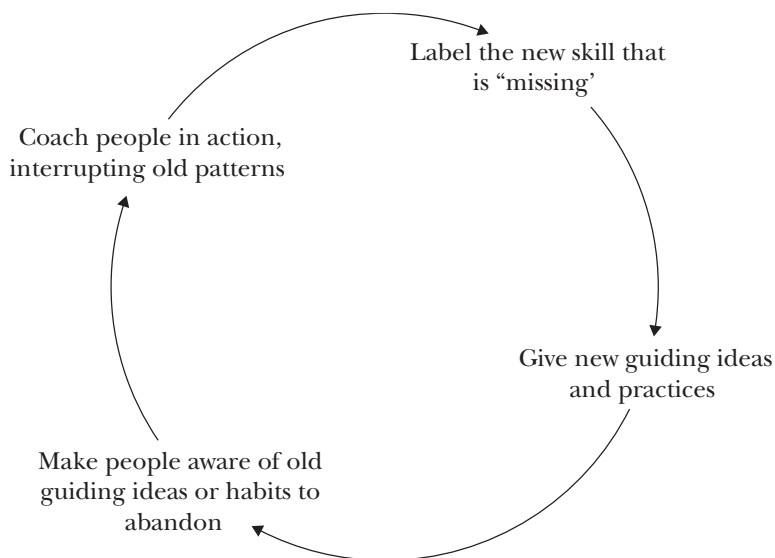
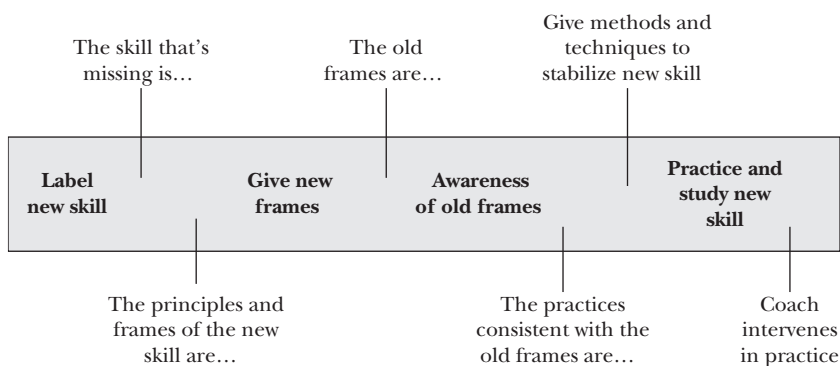


FIGURE 25.2. BUILDING NEW SKILLS



actions. For instance, my friend Bob Fritz makes the distinction between “being creative” and “creativity.” Being creative leads to creating something that never existed before, such as a new industry or a new product or service. Creativity is more about creative or artistic expression.<sup>1</sup>

Once people know what it means to be creative, they can begin to learn about the behavior that will allow them to create something new. After the new skill is labeled, the next step is to make sure they understand why it is important: “We can cut costs all day long, but if we don’t come up with some innovative product ideas in this development process, we may miss the turnoff to the future and our customers will go somewhere else.”

## STEP 2: DISTINGUISH NEW GUIDING IDEAS AND KEY PRACTICES NEEDED TO MASTER THE SKILL

Leadership and team collaboration, like golf or skiing, have a set of guiding ideas that shape, limit, and define the actions that a person takes. One guiding idea to emphasize here is that thinking drives behavior. When people think differently, they act differently. The idea is not to replace one guiding idea or belief system with another that is superior. It is to distinguish new frames of reference that touch people with new possibilities and choices and lead to new skills and capabilities.

How do you teach people the skills and capabilities that are needed in a job? According to Philippe Chéhab, division manager of Swiss (Air) charged with hiring and training new recruits, “To start, you have to hire people who like people, and they have to like them enough to be able to embrace their idiosyncrasies rather than be intolerant and judge them.”<sup>2</sup> Swiss, known for good service, gives trainees guiding ideas like positive energy, enthusiasm, and caring about people; they do not tell people to put the knife and fork here or there.

## STEP 3: MAKE PEOPLE AWARE OF OLD GUIDING IDEAS AND HABITS TO ABANDON

When you are teaching people new skills, it is not as if you are projecting new guiding ideas and practices onto a blank screen. People already have deeply embedded mind-sets and habits that may fly in the face of what you are trying to teach them. Teaching people new skills and capabilities often requires breaking old paradigms and habits people are barely aware of.



Joe Mueller, a manager I once coached, had learned some of the juicy vocabulary of leadership, such as “taking a stand” and went around talking about it all the time. Yet he got himself into trouble because he was so highly skilled at trying to please others and at altering what he stood for according to the political situation. He was also good at suppressing his awareness of what he was doing. This is what I call skilled unawareness.

The coach’s first role in teaching people new skills and capabilities often involves making them aware of what they are unaware of. I asked Joe, “Do you know that you take one stand on one day, another stand the next day, and a third on the next, depending on which way the political winds are blowing?” This information hit Joe like a wakeup call. He said, “I was completely unaware of what I was doing.” Joe asked me to work with him over the course of a one-year period to be resolute in the face of his stand. I remember telling him: “I am going to be like a steel peg in the frozen ground.”

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Saying is one thing, doing another.

Montaigne

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#### STEP 4: COACH PEOPLE IN ACTION, GIVING THEM FEEDBACK AS THEY MAKE A COMMITTED ATTEMPT TO PERFORM

We can have a beautiful theory about how to play the piano, but until we raise our finger in the air and press a key, we do not even know what a piano sounds like. Practice is where we learn by doing. The beautiful thing about practice, especially with a coach, is that it gives us an opportunity to get some feedback. We hit either good notes or sour notes. If we take our theory of action and put it into practice and it doesn’t produce desired results, we can see that something is off.

Obviously a key coaching role is to observe what happens as people begin to practice. If they are not getting desired results, it’s usually a matter of ways of being or ways of thinking or behaviors that they are currently unaware of. We can help them by distinguishing the way of being that is getting them in trouble as well as by distinguishing new ways of being.

For example, when I watched Ben Zander coach the master class at the New England Conservatory, he drew a line down the blackboard.<sup>3</sup> On the right side he put words like *ambition*, *passion*, *commitment*, *zeal*, *risk*, *contribution*, and *aliveness*. On the left side he put words like *apathy*, *emotionless*, *half-hearted*, and *fear of failure*. These words reflected different ways of being. Zander interrupted a student playing Mozart and said, “You can’t play great music from the left side of the board, which is what you are doing. You can only play great music from the right side of the board.” Instantly this intervention seemed to transform how the person was performing.

We can help people by questioning the assumptions behind their theories, or we can coach them on the specific actions they are taking so that they can develop more competence. Practice makes observation possible and allows people to adjust their actions according to the feedback they receive. I can remember Zander interrupting another student and saying, “Play the music faster. Play the big notes; don’t worry about the little notes.”

Sometimes the easiest way to learn to play golf or to ski is to do so with someone who can be a good role model and you can mimic his or her moves. If a project manager in a big firm wants to learn how to create a real team, he or she might find project managers in the same category who are doing it successfully. A key is not just to focus on one role model but to scan the horizon for many different role models. This is helpful in incorporating the skills or capabilities into one’s personal style.

## STEP 5: COACH PEOPLE TO MOVE BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE FIELDS

In most groups, getting the job done happens in one box; training and learning happen in another. Because the traditional training situation is often separated from what really needs to be done, there is often no way for people, and especially teams, to learn on the job. There is no place where managers can go to reflect on what they are doing and learn new skills in the context of obtaining the results that they need.

One of these innovations, the distinction between performance and practice fields, comes from Peter Senge and

his colleagues at the MIT Organization Learning Center. For example, in the field of competitive sports and in the performing arts, players continuously move back and forth between the practice field and the performance field. The idea is to expand their capacity. It is difficult to imagine a football team learning without practice or a symphony orchestra learning without rehearsal.

Yet this is precisely what is expected of managers and teams. Managers frequently have to act on their strategies when there is no chance to test them, the fear of personal failure is great, and there is no way to develop new team skills or replay an important decision. They are also asked in three-day training sessions to develop complex skills, such as building shared vision, enhancing dialogue, or reflecting on mental models, with little opportunity to practice them in real-world situations.

According to Senge, “I like the metaphor of the practice field because both in the practice field and in the rehearsal hall what you do is slow things down. In a real performance, there is a certain pace to things, often a certain frenzy to it, but in the practice field you stop, you try it, you try it a different way. At the same time, you see it from different angles. This creates a much more reflective environment.”<sup>4</sup>

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The basic idea of performance and practice fields is to make sure that learning occurs in the context of doing the job rather than as a separate activity.

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## EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE FIELDS

The MIT Organization Learning Center group has set up a number of managerial practice fields with prominent companies like Ford, EDS, and GS Technologies. In the Lincoln Continental Division at Ford, in a project that focused on speeding up product development and quality, managers set up regular one- or two-day learning labs to deal with the issues that were coming up. These learning labs helped managers discuss problems that would normally be undiscussable.

EDS decided that it wanted to create the learning organization infrastructure shown in Figure 25.3. The learning lab that Fred Kofman developed focused on developing twenty or thirty coaches



who would be proficient in the skills of a learning organization, such as sharing vision, team learning, and systems thinking. These coaches would later be “seeded” into the organization.

The infrastructure consisted of (1) special classrooms where new skills and practices could be developed, (2) breakthrough projects where the skills and practices could be applied to key performance criteria, (3) practice and reflection assignments, and (4) personal coaching meetings. Today a high number of EDS employees report directly or indirectly to these program participants.

The following exercises can be used in creating a leadership and team learning practice field. The first section of exercises is on leadership transformation and the second is on group transformation.

## LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION

*Exercise 1.* Videotape a meeting to show the group leader how his or her way of speaking and listening contributes to the group’s problems.

*Exercise 2.* Engage in a conversation about a big dilemma, and engage in dialogue where you balance advocacy and inquiry.

*Exercise 3.* Study and practice one skill for one week in the context of getting the job done.

*Exercise 4.* Recommend articles and books to further people’s learning.

Some of our other recommendations are the following:

### **Books**

- *Theory in Practice*, by Chris Argyris and D. A. Schön
- *Overcoming Organizational Defenses*, by Chris Argyris
- *Knowledge for Action*, by Chris Argyris
- *The Skilled Facilitator*, by Roger Schwarz
- *The Fifth Discipline*, by Peter M. Senge
- *E Leader*, by Robert Hargrove
- *The Breakthrough Strategy*, by Robert Schaffer
- *Art of Possibility*, by Benjamin Zander

## Articles

- “Good Communication That Blocks Learning,” by C. Argyris, *Harvard Business Review*, July–August 1994
- “The Reinvention Roller Coaster,” by Tracy Goss, Richard Pascale, and Anthony Athos, *Harvard Business Review*, November–December 1993
- “Strategy as Stretch and Leverage,” by Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad, *Harvard Business Review*, March–April 1993

## GROUP TRANSFORMATION

### *Exercise 1: Have People Write a Case Study and Discuss It with Colleagues*

An approach to helping people in groups become more aware of any discrepancy between their espoused theory and theory-in-use is to have each person in the group write an honest, one-page case study of what he or she sees as the issues. Then call people together to discuss the case studies. Writing the case study allows people to look at what is going on and at the same time disengage from the situation emotionally. It also allows people to have a frank and open discussion about the situation and the feelings they have about it.

### *Case Study Format*

- What results do you or your group intend to produce?
- How do you and your team think you act?
- What is the feedback gathered about your actual behavior?
- What unintended results are occurring?
- What are the thinking patterns or actions that produce your behavior?

### *Exercise 2. Take a Controversial Issue, Then Use Conversational Protocols That Help with Team Reflection and Learning*

The protocols listed below, developed by some colleagues and friends at Innovation Associates, are useful in helping groups move from an unproductive discussion to a real quality of dialogue and

for encouraging teams to intervene in their own conversations. When the conversation is about a business topic, such as strategic operation issues, quality and service issues, or team learning issues, post the questions to serve as guides. Appoint a facilitator to balance inquiry and advocacy by bringing the group back to the questions from time to time. After a while, the group members will get the hang of it and do it themselves.

### *Questions to Ask*

1. Am I willing to be influenced? Am I open to learning?
2. When advocating a position:
  - Do I reveal my thinking and mental models?
  - Do I explain my assumptions?
  - Do I share the observable data from which I drew my conclusions?
  - Do I encourage others to explore my model, my assumptions, or the data?
  - Do I listen to really hear?
  - Do I stay open?
3. When faced with another's view with which I disagree:
  - Do I ask, "What leads you to that view?"
  - Do I seek to truly understand the view?
  - Do I explore, listen, and offer my own views in an open way?
  - Do I listen for the larger meaning that may emerge out of honest, open sharing of alternative models?

### *Exercise 3: Completing Relationships*

Often relationship problems are at the source of many of the problems people face in implementing a strategy or, for that matter, doing anything else. Because people tend to be sensitive and take things personally, it is quite common for relationships to break down. Providing some structure to completing relationships has proven successful. This exercise starts with two people who need to do what I call "get complete" with one another by sitting down together. One person has a pen, which we call the "talking stick." The person with the talking stick starts and says everything he or she needs to say.

When someone has the talking stick, the other person cannot speak, only listen. On the finishing, the first person gives the pen to the other person. Then that person speaks until he or she is finished. This goes on until no one needs to pick up the talking stick and speak anymore. It is important at this point for each person to acknowledge that he or she is finished. We have noticed that after doing this exercise with an intact group, the efficiency of the group improves dramatically.

#### *Exercise 4: The Hot Seat Exercise*

This group feedback exercise is a powerful yet delicate exercise that can have a big impact on both the individual and the group if it is managed well. Seat the members of the group theater style; then place one chair in the front and center: this is the “hot seat.” Provide some general guidelines about giving and receiving feedback, such as the following:

#### ***When Giving Feedback***

- Talk straight; don’t sugarcoat.
- Speak with the intent to make a difference.
- Focus on changeable behavior, not personality.
- Use intellect and intuition.

#### ***When Receiving Feedback***

- Sit with arms and legs uncrossed.
- Listen whether you agree or disagree.
- Listen with the intent to learn something new.
- When everyone is done, take a minute to acknowledge that you received and understood the feedback.

When people understand the guidelines, one person goes to the hot seat and each person in the group gives him or her feedback using the following three sentence stems:

- “One thing I appreciate about you is . . .”
- “One thing I have difficulty with is . . .” or “A next step for you might be . . .”
- “One thing I want to create with you is . . .”



It's vital for people to have generosity of spirit in giving feedback on strengths as well as on areas that need improvement.

The person in the hot seat is asked not to speak so that he or she can receive the feedback rather than have a knee-jerk reaction to it. As more and more people in the group speak, there starts to be a common thread to all the feedback the person receives. This feedback is enriched by different people's personal experiences of the person—his or her wisdom, insights, and intuition, as well as unique forms of self-expression. When everyone is finished, the person is asked to say something about what he or she learned in acknowledgment of the feedback. One of the first things people often do is wipe their brow and say, "Wow! It really is hot up here." In a group of six to eight people, allow fifteen to twenty minutes per person.

As a result of giving authentic feedback to one another, people experience stronger relationships with each other, and the efficiency and the effectiveness of the group go way up.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

# CREATING A COACHING AND MENTORING CULTURE

## Look for Openings Rather Than the Big Bang

*A cultural clearing is what the culture allows for and pulls for.*

Many CEOs and talent managers believe that coaching would be a powerful way to develop a leadership pipeline consistent with their business strategies. The problem is that they don't have a coaching culture. Today, with many CEOs taking over jobs as difficult as climbing Mt. Everest, the idea of hiring an executive coach who can guide them along the way has become increasingly appealing. Yet in many companies, leaders are still reluctant to engage a coach.

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Coaching can appear only when there is a cultural clearing for it to show up.

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Frank Anderson the Pentagon University told me, "Robert, we want to create a coaching practice to help our program managers succeed in tough jobs. However, at the Pentagon, we still don't have a coaching culture." When I asked him how he knew that, his response was, "Because I don't know of any four stars or three stars that acknowledge having coaches." The issue of

creating a coaching culture also applies to the managerial frame most executives think and operate from.<sup>1</sup>

Leadership from on high is increasingly on the way out as we shift from the age of the machine to the age of talent and from a mass economy to a creative economy. Today the leader as coach who stimulates imagination and innovation is an intriguing concept, but there are still cultural hurdles to overcome. Often the people at the top have an attitude of, “Do it or I will fire you and find someone else to do it,” rather than, “How can I coach people to expand their capacity to get the job done?”

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The first step in creating a coaching culture is to find a passionate champion.

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The question I am often asked by CEOs, HR leaders, and master-level coaches throughout the world is, “How do we create a coaching culture?” As with each of my master classes, the object here is not to write an exhaustive treatise but rather to share some of what I know about the subject. The first step in creating a coaching culture is that there must be a champion, such as the CEO or an individual or team from HR, who is prepared to fight for this idea. Once you have a champion who outlines the vision and values of a coaching culture, the following steps will be useful.

## FIVE STRATEGIES FOR CREATING A COACHING CULTURE

In brief, these are the five strategies for creating a coaching culture.

1. Start with a survey: “Desperately seeking coaching skills.”
2. Sponsor a Masterful Coaching Workshop: reaching a critical mass.
3. Enroll leaders in executive coaching and team coaching.
4. Get leaders at the top personally and methodically involved in coaching.

## 1. START WITH A SURVEY: “DESPERATELY SEEKING COACHING SKILLS”

A simple but powerful approach to transforming a company’s leadership style is to do an employee survey, starting at the bottom of the pyramid. In most companies, such surveys usually reveal that the leadership desperately needs to develop coaching skills and capabilities to attract, develop, and retain talent. ConocoPhillips did such a survey of its employees, which led to bringing me and other coaching gurus into the company to discuss a pilot program. Tommy Duncan, the HR director, told me he picked me and Masterful Coaching because I looked so disheveled at the meeting (my bags had been lost by the airline) that they figured refinery managers would be able to relate to me.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. SPONSOR A MASTERFUL COACHING WORKSHOP: REACHING A CRITICAL MASS

Creating a new vision or culture always requires changing minds. At ConocoPhillips, my company was highly successful at creating a coaching culture through our Masterful Coaching Workshop. The first part of the workshop was spent on creating a coaching mind-set, “Exploding the Five Myths of Coaching,” and was then followed by teaching coaching skills. This workshop proved to be a powerful way to get people out of the old conversation about coaching, “Coaching is about leadership lobotomies,” and generated a new conversation: “Coaching is about achieving the Impossible and changing your life.” Let’s look more closely at the five myths of coaching:

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**Myth 1: Coaching is a last-gasp effort for washouts.** In one of the first Masterful Coaching workshops I gave, one of the vice presidents came up to me on the first day and said, “I have been sitting here all day wondering why I resist coaching so much.” He continued, “I now realize that there is a stigma attached to the word—spelled LOSER.” Then he continued, “Coaching has always been suggested to me as a kind of last-gasp effort before being shown the door. Around here, coaching points are

associated with getting hammered at the annual review. I am now starting to see things entirely differently.”

**Reality: Coaching is for winners who seek an edge or advantage.** After every Masterful Coaching seminar, I offer a free coaching session to every participant. Interestingly enough, I am usually approached only by the “winners,” people with top positions (or top potential) and the highest personal and organizational aspirations. These are also people with very strong wills, who at the same time have a basic attitude of humility, curiosity, and learning. My observation is that these people seek an edge or advantage in reaching their goals and sense that coaching can give it to them.

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**Myth 2: Coaching is about identifying and filling gaps—competencies.** Like dissecting a frog to find out the secret of life, most leadership and management development programs tend to dissect leaders to find out the secret of their art. First the corporate university comes up with a list of ten leadership characteristics (with five dimensions for each trait). Next comes the obligatory round of computerized 360-degree feedback, followed by a list of strengths and gaps. Finally, comes the push approach to coaching and training, designed to fill these gaps. This psychological, mechanistic approach is based on a fundamental misconception of how leaders actually develop.

**Reality: Coaching is about creating Impossible Futures, not just filling gaps.** One of the most powerful realizations I have made with Masterful Coaching Inc. is that when leaders declare an ambitious aspiration for themselves and their organization, they create the pull for coaching. This happens all the more so when the ambitious aspiration is coupled to a desire for accomplishment and a basic attitude of curiosity, humility, and learning. Thus, all of our coaching starts with asking, “What is an inspiring Impossible Future you can passionately engage in?” Next we ask, “Who do you need to be in the matter?” In other words, “Where is the gap?” It is my experience that winners love living in the gaps, whereas losers love to pretend the gaps don’t exist.

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**Myth 3: Coaching takes place in the domain of therapy—Dr. Freud’s revenge.** I visited a top HR executive at Sony Corporation in New York who confided in me that until recently, coaching was considered a kind of leadership lobotomy for problem employees. The coach would be someone who more resembled Dr. Freud than a business manager and who would come into the company and “couch” people. After the usual battery of Myers-Briggs tests, psychometric tests, and self-help pamphlets on topics like anger management, the coaching would usually take place behind a locked door and often in hushed comments, lest people be heard talking about their oedipal urges, their father’s domineering ways, or their boss’s tantrums.

**Reality: Coaching takes place in the domain of accomplishment.** It’s very clear from the world of sports and the performing arts that the job of a coach is to expand people’s capacity to perform. As far as the focus here is concerned, the coach’s job is to help people reach an Impossible Future and win at the great game of business. Thus, I begin every coaching assignment with getting people clear about a leadership and business challenge that can be linked directly to return on investment. At the end of every coaching assignment, I want hard evidence that the coaching made or saved the company money.

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**Myth 4: Coaching is someone else’s job—a separate development activity.** I am amazed when I hear people say that a leader should not coach his or her direct reports. The myth behind this is that while managers are supposed to be in charge of performance, only HR or consultants are supposed to be in charge of development. Can you imagine the coach of the New York Yankees, or Detroit Pistons or Manchester United thinking and operating like that? Yet as a result of this myth, most managers tend to do a totally inadequate job of developing their direct reports. Worse, they also tend to do a totally inadequate job of managing performance. This is because they tend to manage by objectives and to see coaching as interfering.

**Reality: The number one role of a business leader is to be a coach and teacher—integrating performance and development.** Today the leader’s job is not just to shout orders or manage by

objectives: “Here’s the stretch goal; come back and see me at the end of the year when you have the result.” Today the leader’s job is to expand people’s capacity to perform, taking into account that talented people develop in the process of producing results. Performance and development are integrated. It may help to keep the following in mind: Coaching people to play 100 percent at the great game of business can be the ultimate self-development experience. Coaching people to provide great products or a small act of service can be the ultimate transcendent growth experience.

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**Myth 5: Coaching is an isolated event that happens at the yearly performance appraisal.** Bob Jackson, a Conoco leader, told me that until he participated in the Masterful Coaching course, he always considered coaching as something that happened one or two times a year during annual goal setting and performance appraisal. What he realized after taking the course was that it was his job to coach and teach his direct reports on a weekly or even a daily basis to achieve business results and to develop as leaders. I have discovered through research that the best leaders in the world spend 40 to 60 percent of their time coaching and teaching people in groups to produce personal and business breakthroughs.

**Reality: Coaching is a continuous but not continual process.** We have discovered in providing Masterful Coaching for executives that it takes a year or more to have an impact on an individual or bring about fundamental change in an organization. Coaching on this basis is not an obligatory appraisal but a powerful partnership in which the coach empowers people to accomplish what they need to. This does not just involve an isolated conversation, but rather a network of conversations in which the coach and coachee are continually engaging in such questions as: What happened? What’s missing? What’s next?

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Culture is not out there in the organization like a fog, but rooted in the minds of the individuals.

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### 3. ENROLL LEADERS IN EXECUTIVE COACHING AND TEAM COACHING

The Masterful Coaching workshops I did at ConocoPhillips eventually allowed us to influence enough people that we were able to generate a new conversation about coaching in the company. People now saw that coaching is a good thing, not a bad thing. However, we still had a long way to go in creating a coaching culture. One night I went out to see the Houston Astros play with Tommy Duncan, the man who had brought me into the company. I asked him if he knew any executives in the company who would be ready to engage with an executive coach. Tommy looked at me between batters and said, “No, the culture here isn’t ready for that yet.”

I was a bit disappointed, but the next day I got a phone call from Chris Conway, one of the rising stars in the organization, who asked me about executive coaching. The engagement was so successful that this led to coaching another rising star, Carin Knickel, who was so excited about the coaching that she enrolled her boss, the president of the whole Downstream part of the organization, Richard Severance, in executive coaching, a man with enormous power and influence.

Severance not only retained me as an executive coach, but got all his direct reports to engage executive coaches from my company. Each of these business unit leaders took on an Impossible Future and then decided to enroll their team in our team-based Action Coaching program with the view of helping them realize it. Every person in the Action coaching had a leadership challenge and business challenge in service of the Impossible Future. Yet there was another twist in that every person in the program had to coach two or three direct reports who were not in the program. This was the tipping point that led to a coaching culture, and from this point on, everything started accelerating.

### 4. GET LEADERS AT THE TOP INVOLVED IN COACHING

As people like Richard Severance and his direct reports began to experience coaching firsthand, they simultaneously began to shift their managerial frame from command and control to coaching



and teaching. Severance began to conduct talent reviews of all the people in his organization, as well as making sure his direct reports not only participated in team-based Action Coaching, but also spent a minimum of thirty hours a month coaching and teaching.

Our work at ConocoPhillips was confirmed when I found out about Jeff Fettig, CEO of Whirlpool, through his HR manager, David Binkley, who also believed that one of the best ways of creating a coaching culture is for the CEO and the top management group to be personally and methodically involved in coaching. Fettig is a natural at this and spends 60 percent of his time in coaching and mentoring activities. He coaches his direct reports—80 percent on performance, 20 percent on development—and mentors five other talented high potentials in the company. The people he mentors are drawn from the United States, South America, Europe, and Asia. Each has been placed in a stretch assignment and expected to both develop and perform in it.<sup>3</sup>

Fettig coaches people once a month using an independent talent assessment of each person's strengths and gaps, as well as a briefing paper on the emerging issues each faces in his or her business. I spoke to each of the people Fettig is coaching, and they were each blown away by the opportunity to be coached by Fettig. What impressed them the most was that he never postpones or cancels a meeting. Says Binkley, "If you do, that it sends a wrong message." This top executive coaching program that both Fettig and all his direct reports are involved in has gone a long way to creating a coaching culture at Whirlpool.

## CATALYTIC BREAKTHROUGH PROJECTS

You may say, "It's easy enough for the CEO to do something about create a coaching culture, but what if you don't have that kind of power and influence?" This was just the kind of question that Sandy Scott, a midlevel HR person at an organization of twenty hospitals in the West, asked me when she visited me at my home on the rocky coast of Maine. Sandy had been tasked with fortifying the organization's leadership pipeline through creating a coaching culture and developing the organization's talent pool.<sup>4</sup>

I suggested to Sandy that she consider starting with one or more catalytic breakthrough projects that she could accomplish with existing readiness for change, existing authority, and existing resources. A catalytic breakthrough project (1) is based on an extraordinary, unpredictable result: “can’t get there from the past”; (2) is inclusive in the sense that it brings far-flung collaborators together; (3) takes you to a different place by spearheading a breakthrough; (4) is loaded with WOW factors; and (5) is a quick win, accomplished in under a hundred days.

I said to Sandy, who was concerned that she was only five days into the job and had no budget, “Let’s start with the assumption that you have no money. Then ask: What can you do to create a coaching culture? Is there any leadership or coaching program already underway that we could supercharge by turning it into a catalytic breakthrough project?” Sandy came up with two ideas for a catalytic breakthrough project, and we began working on a project charter as we continued to talk over a meal of broiled scallops and New England clam chowder. She later sent me the write-up in an e-mail.

The first project involved designing and implementing a similar program to that of Jeff Fettig and Whirlpool, except the idea was to launch it with one general manager (out of eleven) in the western region. If it worked, she would get the CEO involved, and roll it out to other local CEOs as well. The second project involved taking a leadership development program for twenty-five rising stars in the organization that was already budgeted and scheduled and greatly strengthening the coaching component. It essentially boiled down to designing and implementing an internal coaching certification program based on the Masterful Coaching paradigm.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

# COACHING SMALL ENTERPRISES

## Get People to Race Up the Value Chain and Wallop Wal-Mart

*Coaching CEOs of big companies and being  
a guru is definitely overrated.*

Coaching CEOs of big companies may sound glamorous, but it is actually a small market with lots of competition and guardians at the gate. Second, if you are a mega guru, potential clients may think you are so high and mighty that they are likely to be intimidated by you. Sure, you may get lucky and land the opportunity to coach a legendary CEO of a big brand-name company with the possibility of a million-plus rollout in store if you succeed—but in truth, this is almost like hitting a hole-in-one in golf.

The teachable point of view of this chapter is that if you shift your strategy to coaching CEOs of small businesses (or department heads in big ones), your chances of success probably increase by a factor of ten. Think of the numbers. For every Fortune 500 firm in the United States or Global 1000 firm around the world, there are at least a thousand or even tens of thousands of family-owned enterprises and small businesses.

The CEOs of big companies are often a bit jaded when it comes to coaching or leadership training, often complaining of

being “consulted out.” By contrast, the CEOs of small companies are often acutely aware that they can’t reach their goals on their own. They show up like disciples of a great Zen Master seeking to be taken under the master’s tutelage. In many cases, they have never had a boss to show them the way, never had any formal leadership training, and never sat down with a consultant. Instead of standing on false pride, their attitude is likely to be, “I need all the help I can get.”

Coaching the leaders of small enterprises to realize an Impossible Future and win at the great game of business is an excellent way to hone your own business coaching skills. The principles and methods you will learn in this master class are actually universal for all business—extra large, large, medium, small, extra small. Having said that, for a coach who has worked mainly on soft leadership skills and now would like to become more of a “hard business coach,” spending a few years coaching small enterprises is an excellent proving ground, much more so than working in a big corporation.

The reason is that when you waltz into the executive suite of a big company that does billions in sales, has tens to hundreds of thousands of employees, and spans the globe with offices in fifty countries, you are dealing with an enterprise so big that it is hard get your arms around it. If you do coach an executive of one of these companies, you have a better than even chance of working with a life-long bureaucrat in charge of a support function, cost center, or center of excellence who hasn’t thought like a businessperson in years. By contrast, if you coach the leader of a small business, you have a better than even chance of working with a real businessperson, along with the opportunity to have an impact on the whole business.

My promise to small business leaders is that coaching will help your business grow exponentially, multiply your profits, and win the talent war. At the same time, I tell them that if they are willing to play 100 percent, this can all turn out to be the ultimate self-development and growth experience.

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Be the best in the world at what you do.

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## CHECKLIST FOR SMALL BUSINESS

I am not going to attempt here to provide the ultimate small business coaching guide, but rather relate some of the things I have found important in coaching small businesses. Let's start with this checklist for small business:

- ☐ Is the ambition to be great, not just big?
- ☐ Is there a business model that is stable, powerful, innovative? The acid test? Cash.
- ☐ Are you focusing on a dramatic difference?
- ☐ Is it a professional service firm (PSF) that sells dreams or is it trying to wallop Wal-Mart on price?
- ☐ Is the client working on the business or working in the business?

Let's look at these in detail.

### IS THE AMBITION TO BE GREAT, NOT JUST BIG?

On the day I penned this chapter, I visited Russo's, "the food lover's store" in Watertown, Massachusetts. The store has an incredible array of vegetables, all of which look as if they just came off the back of a farmer's pickup truck; cheeses that reminded me of my many trips through the Swiss Alps; Italian deli items like prosciutto and pancetta and parmigiano reggiano. Being there brings up images of Florence, a gourmet bakery, a flower shop. All of this combines to provide a literally mouth-watering shopping experience. The lesson? The commitment to be great, not just big, can transform any small business into a big success. Ask the clients what they would have to do for people to say, "They are the best in the world at what they do."

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Coach people to come up with innovative business concepts.

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### IS THERE A BUSINESS MODEL THAT IS STABLE, POWERFUL, INNOVATIVE?

A coachee with a lousy business model is going to wind up working long hours for a dwindling pile of cash. Conversely, if this

person has a great business model and executes it well, she will wind up with a mountain of cash. If that is the case with the client, ask: “Who are the category killers in your industry? How do they do business? Why don’t you do it that way?” Whole Foods Market started out as a small business and is now turning into a large empire. The reason is that founder John Mackey came up with a stable, powerful, innovative business model based on the idea that people want to eat delicious, healthy, and natural food. Whole Foods Market produces almost ten times the revenue per square foot of shelf space than a typical Safeway-type store does and is growing by leaps and bounds.

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You are either dramatically different or dead.

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### ARE YOU FOCUSING ON A DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE?

Tell the coachee that if he wants to succeed, he needs to be the only one in the world that does what he does. Here is a case in point. While I was renovating a big house I own just outside Boston, I decided to start my own construction company to defray costs. I didn’t want to compete with every small contractor driving around in a pickup truck and selling painting, plumbing, and carpentry, so I decided to name the company HomeFaceLift and create a professional service firm dedicated to helping people dramatically increase the investment value of their property or be able to raise the rent. The idea was to deal with the focal points that had the most economic impact: front walk, bath, kitchen, fireplace, and so on. The business was so wildly successful I had to curtail it before it took over my life.

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Race up the value chain: from raw materials to products, to services, to experiences, to dreams.

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### IS IT A PSF THAT SELLS DREAMS OR IS IT TRYING TO WALLOP WAL-MART ON PRICE?

A client who is trying to compete on price will lose to the Wal-Marts of the world 99.9 percent of the time. How do small companies wallop the Wal-Marts? One easy way is to turn your company

into a PSF, which starts with building superb client relationships and facing up the value chain. I saw an IBM ad that said it all: “Stop thinking like a bank; start thinking like a customer.” All banks offer basically the same things. Yet if you make a special request, it is very easy to get a “we don’t do that” or “no” for an answer. At Commerce Bank, the teller has a red button under the desk. If the customer makes a special request that doesn’t fit bank policy, the teller presses the button and the call is relayed to a PSF person who tries to figure out a way to give them a yes.

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RE/MAX is in the business of selling dreams.  
Most real estate offices just sell properties based  
on comparable prices, forgetting what the  
customer is really after.

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## IS THE CLIENT WORKING ON THE BUSINESS OR WORKING IN THE BUSINESS?

As Michael Gerber, author of *The E-Myth*, points out, Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald’s, “the largest small business in America,” never worked in the business of a hamburger restaurant.<sup>1</sup> What he did was work on the business, perfecting all the systems for turning out low-cost food items with high efficiency. Once he did that, he asked himself how he could achieve business growth given he didn’t have much money. He then perfected the McDonald’s franchise system. By contrast, most small business owners work in the business, not on the business. They are like the Dutch boy with his finger in the dike trying to keep the water from flooding in due to the fact that they have never designed the business to work like a system.

## MARKETING, FEES, AND THE STRUCTURE OF COACHING ENGAGEMENT

The first step in coaching a small business is to get together with the CEO for dinner and or lunch where building a relationship is the only thing on your agenda. Keep in mind the aphorism that it is more important to be interested than interesting,

so adjust your statement-to-question ratio accordingly. You will discover that as people begin to have the experience of being in relationship with you, they will start to engage you in a meaningful conversation about what is really on their minds. This creates the opportunity to discuss their goals and problems with respect to their business, as well as the opportunity in coaching for them.

At some point you can talk to the client or prospect about contracting and fees. Most small businesses are used to paying ten to fifteen thousand dollars to professional service firms for accounting and legal services a year, and coaching will fit into that slot in their minds. Paying a thousand or fifteen hundred dollars a month for coaching is usually seen as acceptable if the client has something at stake in reaching goals or solving problems. Also send up a trial balloon on a risk reversal proposition if you feel the person might balk on the price—for example, “I will coach you for three months, and then you can decide to pay me based on the value I provide—either more or less than the thousand or fifteen hundred dollars a month that I usually charge small businesses.” Make a request that if you make a difference in their business, they will refer you to three other small business owners who are friends.

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Meet with people once a month and talk once a week.

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## USE THE GOAL MODEL TO COACH A SMALL BUSINESS

While you can draw from the Masterful Coaching one-year program and the 12 Catalytic Coaching Conversations intended for larger companies, it's better to keep it simple with small businesses. The GOAL model is a simple and powerful method to turn a business around: (1) goals and aspirations, (2) observe reality, (3) assess options, and (4) learning and feedback as people attempt to perform. A good rule of thumb is to spend 10 percent of your coaching session on goals and aspirations, 20 percent on facing reality, 60 percent on developing options



and action plans, and 10 percent on learning and feedback. This also applies to any individual coaching session.

## GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

Being small is no excuse for smallish aims. Start by asking people: “What would be an Impossible Future for your business based on the size of your ambitions rather than the size of your resources and budget?” To answer this question, the person has to get bigger than the circumstances that are pressing in and dare to dream. Also ask: “Who do you want to be as a company?” which is a different question from: “What do you want to do [or have done in the past]?” This question is a good way to get at the person’s hidden aspirations for business. Get her to think in terms of being the future of her industry. I want to be the future of [fill in the blank—the food business, banking, eyeglasses, real estate, and so on]. Cirque du Soleil decided it wanted to reinvent the circus. It stopped focusing on kids, got rid of the animal acts and the clowns, and started providing adults an unforgettable entertainment experience.

- What’s your Impossible Future or big game?
- Where are you committed to being great, not big?
- Who do you want to be as an organization (not, “What do you want to do?”)?
- I want to be the future of ...

## OBSERVE CURRENT REALITY

The biggest mistake most small businesses make is not that they don’t have a goal, even if it’s vague, but that they don’t face reality. They tend to pretend that things are better than they are until their most talented people quit, their customers fade away, and cash reserves have dwindled. At Masterful Coaching we use the “What’s So” process, an all-day meeting with the owner and team to get people to face reality. This is the first step in turning a business around.

Start by putting flip chart paper up on the wall for each of these categories: (1) talent, (2) marketing, (3) supply chain,

(4) customer service, and (5) finance and accounting. Then ask the questions below. In this process, the scales will fall from people's eyes. For example, my brother and son started a successful Internet business selling furniture. Yet it wasn't until we did the "What's So" exercise that they realized that although the phone was ringing off the hook with customers placing orders, they were actually selling many items for less than they were paying for them. They were competing on price and thus offering walloping discounts, sending them into the red.

For each category listed previously, ask the following questions, and put the answers on the corresponding flip chart:

- What's been accomplished?
- What are the facts?
- What's working? What's not working?
- What's missing that, if you had it, would make a difference?
- What's next?

Keep asking: "Anything else?" The walls should be full by the time you are done.

### IDENTIFY YOUR OPTIONS: WHAT'S MISSING THAT, IF PROVIDED, WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Once you get clients to face reality—something that may result in their turning green as they realize they are losing talent, money, and customers at an alarming rate—the next step is to coach them to identify their options and inspire them to take action. Most small businesses, like large ones, have many more options available to them than they are currently aware of. You can start by identifying problems that showed up in the "What's So" under "Facts" or "What's not working" and then brainstorm what options people might have that could produce a breakthrough. The following are some good examples

- Hire a minimum of one really talented person. Get rid of three nonperformers; one talented person can do the job that three to five people can do.

- Turn your business into a PSF. I urged my brother to sell his furniture company, “Rooms To Go,” at a premium price versus just being another me-too competitor.
- Leverage the Internet. The Web allows any small company to think and act big.
- Overspend on marketing. Who are the probable customers? How can we reach them? Figure out how to use Google ads cost-efficiently.
- Focus on the local scene. Sure, there are big companies from China, India, and Mexico in software design, yet we are just down the street.
- Get control of costs. Watch cash reserves and act fast.

## LEARNING AND FEEDBACK

Once you settle on your options and people go out and make a committed attempt to perform, you need to stick with them as a coach and provide regular feedback and learning. I usually start with asking, “What happened?” “What’s missing?” “What’s next?” I may also go with them to a key employee or client meeting and observe how they handle themselves and tell them one thing they did very well and one thing they could do much better.

## REPEAT THE GOAL MODEL EVERY MONTH

Setting the GOAL model in motion the first month should inevitably result in an action plan or to-do list. When you start the second coaching session in the second month, check in on what the client accomplished with respect to her to-do list. Then start the GOAL model all over again. If you spent a whole day on this in month 1, spend about a half-day on it in month 2, and about ninety minutes thereafter. After a while, the GOAL model will be transferred to the client, who will use it to coach her employees, often without even being aware of it. Create a scoreboard that will allow you to connect the coaching to real return on investment—dollars and cents.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

# BUILDING A SUPER-SUCCESSFUL COACHING PRACTICE

### Lesson 1: How to Get Clients

Today there are 75 million baby boomers heading for retirement who see coaching and consulting as another option to retiring and playing golf in Florida for the rest of their lives. As of this writing, the International Coaching Federation has twenty thousand members and is still growing. And many people throughout the world are signing up for Masterful Level Professional Certification courses. Yet as Carl Kaestner, a friend and colleague, asks, how many of these people are getting rich (even making a living)?

This master class is intended to provide some guidelines as to how to build a successful coaching practice without necessarily telling you what to do right up to the last steps. Let's begin with the premise that coaches can learn a lot from consultants, lawyers, and others who have built up a successful professional service firm (PSF). Whether you market yourself by books, Web sites, blogs, direct mail, cold calls, or something else, to succeed as a coach or in any PSF is all about having superb client relationships. This will be the bedrock of your success. It always has, and it always will.

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A coaching practice is a joyful, creative, entrepreneurial endeavor that elicits maximum concerted human potential in the wholehearted service of others.

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You build a coaching practice by thinking in terms of building a practice one customer at a time by exceeding expectations at every turn. Think of yourself as being lucky enough to have one customer this year, and then deliver beyond that person's wildest expectations by offering solutions that make a difference in people's lives. This one-to-one approach leads to new business by virtue of referrals, probably the best way to build a business.

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Being a small niche-oriented PSF is no excuse for small aims.

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Smallness is no excuse for having small aims. Decide who you want to be as a company, not just on what you will do. When I started Masterful Coaching in 1995, I said I wanted to be the world leader in executive coaching. I decided to claim the mantle of leadership as a self-expressive, existential act, even though, truth be told, I didn't have a single client. Interestingly enough, several weeks later, I got a phone call from Hedrick and Struggles, the big search firm, asking if I was interested in selling Masterful Coaching to the firm. I also wanted to be the future of coaching, where coaching takes place in the domain of accomplishment versus coaching's past, which was all about therapy.

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If you can't explain your marketing position in eight words or less, then you don't have a position.

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Seth Godin

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There are more coaches out there in the world than hot dinners, so in order to build a successful coaching practice, you have to create a unique marketing position that will make you stand out from the crowd. What do you do that nobody else does? Can you explain it in one sentence, one paragraph, or a short elevator speech? I tell people that (1) Masterful Coaching is about producing extraordinary and tangible business results—real return on investment, not just realizations; (2) Masterful Coaching is transformational—it produces an alteration in who people are, not just an assessment; and (3) if I am having a good day, they get a wizard, not just a practitioner of some method.

## MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL COACHING PRACTICE

There is perhaps not one silver bullet you can use to attract new prospects and get repeat business from clients. It is more a matter of being brilliant on the basics—doing things like blogging, passing out your business cards, and taking people to lunch and in the process, fattening up your rotating file as a regular discipline. As they say in sports, you can't control every bounce of the ball, but if you are brilliant on the basics, good things will happen.

### BUILD A WEB SITE THAT GIVES YOU A BRAND NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS

A Web site address is a powerful and low-cost tool for announcing to the world that you are in business. It instantly gives you a brand name (for example, coach.com) and an address where people can find you. It allows you to convey your dramatic difference and makes it possible for customers to get to know you. It needs to convey your business concept, your big idea, and your solutions (experiences).

It is really surprising to me how many people go into a coaching business without taking advantage of the enormous marketing opportunity a Web site provides. You never get a Web site right the first time. Get it 80 percent right; then iterate. Make sure your design package allows you to do that on your own without having to pay someone every time you make a change.

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Make blogging a daily discipline.

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### BLOG AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

I strongly believe blogging is the number one emerging marketing, brand-building tool of our times. There is perhaps no better way to have intimate, engaging, mind-set shifting “conversations” with clients and prospects. Coaching is a relationship business, and blogging is a way to establish a relationship instead of just trying to hawk your products. It's a way for people to hear about

your fascinating, intriguing teachable points of view and begin to apply it to their own situation. It's a bridge for people to take another step in getting to know you better: "I agree with what you said in that blog. Can we talk?"

Do you see blogging as a breakthrough opportunity for you? If not, why not? Let me encourage you to blog as if your coaching practice depends on it; in fact, it does.

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Do pass out your business card!

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## NEVER EAT ALONE

I am not the type of person who goes to a big conference, sets up a table, and schmoozes with whoever happens to walk by. I prefer a more intimate conversation with people. I read a book about networking a few years ago, *Never Eat Alone*, that turned my paradigm about networking around. Networking isn't glad handing; it is an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life. I can't think of a better way than breaking bread for a coach to engage in a meaningful conversation with people that gives them an experience of your value added and perhaps leads to other things. Charles Handy, the guru's guru in London, has a Web site where he extends an invitation to anyone "interesting" to come to his house and have breakfast with him and his wife. I am sure many of these breakfasts lead to business ventures.

## DON'T BE TOO SHY TO ASK FOR REFERRALS

Coaching is a relationship business where you start out with a program; if you are successful, you eventually evolve into the role of a trusted adviser. If you are lucky enough to achieve that status, the client probably not only really likes you but has a full appreciation of your added value. However, clients tend to be focused on their own concerns in the center of their own universe, so it may not occur to them that you need their referrals. This is why you need to say to them: "I am seeking to build my coaching practice. If you feel this work has made a difference, I would appreciate any referrals you might have for me." Take a few minutes to brainstorm with the client who these referrals could be.

## IT IS OKAY TO OFFER ONE FREE COACHING SESSION, AS WELL AS TO REVERSE THE RISK

A colleague started a coaching business by telling people he would coach them without their having to agree to pay anything, under two conditions: (1) if after three months of coaching, they were getting value from it, they would pay the normal fees; and (2) if the coaching had an impact, they would call up three friends or colleagues who were candidates for referral and set up a personal introduction. This approach reversed the risk from the client to the coach, removing a big obstacle to the coaching process. It also was a highly effective way to build in a conversation about referrals from the beginning. A variation on a theme of this approach is to offer a potential client one free coaching session.

## FEES: HOW MUCH TO CHARGE

I have discovered that the fees people charge are equal to their self-confidence and the value they place on their own skills and capabilities. Coaches who are skilled but who have low self-esteem tend to charge too little and wind up working all the time for nothing, whereas coaches who are too arrogant charge too much and, except for the odd lucky break with a big client, get little business. I like the idea of hooking compensation to performance. Charge an average rate and create a variable compensation plan that is dependent on results produced.

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Always get a contract. Never go on “He’s a nice guy.”

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## CONTRACTING: CONNECT COACHING TO ROI

I used an example in the first chapter of a coach from England who used a variable compensation scheme. The CEO told him his Impossible Future was to grow the company from \$3 billion to \$5 billion. The coach said that was great, making the point that it might take them decades to get there (it had taken decades to get from \$1 billion to \$3 billion) and then asked, “What would it



be worth to you have the power and velocity to get there in three years?" The CEO was intrigued.

The coach and CEO worked out a lucrative financial arrangement that worked out in the millions if you include stock options. The coach went to work in terms of defining the conditions of satisfaction to deliver on the goals. The coach became a member of the executive team with a full seat at the table. The coach held a yearly executive offsite or breakthrough strategy session for a full week with the top one hundred people in the company. And the coach could call meetings any time and at any place in the company. The goal was not only reached, but exceeded.

## TEACHABLE POINTS OF VIEW ABOUT SUCCESS

- *Dress for success.* People greet you according to your dress.
- *Be niche oriented.* Do you want to coach women? Boomers? Global 1000s in biotech? Venture capital start-ups?
- *Blog as if your life depended on it.* This is a great marketing tool and needs to be a daily discipline.
- *Focus on localness.* Emphasize that your office is just down the street: easy access and no travel costs.
- *Choose great clients.* Go for clients who aim to change the world and who are fun and playful.
- *Fire clients who are jerks.* Life is too short to have jerks for clients.
- *Resolve to provide a great client experience from start to finish.* Think like a customer, not like a coach.
- *Make their agenda your agenda.* If you do a great job, you will get more business.
- *Create intimacy.* Coaching conversations need to be intimate for the client to talk about goals and problems.
- *An engagement is not complete until you deliver:* a big promotion, Impossible Futures, culture change, return on investment.
- *Exceed expectations.* My first goal is to build a relationship with the client, my second goal is to exceed expectations, and my third goal is to make a profit.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

# GET PEOPLE TO BRING THEIR WHOLE SELVES TO WORK

Give Them an Opportunity to  
Make a Difference

*Coaching is about challenging and  
supporting people, giving them the gift of  
your presence.*

One of the most powerful observations I made with Masterful Coaching is that most organizations give people a big title and pay people big, big bucks with a view toward motivating them to do excellent work. And yet in my experience, the most motivated people are those who are doing something to make a difference in their world, and the best work is often done by volunteers. The key inquiry for organizations today lies in being able to elicit people's voluntary commitment.

What do big profit-making corporations need to learn that many small, philanthropic organizations already know? The answer is to design organizations that are consistent with human nature. Though many things have changed in the past five thousand years or so of human cultural history, there is one thing that hasn't: human nature. Human beings want the experience of being lovable (appreciated), being capable, and knowing that their existence makes a difference in the world.

Creating an organization that is consistent with human nature starts with an inspiring vision that people passionately care about, asking leaders to set significant leadership and business challenges that will make a difference rather than just fulfilling a functional role. It also involves acknowledging people for what they contribute to the company's being a market leader with a powerful bottom line.

Yet what about the side of human nature that has nothing to do with being a market leader, getting those productivities and efficiencies, or the bottom line? If you ask people what they passionately care about, they usually tell you their families, schools, communities, war and peace, the earth, and so forth. They have a deep desire to make a difference in these areas of life. Yet given the hectic pace of daily life at the dawn of this century, they just don't often have the opportunity.

## A NONTRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE

What a growing number of companies are finding is that if you give people the opportunity to make a difference in these other areas, they will bring their whole selves to work. Some companies have labeled this *strategic philanthropy*. This idea involves setting up programs that encourage employees to make a meaningful contribution to their local schools, their community, and the world they live in.

People's Bank in Massachusetts, for example, has a program whereby employees are encouraged to take three months off with pay every three years, to do some kind of philanthropic work in schools, hospitals, or social programs. The result is not only one of reaping the community's goodwill but also employees who return full of inspiration and motivation with a desire to be of greater service to their colleagues and customers.

At Masterful Coaching we have a Youth at Risk mentoring program. Some of our coaches spend a minimum of two to three hours a month mentoring youth who have a great deal of potential but who are at risk in some way. The first person I mentored was a very talented young African American woman in Roxbury, a troubled section of Boston. Despite the fact that she was the class

valedictorian of a special school and the winner of a national poetry award, she was not enrolled in college and was in danger of being married off to a fifty-year-old man in Haiti. I found offering her a powerful assist at a time when she needed it immensely satisfying. For me, working with her was a breath of fresh air and resulted in a renewed sense of purpose to the work I was doing with clients.

One day I visited the financial district of New York City to meet with people at the Chase Manhattan Bank. The Chase building sits in a large plaza and its architecture is tall, formal, and imposing—not the kind of place where you would want to apply for a loan if you missed your last car payment. As you walk into the lobby, you see a statement emblazoned on the wall: “Our purpose is to provide financial services to those companies that support the well-being of our customers, whether they are individuals, companies, communities, or countries.”

What caught my eye, and made the rest of the message stand out in that imposing lobby, was the word *well-being*. It told me that business was not just about making money or making and selling products and services—that it could be about contributing to the well-being of people, communities, and the planet that we share. The people whom I talked to in the bank said that when chairman Tom Labrecque first saw the message, it was only a small banner. He insisted that it be put in huge letters. Labrecque believes firmly that if the company contributes to the well-being of people, communities, and customers, it will have a very profitable relationship with them.

Every coach should ask: “Does our work contribute to people’s well-being?” As we’ve seen, it is important to create a work environment that allows people to delight customers and improve operations. But it is hard for a company to add value if it is not supporting the ecosystems, educational institutions, and other institutions that it touches. The following stories illustrate how two companies, Reebok and Bally, encourage their people to make a difference in the world (see Figure 29.1).

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If people feel good about themselves, they are more creative and productive.

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FIGURE 29.1. THE CYCLE OF STEWARDSHIP



## REEBOK: BRINGING YOUR WHOLE SELF TO WORK

Over the past hundred years or so, a macho management culture has evolved based on the belief that the only thing that matters is work and that the business of business is business, that is, to make money. The personal parts of people's lives were supposed to be checked at the door when people showed up for work. Yet a growing number of powerful executives, many from the baby boomer generation, have found that while making money matters, the other things that people care about matter too. One of these executives is Sharon Cohen of Reebok. Cohen joined the company in the early days when there were only twenty employees and later wound up working for CEO Paul Fireman as Reebok's vice president of advertising, a powerful job in the competitive, frenetic world of athletic footwear and apparel.<sup>1</sup>

Says Cohen, "I came to work for Paul Fireman because I liked his values. He talked about honesty, about taking a stand for the things you believed in, about keeping your word, and about family." At forty-five, Cohen's life changed: "I had a baby girl." She left her job in Reebok's marketing area and became vice president of public affairs and executive director of the Reebok Foundation. One of her roles is to help Fireman create an environment in which people can bring their whole selves to work.

"You have to look at the person as a whole," says Cohen. "People spend a lot of time at work. You can't compartmentalize personal life and work life, individual and family concerns, personal concerns and social concerns. People are not just workers by day and good parents by night. In the same sense, you can't pretend that people just bring their minds to work and sit at a desk all day. They also have a body, a spirit, a soul."

Fireman is a believer in corporate responsibility. Says Cohen, "I doubt if there are very many CEOs, if there are any at all, who would admit to social irresponsibility. But there's a long way between the rejection of irresponsibility and the acceptance of responsibility. If you think of a bell curve, what you will find under the bell of the curve, where most companies gather, is what we might call social indifference. That's all those companies and managers who don't regard the matter of responsibility as part of their corporate mission."

According to Cohen, "The things that we do in the area of social responsibility—like the Reebok Human Rights Award and Human Rights Program—make people feel proud of the company and good about themselves. When people feel good about themselves, they are naturally more creative and productive. They add a lot of value to their jobs. You can't measure it, but you can feel it when you take a walk through the halls. It's not coaching in the traditional sense, but it's a kind of indirect coaching." What does the company do in the human rights area? In the fall of 1994, Reebok found out that a factory in China was housing its employees in an unsafe building. Reebok called the factory and said that the employees would have to be moved. The factory manager said, "We will have them out by the end of the month." The Reebok representative said, "That's not good enough." The factory workers were in better housing by the end of the week.

Then there is the Reebok Human Rights Award. Each year, the program recognizes four young people on the front line of human rights work who, early in their lives and against great odds, have had significant impact in their communities. Another Reebok human rights program, Witness, is designed to arm the human rights movement worldwide with the weapons of mass communication, such as handheld video cameras and fax machines.

"A video camera in the hands of the right person is more powerful in stopping the violation of human rights than a tank or a gun," said musician Peter Gabriel. Former President Jimmy Carter has hailed the company as doing more for human rights than any other company in the world.

Reebok also has a volunteer program that provides opportunities for people to be of service in the community. According to Cohen, "We do a big effort with the City Year Serve-a-Thon—a youth development program that has become the new urban Peace Corps. Our employees get together on the day of the Serve-a-Thon and paint a school or do whatever the project happens to be."

"We also do other things," says Cohen, "like serving Thanksgiving dinner to the homeless in our cafeteria. We know that this is creating a real benefit for our employees, not just the guests. It is great for employees to see themselves not just as people doing a job to support themselves, but as people who are doing something to make a difference in the world."

"We don't do these projects for economic reasons, but we know that whatever good it does for people to be able to make a real contribution, we get it back tenfold. It's part of what makes the Reebok environment one of commitment, caring, and possibility. It becomes part of the way managers interact with the people who report to them, and this becomes part of the value that people create and bring to customers. Can you see it in profitability? Yes! How do you know? We can't measure it, but you just know it."

How might it all add up in dollars and cents? Reebok's performance over the past ten years has been 30 percent compounded in sales and almost the same in profits. According to Cohen, who has a marketing person's ability to zero in on a single phrase that says a lot about a company, "Someone referred to our brand about a year ago as 'pure performance plus humanity.' When I heard that, it clicked."

## BALLY: AN ORGANIZATION CONSISTENT WITH HUMAN NATURE

It is one thing to be able to create a context that inspires and empowers people to add value if you are the CEO of a large company, but how do you do it if you are a middle manager or a team leader? John Egan, marketing and sales manager for Bally retail shops in the United Kingdom, found a way. Egan not only has a philosophy and a system but knows how to inject it with fun and excitement.<sup>2</sup>

Bally's U.K. management has nurtured a particular business culture where employees pay attention to personal needs, ask customers what they think, and send thank-you notes. According to Egan, "I've learned that for people doing frontline jobs, it's not the salary and it's not the benefits package that make a difference, it's the small things—a bit of recognition or a bit of praise or a bit of sharing in success."

The key to creating a value-added culture is to have a philosophy about people. One thing that Egan has realized is that most so-called ordinary people are capable of extraordinary things.

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One of the biggest mistakes that managers make is seeing people as ordinary just because they are doing ordinary jobs, and therefore they expect ordinary things from them.

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Egan strongly believes that if you look after the staff first, they will look after your customers. A lot of companies introduce a customer-focused approach but don't take into account that employees are angry and resentful because they haven't had a day off in three weeks. "We teach our managers," says Egan, "to look after the needs of the staff in every single way.

"For example, we tell them to put themselves in the other person's shoes if someone has to pick up a child, or has a doctor appointment, or is taking a class and wants to leave the store early. We teach them to say yes instead of saying, 'No, it's a busy afternoon and you are going to have to wait until the normal time.' If you do look after the small things, like letting people go ten or fifteen minutes early, they'll come back and work late



or forgo their lunch break, not because they have to but because they want to. Furthermore, their happiness will come through in their smiles or in their eyes when they are actually talking to a customer and trying to sell them a pair of shoes.”

Egan continues, “It helps to just talk to people on an individual basis. The first thing that we would do when we go into a Bally store is to greet everyone in a very enthusiastic way to make sure people know that we think they are important. Then we find the opportunity to ask them how the job is going, what they’ve done previously, what they like, what they don’t like, and if they found the training useful.

“Once you’ve had a chat with a person, make it clear how much you think he or she can contribute. ‘Have there been any problems, and how can we improve that?’ or ‘If you owned your own shop, what would you do?’ We all share the philosophy of recognizing people and making them feel part of an organization, no matter what part they play, however big or how small. Even if the cleaner walks by while I am there, I will ask him what he thinks.”

One of Bally’s reasons for success is training, which is headed up by Susan Wellman. “We know that people aren’t going to want to work in a shoe shop for the rest of their lives,” says Wellman. “We recognize that people do want to progress and to develop as people, so we’ve got to give them the mechanics to do that.” Bally makes sure that the courses it runs are not just for the company’s benefit, but for the employees’ development as well. This includes courses in creative writing, leadership, and interdisciplinary management.<sup>3</sup>

Along with asking people for their ideas and providing training, recognizing performance is very important. “We also do things,” says Egan, “to recognize the good performers, not just the superstars. Sometimes it’s finding out snippets of things—someone might have had to work on her day off just to solve a problem in the store. Usually what we do is send her flowers, a bottle of champagne, or a note.” Personally, Egan believes that as long as recognition is sincere and honest, it’s impossible to overdo it.

“I was at work one day, and we were looking at the absence and sickness record. We noticed that we had quite a few people

who had 100 percent attendance records. These were people who instead of turning over and staying in bed when they woke up with a headache decided that they were going to work. We felt we should recognize this achievement, so we sent beautiful boxes of hand-made chocolates to over seventy people.

“We sent the chocolates straight to their homes, right out of the blue. When they arrived home, there was a mysterious box and a letter from me saying: ‘Thank you very much for your perfect attendance record over the last twelve months.’ And the next day they went to work and said ‘Bloody hell, look what happened!’” They were as inspired, empowered, and motivated as they could possibly be. They showed up like people who were really up to something—putting a man on the moon—not just finding a size 9 shoe for someone in a shoe store.



## A FINAL REFLECTION

*Stewardship is taking a stand for the future of the people, communities, complex social systems, and the world we care about.*

This book is about coaching leaders at all levels to create inspired, high-performance organizations that work in both human and business terms. Today all business leaders I know would like to leave such a legacy to their corporation and its stakeholders and their own families. Yet it often doesn't occur to them that our legacy to our families should not be just a few material possessions but the raising of our collective vision from a foundation of socially constructive values deeply embedded in our society, communities, and schools.

The primary reason is that the leaders of our institutions rarely see themselves as stewards of the planet, communities, and employees; they consider themselves voyagers on the road to personal and corporate success. We design organizations based on the idea of becoming more productive without taking into account the far-reaching consequences of a production culture. It seldom occurs to us that our way of living is not sustainable and we are existing off the capital of future generations.

We live in a culture that stresses not stewardship and service but an abundance of self-interest. We lead, manage, and coach people out of this context, setting goals that often camouflage personal ambition as organizational ambition. We do not take into account what people passionately care about or the purposes they hold as sacred. Then we cannibalize people's time and energy, turning them into what the Japanese call a "salary man."

As a result, people bury their deep feelings of caring for their organizations, their employees, and their work.

Masterful Coaching doesn't start with setting goals, motivating people, and appraising their performances so as to get more out of them. It starts with looking in the mirror ourselves and asking what really matters to us so as to unearth the fact that we do care. This naturally leads to stewardship, choosing service over self-interest, taking the longer and deeper view rather than just being concerned with next door or next week. It means seeing who we are in the context of taking a stand for the future of people, institutions, and the world. It means creating business enterprises that are not only outstandingly productive, but also nurture the human spirit and allow people to learn and grow.

There are many opportunities in every organization to make stewardship real: being an executive who makes strategic decisions that regenerate the company's future and the community and environment at the same time; helping a client make customers successful; serving as a mentor for an up-and-coming player; or making sure the team gets the support, direction, skills, and capabilities it needs to succeed, regardless of the consequences to the coach. People who truly embrace the quality of stewardship stand out. They ask: "What are your vision, values, and real goals?" "How do you see your next steps?" "How can I help?"

In writing this book, I met many men and women whose definition of leadership, coaching, and teaching went beyond the usual parameters and included the notion of social responsibility. These were often people whose personal (corporate) commitment to good stewardship encompassed investing in a common cause. They made this an integral part of their lives, investing their time and energy and resources in it rather than making a mere gesture. As one executive put it, "I invest in the recognition of the unity of the world, my connectedness with all people, and my own highest human aspirations."

# NOTES

## **Preface**

1. P. Sellers, "Something to Prove," *Fortune Magazine*, June 24, 2002.
2. Robert Hargrove, *Masterful Coaching Fieldbook* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2007).

## **Introduction**

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2. Thanks to Bart Sayle of Breakthrough Group Ltd. in London who attended one of my Certification Programs for this story.

## **Chapter Two**

1. I am appreciative of the opportunity to work in John Fish's organization and to write about it.
2. J. Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001).
3. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with John Young, an exemplary leader, over the past few years. I also appreciate working with Frank Anderson, president of the Defense Acquisitions University and Dave Fitch, both extraordinary leaders and men.

## **Chapter Three**

1. I heard this quote at a Tom Peters presentation.
2. D. Goodgame, "The Game of Risk," *Time*, Aug. 14, 2000.

3. I appreciate the opportunity to work with John Nelson, then CEO and now chairman of Norton Company in Massachusetts.
4. I am grateful for the opportunity to work at Colonial Pipeline and am appreciative of conversations with John Lemmon and Bill Scott. Bill has been one of my favorite coachees. His creativity and effectiveness and good humor make him a pleasure to work with.
5. [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_Wittgenstein](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Ludwig_Wittgenstein).
6. Chris Argyris is the creator of the Ladder of Inference. A pioneer in the area of organization learning, he is the author of numerous publications and has developed many tools for management learning, among them the Ladder of Inference. See C. Argyris, *Overcoming Organizational Defenses* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1990), C. Argyris, *Strategy, Change, and Defensive Routines* (Boston: Pitman, 1985), and C. Argyris, *Knowledge for Action* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

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2. Thanks for this story from a leader I coached, Bill Nahil.
3. I am appreciative of the opportunity to sit in on a class led by Benjamin Zander, director of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and author of (with Rosamond Stone Zander) *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000).

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2. J. S. Bruner, *Making Stories* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2002).
3. My appreciation for this example from my friend and colleague at Masterful Coaching, Hans Peter Hartmann, whose uplifting spirit shines through in all of his coaching.

4. The notion of master programs comes from the work of Chris Argyris. See C. Argyris, *Overcoming Organizational Defenses* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1990), C. Argyris, *Strategy, Change, and Defensive Routines* (Boston: Pitman, 1985), and C. Argyris, *Knowledge for Action* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).
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### **Chapter Eight**

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2. I am appreciative of the opportunity to work with Richard Severance on creating an Impossible Future for the ConocoPhillips Downstream organization. In that coaching engagement, I learned as much as I taught.

### **Chapter Ten**

1. I am appreciative of the opportunity to coach Jim Nokes of ConocoPhillips.

### **Chapter Eleven**

1. Jim. Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

### **Chapter Twelve**

1. Thanks again to John Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics for the United States.
2. Again, appreciation to Richard Severance.

### **Chapter Thirteen**

1. W. Bennis, *Organizing Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

### **Chapter Fourteen**

1. Jack Welch, *Winning* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).
2. Special thanks to Rene Jaeggi, former CEO of Adidas.
3. I appreciate being able to write about my coaching relationship with Greg Goff of ConocoPhillips.

### **Chapter Fifteen**

1. D. McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).
2. Thanks again to John Young, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.
3. Thanks to colleague Thomas Zwiefel for this example.



### Chapter Sixteen

1. I had the privilege to interview David Binkley, vice president of Global HR, on the work that he and Jeff Fettig did to create a coaching environment at Whirlpool.

### Chapter Seventeen

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### Chapter Eighteen

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2. I am appreciative of the opportunity to interview Fred Stiers about how he used the Masterful Coaching approach with his group.
3. Thanks again to John Young, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

### Chapter Nineteen

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### Chapter Twenty

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2. D. Bohm, *On Dialogue* (Ojai, Calif.: David Bohm Seminars, 1990).
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### Chapter Twenty-Two

1. Thanks again to Jim Nokes for the story.
2. Joel Klein, chancellor of the New York City Department of Education on the "Charlie Rose Show," July 22, 2007.
3. *New York Times*, July 16, 2005.

### Chapter Twenty-Three

1. Many of the ideas in this chapter are based on the work of Chris Argyris, whose findings in the areas of getting people to discuss the undiscussable are documented in many publications. See C. Argyris, *Overcoming Organizational Defenses* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1990), and C. Argyris, *Strategy, Change, and Defensive Routines* (Boston: Pitman, 1985).
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3. [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/john\\_kenneth\\_galbraith.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/john_kenneth_galbraith.html).
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**Chapter Twenty-Four**

1. Again, the idea of unfreeze, change, and refreeze was introduced by Kurt Lewin.
2. B. Zander and R. Zander, *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000).
3. I am appreciative of this story of colleague David Korkosz.
4. P. Riley, *The Winner Within* (New York: Putnam, 1993).

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**Chapter Twenty-Seven**

1. M. Gerber, "E Myth" (New York: Harper Business, 1986).

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1. I am grateful to Sharon Cohen for conversations about Reebok and its inspiring work in the area of social responsibility.
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Robert Hargrove** is a world-renowned, revolutionary thought leader in the field of talent development and coaching. His motto is “Better Leaders, Better World,” and he believes that coaching leaders to achieve an Impossible Future is the fastest, most powerful way to achieve both.

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Hargrove put coaching on the map with the first edition of *Masterful Coaching*, inspiring people with his paradigm-smashing idea that extraordinary leaders develop in the process of producing extraordinary results, not through abstract training programs.

An inspiring public speaker, Hargrove leaves his audiences empowered: “Coaching is about inviting people to discover their own greatness in the process of realizing an Impossible Future and winning in their business.” This is for many the ultimate self-development and growth experience.

He says that coaching is a new domain with the power to make traditional consulting and training irrelevant. It is not that these traditions aren’t of value; it is that they are insufficient given the fact that, “We are in a brawl without rules.”

“When people get involved in a Masterful Coaching relationship, it is extraordinary,” says one executive, “so extraordinary, it’s unbelievable.” Hargrove’s clients have risen to such prominent positions as Under Secretary of Defense, the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, and European CEO of the Year. They include Adidas, Zurich Financial Services, Phillips, Toyota, Novartis, ConocoPhillips, and Fidelity Investments.

Hargrove's coaching programs include Executive Coaching, Executive Life Coaching, team-based Action Coaching, the CollabLab, and the Masterful Coaching Certification Program.

The Masterful Coaching approach is one of the only methods that delivers real return on investment. According to one client, "We pretty much stuck with the Masterful Coaching approach, and it made the company hundreds of millions of dollars."

Today, with coaching a billion-dollar industry, Hargrove's goal is to legitimize it as a distinct profession with standard operating principles and practices. You can contact Robert Hargrove at Masterful Coaching +1 617-739-3300 or at Robert.Hargrove@MasterfulCoaching.com. You can visit him at [www.MasterfulCoaching.com](http://www.MasterfulCoaching.com) and [www.RobertHargrove.com](http://www.RobertHargrove.com).

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