

Executive Coaching: In Search of a Model

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Abstract

Executive coaching is an emerging field with broad demand and subsequent growth in service providers. The International Coach Federation (ICF) reports a membership of over 5500 coaches, and there is likely a large but indeterminate number of practicing coaches that do not belong to that organization. Enterprises around the globe are utilizing the services of these executive coaches. The topic is receiving increasing coverage in a number of professional, technical, and popular periodicals and numerous books on the topic. Unfortunately, there is little agreement on what executive coaching is or who is qualified to provide it. Consequently, the skills and qualifications of self-proclaimed coaches remain indeterminate. In this paper, we provide a brief overview of these issues. We suggest an operational definition of coaching, including its goals and objectives, and identify suggested competencies and qualifications. We conclude with implications for Leadership Educators.

Introduction

Executive coaching is an emerging field with broad demand and respondent growth in the number of service providers. The International Coach Federation (ICF), one of the larger organizations for coaches, boasts a membership of over 5500 coaches. Including individuals associated with other organizations and independent practitioners, there is likely twice that number of individuals who refer to themselves as coaches.

From Wall Street to Main Street, from Silicon Valley to Europe, supply is being fueled by demand. Enterprises across the country and around the globe, including

American Express, Sears, Bank of Boston, Nautica, Met Life, Bear Stearns, Kodak, AT&T, Motorola, Salomon Smith Barney, Twentieth Century Fox, Citicorp, are utilizing the services of executive coaches. A number of organizations have developed around this burgeoning field. These include the International Coach Federation (www.coachfederation.org), the Professional Coaches and Mentors Association (www.pcmaonline.com), and the American Coaching Association (www.americcoach.com).

Why all the excitement? Users report a variety of positive experiences and effective outcomes. Coaches work with clients to build on strengths, improve performance, and enhance quality of life. Many coaches look at both their clients' business side and, at the same time, look to ensure effective time management, balance between professional and personal demands, and life relationships. Some executives value having an objective party they can talk openly to about professional issues of import.

Mary Bradford, sales Manager of the New England region of Met Life's resources division, was quoted by Morris (2000) as saying that her coaching experience "was like a grenade in my life that's still going off." Many attest that coaching is like having a personal trainer. In a world of ever increasing complexity and higher stakes, they believe that coaches help them raise their game to the next level.

The topic is receiving increasing coverage in a number of professional, technical, and popular periodicals and numerous books on the topic. Hundreds of articles have been written in the past few years in Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, Money, USA Today, Industry Week, the Wall Street Journal, and Kiplinger's. CNN has featured executive coaching on multiple occasions. The Consulting Psychology Journal devoted its entire Spring 1996 edition to executive coaching. Bruce Peltier's "The Psychology of Executive Coaching," in addition to being an excellent volume on theory and application, provides an excellent review of the literature on executive coaching.

What is Executive Coaching?

Interestingly, nearly every article on the topic begins with the same question: what is executive coaching? The question itself demonstrates the lack of common understanding within this diverse field. What most providers agree on is that executive coaching is a one-on-one relationship between a coach and a client in order to meet client needs. According to the ICF (2002), "Coaching is an interactive process that helps individuals and organizations to develop more rapidly and produce more satisfying results."

The nature of the relationship, and the array of needs amenable to coaching, remains subject to the aims of the provider. Currently, providers calling themselves coaches offer “coaching” in a broad range of areas including “executive,” “leadership,” “strategic business,” “relationship,” “life planning,” and “rock and roll bands.”

Is Coaching Mentoring?

There are vigorous debates as to whether coaching is mentoring, consulting, psychotherapy, or some hybrid thereof. A mentor, in the traditional sense of the word, is an individual that has the same business expertise as the mentee. So we might, for example, see organizations in which senior executives mentor less senior managers on the “tricks of the trade.” At the highest levels of the organization, there are no “more senior” executives, and therefore no “mentoring” in the traditional sense of the word. In these cases, some opt for executive coaches. Coaches in this sense take on the role of a subject matter expert, one versed in the exact business in which the coachee is engaged. Garner (2000) describes an individual who sought coaching because he wasn’t versed enough to “speak the lingo” of finance “on the executive floor” and “needed someone to guide him through unfamiliar territory. . . . In other words (he wanted) . . . training with the professor all to himself.” The ICF (2002) seems to suggest that coaching is a form of mentoring when they suggest that executives can get what they want “faster and easier by having a coach *who’s been there.*”

We believe that mentoring provides an inadequate, if not misleading, conceptualization of executive coaching. Says Justin Yaros, CIO of Twentieth Century Fox as quoted by Garner (2000), “Executive coaching with the right person can provide something mentoring can’t – an objective, nonbiased view of the company . . . what (higher level executives) need are leadership and other executive development skills. And there are few people in an organization at this level who can teach that.” In order to achieve the objectives of improving performance and enhancing quality of life, executive coaching has to be much more than mentoring.

Is Coaching Consulting?

A consultant, in the traditional sense of the word, brings some expertise to bear on specific areas in the executive’s organization, typically related to organizational processes. Morris (2000) suggests that a coach is “part consultant, part sounding board, part manager.” The ICF (2002) proposes that “Coaching is a form of consulting. But the coach stays with the client to help implement the new skills, changes and goals to make sure they really happen.”

Baig (1997) appears to conceptualize executive coaching as having a distinct people-focus. He suggests that the types of people that can benefit from coaching include “a brilliant ideas person who clams up, or rambles, while trying to communicate thoughts before large groups. . . or a boss with a short fuse who really wants to change.” In a sense, this conceptualization suggests that the coach is more of a consultant than a mentor.

“Consulting” seems to come closer than “mentoring” to describe what executive coaching is. The coach does bring specialized knowledge about organizational processes, particularly inter- and intra-personal processes, to the relationship. However, the coaching relationship does more than bring in advice and consultation. In many regards, coaching is most successful when change is facilitated within the executive, enabling the executive to more effectively facilitate organizational change.

Is Coaching Therapy?

The Executive Coaching Forum of Boston (2000) suggests that “the coach creates a safe environment in which the executive can be comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn and develop. Drawing from a broad knowledge base and a solid repertoire of learning tools, the coach offers guidance and activities that help the executive meet her learning goals.” This sounds very much like the approach that behaviorally-based psychotherapists would take. Baig (1997) proposes that a coach is “Part consultant, part motivator, part shrink.” He suggests that “Often, the coach comes close to being a therapist. In one extreme example . . . a coach in Lafayette Hill, PA., worked with an executive who was so depressed after his daughter was killed by a truck that he says he ‘spent five weeks keeping this man on earth.’” Morris (2000) goes further and notes that “Observers of the phenomenon say that an executive coach often functions as a therapist, too – though the coaches themselves tend to deny this with some fury.” She quotes Warren Bennis as saying “a lot of executive coaching is really an acceptable form of psychotherapy. It’s still tough to say, ‘I’m going to see my therapist.’ It’s OK to say, ‘I’m getting counseling from my coach.’”

The International Coach Federation, on the other hand, is adamant that coaching is not therapy. On a page of their internet site devoted to FAQs, the ICF (2002) states that “Coaching is not therapy. We don’t work on ‘issues’ or get into the past or deal much with understanding human behavior.” Interestingly, they identify Attention-Deficit Disorder, a mental disorder, as a problem for which executive coaching is effective. They also assert that coaches work on both professional and personal goals and that “with the line between personal and business life blurring in the 90s, the coach is the only professional trained to work with all aspects of you.” This too sounds very much like psychotherapy.

Clearly, coaching relationships blur the line between the traditional concepts of mentoring, consulting, and psychotherapy. Because of the similarities between coaching and psychotherapy, of great concern are the dangers inherent in inadequately trained providers delivering such services.

Our Definition of Executive Coaching

Techniques common to both therapy and coaching include developing rapport, establishing an effective working relationship, assessing needed change, and facilitating the development of more effective behavior, among others. Commonalties between the two clearly establish the value of training in psychological principles and behavior change in order to conduct executive coaching. While both therapy and coaching utilize some of the same techniques, the objectives of executive coaching are quite different, focusing primarily on performance outcomes. For our purposes we differentiate between therapy and executive coaching in the following manner. Therapy is predominantly focused on clinical problems using a medical diagnosis and prescribed treatments designed to alleviate clinical disorders. Coaching, on the other hand, we define as a collaborative partnership in which the coach serves to facilitate awareness and enhance interpersonal and organizational effectiveness in the executive which extends to job-related performance and beyond.

Goals and Objectives for Executive Coaching

A broad range of activities fall under the label of executive coaching. To be effective the specific nature of these activities depends on the individual and organizational needs identified. Alyssa Freas (2000) in “Coaching for Leadership” suggests that “selecting the right approach is vital to realizing the desired outcome” (p. 28). In defining “Strategic Executive Coaching,” she suggests the following:

Modern effective executive coaching has to be strategic and individualized. A balance has to be struck between the organization and the individuals. In order to engage and to motivate, coaching must be individually tailored to the needs and aspirations of each particular individual. To deliver business results, the approach must be organizationally tailored to the strategy, vision, and values of the organization. The inclusion of business factors—as well as individual factors—is key to achieving business results (p. 28).

This is why assessment is so important in developing any executive coaching process. To be most effective, executive coaching must begin with the

development of insight by the executive into those critical leadership areas in which they demonstrate “blind-spots” or self-deception. Executive coaches, with appropriate expertise, will conduct a comprehensive assessment including the use of well-validated tests measuring job-related personality, interests, abilities, and feedback from peers and direct reports (360° assessments), among others. Gathering extensive information regarding the executive’s role in the organization, his or her strategic goals and objectives, and human resource issues are essential as well.

Although goals and objectives for executive coaching may vary substantially from individual to individual and organization to organization, there appear to be some common factors involved in most circumstances. As referred to above, one of the primary initial objectives in most coaching situations is the development of self-awareness. This insight into personal characteristics facilitates the recognition of the impact of these attributes on leadership behaviors. In essence, this involves taking an honest look at the way in which personal characteristics and behaviors impact on decision-making, relating to others, planning, and all the various other executive functions. The initial assessment provides a strong foundation for the executive’s evolving self-awareness.

A second common objective for many executives is overcoming self-limiting and self-defeating behaviors. Common examples of such behaviors include displaying inappropriate levels of assertiveness; being overly aggressive or self-effacing; not relating to others in ways that are acknowledging and respectful; emphasizing action without analysis, or conversely, “analysis paralysis;” ignoring others’ needs, while focusing exclusively on ones’ own; micromanaging and being unable to delegate effectively; not supporting employees’ efforts or punishing risk taking on the part of direct reports; and, ultimately creating a culture of fear and “yes” people.

Coaching objectives may range from improved self-management to the further development of knowledge, skills and attitudes related to emotional intelligence. To accomplish this task generally requires enhancing motivation and creating a laser focus for the energy generated by this process. For most executives it is essential to enhance one’s own motivation and effectiveness prior to developing these attributes in others.

Today, one of the primary personal characteristics of executives, which has the greatest impact on their organizations, is their level of interpersonal finesse. When present, interpersonal effectiveness can overcome a lot of adversity, serve to motivate employees, and maintain effective relationships throughout the organization. When absent, this same characteristic may lead to labor disputes, legal action, and poor morale, and generally ineffective organizational performance.

Based on the foundation above, executives can move toward enhancing motivation and effectiveness in those who report to them. These benefits derive both from the executive's developed ability to model desirable attitudes and behaviors, and from his or her attainment of a new skill set with which they can in turn coach their own employees to improved performance. As suggested by Bass (1998):

Leadership is charismatic such that the follower seeks to identify with the leaders and emulate them. The leadership inspires the follower with challenge and persuasion providing meaning and understanding. The leadership is intellectually stimulating, expanding the follower's use of abilities. Finally, the leadership is individually considerate, providing the follower with support, mentoring, and coaching (p. 5).

Such leadership requires self-awareness and certain personal and interpersonal characteristics and skills. These characteristics and skills are often developed most effectively through the executive coaching process.

Who is Qualified to Provide Executive Coaching?

There is little agreement on who is qualified to provide coaching, how providers should be credentialed, and how organizations that train coaches should be accredited. The myriad of coaching philosophies is mirrored in the varied numbers of individuals calling themselves coaches. Coaches currently identify themselves using a number of descriptors, including Executive, Leadership, Strategic business, Performance, Success, Team, Financial Freedom, Culture integration and management, Life planning, Relationship, Creativity, Family, and Spirituality. The ICF hosts a searchable directory of its coach members, called the Coach Referral Service (CRS). The CRS advertises that "One can find business coaches, financial coaches, spiritual coaches, life planning coaches, a rock and roll band coach, and *hundreds more*." Coaches come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are therapists, some unsuccessful consultants, and some retired executives.

Not surprisingly, the skills identified as necessary for an executive coach depend in large measure on the model of executive coaching being used, and that stems largely from the background of the individual coach. For example, a retired Information Technology executive trying to provide coaching services to executives in information technology may largely see coaching as a mentoring activity. "Been there, done that" comes to mind to describe this model. The retired executive-coach, given his or her background, will likely see coaching as a vehicle for current executives to obtain job-specific mentoring from outside the organization. The logic follows with ex-consultants and ex-therapists. The chosen

model likely depends on the background of the individual coach. This leads to a host of concerns about under-qualified providers providing executive coaching “in their own image.”

As well stated by Morris (2000), “But who, exactly, can be a coach? That’s the scary part: pretty much anybody. Many are therapists. Many more are dropouts from consulting. Many of the coaches interviewed for this story were garden-variety professionals, in past lives an Andersen consultant, a CPA, an IBM salesman, a low-level bank executive, a marketing vice president for Bloomingdale’s.”

We believe that the ability of anyone to declare themselves an executive coach in spite of inadequate training, experience, and credentialing can cause significant harm to both the coached individual and his or her organization. Some seem to disagree. On its FAQs internet page, in response to the question “Can coaching hurt someone?” the ICF opines “No. How? We aren’t doing psychological work. We’re not trying to control client’s thinking. We’re not cattle prods.” Others support our position. Steven Berglas (2002), a clinical psychologist and executive coach who spent 25 years in the department of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and is currently a researcher and an adjunct instructor at UCLA’s John E. Anderson School of Management, argues that “. . . in an alarming number of situations, executive coaches who lack rigorous psychological training do more harm than good.” (p. 87).

Berglas (2002) goes on to say that “By dint of their backgrounds and biases, they downplay or simply ignore deep-seated psychological problems they don’t understand. Even more concerning, when an executive’s problems stem from undetected or ignored psychological difficulties, coaching can actually make a bad situation worse.” Berglas relates what he describes as horror stories in which he has eventually intervened with executives whose conditions were made worse by inadequate coaches.

As one true-life example, Berglas describes one coach as an “impressive” jock with “a bodybuilder’s physique” that had been a co-captain of a big-ten football team and “knew that he was . . . not studious enough for medicine or law. But recognizing he had charisma to spare. . . decided that he would pursue a career in executive coaching.” Another example he relates is that of “a dapper onetime corporate lawyer” who taught his narcissistic (a serious personality disorder) client techniques for “managing the little people” in his organization. In both these cases, significant harm was done to the executive, and to the executive’s organization, as a result of the coaching experience.

Berglas asserts that “Many coaches gain a Svengali-like hold over both the executives they train and the CEOs they report to, sometimes with disastrous

consequences.” (p. 90) He concludes: “Without safeguards to prevent coaches from training those whose problems stem not from a lack of skills but from psychological problems, the executives being coached and the companies they work for will suffer.” (p. 92).

Suggested Competencies of Executive Coaches

Berglas suggests that frequently firms use coaches as a quick fix and give little thought when hiring them. He is quoted in the Dallas Daily News (08/21/02) as saying, “That’s scary when you’re messing with people’s heads.” Baig (1997) suggests “be sure to ask a coach for his or her educational credentials – degrees in organization behavior and psychology are helpful - as well as an accounting of real-world experience.”

So what are the necessary competencies to perform effectively as an executive coach? Although specific content may vary depending on the goals and objectives identified, we suggest that there exists a core set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are critical. These are now discussed.

Ability to Develop Rapport

The coaching process necessarily requires a close, personal, and trusting relationship between two professionals. Expertise in the traditional interpersonal skills of warmth, genuineness, empathy, and positive regard are a necessary foundation. In addition, specific training in the micro-skills associated with establishing rapport and obtaining the cooperation of sometimes initially “resistant” participants is an essential skill for executive coaches. These micro-skills include the use of posture, facial expressions, body language, proximity, cultural sensitivity, reflective listening, and others.

Assessment Knowledge & Skills

The use of interviewing techniques, standardized tests, and other methods of gathering information about the executive requires specialized expertise. It is important that the executive coach be well versed in the psychometric properties of the various personality, interest and abilities tests on the market. This knowledge is needed to assure that the instruments being used are reliable and valid for use with a specific executive in a specific situation. Just as important as knowing the strengths of a particular instrument or technique is knowing the limitations, so that statements regarding the executive may be qualified based on these limitations.

Persuasive Feedback Skills

It is not uncommon for an executive to have been previously provided constructive criticism from direct reports and significant others. However, high level executives are not necessarily known for their ability to receive feedback regarding their limitations and needed areas for development. It requires particular acumen to provide this feedback in a way in which the executive will receive it. This requires sensitivity to the body language and responses of the executive as the feedback is being provided. It also requires the ability to adjust the feedback to the style and receptivity of the executive so that the information may be productively utilized.

Ability to Deal with Resistance

Virtually all efforts to provide feedback and initiate change are met with some form of resistance. This may be manifested by the individual who consistently attends assessment sessions, but is “too busy” once the feedback is provided and demands for change are initiated. Another example is the executive who readily agrees to partner with a direct-report to change personal and organizational behaviors, but is much more reluctant to partner with his or her boss or spouse. This reluctance is motivated by the knowledge that the spouse or boss is in a much better position to monitor change and establish accountability for the executive.

Skill in Motivating for Change

Talking about change is often much more attractive than actually doing it. It is critical to understand and have the necessary skills to manage the motivational aspect of the behavior change process. Identifying which factors motivate a specific executive and ways of activating this motivation in a focused way is essential to initiating and maintaining change.

Ability to Manage “Flight into Health”

Not infrequently, individuals initiating an attitude or behavior change will suddenly be “all better” and no longer need to participate in the oftentimes long, arduous process of permanent change. In working with executives, coaches sometimes encounter situations where, following the first or second session, the executive returns saying, “hey doc, I’ve really got this relationship building stuff down now and I won’t be needing to come back.” However, reports from their organization suggest otherwise. The skilled coach will navigate this particularly precarious situation and move the executive beyond this phase to a place where the real work can continue.

Business Experience and Expertise

The business environment provides unique situational challenges. Unlike the therapist's couch, where the focus is uniquely on the individual, the business environment requires a balance between personal, interpersonal, and organizational goals and objectives. An executive coach with "real world" business experience will bring in an experiential awareness of and sensitivity to the demands of the work situation, including profit motivation, accountability to stakeholders, and focus on strategic and operational results.

Stress and Crisis Management Expertise

Few executives do not experience stress in the workplace. Stress may result from situational crises or from ongoing operational demands. Individual reactions to stress include irritability, impatience, insomnia, and fatigue. Chronic and severe stress can lead to more significant difficulties such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, depression, and anxiety. Moreover, organizational reactions to stress, often induced by senior leadership, include absenteeism, turnover, poor working relationships, and low morale. Both individual and organizational responses to stress have significant financial and human capital costs. A skilled and competent executive coach should have the knowledge and abilities to work with the individual executive and his or her organization to ameliorate the adverse effects of stress. (Quick et al., 1997).

Knowledge of Organizational Dynamics

In addition to general communication skills and the ability to develop rapport, the effective executive coach may advise the executive regarding group dynamics and the communication involved among work groups and executive staff. A facile knowledge of organizational behavior is a must. This includes an understanding of the behavior of individuals and groups within organizations with special emphasis on interpersonal skills, motivation, leadership, and communication. Knowledge of group processes such as stages of team development, cohesion, group norms, and group problem-solving and decision-making is a plus.

Integrity and Ethics

We believe the competencies described above are essential to fulfilling the role of executive coach. Additionally, particularly given today's business environment (i.e., Enron, WorldCom, Martha Stewart), integrity and respect for the dignity of others are also key competencies. Many professions have adopted a set of ethical guidelines to provide guidance to their practitioners. An example is the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists (APA, 1992), which states that "psychologists accord appropriate respect to the fundamental

rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They respect the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination, and autonomy . . .” Regardless of the theoretical orientation and coaching model used by the practitioner, we advocate adherence to a similar set of ethical standards.

How Can These Competencies be Obtained?

In developing a competency-based model of executive coaching, it is essential to recognize that coaching is fundamentally about refining and changing attitudes and behavior. Consequently, executive coaching is in essence a psychological process and requires a great deal of interpersonal training and ability on the part of the coach (Brenner, 2002). In addition to the development of this psychological knowledge and skills, organizational acumen is necessary as well. Following are some of the ways in which this knowledge and skill base may be developed.

Academic Training

As suggested by Berglas (2002), we believe an executive will be best served if his or her coach is a professional with an advanced degree in a psychological discipline from an accredited graduate program. This training will assure that the coach has the basic knowledge and clinical skills needed to accomplish the objectives and goals enumerated earlier.

Supervised Experience

We have argued that executive coaching blurs the line between the traditional concepts of mentoring, consulting, and psychotherapy. Of these, we suggested that it is more aligned with psychotherapy, as both include developing rapport, establishing an effective working relationship, assessing needed change, and facilitating the development of more effective behaviors, among others. Because of the intensive, highly personal nature of the coaching relationship, we believe that executive coaches should have significant (thousands of hours) supervised experience working one-on-one with individuals in helping relationships. Such experiences include supervised practica, supervised internships, and post-doctoral supervised training. Coaches will have had the opportunity to be trained, mentored and coached themselves in the tools and techniques which are most beneficial in moving executive candidates forward in the coaching process.

Real-world Business Experience

It will be highly beneficial to businesses if they select executive coaches with business and management experience which has been supplemented by training in

the use of data collection instruments, behavior change strategies, and motivational methods. What is needed is “a proven and replicable coaching methodology that moves from behavioral diagnostics (of the -candidates strengths and counter-productive tendencies); to a methodical debriefing process; to behavior change techniques that lead to substantial, measurable, and sustainable refinements in the candidate’s performance and levels of satisfaction; to a collaborative and contractual process between the candidate and management; to self-propelled development” (Brenner, 2002). This examination and development of the executive is only complete when it occurs within the context of identified organizational needs. Consequently, the executive needs to have the organizational understanding and insight to work effectively with both of these constituencies.

Implications for Leadership Educators

Why the growth in executive coaching? Some attribute its growth to deficits in leadership education and training. Says John Kotter of Harvard Business School as quoted by Morris (2000): “We have a lot of people who were trained to be superb managers but now have horrendous leadership challenges thrown at them. I think a lot of the coaching is aimed at trying to help people develop skills and actions that are different from what they grew up with.” Morris echoes this sentiment: “Coaching . . . bridges the growing chasm between what managers are being asked to do and what they have been trained to do.” Townsend (2002) challenges leadership educators with a broader fundamental question: “What is the true purpose for leadership education and do leadership organizations deliver what they promise?” (p. 1).

Are we then, as leadership educators, providing the necessary education and training? In truth, the issue is even more complex than that given the diversity of the field. Huber (2002) notes that leadership educators may be found in a variety of venues including “youth club organizers, junior high and high school teachers, college professors, student program directors in higher education, community development professionals, military trainers, religious groups, human resource development specialists, civic organizations, and consultants . . . In addition to teachers and trainers, there are leadership coaches mentors, and role models.” (p. 1) In other words, leadership training is not confined to the halls of academia, but is instead delivered by a diversity of professionals across a diversity of settings, to meet a diversity of client needs. Therefore, it is not likely, nor even desirable, that leadership educators will be able to provide a classroom experience that fully prepares leaders, much less executives, for every venue and contingency. As well stated by Huber (2002), “absent a universally acceptable definition of leadership, we must look . . . to the context within which leaders will lead to best decide which skills to teach . . . our underlying purpose will differ

slightly in different venues.” (p. 1) We suggest that coaching, as a model of leadership development, precisely matches developmental needs with service provision. Consequently, coaching as a model for providing leadership development will likely continue regardless of curriculum enhancement.

Curtin (2002) supports this argument. He reviewed over 20 leadership-development methods, and ultimately placed them into two categories: teaching or facilitation. He characterized “teaching” as “the transfer of leadership information to groups or individuals by instructors who are to some degree experts;” and “facilitating” as “the development of leadership information by aiding groups or individuals to discover the knowledge and skills about leadership” within an experiential and action-oriented process. (p. 2) He concluded that “facilitated, action learning . . . is now used more commonly than classroom teaching methods.” (p. 2) He notes that “one of the responses of organizations to more volatile and uncertain environments may be the choice of methods of leadership development that are based less on teaching and more on facilitating.” (p. 8) We suggest that, if done correctly, executive coaching can be an effective tool for helping organizations and individuals accomplish focused and action-oriented leadership development in response to the challenges of these volatile and uncertain environments.

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