




Increasing Business Profitability through Leadership Coaching

*Discover 8 ways leadership coaching
can empower your leaders, engage
your employees, and energize your
business*

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Why Engage in Leadership Coaching?

Great leaders are at the hub of every great business. Success springs from their vision, drive, strategy, inspiration, and direction. They create a culture of teamwork, collaboration, innovation, and excellence. Their companies launch themselves on an upward trajectory to reach heights heretofore unreached.

There is a sobering corollary, however. Poor leadership saps energy from businesses. Drains employees of motivation. Hesitates at critical moments. A lack of leadership generates a culture of mediocrity, conflict, disengagement, and confusion.

Fortunately, neither great leadership nor poor leadership is genetic. There is nothing inherent in any man or woman that decrees, “This person will be a great leader!” or “That one will never succeed!” The fact is, *great leadership is a skill, and any skill can be acquired.* Leadership skills are often best attained and honed by engaging in personal, one-on-one leadership coaching.

A qualified leadership coach can provide an executive, manager, or supervisor with tools and techniques to help *maximize their time* and *minimize their frustration*. He or she will pinpoint specific areas where the leader can improve their personal performance and their interactions with others – thereby increasing their business’s profitability at every level within the organization.

It is easy to brush off leadership coaching with the excuse, “I don’t have the time!” But in as little as an hour a week over the course of a few months, a good leadership coach can help a leader clarify their values, set strategic goals, develop key leadership skills, and identify and

remove any “blocks” that are hindering success. The specific outcomes of leadership coaching are as varied as the individuals being coached. However, there are eight major benefits that executives, managers, and supervisors can expect to receive:

1. Discovering Style

Leadership can be defined as influence. An individual leader’s style consists of the behaviors he or she uses to guide, direct, or empower others. While every leader is unique, there are several basic categories of leadership style:

- **Supportive.** This style is highly relationship-oriented. The supportive leader places emphasis on giving moral support to employees, and always requests and considers their input. However, while interpersonal communication is esteemed, the actual ability to provide clear direction is sometimes lacking.
- **Directive.** This style is task-oriented. The directive leader focuses on accomplishing the duties of the present moment, and is very willing to tell employees exactly what to do, rather than requesting their input or feedback. Achievement is paramount and compliance with authority is expected.
- **Democratic.** This style is consensus-oriented. The democratic leader seeks the viewpoint of the employees, but the ultimate decision rests exclusively with the leader.

- **Collaborative.** This style is vision-oriented. The collaborative leader encourages both employee input and employee autonomy. Staff members are trusted to do their jobs. The leader takes the responsibility of providing support, resources, training, and coaching to each employee to help them achieve their highest level of success.

Style is not something that can be shrugged off as unimportant. When leadership style is misapplied, businesses find themselves plagued with employee disengagement, increased conflict, a lack of motivation, and decreased productivity.

A qualified leadership coach will help a leader discover their primary leadership style, and examine whether that style is helping or hindering their employees. They will then coach the leader in learning how to use *each* leadership style effectively, depending on the needs of the situation.

Coaching is a rigorous process. A good leadership coach will use a variety of professional development tools, including 360° reviews, standardized assessments, and training instruments. These tools turn theory into hard, objective data that can be quantified, analyzed, and applied.

Additionally, coaches may provide sample scenarios to help the leader learn when different leadership styles would be most appropriate. They will walk the leader through current situations in detail in order to plan the best response. Many times, they will attend meetings where the leader is interacting with their employees, and give immediate feedback on what went well and what could be improved.

Through effective coaching, leadership style is transformed from a static label into a tool leaders can use dynamically to maximize every interaction they have with their employees, colleagues, and customers.

2. Improving Communication

One of the key skills all great leaders share is that they are effective communicators. They are able to:

- State their vision for the group, team, department, or company.
- Establish a clearly-defined set of expectations.
- Provide both reinforcing and redirecting feedback to employees to improve performance.
- Tailor their message for a given individual or group.
- Utilize different tones of voice depending on the level of urgency of the matter under discussion.
- Inspire people to move in a common direction.
- Appeal to people's emotions and connect with their deepest desires.
- Deliver tough messages in a way that addresses the realities of the situation but also encourages hope.
- Communicate information effectively, both one-on-one and in public presentations.
- Engage in active listening with every member of the organization with whom they have contact.

For many people, one or more of the above skills does not come easily. Leadership coaching can step into that communication gap. First and foremost, a coach will have the leader complete a comprehensive assessment in order to identify their primary communication style. This objective data is essential for the leader to increase their self-awareness and understand how their style may be affecting those around them.

Once the primary communication style has been identified, the coach will assist the leader in honing his or her style so they can deliver messages with a maximum amount of effectiveness in any circumstance and to any audience.

A vital – and often overlooked – part of learning to speak well is the ability to listen well. Here again, the coach will provide the leader with a wealth of active listening tools, such as paraphrasing and reflection, asking open-ended questions, and recognizing nonverbal signals.

Finally, the coach will provide input on how to give performance reviews, facilitate meetings, hold difficult conversations, and deliver public presentations. The coach may attend any or all of these types of situations in order to provide real-time feedback and coaching.

3. Understanding Motivation

A survey by Gallup discovered that some 20% of all employees are actively disengaged from their work: they are acting out, undermining the companies they work for, and recruiting others to join their negativity (*Gallup Management Journal Online*, September 13, 2007, pages 1-5). In light of this sobering statistic, it is more important than ever that leaders understand motivation and how to encourage it in their employees.

At its core, motivation has to do with people's basic needs and desires. Abraham Maslow identified five different needs that all people share:

- 1. Basic.** At the core of all people is a desire to have their basic needs met, i.e., food, shelter, clothing.
- 2. Security.** Once their basic needs are met, people work at maintaining that level of comfort – they seek security.
- 3. Belonging.** After people feel that they are in a secure position, they begin to turn their eyes outward: “Do I like the group of people I am with?”
- 4. Ego.** When people find fulfillment as part of a group, they then experience a deep need to stand out from the crowd as an individual and have their unique talents and skills utilized and recognized.
- 5. Self-Actualization.** Finally, people need to not just stand out from the crowd, but to find and express their deepest and truest self in their work.

As noted above, these needs build upon one another. Once people have fulfilled one level, they are motivated to fulfill the next level, and so on. *Leaders need to recognize these five core needs and create an environment where they can be systematically fulfilled.* By encouraging the fulfillment of each of these needs in turn, a leader is sowing the seeds for high levels of engagement. His or her employees will seek continually higher levels of accomplishment as they proceed to the areas of ego and self-actualization. But if employees are frustrated at any stage – if they feel that they cannot fulfill their ego needs, for instance – they become disengaged. Their motivation wanes.

A leadership coach will help an executive, manager, or supervisor identify the needs of each employee, and will establish a creative strategy *for each individual* in order to maximize the potential for high levels of engagement.

Through this careful, planned, and systematic approach, leaders can create an environment that encourages higher productivity, increased levels of employee satisfaction, greater efficiencies, and individual initiative and ownership.

4. Providing Feedback

Feedback is perhaps the single most powerful tool a leader has at his or her command. Ken Blanchard wisely noted, “Feedback is the breakfast of champions.” Effective feedback can:

- > Increase productivity
- > Increase sales
- > Decrease conflict
- > Streamline processes
- > Increase creativity
- > Improve delegation
- > Improve efficiency
- > Uncover training needs
- > Improve the bottom line
- > Improve customer service
- > Develop new skills
- > Improve problem-solving abilities

But it takes time and effort to become skilled in providing effective feedback. A leadership coach will train a leader in how to provide feedback that is *consistent, direct, specific, descriptive, and proactive*. This type of feedback can be used both to correct inappropriate behaviors and to reinforce positive behaviors.

Additionally, a coach can help an executive, manager, or supervisor recognize the differences between:

- 1. Performance issues.** For example, Bob consistently tries to pawn off his projects on his co-workers.
- 2. Style issues.** For example, Theresa needs significant time alone to come up with creative graphic design concepts. Her boss, Margaret, finds this frustrating because she herself prefers group brainstorming sessions to stimulate the creative process.

- 3. Personality issues.** For example, Fred is laid back. No matter what the crisis, he is never flustered. Jim, his VP, assumes that his calm personality means that he doesn't understand or care about the urgency of the situation.

Too often, leaders criticize employees in all three of these situations. But in fact, only the first is an appropriate subject for employee performance feedback. A leadership coach will help the leader address true performance issues, and will help him or her accept and work effectively with different work styles and individual personalities.

5. Resolving Conflict

Most people – whether or not they are in a leadership position – are not comfortable with conflict. Often, that is because they are ill-equipped to handle conflict situations. The result is that conflict situations tend to spin out of control, bringing the natural conclusion that all conflict is bad.

A good leadership coach addresses this issue in several steps. First, the coach helps the leader to view conflict in a different light: he or she helps the leader adjust their *attitude*. The fact is, conflict can have many positive outcomes, including:

- Increasing understanding between the involved parties.
- Demonstrating that dignity and respect can be maintained despite disagreements.
- Accepting responsibility for one's actions and their intended and unintended consequences.
- Engaging in creative collaboration to find new solutions to old problems.

Once the leader has gained new insight into what conflict can actually accomplish within

the organization if handled well, the coach moves on to the second step: providing the leader with the proper *tools* of conflict resolution.

As with leadership style and communication style, there is no single perfect method for resolving conflict. Sometimes it is appropriate to accommodate oneself to another person's needs. Other times, a more direct and authoritative approach might be called for. Often, compromise or collaboration may be optimal. The leadership coach will train the leader in becoming proficient at multiple styles of conflict resolution, and help them recognize when each style would be most appropriate.

The coach will also help the leader learn to slow down in a conflict situation in order to leave time to think and analyze before responding. Many conflicts are either started or exacerbated by the fact that people respond instantly to a negative stimulus without examining (or even recognizing) the thoughts and feelings that prompted their response. By slowing down and identifying thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and attitudes, the leader can make a *conscious decision* as to how best to respond to the situation, rather than merely *react* out of an emotional impulse.

Once the leader has adjusted their attitude toward conflict in the workplace and become proficient with conflict resolution tools, they reap the final reward: becoming *comfortable* with conflict. This does not mean that they enjoy it or pursue it. It simply means that they recognize that conflict will occur on a regular basis even in the healthiest of work environments, and that it should be accepted and addressed calmly and rationally in order to reap the many benefits that such situations can bring to the company.

6. Increasing Awareness

Many times, leaders hit a plateau. Their advancement within the company grinds to a halt. Special assignments are not forthcoming. Their departments are spinning their wheels – expending tons of energy, but going nowhere fast. Problems are self-sowing at an alarming rate, with no visible improvement anywhere. Key employees are leaving with no explanation.

One of the greatest tools a leader can use to move beyond this plateau is self-awareness. All the issues noted above are, at their core, issues of leadership ... that is, issues that arise from within the leader.

For instance, the leader may be bringing into the workplace their own fears, insecurities, and irrationalities. They may be responding to current matters out of unresolved issues from their past, i.e., they are hauling around baggage from their childhood, or from broken adult relationships, or from previous difficult managers they themselves have had. They may not understand themselves well enough to know how they lead now or why it is having a negative impact – much less how they should be leading to bring about positive results.

A qualified leadership coach will guide the leader through a self-discovery and self-awareness process, using such industry-standard tools as the DiSC Personality Test, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Leadership Practices Inventory, Styles of Leadership Survey, and more. These tools provide quantifiable data to help the leader understand how they view themselves, other people, their role in the workplace, their philosophy and style of leadership, etc. The tools also demonstrate precisely where leaders need to strengthen their knowledge, understanding, or skills in order to bring about needed change in the organization.

7. Managing Time

“The tyranny of the urgent” (a phrase coined by Charles Hummel) is frequently how leaders manage their time. Whatever person, problem, email, or phone call screams the loudest gets addressed – even if that means pushing everything else farther down on the list. It’s a never-ending rat race and results in constant frustration, frequent delays, and – all too often – lost opportunities.

A leadership coach can step into this maelstrom and calm the storm. It begins with clearly defining the difference between what is *urgent* vs. what is *important*. The fact is, leaders spend an inordinate amount of time responding to what is urgent but not necessarily important. The result? True priority items get short shrift ... if they get any attention at all. Over time, this can have an adverse effect on the company’s bottom line.

Once the leader has been trained in separating the important from the urgent, the coach addresses the issue of the leader’s priorities and schedule. Here, an important distinction has to be made. In the words of Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, “The key is not to prioritize your schedule but to schedule your priorities.”

Establishing priorities comes *first* – before a single item is scheduled on the calendar or logged in the day timer. Otherwise, hours and days and weeks will be filled with “the latest priorities,” rather than structured around executing “the true priorities.” Only by identifying what is really most important will time ever be allocated effectively toward accomplishing those goals.

Some of the true priorities a coach will help a leader schedule and address effectively include:

- Resolving outstanding issues in the department or company.

- Coaching employees one-on-one for their professional development.
- Setting key objectives for the day, week, month, and quarter.
- Spending time each week to review the vision for the team, department, and company.
- Establishing set times to respond to emails and phone calls.
- Contacting existing clients on a regular basis to ensure their continued business.

It is easy to claim that there is no time for items such as the ones noted above. But a good leadership coach will make these essential priorities a daily reality for the leader, with the result that the leader will accomplish more than he or she ever imagined possible.

8. Utilizing Metrics

Common complaints from leaders include, “We can’t seem to get things done on a timely basis!” “We’re talking about the same issues over and over with no improvement.” “We’re not as profitable as we should be.” “We’re spending too much.” If these complaints are a regular occurrence, they point to a lack of *metrics* and *accountability*.

Experience proves over and over that “what gets measured, gets done.” The corollary is also true: what doesn’t get measured, doesn’t get done. But if that is the case, why don’t metrics and accountability play a greater role in business? Here are some of the reasons leaders give:

- “I don’t have time.”
- “I don’t know how.”
- “We’re doing fine the way we are.”
- “Nothing ever changes, anyway.”
- “This is the way it is.”

A qualified leadership coach will address each of these issues, systematically helping the leader to:

- Prioritize and schedule time for analyzing what needs to be measured.
- Establish detailed and specific metrics for each area that requires measurement.
- Examine opportunities that may have been missed by being satisfied with the status quo.
- Resolve issues that are brought into focus by the metrics.
- Utilize the measurement results to refine and expand the current business model.

Leaders are often astonished to realize that nearly everything in business can be measured, tracked, analyzed, and addressed. Not only “hard” items like production times or expenses, but also “soft” areas such as emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and communication skills. In every case, significant improvement comes when leaders hold themselves and their employees accountable to the findings brought to light by appropriate metrics.



Grow Your Business!

From CEOs of global giants to start-up entrepreneurs, every leader can benefit dramatically from working with a qualified leadership coach. The effective use of leadership style, communication, motivation, feedback, conflict resolution, self-awareness, time management, and metrics literally spell victory or defeat in the world of business and commerce. It is empowering to realize that each and every one of these skills can be learned, honed, and applied, completely transforming a business's culture, performance, and profitability.

Contact Us

Makarios' solutions are inspired by the needs of our clients, including their demand for operational excellence and a competitive edge without incurring the overhead of large consulting firms. To talk with the principals of Makarios and to transform your organization, call us at 610-380-8735, or email Timothy Thomas at thomast@mc-llc.com or Rip Tilden at riptilden@mc-llc.com.

About Makarios

Makarios Consulting is a full-service management consulting firm. We work with business owners and entrepreneurs who want to grow their companies and execute more effectively every day. Our unique set of management disciplines and tools helps clients refine their business strategy, improve their operating performance, and build healthy leadership teams. Clarity and accountability provide our clients with the traction to outperform their competitors – every week, every month, every quarter. To find out more, please visit www.MakariosConsulting.com.