



## Today's New Essential Leadership Relationship: Executive Coach

An executive coaching relationship should no longer be viewed as an optional relationship for senior leaders. Back in 2005, Thomas Friedman wrote a book on how the world is flat. Today, the pressures of globalization for executives are immense. We have seen the COVID-19 pandemic create challenges for leaders that no one has ever faced. Helping executives to stay focused on personal development, so it does not get lost in the tsunami of urgent details and day to day activities, is an essential benefit of executive coaching.

The essence of the power and effectiveness of executive coaching lies in the coach-leader relationship. This robust relationship fosters a leader's growth through purposeful direction, reflection, feedback and accountability.

Today's reality for a senior leader is that the marketplace is changing rapidly, and you are either ripe and rotting or green and growing. So, how is an executive to effectively stay green and growing in such a fast-paced environment?

Modern peer-reviewed qualitative and quantitative research provides support for the effectiveness of the executive coach-leader relationship. In an extensive quantitative study by Stanley Black & Decker, the Sasha Corporation found that executives receiving coaching increased goal performance by 15% as compared to executives not receiving coaching. Also, some of the most admired companies in the Fortune 100 contribute to the \$1 billion executive coaching industry. The coaching sector is the second-fastest-growing sector in the world at a 6.7% average yearly growth rate projected through 2022,

according to marketresearch.com. The broad support for executive coaching and the effectiveness is undeniable.

## Direction and Reflection

Without an executive coach, a leader can lack perspective and miss the benefit of assistance with setting direction. Any road will get you where you want to go if you don't know where you are going. Setting direction is vital to growth as a leader. Executive coaching starts with an assessment and setting direction. A coach ensures development goals are purposeful and brings perspective to the best focus area. Also, guided reflection is another critical benefit. Often leaders pressed for time move from one urgent task to another and miss the advantage of pausing to reflect. The executive coach partners with the leader to ask questions that explore learning and maximize the value of the coaching. Peer-review research on the topic of reflection has found slowing down and providing time for intentional reflection improves an individual's performance.

## Feedback and Accountability

The reality is that leaders are busy, and without accountability, miss the opportunities for learning and growth. In the executive coaching relationship, external accountability is a crucial benefit. Typically, toward the end of the current year and beginning of the new year, we all start thinking about self-development and annual goals. Then all too soon after, a week passes, work happens and we barely remember the goal. A coach can prioritize topics most critical to advancing executive development.

Executive leaders receive feedback continuously from a wide range of sources on potential areas of development, but also can struggle to make sense of the feedback. Proximity to a problem sometimes impacts the leader's clarity on importance. Also, general feedback often is not presented in effective or constructive ways. During a recent press briefing, President Donald Trump lit into a reporter for a line of questioning and stated he was a terrible reporter. The non-verbal response of the reporter indicated he was crushed and felt attacked. The reporter received feedback, but it was not specific or constructive. Having a coach can help executives take input from different groups of people that may be emotional to the leader. A coach also can assist the leader with filtering through various points of feedback to return focus on the essential constructive aspects.

Now more than ever, due to the complexity placed on senior leadership roles, executives need coaches that can support their continuous development. Falling behind in a rapidly changing marketplace will not lead to success. The coach-leader relationship is an essential tool to foster a leader's growth through purposeful direction, reflection, feedback and accountability.



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