



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: HOW TO ENSURE VALUE FROM STRATEGIC EXECUTIVE COACHING®

What is required for getting the most value from Strategic Executive Coaching®? It mostly depends on the situation. We have observed over the last 25 years that a few conditions need to exist to enhance the experience and ensure the expected outcomes are achieved:

- 1) **All stakeholders understand and agree on expected outcomes.** Believe it or not, there are times when, without careful and constructive dialogue, the stakeholders have different perspectives or agendas regarding outcomes. Without alignment early on, the process can get messy. A skilled coach will work hard to figure out the various motivations of all those involved in the coaching process. Most of the time, motivations are clear and consistent. Be wary when no one can clearly articulate why coaching should take place or what the outcomes should be. Also, be careful when, in a matrixed organization, Boss A says that the person does not need to change anything, and Boss B says that the person needs to change in several ways. That conflict needs to be resolved in a way that makes sense to the three parties. Understand what is driving that difference.
- 2) **A true intention to grow on the part of the coachee.** A commitment to self-improvement is the key. Intrinsic motivation is important for sticking with the uncomfortableness of receiving data that might conflict with your own view of yourself, coming to acceptance, and committing to change. As important as motivation is, willingness to be a learner might be even more so. Learning requires a bit of humility, a dose of resilience, and a lot of patience. This also means being genuinely receptive to feedback—inviting it and encouraging it on an ongoing basis.
- 3) **Understanding the time commitment required to achieve outcomes.** Time is the one thing we all get the same amount of each day. Truly engaging in coaching requires a time commitment. It's like anything else. If you want more muscle, you lift weights. The more you go to the gym and follow the right program, the more your muscles will develop. If you set up the coaching based on twice a week for six months, it may not be as beneficial to you as two days the first month, adding a few phone calls the second month, and two hours every other week for the duration of the coaching engagement. The amount of time set aside for your coaching should be directly connected to the expected outcomes and the plan to achieve them. This relationship of time and outcomes illustrates Warren Buffett's maxim, "Price is what you pay. Value is what you get." Role clarity and a trusted partnership among coach, coachee, boss, human resources, board, and maybe others are essential.
- 4) **Flexibility and rigor in the process.** That is, executive coaching must be customized to meet stated objectives of the stakeholders, yet rigorous enough to ensure accountability.

If all of these things are in place, the coaching is likely to succeed. For additional perspective, see Sherman, S. and Freas, A., "[The Wild West of Coaching](#)," *Harvard Business Review*, November 2004.