

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: SUSTAINING THE POWER OF EXECUTIVE COACHING

Are you ever finished with developing your leadership effectiveness? Is executive coaching ever over? Clearly the answer to the first question is that you always want to continue the journey toward improving your leadership effectiveness. Whether executive coaching is ever over is a more interesting question.

We have learned that commitment to self-improvement is a predictor of success. Take Jasmine, a C-suite executive at a high tech company, for example, who was a fantastic leader to begin with and made further strides through her work with an EXCN coach. She continues to seek guidance and input even though she has moved up in her organization and her responsibilities have changed.

EXCN's philosophy is that self-improvement applies to us as well. We therefore conduct client research to look at the long-term impact of executive coaching on leaders' careers, lives, and leadership effectiveness. Our clients are intelligent consumers and they indicate that the coaching had "profound impact" on them as they grew in their organizations and advanced in their careers. The gains they report from coaching are increased self-awareness, improved self-confidence, and greater access to leadership intuition when difficult decisions had to be made. They also describe more effective team leadership, better ability to engage board members, learning methodologies to overcome roadblocks, guidance to make a transition to more senior positions, amongst others. They state they are better able to lead organizations, provide coaching to their people, voice their views with confidence, manage complexity and breadth, and achieve results.

In EXCN's prior long-term impact research, conducted in 2011, more than half of the executives interviewed mentioned that having periodic check-ins with their executive coach — after the initially contracted six months of executive coaching — would have created even more accountability and value. Similar supporting comments have been made in our 2015 "look back" research. Clients state they feel that changing complex behaviors cannot happen in just a few months. They say that reinforcement and monitoring longer term from the executive coach would help them continue to grow and progress, deal with change, and cement improvements made. In response to the 2011 comments about this, we changed our business model by adding a "Sustaining Success" component.

We suggest that leaders who have engaged in executive coaching set the tone for sustaining success with regularly scheduled check-ins over a long period of time. Why would you, if you have been coached, want to do this?



An analogy may resonate with some. The motivation is similar to why people who are successful at weight management often engage in maintenance programs, for example, Weight Watchers' "Lifetime Membership." Weight Watchers was just recognized by *US News & World Report* as the best commercial weight loss plan (again). Think of Sustaining Success as a leadership maintenance program. We would like

to point out, though, that the goal is not limited to maintenance, but also includes ongoing development and improvement as a leader, as responsibilities and challenges (and the world!) change.

What are some tips or sample methodologies that an executive coach might use to help you sustain your improvements? An executive coach can:



All great leaders seek advice and counsel and are not embarrassed to ask for it. They also admit mistakes and say, “I do not know, and I need help.”

If you are a leader who has made a significant investment in executive coaching and it yielded positive benefits, are you doing enough to sustain success and maintain developmental momentum? How much would the value of “sustained success” be to your company and you?