COACHING IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS

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TOWARDS A COACHING CULTURE
CHRISTIAN VAN NIEUWERBURGH

INTRODUCTION

As a consequence of the widescale adoption of coaching interventions in professional contexts in many of the world's leading economies (Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey, 2015), attention has turned to finding ways of sustaining the positive effects of coaching and broadening out its impact across organisations. The phrase 'coaching culture' is often used within organisational settings, despite the fact that there seems to be little shared understanding of what this means (Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh, 2014). This chapter considers the key characteristics of a coaching culture and provides some practical ideas for organisations interested in leveraging the benefits of coaching. The chapter concludes with some thoughts about the future of coaching cultures within organisational settings.

There seems to be growing agreement that coaching has a positive role to play within organisational settings. For example, Penny Valk, Chief Executive of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM), noted that 'coaching is a particularly powerful tool in the modern workplace – one that has proven to be a highly effective way of developing individual and organisational performance by unlocking capability. At its best, this key management tool can deliver considerable benefits, helping managers get the most from their teams, boosting employee engagement and developing high performing workplaces' (Institute of Leadership and Management, 2011: 1).

According to a survey commissioned by the ILM, coaching is widely used in professional contexts within the UK (see Table 16.1).

Table 16.1   Responses to ILM survey

What proportion of organisations use coaching as a development tool?	80%
What proportion of organisations make coaching available to all staff?	52%
What proportion of organisations provide ongoing support and development for internal coaches?	66%
How many respondents saw the direct benefits of coaching to the organisation?	96%
What proportion of organisations use coaching for the personal development of staff?	53%
What proportion of organisations use coaching for improving organisational performance?	26%
What proportion of organisations measure the outcomes of coaching?	93%

Created from data gathered from an ILM report that was based on telephone interviews with learning and development managers at 250 large organisations (Institute of Leadership and Management, 2011).

WHAT IS A COACHING CULTURE?

This widescale use of coaching has raised questions and interest about how organisations can leverage the most value out of coaching interventions. Peter Hawkins, Professor of Leadership at Henley Business School (UK), sees the creation of coaching cultures as the 'next phase in the development of coaching' (2012: 2). Clutterbuck and Megginson, both leading figures in the area of coaching and mentoring, propose that a coaching culture is one in which 'coaching is the predominant style of managing and working together … where a commitment to grow the organization is embedded in a parallel commitment to grow the people in the organization' (2005: 19). The phrase 'parallel commitment' is very helpful in this context. In other words, if we are interested in pursuing a coaching culture, we should note that a dual focus is required: the organisation's goals on the one hand and the growth of people within the organisation on the other. Coaching interventions can be planned and implemented in ways that fully support both aims.

Following a comprehensive review of the literature, Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh developed a revised definition of coaching cultures based on a 'bringing together' of existing ideas and concepts: ' … coaching cultures exist when a group of people embrace coaching as a way of making holistic improvements to individuals *and* the organisation through formal and informal coaching interactions. This can mean a large proportion of individuals adopting coaching behaviours to relate to, support, and influence one another and their stakeholders' (2014: 92).

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A COACHING CULTURE?

Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh (2014) identified some consistent features of prevailing theories about coaching cultures.

- Coaching can form an integral part of how organisations develop their people.
- Coaching can be embedded within regular performance management processes.
- Coaching can demonstrate a commitment to support the professional growth of individuals within an organisation.
- Creating a coaching culture requires investment and can take time.
- Creating a coaching culture can lead to changes in the organisation with rewards for staff, stakeholders and clients.

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED BENEFITS OF COACHING CULTURES?

The proposed benefits of coaching cultures are manifold. Bringing together the results of a number of research projects, evaluations and case studies of internal coaching programmes, it is possible to reflect on some of the consistently noted positive outcomes.

According to an evaluation undertaken by Carter et al. (2009), an internal coaching programme for managers resulted in enhanced emotional intelligence, increased self-awareness, improved relationships between staff, enhanced interpersonal skills, increased workplace confidence, an improved ability to manage and better work-life balance. In a similar study, McKee et al. (2009) found that coachees reported increased loyalty to their organisation, development in their leadership abilities, improved communication with peers, an enhanced ability to resolve conflicts, and a renewed passion to support the development of others. In a study based in India, Mukherjee (2012) proposed that there were both direct and indirect benefits for managers trained to act as coaches within the organisation. Mukherjee concluded that 'coaching is one of the most effective tools in building leadership capacity' within organisations. These findings are presented in Table 16.2.

Table 16.2 The proposed benefits of coaching interventions within organisations

Proposed Benefit	Studies
Enhanced emotional intelligence	Carter et al.
Increased self-awareness	Carter et al.
Better relationships/communication with colleagues	Carter et al., McKee et al.
Enhanced interpersonal skills	Carter et al.
Increased confidence	Carter et al.
Better ability to manage/lead	Carter et al., McKee et al., Mukherjee
Better work-life balance	Carter et al.
Increased loyalty to organisation	McKee at al.
Enhanced ability to resolve conflicts	McKee at al.
Renewed passion to support development of others	McKee at al.

HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT A COACHING CULTURE EXISTS?

Many organisations now use coaching within a range of learning and development, and organisational development interventions. However, it is not always clear when a coaching culture can be said to exist within an organisation. According to a leading expert in this field, 'a coaching culture exists in an organisation when a coaching approach is a key aspect of how the leaders, managers, and staff engage and develop all their people and engage their stakeholders' (Hawkins, 2012: 21). In other words, the existence of a coaching culture can be determined if most people within an organisation use a coaching approach. While this is a good measure, it is a difficult variable to observe and record. Furthermore, questions could be raised about who makes the decisions about whether the managers and staff are employing a coaching approach in their interactions. Having said this, it seems appropriate to judge whether an organisation has a coaching culture based on the experiences of its people and its clients or stakeholders. The 'Framework for Practitioners 3: Coaching Cultures' presented at the end of this chapter provides an example of a helpful way of assessing the existence of coaching cultures.

HOW CAN WE WORK TOWARDS A COACHING CULTURE?

Even though there has been little clarity within the field about the exact definition of a coaching culture, there have been many attempts to identify ways of creating, developing and embedding coaching cultures. Early writers on the topic, Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005), proposed that there were four stages of development towards a coaching culture:

1. *Nascent*: almost no commitment to the concept of a coaching culture.
2. *Tactical*: some recognition that a coaching culture may be desirable but only a vague understanding of the concept.
3. *Strategic*: investment has been made towards developing a coaching culture and leaders start to model best practice.
4. *Embedded*: people across the organisation are involved in coaching and these initiatives align with organisational objectives.

While Clutterbuck and Megginson's four stages related to the phases that organisations might go through en route to a coaching culture, Passmore and Jastrzebska (2011) recommended a 'journey' comprising of five stages.

A journey towards a coaching culture

1. Informal external coaching.
2. Professional external coaching.
3. Coaching as a management style.
4. Coaching for all.
5. Coaching across the network.

Hawkins (2012) suggests a more comprehensive seven-step process.

The seven steps towards a coaching culture

1. Procuring external coaches.
2. Developing internal coaching capacity.
3. Leaders supporting coaching initiatives.
4. Developing team coaching/organisational learning.
5. Embedding coaching in performance management.
6. Coaching becoming the dominant style of managing.
7. Coaching used to do business with stakeholders.

Discussing the creation of coaching cultures in educational settings, van Nieuwerburgh and Passmore propose an integrated process for working towards a coaching culture. They recommend aligning the process to the Appreciative Inquiry stages of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (4-D cycle) (Srivastva et al., 1990) in order to gain buy-in for the move towards a coaching culture from all stakeholders. The 4-D cycle is then followed up by the leadership team who would take responsibility for ensuring that:

- Suggestions and proposals for moving towards a coaching culture were incorporated into the organisation's strategic plans.

- Leaders across the organisation model the new behaviours.

- They were available to support the implementation of action plans.

- Challenges and difficulties were engaged with quickly and efficiently.

- Successes were regularly celebrated.

(van Nieuwerburgh and Passmore, 2012: 171)

WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN?

Having considered a number of proposed routes towards coaching cultures, it seems that, generally speaking, the following broad stages seem to be supportive of the creation of coaching cultures. It seems that it is helpful to have an initial stage of *assessment*. How well is the organisation doing already? What is in place? What is the appetite for a coaching culture? Who will support it? How will leadership buy-in be secured? This initial stage may need to be followed by some *championing*. This may include enlisting the support of influential thought leaders who are enthusiastic about the proposed coaching culture. It also requires leaders to 'champion' the benefits of coaching, particularly by modelling best practice and getting involved in coaching initiatives. The authors in this book have consistently argued for the provision of high-quality *training* for those who will be involved in coaching others. This training should be offered to those who volunteer to take on coaching roles within the organisation. Following the training, an *internal coaching resource* should be set up. The existence of internal coaches seems to be one of the principal ways of leveraging the benefits of coaching within professional contexts (Gormley and van Nieuwerburgh, 2014). A key to the long-term success of coaching within professional contexts is *organisational alignment*. The use of coaching interventions and approaches should be integrated into existing schemes, projects and objectives. Coaching should not be seen as a 'bolt-on' initiative. The final stage necessary for embedding coaching within organisations is *normalisation*. Formal coaching sessions, managers using a coaching approach and informal coaching conversations should become part of 'the way we do things round here'.

ACTION planning for a coaching culture

Assessment

Championing

Training

Internal coaching resource

Organisational alignment

Normalisation

For those who like acronyms and checklists, the ACTION plan may provide a way of working towards a coaching culture. However, it should be acknowledged that the development of a coaching culture is a complex, albeit valuable, undertaking. We believe that the process of working towards a coaching culture is ongoing. The ethos of a coaching culture demands continual improvement and an openness to new ideas about creating a better environment in which to work.

For readers who are less comfortable with acronyms and checklists, we would propose an alternative approach. This comprises of three questions that should be addressed by those wishing to move towards a coaching culture.

Three Questions

- What is the case for a coaching culture?
- How can we transfer what is most powerful about coaching conversations into our workplace?
- What will be different in our organisation as we work towards a coaching culture?

The principle of *democratic voluntary involvement* is a necessary part of the process and should underpin initiatives to support the development of coaching cultures. 'Democratic' means that everyone has the opportunity to participate. 'Voluntary' means that each person is given a choice about whether or not to engage in coaching-related activities. 'Involvement' means that those who volunteer should be able to contribute positively in one way or another. By addressing the three questions listed above and adhering to the principle of democratic voluntary involvement, organisations can develop their own unique ways of pursuing coaching cultures.

Practical ideas for consideration before embarking on a journey towards a coaching culture

- Creating a coaching culture will require a significant investment of time and money.
- It is important to make sure that the people involved see some value in working towards a coaching culture.
- From the start, it is helpful to think about how the benefits of a coaching culture will flow beyond the organisation's staff to clients and stakeholders.
- Coaching initiatives and programmes should be co-created based on the principle of democratic voluntary involvement.

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FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTITIONERS 2: THE GROWTH MODEL

JOHN CAMPBELL

John Campbell, Executive Director, Growth Coaching International

As interest in various forms of workplace based coaching has developed in recent years, the number of opportunities for learning coaching skills has also increased. In many of these coaching skill development programmes, both those offered by universities, and those offered by commercial providers, various coaching models or coaching conversation frameworks have been proposed.

It is argued that such coaching models provide a structure to help coaches 'on the ground' during coaching interactions. The most widely used of these coaching models is GROW, popularised by Sir John Whitmore in an early edition of *Coaching for Performance* (2009). GROW is a mnemonic suggesting four key steps or components of a coaching conversation:

G – Goal (setting a goal in relation to a preferred future in an identified area of change)

R – Reality (exploring the current situation or reality so as to establish a starting point on the journey towards the goal)

O – Options (generating possible strategies and options for achieving the goal)

W – Wrap up (next steps and actions that can be undertaken to move towards the goal)

Various other coaching models and frameworks including REGROW and CIGAR (Grant, 2005) have been proposed, sometimes with similar components and sometimes with differing points of emphasis. All have been designed, however, to provide the novice coach, in particular, but also more experienced coaches, with a scaffold to help ensure coaching interactions are structured, purposeful and that they ultimately lead to action.

Models such as GROW have attracted some criticism (Cavanagh, 2013) for being too linear and simplistic to cope with the complex nature of the coaching interaction. If used without skill, subtlety and flexibility such models can be less helpful. Used skilfully and with a 'light touch' they provide a valuable way to help a coach and coachee navigate the coaching conversation.

GROWTH is another of these coaching frameworks. A variation on GROW, it was developed originally by Mandy O'Bree, the Founder of Australian Growth Coaching (now Growth Coaching International), a coaching consulting practice based in Sydney, Australia. It was originally published and described in the original, self-published edition of *The Leadership Coaching Guide: Growing You and Your Organisation* (O'Bree, 2002).

	RELATIONSHIPS	**Building the trust**
G	**GOALS**	What do you need to achieve?
R	**REALITY**	What is happening now?
O	**OPTIONS**	What could you do?
W	**WILL**	What will you do?
T	**TACTICS**	How and when will you do it?
H	**HABITS**	How will you sustain your success?
	RESULTS	**Celebrating the results**

Figure F2.1

THE GROWTH MODEL

While adapted from GROW, the GROWTH model has a number of additional dimensions that have proved popular with many practising coaches.

It begins by emphasising the critical importance of the *Relationship* between coach and coachee in any coaching interaction. If levels of trust and rapport are strong it is much more likely that the conversation will be purposeful and helpful (Bluckert, 2005). If this is not the case any coaching conversation will be more challenging.

Identifying a clear and specific *goal* is an important part of the coaching process. Helping the coachee get clear on what is wanted can take some time but is always worth the effort. Indeed it is essential. It is not uncommon that more time will be spent in this part of the

GROWTH model than any other. There is considerable literature emphasising the central place of goal setting within coaching (Grant, 2006; Locke, 1996; van Nieuwerburgh, 2014).

Once a goal has been clarified and agreed it is helpful to establish the current *Reality*. This is important for several reasons – it helps to establish a clear starting point, but even more significantly, within the GROWTH model approach, it involves an exploration of 'what's already working', and helps direct attention to current resources that might assist in achieving the goal. At this point concepts from Solutions Focused theory (Jackson and McKergow, 2007; Shennan, 2014) influence how this step is explored. Emphasis is given to an exploration of strengths, positive past experiences, and any other personal or social environment resources that could assist in goal attainment. Consequently, in the GROWTH model R also stands for *Resources* since it is at this stage that the coach can specifically direct attention and tease out any skills, experiences, practices, policies or people – any of which can support progress towards the goal.

A focus on any strengths or resources that can be identified helps to build a sense of self-efficacy in the coachee – the sense of 'I can do this!' A growing sense of self-efficacy is a component of Agency Thinking, one of the key ingredients in building hope (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Agency Thinking refers to the level of intention, confidence and ability to follow various pathways towards the desired future. Helping to establish a strong sense of hope in relation to the identified goal is an important influence contributing to goal attainment.

When the reality and resources have been explored the conversation moves towards exploring *Options* – identifying various possible strategies and actions that can move the coachee towards the goal. This is typically done as a form of brainstorming – to generate a range of possible strategies. At this point an additional element of Hope Theory, Pathways Thinking, becomes important (Rand and Cheavens, 2009). 'Pathways Thinking' refers to the ability to generate various routes from the present to the desired future. It is argued that a cyclical relationship exists between Agency Thinking and Pathways Thinking – increasing the sense of Agency helps to generate more Pathways and more options helps to increase Agency – both contributing to a growing sense of hope.

At this point the model moves from exploration towards action and the *Will* step invites a choice from among the various options. This is a clear signal that the conversation will require decision and action. Exploration is helpful but new actions will be required to begin movement towards the goal. The simple question, 'What will you do?' can be quite confronting at this point. An additional helpful question here can often be 'Which of these options do you have most energy around pursuing?' This allows the coachee to follow the 'energy path' – a helpful way to create some momentum.

Once a particular strategy has been chosen identifying specific next actions in the *Tactics* step moves the coachee towards identifying and committing to simple and do-able small next step actions. Again the influence of the Solutions Focus perspective is significant here (Jackson and McKergow, 2007). These are small, even tiny, steps creating initial movement towards the goal. Small steps increase the chances of success and allow for a flexible, more nimble, response as the initial actions begin to create change. It also helps if these next step actions are tied to specific times, they are more likely to happen if that is the case.

It is helpful at this point to invite some reflection on sustaining progress and the *Habits* step in the GROWTH framework emphasises this aspect. 'What might help ensure that you continue the momentum on this?' is a good question to help identify support mechanisms that can ensure that progress towards the goal is sustained.

Golwitzer's (1999) research on implementation intentions supports the value of giving explicit focus and time to thinking into the future to identify ways to continue striving towards goal attainment even in the face of unexpected twists and turns in the journey.

Finally the model recognises that *celebrating* progress and success is an important component that helps build and sustain motivation. Gable and colleagues' (2004) work on Positive-Constructive responses to success, however small, is helpful in highlighting the motivational and relational impact of intentionally and explicitly celebrating progress towards the goal.

The GROWTH model develops and extends a number of the key elements of GROW. In addition, the increasing application of positive psychology and Solutions Focused theories and research provides a stronger evidence base for various elements and enables a more nuanced application.

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FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTITIONERS 3: SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COACHING CULTURES

TIM HAWKES

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In our experience, organisations come to the decision to work towards coaching cultures in three different ways:

1. *Organisation led* – The senior team within the organisation understands and sees the benefits of coaching within their organisation and requests the Learning and Development function to put together a strategy.
2. *Director led* – One or two directors see the importance of coaching and begin an initiative to put together a coaching strategy.
3. *HR department led* – Individuals within the Learning and Development team see the importance of a coaching culture and begin a programme to develop its strategy from within, managing upwards.

Whichever of these is the initiator of the organisational coaching culture the responsibility of implementation usually falls to the Human Resources, Organisational Development or Learning and Development teams. There is growing research on coaching cultures (discussed in Chapter 16) but limited practical guidance.

Two of the biggest mistakes made by organisations implementing a coaching culture

- *Unstructured external coach programme* – Non-vetted external coaches delivering independent programmes which are not aligned to the organisation's cultural strategy.
- *Death by coach training* – Providing more and more coach training as a way of shoe-horning in a coaching culture.

We believe that it is important for practitioners to be aware of the constituent parts of a coaching culture. We propose that there are nine dimensions.

NINE DIMENSIONS OF A COACHING CULTURE

These dimensions are key elements for ensuring that a coaching culture is embedded within an organisation. We believe that all nine dimensions are necessary for a coaching culture to flourish:

1. *Develop Coaching Resources* – Provide a place of reference for coaching.
2. *Improve Workforce 'Coachability'* – Prepare the workforce for coaching.
3. *Go from Coachee to Coach* – Develop potential within all individuals to become coaches.
4. *Build Coaching Skills* – Develop a formal programme of coaching training.
5. *Create Internal Coaching Groups* – Embed the coaching for lifelong development.
6. *Deliver an Internal Coach System* – Formally agree future initiatives that coaches support.
7. *Use External Coaches* – Bring in outside qualified expertise to accelerate learning/understanding.
8. *Promote Advocates for Coaching* – Create role models to set the desired standard.
9. *Enjoy a Self-sustaining Coaching Culture* – Create a business where knowledge and wisdom are shared openly.

These nine dimensions fit into the Embark Coaching Culture Model (the Embark Coaching Culture Framework created by Tim Hawkes and Stuart Haden) which helps us understand where in the organisation these dimensions fit and at what point in the journey the organisation is.

THE EMBARK COACHING CULTURE MODEL

This model provides a helpful framework which can support practitioners to identify what is required to develop a successful coaching culture regardless of the starting point.

The model breaks the coaching culture down into two axes which help identify where an organisation is on the 'coaching map'.

Axis 1 – Your Organisation

For a successful coaching culture to exist, coaching skills must be exhibited at all levels. It should not be reserved for senior management, it is for everybody. With this in mind the model targets the organisation at three levels as follows.

- *Developing the workforce* – Focus on your non-management population. This can be considered as the majority of your employees.

- *Developing your middle/junior managers* – This level focuses on new and aspiring managers, technical experts and managers that hold middle-ranking responsible jobs.
- *Developing the senior managers* – This level focuses on your strategic thinking management population and is restricted to the few high-level managers in your organisation.

Axis 2 – Coaching Maturity

The Embark Model uses three levels of coaching maturity to demonstrate progress. It adopts the well-known approach of Knowing, the lowest level, through to Being, the highest level.

- *Knowing Coaching* – The belief and knowledge that coaching exists with an understanding of what it is, maybe some training taking place, and reading coaching books and materials.
- *Doing Coaching* – Actively using coaching techniques within the workplace, and being aware of when individuals, teams, organisations are using coaching techniques.
- *Being Coaching* – Coaching is a way of life, fully understood and delivered in a meaningful way with knowledge of key tools and techniques effective in developing individuals. The coaching is self-sustaining when individuals are 'being' coaching.

To put these together we created a nine-box matrix or map

Table F3.1   Mapping the future of culture change

	Knowing	Doing	Being
Workforce	1. Develop resources	2. Improve workforce coachability	3. Go from coachee to coach
Junior and middle managers	4. Build coaching skills	5. Create internal coaching groups	6. Deliver internal coach system
Senior managers	7. Use external coaches	8. Promote advocates for coaching	9. Enjoy a self-sustaining coaching culture

By ranking each of the dimensions through an organisational survey the organisation can clearly understand where its weaknesses are in terms of a coaching culture, avoiding some of the common pitfalls.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM EMBARK?

Over 800 people have completed the Unlimited Potential Embark coaching culture diagnostic from organisations such as British Gas and the University of Law. The combined results of all

these companies give us a picture where organisations think their coaching culture currently stands.

The most startling outcome of these surveys is that in almost every organisation (there are a few exceptions) Dimension 2, 'Improve Workforce Coachability', vies with Dimension 4, 'Build Coaching Skills', for the top spot. Whilst we know that organisations are spending a significant amount of money on internal coach training programmes (Dimension 4), it is less clear what money they are spending on 'Improving Workforce Coachability'.

Since the work that we have done with organisations indicates that little development has gone into workforce coachability, we would question whether some organisations make the assumption that their workforces are inherently coachable. The lowest scoring dimensions in the survey tend to be 9 and 6, 'enjoy a self-sustaining coaching culture' and 'deliver internal coach system'. The self-sustaining culture is no surprise as this is a result of all the other dimensions working together. As for delivering internal coach systems, the evidence is that organisations are training internal coaches, putting them to work in the organisation, but the internal coaching mechanism is not fully supported.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that we have drawn from analysing client results and looking at organisational coaching cultures across the world is that true success comes at the moment of interaction, i.e. the moment when one person asks the critical question that needs to be asked and then listens to the answer.

Success in a coaching culture relies on every individual having the knowledge, confidence and support to ask the high quality well-timed coaching question and be prepared to listen, *really* listen, to the answer.

Tim is a Managing Director of Unlimited Potential, co-founder of the Embark™ coaching culture diagnostic tool and also a Chartered Mechanical Engineer. Working globally over the last ten years Tim has delivered programmes ranging from one-to-one coaching through to organisational coaching culture development programmes, relying on high quality coaching as the basis of all of his work. He specialises in assessing organisational coaching culture through his unique Embark™ coaching culture diagnostic. He has worked for the University of Warnick MBA on diversity and also delivered coaching change programmes for organisations such as the Royal Mint, National Archives, Cognizant and Radisson Edwardian.

PERSPECTIVE FROM PRACTICE 1: WHAT WE KNOW FROM ELITE SPORTS

PAT McCARRY

Competitive environments at the highest level can be considered rigorous laboratories for effective coaching practice and as such offer a great deal that can be transferred to many other fields, including business, health and education.

Coaching in team sport is a unique and sometimes complex role, clearly distinct in nature from coaching in other contexts. This is because the sports coach is a key central figure in influencing the achievement of desired outcomes for sports organisations and teams, and as such is held accountable and placed under constant scrutiny. There is no peripheral role for the coach as competitive games take place regularly where the performance levels of the team are tested and exposed under microscopic analysis for all to see. This high pressure environment, whilst exciting, can also be highly stressful. For example, in football three consecutive defeats can result in the termination of a contract. It is important to remember that the team coach works within a network of relationships that can include stakeholders with conflicting interests, such as owners, directors, sponsors and fans who all make increasing demands on the coach and players.

Feedback in this profession for both players and coach is constant, conflicting, and at times unforgiving. In terms of performance on the field or court, however, the coach is in constant receipt of qualitative and quantitative data on an unprecedented scale which sometimes makes it necessary to employ a comprehensive backroom staff. The coach's observations during the game coupled with extensively detailed computerised match analysis will immediately provide the coach and staff team with a wealth of information regarding individual players' performances in addition to the team as a whole. It is this analysis and detailed assessment of the forthcoming opponents that inform immediate planning for the coaching sessions. From this you the reader can see the perfect feedback loop inherent in team sport that is possibly more ambiguous in most other professional contexts. In sport, the coach is

never without clear performance goals and their skill lies in converting these demanding goals into high quality, structured coaching sessions in an effective and highly interactive learning environment. The coach has limited time to make an impact before the next game and must therefore take every possible opportunity to maximise improvement in what has become a ruthlessly competitive arena.

TRANSFERRABLE LEARNING

Create and maintain a purpose-driven and values-based culture

What does your organisation stand for? Is there a clearly understood and easily expressed purpose? Do your employees feel part of something that they care about and that has personal meaning for them? In sports terms, what are they playing for?

Have a clear vision and strategy for recruitment

How rigorous is your recruitment policy? Is there clarity around what skills and characteristics are needed to fit into particular roles in your team? Who is on the recruitment team and why? The most successful sports team in history, the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team, recruit mainly based on character because they believe the requisite talent can be developed given a baseline of skill.

Model and expect high standards of behaviour and performance

The management team need to model the very highest standards in terms of behaviour and performance. If they do not, then they cannot expect the rest of the team or staff to do so. A good question for leaders to ask is 'How do I affect my staff or team when I interact with them?' An even better practice would be to check this out with peers and staff directly.

Value and grow the staff through a conscious and challenging development process

The staff or team are the greatest asset and need to be valued as such. The way that leaders genuinely care about them and grow them will be reflected in their morale, performance and

behaviour. This includes the provision of regular feedback and access to coaching. The aim in sport is to improve the team's motivation, morale and performance constantly because the team is only ever a short period of time away from the next test. The team's managers cannot wait until the next formal appraisal date because the improvement needs to happen immediately. The approach is rigorous, rewarding, and demands total commitment. To ensure progress and minimise burnout, it is key that players see practice as an enjoyable, stimulating learning experience where they can grow, be motivated, and have opportunities to express themselves.

Encourage and model honesty and transparency

So often in the past a 'them and us' attitude has prevailed between management and staff. The outcome of this has been that management will hold the power even more tightly. If this is the case then there can never be trust and loyalty cannot be taken for granted. In sport, it is accepted that the performance and behaviour of the team are directly influenced by the coach and management team. This healthy approach to accountability enables both individuals and the team to continually improve.

Create challenges and goals that excite and stimulate

Sports teams and individuals thrive on exciting challenges that stretch and motivate them. There will be team goals and also individual goals regarding development and performance. If the players are involved in holding each other accountable and supporting each other when times are difficult, then the hard work is made more manageable and enjoyable. There is something wonderful about being part of something greater than oneself and having an opportunity to test this growth and performance level regularly through competitive fixtures. In addition, the majority of individuals involved in competitive sports enjoy what they do. This can be stressful and exhausting but it is enjoyable and has a constant and clear focus. It is worth considering how this can be replicated in other work environments. How can the environment be a more enjoyable and stimulating place to work in? People often spend a good deal of their day in a working environment, so it is prudent and humane to consider how this time can be as enjoyable, productive and rewarding as possible.

Pat McCarry is an executive coach who also runs courses for the professional development of football coaches. He has a BSc in Sports Science and Management and a PGCE in secondary education from Loughborough University. He worked in education as a teacher, governor and committed member of senior management for ten years. In 1999 he became Director of

Coaching and Professional Development for UK Elite Soccer, the second-largest coaching provider in the US where he developed coaches across 30 states. He is currently completing an MA in coaching at Warwick University and has a passion for innovative leadership programmes.