
CHAPTER 2

People Are Complex and the World Is Messy: A Behavior-Based Approach to Executive Coaching

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I HAVE A simple yet fundamental assumption about coaching: The purpose is to change behavior. The core of my coaching boils down to one equally simple yet provocative question for the participant: What are you going to do differently? Implicit in that question is a focus on action and a focus on the future (rather than the past). This chapter outlines a rich set of models, tools, and techniques designed to help people answer that question and then follow through to take the actions that lead to lasting change, better results, and greater satisfaction.

A second assumption is that people are complex and multifaceted. Therefore, behavioral approaches that reduce complex human behavior to mechanistic stimulus-and-response chains will not succeed. Human behavior flows from a combination of affective, cognitive, behavioral, and even spiritual elements. So while the focus of this approach is on behavior,

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the whole person must be addressed in the process. Behavior is about far more than just the observable behavior; it's the result of a whole person with a rich, multifaceted life—past, present, and future—interacting with the people and the world around the individual. Failure to address the whole person in coaching will yield inadequate or temporary results.

A third assumption is that the world is messy. Although certain elements are simple and predictable, our lives and our interactions with others contain complicated, ambiguous, and unpredictable variables that may change over time. This assumption has significant implications for coaching, especially in how we help people sustain changes in their lives. If the same behavior might produce radically different results in different settings, then coaches must help the people they coach become effective learners, capable of translating their lessons into new settings, even after the coaching has ended. Therefore, in addition to changing behavior, a second purpose of coaching is to enable people to be better learners. Enhancing self-guided learning is so important it is embedded in the following definition of coaching: "Coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective" (Peterson & Hicks, 1996, p. 14).

A fourth assumption is that what happens in the coaching session matters less than what happens on the job, at home, or in whatever settings are important to the person. The more people I coach, the less I rely on breakthroughs in insight that generate excitement in our conversations. Instead, I focus on facilitating the steady progress that leads to long-term sustainable changes in behavior outside the coaching conversation.

In their analysis of the learning techniques that actually improve performance, Druckman and Bjork (1991) reinforce this assumption: "The crux of the problem is that learning and performance are not the same. . . . Procedures that enhance performance during training may or may not enhance long-term retention and transfer to altered contexts; conversely, procedures that introduce difficulties for the learner and impair performance during training may foster durable and flexible post-training skills" (pp. 24–25). To translate this to coaching, what contributes to better learning within the coaching session may in fact interfere with effective use of the learning outside of the session. Conversely, the types of experiences that lead to tangible long-term changes in behavior may feel like slogging through mud in the coaching session. A familiar example is that massed practice (e.g., cramming the night before a test) produces better immediate learning, whereas spaced practice (e.g., studying the same topic regularly over an entire semester) produces better retention and better long-term performance. Effective coaches use the principle of spaced practice by helping their clients

practice new behaviors across multiple sessions; the participant may learn more slowly, but the results last longer. Other examples are included later in this chapter, but due to space limitations readers are encouraged to read Druckman and Bjork's (1991) third chapter, "Optimizing Long-Term Retention and Transfer."

A fifth assumption is that caring about the people we coach is a vital part of the process. Coaches need to demonstrate (behaviorally!) that they are interested in their clients and are committed to helping them accomplish meaningful goals. The techniques that follow are inevitably hollow if they are not used in the context of a positive, caring, warm, and respectful relationship.

KEY CONCEPTS

Practitioners and researchers describe a range of behavioral and cognitive-behavioral techniques that are useful in coaching (Ducharme, 2004; Grant, 2001; Kampa & White, 2002; Moore & Highstein, 2005; Peltier, 2001) and in improving work-related performance in general (e.g., Andrasik, 1989; Baldwin & Baldwin, 2001; Braksick, 2000; Daniels & Daniels, 2004; Dickinson, 2000). Critics often oversimplify behavioral approaches as mechanical, unsophisticated, narrow, or manipulative (Ducharme, 2004; Peltier, 2001). However, even advocates recognize that purely behavioral techniques are not sufficient for coaching people to deal with the complex and messy realities of life.

This section includes brief overviews of classic behavioral techniques, including modeling (Rosenthal & Steffek, 1991); feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996); shaping and successive approximation (Baldwin & Baldwin, 2001); self-management (Kanfer & Gaelick-Buys, 1991); rewards and reinforcers (Peltier, 2001); and behavioral practice (Druckman & Bjork, 1991). These topics are embedded in a discussion of four frameworks that are intended to expand the traditional picture of a behavioral methodology. Even though the frameworks are holistic in nature, including cognitive and affective components as well as behavioral, the focus of their use in coaching is still behavioral. For example, when discussing motivation, the coach's purpose is not to change a person's motivations or to increase the person's insight into their origin, but to see how the person being coached can most effectively use these motivations to guide, shape, and reinforce desired behavior. Thus the coach is far more likely to ask "What would you like to do about it?" than such insight-oriented questions as "Why do you think that is?" or "Where do you think that came from?" or an affect-oriented question such as "How do you feel about that?" The latter types of questions may be use-

ful in building an effective working relationship, but they are not, strictly speaking, a necessary aspect of coaching.

THE DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

If, as stated previously, the purpose of coaching is to change behavior, then it seems essential that coaches have an understanding of the “active ingredients” required for such change to occur. The Development Pipeline describes the necessary and sufficient conditions for change and serves as a guide to where coaching can provide the greatest value for a given individual (Hicks & Peterson, 1999; Peterson, 2002). The five necessary conditions (see Figure 2.1) are:

1. *Insight*. The extent to which the person understands what areas need to be developed in order to be more effective (Elliott et al., 1994; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1994).
2. *Motivation*. The degree to which the person is willing to invest the time and energy it takes to develop oneself (Dweck, 1986, 2000; Miller & Rollnick, 2002).
3. *Capabilities*. The extent to which the person has the skills and knowledge that are needed (Druckman & Bjork, 1991; Rogers, 2004).
4. *Real-world practice*. The extent to which the person has opportunities to try new skills at work (Druckman & Bjork, 1991; Holton & Baldwin, 2003).
5. *Accountability*. The extent to which there are internal and external mechanisms for paying attention to change and providing meaningful consequences (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Holton & Baldwin, 2003; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1994; Rogers, 2004).

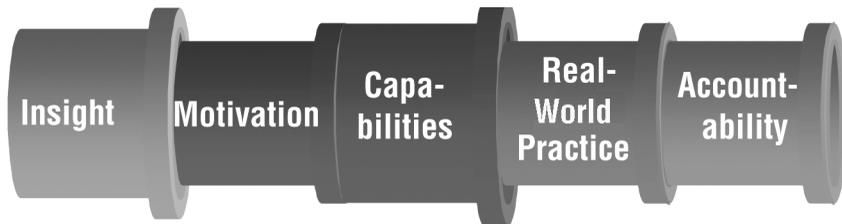


Figure 2.1
The Development Pipeline

The pipeline metaphor highlights that this is a constraint model (Goldratt & Cox, 1992): The amount of change a person can make is constrained by where the pipeline is most narrow. That is, a limitation in any one of the five conditions serves as a bottleneck that sets the upper limit on how much change can actually occur. For example, one person might want to be more strategic (high Insight, Motivation) but might lack the basic skills (low Capabilities) and not even have an opportunity to use them in their current job (low Real-World Practice, Accountability). Attending the best-designed workshop on strategic thinking might increase their capabilities, but still not produce meaningful behavior change. Only when the additional constraints of Real-World Practice and Accountability are addressed in tandem with Capabilities will change ensue for this person.

It is not necessary to get a precise measure of the various conditions; a coach only has to have a working hypothesis as to what is most constrained. In the case study of Bonita, for example, her insight about her interpersonal relationships and leadership style seems to be reasonable. Her motivation to address conflict, however, appears to be relatively low, and it appears that her capabilities are constrained in this area as well. Given some of the difficult relationships around her, opportunities for real-world practice appear to be sufficient. The level of accountability is not clear from the case study. A working hypothesis of her Development Pipeline for addressing conflict is presented in Figure 2.2. This picture suggests, for example, that giving her additional feedback would have little impact on her behavior, because Insight is not constrained.

High Insight and low Motivation is a relatively common profile: “I know I should get better at addressing conflict, but I don’t want to come across as pushy or aggressive”; “I know I should spend more time net-

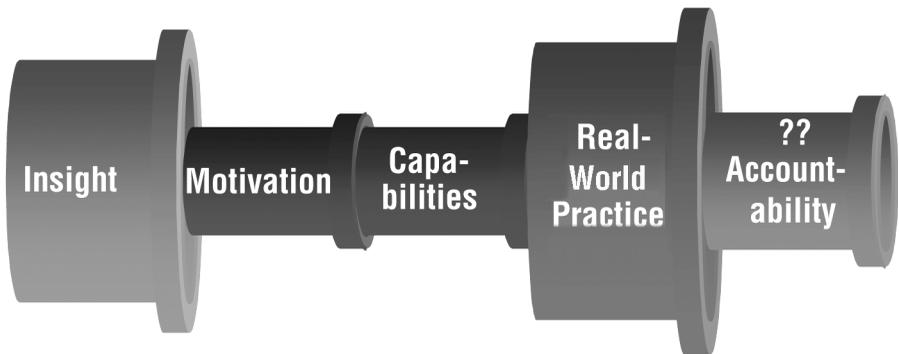


Figure 2.2

Bonita's Development Pipeline for Conflict Management at Work

working, but I just never find the time”; “My boss keeps telling me to take more risks, but it’s just not worth it.” A combination of high Insight and low Capabilities is also common: “I want to be more strategic but I just don’t know what exactly I’m supposed to do.”

Using the Development Pipeline as a diagnostic is a way to ensure that coaching uses the person’s time effectively and efficiently. If Insight is high, a thorough assessment with detailed feedback doesn’t add as much value as it does when Insight is low. If the Capabilities condition is the most constrained, coaching will probably have the greatest immediate impact by proceeding directly to skills training and practice. Then, as capabilities increase, the coach can shift the focus to whatever condition is then most constrained. Coaching is a cyclical process, shifting as needed from one area to the next and back again, always addressing the source of the major constraint.

Working with each person where the Development Pipeline is most constrained is one of the keys to truly customizing coaching (Peterson, 2002). Coaching programs that prescribe the same process for everyone (e.g., beginning with obligatory 360-degree or multirater feedback) end up wasting time for at least some of the participants. Although few actually take the opportunity, coaches have the luxury of being able to continue gathering assessment data throughout the entire process, rather than having to do it all up front. Similarly, coaches can think strategically about when insight needs to be increased and by how much, and then find the most effective way to do that.

GAPS GRID

The second framework, the GAPS Grid, expands the first two conditions from the Development Pipeline to outline the types of information that people need for Insight and Motivation (Peterson & Hicks, 1996). Many coaches (and others responsible for development experiences) seem to focus narrowly on feedback and thus lose sight of the big picture. The two-by-two GAPS Grid (see Table 2.1) examines where the person is now (left-hand column) and what matters most (right-hand column). Both issues are considered from the person’s perspective (top row) and from the perspective of any significant others, such as boss, senior management, direct reports, peers, the coach, and family (bottom row).

Goals and Values refers to what matters to the person and what motivates his or her behavior. This includes values such as power, wealth, altruism, learning, security, status, affiliation, variety, and achievement. Changes in behavior will last only if they are reinforced at some level by the person’s existing motivations.

Table 2.1
GAPS Grid with Representative Questions

	WHERE THE PERSON IS	WHAT MATTERS
The Person's View	<p>Abilities <i>How They See Themselves</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this person see his or her own major strengths? • Where do they see their weaknesses or areas they would like to get better at? • What abilities do they feel will serve them best at accomplishing what matters? • What aspects of their skills or style will get in the way of accomplishing what matters? • What skills do they think have contributed to their success so far? • What additional skills would have been helpful for them? 	<p>Goals and Values <i>What Matters to the Person</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the person's most important goals, values, and interests? • What motivates them? • What is most demotivating to them? • What do they find most rewarding? • What really inspires them to do their best? • What kinds of activities do they enjoy? • What would make work more fulfilling for them? • What do they care most about in life? • What gives them the greatest sense of satisfaction?
Views from Other Perspectives	<p>Perceptions <i>How Others See the Person</i></p> <p>e.g., boss, coach, colleagues, senior management, family, friends, social networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do others perceive them? • What do other people say about them? • How do others view the person's strengths, weaknesses, style, and impact? • To what do other people attribute this person's successes and failures? 	<p>Success Factors <i>What Matters to Others</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is necessary for this person to be successful in his or her current role? How are those factors changing? • What types of people and what skills are most valued in this organization? Why? • What does their boss (and other senior managers) expect of someone in this role? • What kinds of people are most successful in this organization? Least successful? • What can be learned from looking at relevant competency models, job descriptions, and performance metrics? • What social norms and organizational values are people expected to follow?

Abilities refers to the person's view of their own skills, abilities, and style.

Perceptions refers to how others (e.g., boss, colleagues, direct reports, coach, family) see the person. Separating Abilities and Perceptions makes it explicit that the purpose of exploring GAPS information is not to get agreement on feedback, but to understand it from multiple perspectives. It is assumed that the person's view of their abilities will differ in important ways from other people's perceptions. In addition, other people are likely to have different, even conflicting, perceptions of the person. These discrepancies are not contradictions to be resolved, but information to be understood.

Success Factors refers to the expectations of others regarding what it takes to be successful in various roles, such as the person's current or desired job, or social role as team member, leader, or even family member. Success Factors on the job may be found in job descriptions, annual goal setting and objectives, competency models, organizational and cultural values, and informal analysis of who is and is not successful, as well as in the implicit assumptions and unspoken social norms for behavior. Research by the Gallup Organization finds that clear expectations are one of the essential conditions for high performance (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

Because the Success Factors serve as criteria for evaluating how well a person fits, or might potentially fit, a given role, they shape people's perceptions of others. In the case study of Bonita, for example, her boss apparently views a take-charge, assertive style as one of the Success Factors. Because he did not see Bonita in that way, he did not see her as a great fit for her new role.

If a person's Insight or Motivation is constrained (in terms of the Development Pipeline), then a GAPS conversation is useful. Although it is common to begin with feedback (e.g., multirater surveys, assessments, or organizational interviews), it is more productive to begin with the right-hand column of the GAPS Grid, where the deepest and most useful insights arise. The first step is to get a clear picture of the person's own Goals and Values. Surprisingly, relatively few people take the time to reflect deeply on what is most important to them. Through strategic questioning a coach can help the person articulate what is most meaningful to them. Second, build a clear picture of what is expected by others—the Success Factors. What does the person's manager expect? The boss's boss? Other important players in the organization?

Feedback (i.e., Perceptions data) will be taken seriously only when it is seen as relevant to what matters. If the connection is not clear, the coach might as well be telling people their calculus skills or their ability

to speak ancient Greek are weak. It may be true, but it will not inspire much change. Indeed, once the Success Factors are clear to people, they may see the need to change even without feedback from others. For example, if someone understands that the criteria for getting a sought-after promotion include demonstrating strategic thinking and team leadership skills, they may search for opportunities to acquire and/or demonstrate those skills.

Coaches can facilitate exploration of Goals and Values and Success Factors, and may even share their own perspective on what matters. Greater value comes, however, when the coach teaches the person how to reflect on what matters to them and gather information about what is important to others. Another skill critical for long-term development is the ability to get feedback from others. Therefore, rather than seeing the coach's role as primarily to help increase the person's motivation and insight, a more powerful role for the coach is to facilitate an understanding of what kinds of information are necessary and how to obtain them. This may come about through modeling the behaviors, teaching and practicing feedback-seeking skills, and shaping feedback-seeking behavior through success approximation and reinforcement. Although feedback from the coach can be an important tool, it generally represents the kind of dilemma portrayed by Druckman and Bjork's principle of learning versus transfer. The more the coach provides clear, explicit feedback in the session, the faster the person gains new insights. However, the person's ability to take those insights and apply them in future settings can be minimal. In contrast, when the coach teaches the person how to generate one's own feedback (Druckman & Bjork, 1991), initial learning may be slower, but the impact is more lasting and the person acquires a skill to be used in future settings, independent of the coach's presence.

CLEAR GOALS, CONSCIOUS CHOICE, AND EFFECTIVE ACTION

The third framework—clear goals, conscious choice, and effective action (Peterson & Millier, 2005; Peterson & Sokol, 2005; Peterson & Sutherland, 2003)—forms the foundation of most coaching conversations and helps answer the core question, "What are you going to do differently?" After a brief overview, an example will demonstrate what such a conversation might look like.

Clear Goals

This is similar to the Goals and Values of the GAPS Grid, but tends to be used in coaching at a more tactical level, as seen in questions such as:

“What do you want to accomplish in this meeting?” “What are you trying to accomplish with your team?” “What is the purpose of your strategic plan?” Two basic types of questions are used to help the person clarify their goals for a specific situation: The first asks directly about goals (e.g., “What are you trying to accomplish?”) and the second explores barriers and constraints (e.g., “Where are you stuck?” “Why isn’t that happening now?”) Note again that this follows a constraint-based methodology. If the person is clear on what they want and there is nothing in their way, things would be going fine. So either they are not clear or something is impeding their progress.

Part of the complexity inherent in the human condition is that there are always multiple goals in play. In one situation, for example, a person may be motivated by a desire to get results, get things done reasonably quickly, have fun, and feel valued. Sometimes the motivations are easier to see by looking at what people want to avoid: I don’t want to waste time, offend others unnecessarily, look foolish, or damage my career.

Conscious Choice

Once the person is clear on what they are trying to accomplish, those goals become the criteria by which various options are generated (e.g., through brainstorming) and then evaluated. Evaluation can often be as simple as asking the person, “In light of all your criteria, which of these options do you think is going to be most effective?” If the choice is difficult, evaluation might take the form of reviewing the most viable options against each of the stated goals.

Effective Action

Once an option is chosen, it is important to make sure that it can be implemented effectively. If the action is relatively simple, merely walking through the plan verbally might suffice. For more complicated tasks, effective action might involve repeated behavioral practice, reflection and feedback, and learning new skills.

CASE STUDY—BONITA

To use this approach, one of the first steps is to find a specific situation to work on. This stems from an assumption that behavior can most effectively be changed through concrete, behavioral examples, not through abstract principles or awareness. Drawing again on the Bonita case study, here is a hypothetical conversation—starting with clear goals—halfway through an early coaching meeting.

Coach: You also mentioned that you wanted to talk about conflict management. Where is that an issue for you?

Bonita: Some people are so aggressive, and I just prefer to keep things harmonious. We all have to work together. I think we can come up with good answers through open discussion. My way might work slower sometimes, but we build a stronger team.

Coach: So is there a specific situation coming up where you anticipate conflict?

Bonita: Things can be uncomfortable with Ken sometimes. He talks down to me. Like I was saying earlier, I don't think he respects me.

Coach: So where is the conflict?

Bonita: I'd like to be able to talk to him about that—to tell him what I feel.

Coach: And that will generate some conflict?

Bonita: I think so. I think Ken will tell me if I can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

Coach: So if you were in a conversation with Ken, to tell him how you feel, what would be your goal?

Bonita: Just to tell him. If he knew how I felt, he might treat me better.

Coach: What else would you like to accomplish?

Bonita: I just want to let him know.

Coach: Earlier it sounded like you hope that he would change how he talks to you. Is that another goal for the conversation?

Bonita: I'd like to see that. But I'm not sure it's realistic.

Coach: What else would you like to see in this conversation?

In a more insight-oriented approach, the coach might explore Bonita's doubts about what is realistic. In this behavior-based approach, the goals will be explored through testing them behaviorally to see what works and what doesn't.

Bonita: Well, if we're going to get into it, I'd like to find out what he really thinks about me—find out if he respects me or not.

Coach: What else?

Bonita: You know, I'd like him to see that I have a lot to offer. I'd like to get him to see that even though my style is different from his, I can be a good leader.

Coach: What else?

Bonita: That would be pretty good. I'm not sure what I'd actually say, but that's what I'd like to see.

Coach: So given all that we've talked about so far, how would you summarize what you would like to accomplish in the meeting?

Bonita: Just what I said. I'd like him to see that I have a lot to offer.

Coach: That sounds very different from what you started with, where you said you just wanted to tell him how you feel.

Bonita: Yes, but I think this is what really needs to happen. We have to talk this through.

Note how the coach gently persists to help Bonita think through what she really wanted to accomplish. Sometimes a person might say, "I just want to tell you what

I think” or “I just want to hear your side of the story,” when in fact she wants to solve a problem. The discrepancy can actually escalate the conflict because the other person might think he has met the person’s goals: “Okay, I hear what you’re saying. Thank you.” Then, when the person in Bonita’s position persists—because what she really wants is not what she put on the table—tensions flare.

Undoubtedly, Bonita has other goals in this conversation, but the chief goal is now clear enough to proceed. This is a cyclical process and it does not all have to come out at once.

Coach: So let’s look at some different ways that you could approach the conversation. How would you like to begin? (*Conscious choice*)

Bonita: By laying it on the line. That’s not my style, but that’s what I need to do.

Coach: Okay, so how would you do that? What exactly would you say?

Bonita: Ken, I’d like to talk to you about how we get along. I really want us to have a good working relationship, so it would be helpful to figure out what we both can do to make that happen.

Coach: (*Speaking as Ken*) I think our relationship is fine.

Bonita: Well, Ken, I’m not sure I do. . . . (*Pause*) I’m not sure what to say next.

Here the coach shifts into behavioral practice that is based not on an artificial role-play, but on actually rehearsing what Bonita needs to say. Although such practice conversations tend to proceed in small segments, they are otherwise as realistic as the coach can make them. The more realistic the practice, the greater the likelihood of skill transfer and long-term retention of learning (Druckman & Bjork, 1991).

Coach: Okay, let’s debrief what just happened. You said you wanted to lay it on the line. How well did you do that? (*Effective action*)

Bonita: Pretty good. But I didn’t expect his response.

Coach: Let’s go back a bit: How exactly did you state the purpose of the conversation?

Bonita: That I wanted to have a good working relationship.

Coach: So how is that laying it on the line? Talking about wanting a good relationship sounds pretty safe and innocuous to me.

Bonita: I’d get there eventually. I don’t want to just drop a bomb on him.

Coach: Okay, so what do you want to do: lay it on the line or get to it eventually? (*Clear goals*)

Bonita: I’m afraid that if I don’t lay it on the line right away, I’ll soften what I want to say too much. He intimidates me.

Coach: Okay, so what’s a way you could tell him what you want that won’t blast him? Because it sounds like you want to be direct but you also want to treat him with respect. (*Clear goals again*)

Bonita: Yes, that’s important.

Coach: So what could you say? (*Conscious choice*)

Bonita: Ken, I really want to have a good working relationship with you, but there are some things that I just don’t feel good about.

Coach: (*Speaking as Ken*) Like what?

Bonita: Sometimes when you talk to me, I'm not sure that you respect me. You talk down to me sometimes.

Coach: Okay, so how well did that work for you? Was that respectful and direct?

Bonita: Yeah, pretty good. (*Effective action, measured in terms of how well it helped accomplish her goals*)

Coach: Okay, let's keep going. (*Speaking as Ken*) Bonita, I don't think you should take everything so personally. You're a senior manager now—you have to act like one.

Bonita: See, that's exactly what Ken would do! Talk down to me like that. . . .

Through a continuous process of clarifying her goals, making a conscious choice, practicing the action, and then cycling through again, Bonita learns how to handle this conversation more effectively. The insights come from trying a behavior and reflecting on how well it accomplished the desired goal. In the role play, when her initial comment to Ken did not work well, it helped Bonita clarify that she had an additional goal that she had not mentioned—to treat Ken with respect. So in a very behavioral example, she began to learn both new behaviors and new insights. As Bonita and her coach continue to work through the conversation, Bonita will continue to learn new ways to handle surprises. One of the chief benefits is the increase in self-confidence she will feel when she sees that she is able to handle a variety of challenges.

COACHING STRATEGIES

The fourth framework for coaching is the five coaching strategies that address the most common challenges coaches face (Peterson & Hicks, 1996):

1. *Forge a partnership:* Build trust and understanding so people want to work with you.
2. *Inspire commitment:* Build insight and motivation so people focus their energy on development goals that matter.
3. *Grow skills:* Build capabilities so people can do what is required.
4. *Promote persistence:* Build stamina and discipline to make sure learning lasts on the job.
5. *Shape the environment:* Build organizational support to reward learning and remove barriers.

Strategies 2 to 4 explicitly address the necessary conditions in the Development Pipeline:

- *Inspire commitment: Insight and Motivation.* This strategy is primarily implemented through GAPS and clear goals, conscious choice conversations.

- *Grow skills: Capabilities.* This and the following strategy are discussed later in this section.
- *Promote persistence: Real-world Practice and Accountability.*

The strategies highlight two other important responsibilities that the coach has. First, in order to even have the opportunity to help the person change, the coach must establish an effective working relationship of trust and understanding. One of the most consistent findings in the therapy literature is that the relationship itself is often a significant factor in helping people grow (Hill, 2001; Lambert, 2004; Mahoney, 1991). In coaching, whether or not the relationship itself can facilitate change, an effective working relationship is still a prerequisite for the conversations and the work that needs to be done together.

The term *partnership* was chosen deliberately to capture a sense of two equals co-designing the process. It contrasts vividly with the common term *coachee*, which reflects, intentionally or otherwise, a passive state of receiving what the coach offers. Coaching requires a commitment from the coach to care about engaging the person as a partner in figuring out what they will do together.

Second, the coach has an opportunity to look beyond the one-to-one conversations with the person and help shape the environment. At a minimum, this involves coaching the person on what can be done to enlist the support of others, anticipate and manage how other people might react, find appropriate sources of feedback and encouragement, and anticipate other obstacles and challenges. It might also involve coaching the person's boss or sponsor on how they can support the coaching process, or even consulting to the organization on how the culture (e.g., norms, values, role models) and various systems (e.g., goal setting, compensation, performance management) might better support coaching and development.

CASE STUDY—BONITA REVISITED

Continuing the hypothetical conversation with Bonita from the last section will highlight several behavioral techniques important to the third and fourth strategies: growing skills and promoting persistence. We left off with Bonita commenting, as part of the practice conversation, that Ken is likely to talk down to her even if she brings this point up to him. (For the sake of brevity the following conversation is edited to highlight the relevant techniques. An actual coaching conversation would involve even more attempts to draw out the ideas of the person being coached.)

Coach: So how would you like to respond to Ken if he talks down to you during this conversation?

Bonita: Point it out to him right when it happens.

Coach: What would you say?

Bonita: It's tempting to say, "See? You're doing it right now!" But that probably won't be very helpful. I guess I could say, "Ken, I'm feeling like you're talking down to me right now."

Coach: (*Speaking as Ken*) No, I'm not. You just take everything too personally. You have to learn to play in the big leagues now.

Bonita: Yes, so he's still doing it. Now I don't know what to do again.

Coach: Okay, let me teach you two techniques—one for introducing the topic and another for dealing with it if he continues talking that way.

At this point, the coach explains the two techniques and demonstrates simple examples of what Bonita might say. Then, rather than having her practice the new skills in isolation, which would facilitate rapid learning, the coach asks her to try out the new skills as part of the conversation. That way, Bonita has to learn to use the skill in the context of a real-life conversation, where there are no cues and no pauses to think.

Coach: Do you have an idea of how you might use this with Ken?

Bonita: Sort of. . . .

Coach: (*Speaking as Ken*) Okay, so what did you want to talk about today?

Bonita: Ken, sometimes when we talk I feel like you're talking down to me. I'd like to explain my perspective a bit more for you, then take some time to make sure I understand how you see me and our conversations, and then figure out how you and I can work together without me feeling like you're talking down to me.

Coach: (*As Ken*) I think you're just taking things too personally, Bonita. I'm sure if you just spend a little more time . . .

Bonita: Ken, I'm very interested in hearing your reactions, but I'd like to make sure you understand my perspective first. Let me explain. . . .

Coach: Let's stop for a second here: How is this going so far?

Bonita: I feel nervous. But I got the message out and stuck with it.

Coach: (*As Ken*) I know where you're coming from, Bonita. You're just too sensitive and you need to be tougher.

Bonita: As I said, I'd like to explain my perspective. Even if you think you already know, I'd like to make sure.

Coach: (*As Ken*) Look, Bonita, I don't have time for this. This is not a touchy-feely kind of place and if you can't cut it maybe you should reconsider working here.

Bonita: Ken would never say that.

Coach: Perhaps not. But I want you to be prepared for whatever he says, even if it's something you don't expect. Because you're doing fairly well sticking to your message, I'm going to raise the stakes a bit. I'll keep coming at you with

different thoughts, and as I was just doing, even acting irritated and frustrated with you. Even if it's not exactly what Ken might say, the purpose is for you to practice these new skills no matter what happens.

Bonita: Okay. That makes sense.

Here the coach is demonstrating two other learning principles from Druckman and Bjork (1991), providing contextual interference and increasing variability and variety in practice. These techniques help replicate the messy world that people live in, where other agendas and emotions interfere with the person's goals and where unpredictable things happen. If time allows in this session, the coach will practice at least one more conflict conversation with Bonita, giving her exposure to even greater variability and variety. Throughout the conversation, the coach is also using the techniques of shaping and successive approximation to gradually guide Bonita to more effective conflict management skills.

After additional practice, moving through several conversations step-by-step so that Bonita has the opportunity to practice all elements of her new techniques, the coach shifts gears to debrief.

Coach: So what have you learned so far?

Bonita: Mostly that I can do this. It isn't as hard as I thought.

Coach: What else did you learn?

Bonita: That I really have to be clear on what I want. If I'm not totally clear, I lose focus and back down. When I know exactly what I'm trying to do, I can stay anchored on that.

Coach: What else?

Bonita: I can be very direct and still treat people with respect. I never understood how to do that before. But staying clear on my purpose and just sticking to the process seems to work.

Coach: What else?

Bonita: I already knew this, but I understand better that the conversation has two sides—me listening to them and them listening to me. I need to keep that distinction really clear—about when I'm talking and when I'm listening. I'm usually too quick to just stop talking anytime the other person interrupts.

Coach: What else?

Bonita: That's quite a bit, don't you think?

Coach: It works for me. So let's talk about what you're going to do differently now. Based on what you learned today, what exactly will you do differently?

Bonita: I'm going to schedule a time to go talk to Ken. I'll take some time to write down my goals and exactly what I want to say so I remember it.

Note how persistent the coach is in asking for the lessons Bonita has learned. This requires that she actively process the experience, including the subtle lessons as well as the obvious ones, which facilitates retention (Druckman & Bjork, 1991). A useful guideline is to make sure the person feels like they are working at it. The coach asks "What else?" with an open mind, not searching for any particular answer, merely assuming that there is more if the person reflects on it. Then, the coach poses the ultimate question: What are you going to do differently? This

marks the transition from thinking about the session to thinking about what happens next, which is the heart of coaching. In addition to Druckman and Bjork's principles, which combine learning and transfer, the technique known as bullet-proof action steps (Peterson & Millier, 2005; Peterson & Sutherland, 2003) is also useful in promoting persistence.

Coach: When will you schedule the meeting with Ken?

Bonita: As soon as I get back to the office.

Coach: Will that be the first thing you do?

Bonita: I'll probably check my e-mail and voice-mail first.

Coach: So you'll schedule the meeting after you go over e-mail and voice-mail?

Bonita: Yes.

Coach: How long will that take?

Bonita: Anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour.

Coach: How will you remember to schedule it?

Bonita: I'll just do it.

Coach: What might get in your way?

Bonita: If there's a crisis or something. Or if someone stops by to talk. We've got a couple of big projects and there's a lot going on right now.

Coach: And if you get distracted, when will you schedule the meeting?

Bonita: Before I leave work.

Coach: Okay. When will you write down your goals and what you want to say?

Bonita: Probably this weekend when I get some time to think.

Coach: What's your best guess on when and where you'll do it?

The coach continues with a series of practical, behavioral questions designed to help Bonita come up with a workable plan: How long do you think it will take? How can you make sure you don't get interrupted? What else might make it difficult to finish writing it this weekend? What will you do with the piece of paper you've written your goals on? How will you make sure you have it with you to review right before the meeting with Ken? And so on.

These questions may seem extremely basic, or even micromanaging, but part of the purpose of such painstaking detail is to help people visualize exactly what will happen, anticipate obstacles, and develop contingency plans. It also teaches them a process they can use to begin to make conscious choices to change their own habits.

There are two more aspects to the fourth strategy, promoting persistence (i.e., addressing Real-World Practice and Accountability). First is the assumption that positive reinforcement is necessary in order for Bonita to persist with her new skills. Although reinforcement is not explicitly applied, it is integral to the approach described here. That is one reason so much time is spent clarifying the person's goals—to make sure that they are important and clearly articulated. That helps to ensure that effective action directed toward achieving those goals will produce a positive outcome. Even if, for example, Bonita is not totally successful in her conversation with Ken, if she feels that she accomplished some of her goals or made tangible progress toward those goals, or even just learned something use-

ful, she should feel positively reinforced. For that reason, the coach needs to make sure that early attempts to use the skill are likely to be reasonably rewarding. In this case, Bonita demonstrated quick learning and was adept at handling the various challenges offered by her coach. If she had not been so skillful, the coach would have focused on helping her find simpler places to engage in Real-World Practice before attempting the conversation with Ken, such as a minor disagreement with a colleague with whom she has a good working relationship.

The last tactic for promoting persistence is demonstrated by the following questions from Bonita's coach, designed to help her reflect after she engages in Real-World Practice.

Coach: After you have the conversation with Ken, I'd like you to take two minutes to think through three questions: "What worked well? What didn't work? What would I like to do differently next time I face a similar situation?" How does that sound?

Bonita: It makes sense.

Coach: How would you state those questions in your own words?

Bonita: What worked, what didn't, what do I want to do next time?

Coach: What will it take for you to remember those questions and remember to ask them after you talk to Ken?

Bonita: (*Smiling*) I can see where this is going. . . . I'll write it in on the same sheet of paper that I write the goals on. In fact, maybe I'll write the questions down right now so I don't forget.

Coach: (*Also smiling*) Sounds good, Bonita. What else would be helpful for you?

EVIDENCE FOR EFFECTIVENESS

There is substantial evidence that the individual techniques mentioned so far can produce some degree of behavior change as part of a therapeutic intervention (Druckman & Bjork, 1991; Kanfer & Goldstein, 1991; Lambert, 2004). There is less empirical evidence that these techniques are effective in coaching (Kampa & White, 2002). However, Peterson (1993; see also Peterson & Kraiger, 2004) studied 370 managers who participated in an intensive coaching process based on similar behavioral principles. Many of the techniques were the same, but the models and principles were not as explicitly defined at that time. Participants were rated at three points in time: at the beginning of coaching, at the end of coaching (6 to 12 months later), and at least one year following the completion of coaching. Ratings were from three perspectives—self, boss, and coach—and addressed specific learning objectives as well as global outcomes such as overall job performance. Based on the boss ratings alone (arguably the most objective of the three rater perspectives), the average effect size, reflecting how much people improved on their individual coaching objectives, was 1.56 standard deviation units, approxi-

mately the equivalent of moving from the 50th to the 93rd percentile of performance. These gains were still evident in the follow-up ratings over a year later. A control group of items showed no change at the end of coaching or at follow-up.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Coaching Bonita

Now that the basic principles and tools of this behavior-based approach to coaching have been laid out, here is a picture of how they apply to the two case studies, starting with Bonita.

When working with new coaching clients, I typically begin by asking three sets of questions that parallel the GAPS categories of Goals and Values, Success Factors, and Perceptions:

1. What would you like to get from your coaching? What would you like from me as your coach? (I take clients' goals, values, and expectations very seriously, and find that understanding and valuing what matters to them builds trust and strengthens the relationship.)
2. Tell me a little about your job: What do you do, what are the biggest challenges, and what does your organization expect of you?
3. What do you think other people want you to get out of your coaching? Who are the key players and how do they see you?

Depending on the range of issues they are interested in working on, I may briefly explore a topic in more detail to form a preliminary hypothesis on the Development Pipeline constraints. With Bonita, for example, I see her primary constraints on conflict management as Motivation and Capabilities. The preceding sections outlined the methods I would use to work with her on these two areas. Motivation would be addressed through clarifying her goals as well as by building her capabilities and providing a gradually escalating series of challenges to increase her sense of confidence and self-efficacy. In subsequent meetings, we would continue to practice different conflict situations and I would most likely teach her additional skills as well. She would leave each meeting with specific action steps, based on what she learned in that meeting. When she returns for the next meeting, I would ask what worked, what didn't, and what she learned from her experiences. Then we would identify new situations to practice, until she is comfortable that she can handle conflict as well as she needs to.

I typically work with my clients in four half-day sessions, about four to six weeks apart, although the specific arrangements are always individualized. Holding longer sessions allows us time to practice a range of situations in depth when we meet. The spacing in between provides sufficient time for clients to experiment with the new skills and behaviors. I am also available by phone and e-mail at any time clients would like to talk.

Bonita also indicates an interest in exploring work-life balance. I often find that people view work-life balance in terms of the hours available to do the things that are important, and there are never enough available hours to satisfy them. So I focus the coaching on helping them clarify their goals and values to get at what matters most to them. I'd ask Bonita, "What would you hope to accomplish if you had more time? With what aspects of work and family are you not satisfied, and what would you like to change?" Our work on clear goals would continue with prioritizing which goals are most important. Then we would shift to conscious choice, with questions like, "When you have time at home (and at work), what are the highest priorities you want to focus on?" "What do you want to do with the time that you have at home (and at work)?" Being conscious about what she does will help her use the available time on the highest priorities. Finally, effective action means that we might talk about how efficient she is at handling certain tasks (e.g., e-mail, voice-mail, meetings) and search for useful time management techniques. I imagine we would get into conflict management in this area as well, working on how to set clear boundaries with people at work, including negotiating expectations and agreements on what she takes on. We would discuss the advantages and disadvantages of her inclusive, collaborative style and search for ways to balance multiple goals: How can she be participative and efficient at the same time? How can she treat people with respect and still meet her own needs?

As we proceed with our coaching, we might also discover additional topics to work on. In addition, when I work with people who are new in their role, I help them explore five different topics, which might also lead to other areas for us to address.

1. *Business agenda.* What are the business priorities you need to accomplish to be successful?
2. *Leadership agenda.* Who do you want to be as a leader, and how will your actions reflect that?
3. *Relationship agenda.* How will you establish and manage positive working relationships with important stakeholders?
4. *Personal agenda.* How will you manage your time and your priorities in the face of multiple demands and expectations?
5. *Learning agenda.* How will you learn from your experience and build new and better capabilities?

Clearly, we are already addressing some of these topics, although each of the agendas has a more detailed set of questions that we would explore. For example, on the relationship agenda I might ask Bonita to list the key stakeholders, what her relationship is like with each one, their major motivators (i.e., Goals and Values), and her best sense of what they want from her (i.e., Success Factors).

Finally, I would want to make sure Bonita is enlisting the help of others at work. We would talk about whom she can go to for feedback and advice, and we might even practice how she could ask people for constructive feedback to make sure that she gets thoughtful and honest input.

So far I have not mentioned my communication with the organization. Organizational desire for input and knowledge of the coaching relationship ranges from situations where the person is the sole owner of the coaching to situations where the organization expects to know everything that transpires. My position is that, first and foremost, the expectations need to be clear and agreed to by all parties. Second, even if the program is confidential to Bonita, I will encourage her to keep open communication channels to her sponsors, telling them what we're working on, what she's learned, and what feedback and support she would like from them. My role as coach is temporary, and it is important to leave Bonita with the skills and relationships in place for ongoing development.

If Bonita is like most of my clients, at some point I will ask for the hundredth time, "What else would you like to work on?" and she will say, "Actually, things are going pretty well right now." If she has been implementing her action steps, reflecting on what she's tried, getting feedback from others, and then cycling through the process again and again (Peterson & Hicks, 1995), she will likely have made the progress she was seeking and it is the appropriate time to explore bringing a close to the coaching relationship.

Coaching Bob

Bob and I would begin with the same set of questions I ask all clients (see page 69). He would talk about wanting to leave the business running perfectly and I would ask him what he needed to do to achieve that. After we explored his views in detail, I would ask him what it would take from other people's perspective to achieve that (i.e., Success Factors). I can imagine him dismissing the views of at least some of the possible stakeholders. I do not see it as my job, as his coach, to convince him that he needs to change his leadership style based on feedback from others. However, I see it as my job to make sure he has all the necessary information, based on what is important to him (e.g., legacy, reputation), to decide if he wants to make some additional changes. So I would strongly urge him to work with me on exploring GAPS information.

Our coaching would probably proceed down two paths. One path is exactly what Bob is asking for. Using the method of clear goals, conscious choice, and effective action, we would practice how he negotiates deals, handles challenging leadership situations, and works more strategically. The most likely Development Pipeline for Bob in these areas is high Insight, Motivation, and Real-World Practice, moderate Accountability, and moderately low Capabilities. So the best approach is just to help him acquire the necessary skills.

The second path is to explore other potential development needs. For this second set of issues, Bob's pipeline is actually quite different compared to the first set. Feedback from others indicates that in areas such as credibility, relationship-building, coaching and mentoring, his Development Pipeline shows significant constraints on Insight, Motivation, and Accountability. To zero in on the Insight and Motivation conditions, I would strongly encourage Bob to do a systematic GAPS Grid analysis. Given that several of his Goals and Values hinge on others,

not the least being his desire to leave things running perfectly, it seems imperative that he have all the information to understand what that means to others as well as what that means to him.

One possible outcome is that he simply refuses to solicit input from others. However, I suspect that several of his own motivations could be used to persuade him of the necessity of doing so. Table 2.2 presents a hypothetical GAPS analysis for Bob. Knowing what he values, I would simply ask him, "If status, reputation,

Table 2.2
Hypothetical GAPS Grid for Bob

	WHERE BOB IS	WHAT MATTERS
Bob's View	Abilities	Goals and Values
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven, persistent • Smart, logical • Dynamic leader • Self-made leader • Business savvy • Knows the business • Visionary, intuitive • Talented • Warm, friendly, sociable • Charming, engaging, entertaining • Persuasive • Not touchy-feely • Needs to get better at strategic thinking, managing mergers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement, success, winning at all costs • Status, prestige, visibility, getting positive attention from others, especially those who are successful • Power • Independence, autonomy • Results • Efficiency • Image, reputation • Legacy • Fun, adventure • Family (primarily as a symbol of success and happiness) • Contributing to others
Views from Other Perspectives	Perceptions	Success Factors
e.g., colleagues, coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart • Confident • Powerful • Articulate • Charismatic, entertaining • Cares only about results, not genuinely interested in others • Autocratic • Impatient • Critical of others, not very trusting • Superficial • Volatile, emotional under pressure • Low credibility, inconsistent follow-through • Manipulative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic • Visionary • Leadership • Industry knowledge • Business and financial savvy • Engaging and inspiring others • Listening • Building a team • Building relationships • Coaching and developing other leaders • Trustworthy, credible • Customer-focused • Aligning the organization

and legacy are so important to you, don't you think it's worth finding out how people see you? You don't even have to do anything about it, but wouldn't you at least want to know?" Another type of question to hook his interest would be "Given that you want to leave a perfectly running organization behind you, you'll need a strong team of people in place. How will you make sure that you have the right people with the right intentions, so that you can hand it over with confidence?" Both of these types of questions lead to an exploration of what is important to other people and how they see Bob (i.e., Success Factors and Perceptions). Other points based on simple logic also help build the case. For example, I might ask Bob to describe the ideal candidate to take over the CEO role when he leaves. There is a good chance he would describe someone with capabilities and style similar to his own. So I would then ask how he would feel if he had to work for someone like himself. How will Bob convince someone else, as talented and motivated as he is, to work for him for 10 more years? Bob might see the need to treat at least some of his more talented leaders differently.

There is a good chance that the result of a coach-facilitated GAPS exploration for Bob is that he would begin to see other areas he needs to change, simply to ensure that his own goals are met. For example, if people do not trust him, they will be less likely to follow his visionary ideas. If people think he is superficial and insensitive, they will say things that tarnish his reputation and personal legacy. If people think a perfectly running organization requires a leader who coaches and develops others, builds strong teams, and motivates and inspires the organization—even if Bob doesn't believe such things—no one else will be impressed with the organization that Bob leaves behind. Showing him that his own personal success hinges on other people's expectations and perceptions is the method for increasing his Insight and Motivation. That information can then be gathered directly by Bob holding conversations with a variety of people (of course, only after we've practiced skills for listening, building trust, expressing interest in others, etc.). I might also interview people about Bob's leadership strengths and weaknesses as a way to help Bob get a better perspective of how others view him. Bob might not fully understand how intimidating it can be for certain employees to talk openly with an authoritative CEO. Once the Insight and Motivation are there, Bob and I would discuss what other behaviors he might want to change, if any. Bob, like anyone else, will be motivated to change only when he sees how it is in his own self-interest. For someone like Bob, other people's perceptions may not have much value in themselves, but if he sees how other people's perceptions of him impede him getting what he wants, he will probably decide to try another approach.

CONCLUSION

To expand on the comment that opened this chapter, the purpose of coaching is to help other people learn how to change their own behavior in order to more effectively accomplish what matters to them and to others. There are many coaching methods and philosophies that can

help people accomplish that. However, an approach focused on people's actual behaviors ("What are you going to do differently?") is the most direct and efficient way to get there.

A behavior-based approach can be just as warm, nurturing, and supportive as any other method, even though stereotypes of the cold, detached style of old-school behaviorism persist. The behavioral approach presented here demonstrates a deep desire to help people find ways to get more meaning and a greater sense of fulfillment out of their work and their lives. It starts with finding clarity around what really matters to people, and then helps them get there. Because of the emphasis on learning how to learn, this approach can have an impact that persists long after the coaching is finished.

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