

I Want a Coach

I Want a Coach

Why Coaching is Critical
in the Modern World

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Publisher's Note

This title is also available in Dutch (*Ik wil een coach*, 2012) and French (*Moi aussi, je veux un coach*, 2013).

Authors' Note

Throughout the book, we have tried to take both genders into account with regard to the personal and possessive pronouns. However, where this impeded the flow of the text, we have simply used "he/his".

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INTRODUCTION

What is our image of coaching these days? What are our perceptions and misperceptions?

Professional coaching is not what we frequently see on TV, where people are often shamed into admitting that they are spending too much money or that they are useless in the kitchen. Famous chefs, sports coaches often present a glamorous but sensationalist picture of what it means to coach or be coached—and this has nothing to do with coaching in companies these days.

This is a far cry from the realities of business coaching. The clichés taint our perception and make us too embarrassed to ask for an executive coach. If we don't know what coaching is and the impact it can have on our performance, it will always be difficult to ask for a coach.

What do we, as managers, team leaders or executives, expect of a coach? How do we perceive the benefits of coaching? Often we don't have a clear picture of the coaching profession and hesitate to use coaches to our benefit as both individuals and as a company.

A coach can play an important role in managing the often peculiar relationships between individuals and their companies. Unfortunately, there are many misunderstandings about the importance of coaching in this area.

By providing a definition of coaching we hope to show the way and present a more accurate image of the profession of executive coaching today.

What is the difference between companies today and those of 15 years ago? Is coaching used simply to develop our competencies or does it go further? And if so, how much further? Is coaching just for “fuzzy” managers or is it a real business tool that enables companies to implement sustainable and authentic work processes? Are there any real benefits to being coached? Is it a waste of time? Will I lose face if I hire a coach? What exactly is coaching? Can I openly admit to having a coach? How can it be considered an honour to have a coach? Is coaching an essential investment in the leadership of today?

This book provides inspiration and answers to all of the above questions. Our goal is to dispel the myths around professional coaching and illustrate that it is not so mysterious after all.

CARINE VAEREMANS

– MARKETING DIRECTOR FRIESLANDCAMPINA BELGIE

In today's age, where one (r)evolution chases the other, it is easy to feel disconnected, out of control and as if you have lost your bearings.

Those who would like to take charge of their lives again and determine their own destiny can discover the benefits of coaching in this book. Marleen Boen and Leen Lambrechts cut through all prejudices related to coaching, providing an easily recognizable and no-nonsense outline of the potential that coaching offers for lifelong development both as human beings and as managers. The authors show how coaching can be a tool for continuous and authentic growth ... A coach's powerful questions provide an open invitation for personal reflection, growing awareness, trust, inspiration and renewal.

Opting for coaching means choosing quality of life (and work) and expanding your horizons. You are choosing to become the master of your life. You are choosing to follow a compass that aligns with your life's mission.

Coaching leads to better results and to more personal satisfaction.

FOREWORD

FREDDY KERCKHOFS

– SALES MANAGER STIHL BENELUX

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The quality standards for our appliances are higher than ever, especially as Chinese-made products flood the markets. Yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to find personnel with good technical and commercial skills. The core issues for our sales teams are opening up new perspectives and finding creative ways of looking at our clients.

Letting your own potential emerge, rather than keeping it bottled up, and asking questions that take you out of your comfort zone are key ways to achieve this goal. *Am I prepared to explore the unknown and to take risks with my management style? Am I working on developing my helicopter view and on getting rid of my limiting beliefs? Who is helping me in this process and who makes the necessary adjustments? I often do this without any help or support from anyone.*

It is important to know which management style is needed for each generation to be properly supported. *Am I fit enough to meet that challenge? Can I provide the necessary support and guidance?*

From the very first chapter of this book, Marleen Boen and Leen Lambrechts demonstrate that a coach can add tremendous value, and boost self-confidence, without inducing fear.

Consciously making decisions that satisfy all stakeholders while garnering their support and accepting management's freedom to make decisions is no small endeavour.

Being successful is hard work. I am 51 years old and I believe that I often remain on autopilot without venturing off the well-travelled path, but after reading *I want a Coach* I am ready to look for a real coach who reflects my thoughts and actions. I do not want to merely seek advice and approval.

FOREWORD

HANS VAN DER PERRE

– GENERAL MANAGER ATLANTIC BELGIUM

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The heating and cooling business is going through massive changes. Clean energy solutions demand new competencies of our employees, such as mastering new technologies, as well as discovering and exploring new client markets. We also need to venture off the beaten track and to think beyond common solutions on how our products can be used. Managers in such a demanding field are more grateful to gain clarity. Human capital is more precious and scarcer than ever. It costs a fortune to bring people up to the required skill levels, and without proper attention and motivation we run the risk that our competitors will reap the fruits of our efforts. Looking at the different generations that are sharing the work floor has made me think increasingly about the complexity of this issue. I am ready to take this into account.

Every manager in this company is under tremendous performance pressure, which, in addition, varies with the seasons. Managers in such a work environment are particularly grateful to be granted time to talk to an external coach who listens and encourages them to examine their realities and allows them to be entirely themselves. A coaching programme gives you the chance to rejuvenate your mental energies by looking at your daily concerns through a different lens. Such moments help you to reflect anew on possibilities and opportunities and set a new system in motion. Having the opportunity to address concerns around time management, procrastination,

stress, delegation, etc., ensures that the challenges don't get out of hand and become insurmountable problems. This gives our managers the space to take definite decisions that you as the general manager can stand behind.

We can't change the realities of the day, but we can change the way we deal with it and each other.

You will experience the power of questioning first-hand, and you will learn to use and master this skill yourself. This book takes a close look at every type of resistance to being coached, and in doing so helps you better understand the possible benefits of coaching.

Coaching feels good and adds to your quality of life *and* your professional credibility.

MIEKE JACOBS

– EUROPEAN PROGRAMME MANAGER DUPONT PRODUCTION SYSTEM (DPS)

It is the last day of an unforgettable programme about centred leadership in the US and the coach concludes with the words: “With awareness comes the enormous power of choice.” Awareness of who you are, of your natural drives, your values and beliefs, the filters you subconsciously use to look at the world, etc., give you the chance to choose how you want to react, how you want to evolve, how you want to grow.

I have been looking for new insights and personal development for as long as I can remember. I viewed it from a purely theoretical perspective, like a life guard who gives instructions from the sidelines, but never puts a toe into the water. It was not until about eight years ago, when I was an executive, that I had the feeling of being stuck in my own fears with a tendency to control everything. As a result, I had reached an undesirable level of stress. Finally I took the step of hiring a coach, what a smart decision! After one conversation we had a whole range of my limiting beliefs on the table. Changing my old beliefs into more empowering ones released untold energy, energy that I could use to take the next step in my personal and professional growth. What this book has made me understand is that growth is a never-ending journey.

May I challenge you to regularly ask yourself the questions in chapter 3? May I ask you to look into the mirror or into the eyes of a coach (often the same effect) and reveal your vulnerabilities?

Effective and authentic people and organisations are change leaders. But engaging in effective and authentic relationships, I believe, begins by creating a deep awareness of the self.

JOYCE PAFORT

– CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR RANDSTAD

When talking about employee development in companies we often think of all types of training. That can certainly be the answer for specific learning objectives: for acquiring special knowledge, for instance, or for learning new skills. However, the key to a deeper development of an individual lies in a more personalised approach, especially when it comes to functioning in a more complex environment or for people in leadership positions. That's when we talk about *coaching*. You learn to look at your environment and people's behaviour from a different perspective, which leads to greater awareness and the understanding that you have the choice to see and do things in more than just one way.

As an HR manager and coach, I believe that individual coaching can make an important difference for all employees and thus for the entire organisation. This is true in particular for all those who are in the middle of their careers. *Who am I? What am I capable of?* and *What do I want?* seem to be the questions that come up even more frequently at that stage of our lives, and they defy easy answers. Randstad, as an HR service provider, aims also internally for sustainable employability. Lifelong learning is considered the key to a successful career, both within a company and outside of it.

Now that I have completed the certified coaching training, I have come to better understand the power of individual coaching. This

book removes all preconceived notions about coaching. It is a must-read for anyone who is searching for a way to gain greater awareness about their work—especially in today’s challenging context, in which many companies are looking for their added value and how they can make that difference.

FOREWORD

SONIA VERMEIRE

– MANAGING DIRECTOR PUBLICARTO

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As an advertising agency, we have a challenging role to play in a tremendously altered media landscape that requires a completely different approach. Instead of simply translating the needs of an advertiser into the ideal media mix, we now have to master the art of reacting more creatively to consumer signals and, even, to create consumer needs. Such a mentality switch also requires a different management style.

It is no longer a question of, 'You ask, we deliver.' As an executive you have to ensure that your team remains intellectually challenged.

As I was reading *I Want a Coach* I got the feeling that, as a manager, you do not have to ride this change process alone. A professional coach can serve as a sounding board, without passing judgement.

This book, with its wealth of concrete questions and practical case studies, will inspire you to challenge yourself and to open yourself up for self-reflection.

I am convinced of the value of coaching and am following a coaching programme called 'People Focused Management' to find my own answers and to improve my performance and that of my team.

Els verhoyen

- Senior manager ing belgium

Managing seems simple. Managers communicate the vision of the company and make sure that their teams do their jobs in accordance with that vision.

However, to get people to 'do what they are supposed to do' is not so easy. Authoritarian leadership is no longer accepted. The times of giving commands, obediently following orders based on a dialogue model of "Why?" "Because I said so" are long gone. Today's leaders have a new task: to inspire. They must convince and rally support for a common vision. They have to ensure that people do their work with enthusiasm.

Coaching has helped me to truly implement this insight in my work.

I used to have the tendency to quickly and efficiently find my own solutions. After all, with all my years of experience I surely knew the answer to each problem that came up, right? Since then I have learned that going into 'asking mode', taking on a calm attitude and truly listening to the opinion of the people around us, especially our employees, not only ensures more buy-in, but also leads to better results.

My coach taught me to listen actively and empathically, to see situations through the eyes of my employees more often. Showing that you can see the world from their vantage point - their concerns and their perspectives—grows the kind of recognition and appreciation necessary for an open and positive work environment. Moreover, employees who you really listen to, can give you an enormous

amount of information and insights. This allows you as a manager to adjust expectations and assumptions, and to succeed.

I Want a Coach opens up a whole new world, based on humility and reflection. Quality managers are in fact able to show themselves to be vulnerable. They are critical, primarily towards themselves. A good manager knows to take a step back, to take the necessary distance, even with regard to the realisation of his own dreams, his own successes and failures. He has a good understanding of his own strengths and weaknesses, as well as his fears. This is a great feat, which not everybody is able to accomplish alone. Being accompanied by a coach in this process is therefore crucial.

Coaching is a fantastic gift; an essential tool for self-development and reflection. The acquired skills stay with you and can be used again and again. For that, this book is an outstanding guide.

1

**Why is there a need
for coaching?**

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR COACHING?

Internationalisation, globalisation, computerisation: the competitiveness of companies is suffering constant pressure. In order to survive, companies need to be proactive, make quick decisions and be as agile and flexible as possible. To maintain your position as company leader or manager in this context is not granted. Previously there was only one boss who was always right. Things have changed. The traditional company hierarchy makes way for decentralised matrix structures where leadership is scrutinised, and as a manager you are under constant fire.

In order to function properly in this context, more and more managers consult professional coaches. These coaches act as a sounding board, they offer different perspectives and contribute to making the decision process a pleasure instead of a burden.

Furthermore new company values and trends often give rise to fear and insecurity. Coaching in these circumstances – which are looked at further in this chapter – is often the facilitating factor for both company leaders and employees.

I. MANAGERS IN TODAY'S WORLD

1. FAREWELL TO THE BOSS

The days when 'the boss' was the only smart kid around are over—and the manager who thinks he needs to be able to do it all himself will find his image tarnished. It used to be: The boss knows it all, can do it all and finds solutions for everything; he makes decisions, his word is the law and the rest of the company must follow.

In the days of patriarchal family businesses and tightly run enterprises, this approach often worked well. Leadership was never questioned, certainly not as long as the results were satisfactory. In situations like this, a coach cannot offer much, if any, added value.

However, in today's business environment an authoritarian leadership style will not get you very far. Younger generations no longer buy into it. They have become outspoken, they have studied longer and they are far more independent thinkers. In today's enterprises, we therefore find much more room for other voices to be heard.

The model of the dictatorial patriarch works as long as employees have the sense that their leader takes care of them, that he provides security. The pitfall is that this type of leadership is heavily vested in a particular person. We often see that when the patriarch leaves or is replaced by other managers, the trust of the employees disappears with him—with dire consequences.

Small/medium-sized enterprises and multinationals have changed considerably. Who is in fact at the helm of these organisations? Managers, shareholders, steering committees are often unknown entities to their employees, and yet, they impose one truth and one vision on their workforce. The bad news is: not everyone agrees.

We are moving from a directive style towards a more visionary form of leadership. Managers are expected to support their people while ensuring that employees enjoy their work and remain committed to the company's vision.

Each employee speaks his own language and has his own reality and vision. The executive of today is flexible and able to understand and respect the perceptions and truths of his employees. At the same time, he manages to rally his employees behind a common company vision. In other words, for companies to be successful they need managers who are open to different ideas, managers who, by somehow integrating those ideas into a strong, all-embracing vision, manage to engage their employees, inspire them and motivate them from the core rather than imposing the law from the top down. This is no easy task, especially as the manager has to rely entirely on himself in finding and mapping out the way.

Entrepreneurship and ownership

With the gradual disappearance of authoritarian leadership styles we see a new trend in which employees are increasingly asked to display greater entrepreneurship and ownership within a company. Entrepreneurship stands for *taking initiative and starting new projects*. Giving ownership means asking *employees to handle their projects as if they were working for themselves and to make decisions as if for their own business*—with an eye towards optimising resources and time.

It is all very well for managers to expect entrepreneurship and ownership. However, are the managers equipped to deal with it? Will they be able to manage this process?

If a company is not ready to embrace these values with enthusiasm, employees may quickly turn their backs on the organisation.

Ilse, office manager, 28

I am launching a new structure, as is expected of me. Management thinks it's a great idea and is fully behind me, but when it comes to the implementation, I am getting resistance from all sides and everyone is suddenly pulling back. Do I really want to go through with these changes? Is it not management that needs to change?

Often companies feel the need for change and attract staff, young professionals who have the proper entrepreneurial and ownership skills to innovate, for this purpose—but the companies themselves can be inept in handling change. Their young and eager talents suffer burn-outs. If the companies they work for are not sufficiently ready to transform, these young employees get quickly disillusioned.

“I am going to hang in here for another couple of years, learn what I can, gain a bit more experience and then I will go into business for myself.” Comments like these are heard more and more often. What, then, are we doing as companies? We are losing our precious human resources at an increasingly younger age. First we invest in our people and then we chase them away. It seems that our young talents are not getting the leadership they need.

How are you as a manager going to embrace and promote the initiatives of your employees? And how are you going to guide them without losing their enthusiasm? Your task as a manager is to stimulate good ideas while ensuring that your employees stay on board.

This is where coaching comes in. Using a coaching attitude in dealing with your employees presumes that you honour their values. You guide them by asking questions and not by imposing your truths on them, you remain open to their opinions and give them feedback in a respectful and honest fashion. If you are successful in this approach, your employees will feel appreciated and inspired to take the initiative—and you reduce the risk of losing them. In other words, training managers how to deal with the entrepreneurial spirit of their employees in a coaching manner can only pay off.

There is something else: allowing your employees to launch and implement a marvellous idea takes a great leap of faith. For many managers, to rally behind an employee's initiative simply goes a step too far, and suddenly all kinds of barriers rear their ugly head: fear of losing face, endangering your position, jealousy ... These feelings are only too human, but they stand in the way of the evolution of your company, the growth of your employees and your personal development.

Respect for the truths of your employees

Transforming limiting fears into an empowering and stimulating mindset can be achieved through coaching. The inherent personal and trust-inspiring approach of coaching makes it safe for you to expose your weaknesses and discuss your concerns, both as a person and as a manager. It is the only way to let go of your fears, improve your coaching skills and fulfil your own growth and development goals.

A coach accompanies the manager in the search of his own added value. How can he approach employees to get results? How can he motivate people based on their needs to achieve the desired performance?

Coaching means *broadening perception*. A coach helps executives to look at things through the eyes of their employees and other stakeholders rather than solely through their own lens. With this type of support, teams can work along the same lines, for if you have seven employees you will find seven different ways of looking at the same problem.

As an executive you can no longer expect your employees to accept your thoughts and ideas outright. You need to display a different mindset, one that permits you to ask your employees' opinions and then, of course, to take them seriously. This means you need to take a step back from your own beliefs.

Unlearning that you are the sole keeper of the truth can be a difficult process. A coach is the perfect sounding board in this process and the ideal facilitator when transitioning from traditional management to a new way of leading.

Footprints that speak volumes ...

While doing research for this book, I stumbled upon a cartoon that shows what type of leadership is needed today.

The cartoon perfectly sums up the evolution of leadership through the centuries and shows the way we are heading.

In the image, the animal footprint stands for the 'survival of the fittest', which was useful in the days when pure (animal)

survival was the priority. The footprint of the first human indicates the period when humans began to harness animals and the fruits of nature. The heavy-duty footprint refers to a command-and-control style that reigned during the evolution of the “enterprise” concept. The imprint of the heel of a woman’s shoe refers to what recent management literature terms the “emotionally intelligent leader”, which women are supposedly more inclined to be. Whether this is true or not, those (men or women) who want to be successful today, to be authentic leaders, must understand that the way to success includes as many EQ as IQ elements.

Georges Anthoon

previously HR Director at AXA, currently executive coach and mentor

Managers must change their footprints

The Evolution of Authority



2. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE ARE NO LONGER ENOUGH

It is not enough to be the smartest kid on the block. In other words, it is no longer sufficient to know our business inside out or to have great expertise in our field. The days of depending on the expert manager are waning since employees today often know more than their executives.

With the internet and social media gradually evolving as a source of primary knowledge, employees are sometimes more up to date on the latest developments than their bosses. Consequently, managers are increasingly valued less for their knowledge and need to become a different kind of leader. This has led to a trend toward more authentic leadership. We are in search of new parameters; i.e. new ways to earn respect. Dealing better with “not knowing” or “not having to know everything” comes up frequently in coaching.

Managers are more often expected to make decisions in areas with which they are not familiar. A CEO who has to make an important IT decision will put his company's fate into the hands of the CIO. Yet, due to rapid developments in the ICT sector, a decision made today could prove costly tomorrow. If, for example, in 2010 you decided to buy a server that was due to come out in March 2011 for your small/medium-sized business, your decision might have turned out to be too costly, complex and obsolete as the far cheaper and more accessible cloud computing had by that time eclipsed old technology and made owning your own server redundant.

Top managers must therefore be able to make decisions based on the insights of experts. But those insights also need to be linked to the real needs of the company and its core business. A visionary manager needs clarity of thinking and the ability to see the big picture. Merely *knowing your business* is no longer enough to be a leader. Even small/medium-sized businesses are facing this reality.

Life has become more complex than ever. Today it is no longer possible to check up on all the facts yourself, you will want to trust your employees and dare to make decisions without having all the details.

3. HELICOPTER VIEW

As we can see from the above, today's manager needs a helicopter view. As a visionary manager you are successful if you have the ability to keep an eye on the big picture and not get lost in all the nitty-gritty details of your business. This requires keen observation of yourself, of your market and of your employees.

In addition to being a good observer, managers need to be creative in conveying their findings with enthusiasm. Managers are expected to have the ability to express their conclusions in an inspiring and personal fashion to ensure that everyone feels involved and valued.

Managers who continue to micromanage will drown due to a high workload and will be unable to take inspired decisions. To make decisions that allow a company and its people to grow, you need to be able to stand up for your positions with conviction, while trusting that everyone is doing his job to the best of their ability and that all the necessary details are taken care of.

Trust cannot be learned in a training course. Trust presumes good self-knowledge, knowledge of others and the ability to make sound judgements.

And yet many of us are afraid to work from a place of trust (as opposed to a place of control and distrust). These fears are often based on our experiences because we have all witnessed abuses of trust every now and then. We often use that as an excuse to work from a

base of distrust. That is how we become control freaks, forgetting about the countless times when giving trust served us well. But what does being in control bring us? How do you deal with the extra workload if you want to be in charge of everything?

4. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Employees often have high expectations of their managers. When things don't go well, the manager gets the blame. As a manager you are *it* and you are considered to be a role model. People are harsh with each other, and certainly with their managers. After all, managers earn higher salaries.

And so it can get very lonely at the top. Managers therefore need self-confidence, solid decision-making skills and a healthy dose of self-esteem, none of which can be taken for granted. That is why good advice, a sounding board, a person whom you can trust and with whom you can share your doubts, is priceless.