

*Bringing the principles of coaching from
the playing field, theatre and stage into organizations.*

Coaching for Effectiveness: A New Leadership Paradigm

By Leo M. Tonkin

It's the last quarter and your team is behind. They just aren't producing according to the game plan. You look over the strategy to determine what your next move is going to be. The pressure is really on to win. If you can pull this one off, you and your team will be way ahead for next season. You call a time out to discuss your next plan of action with the team. It's up to you to empower them to be victorious. The team is on edge for your inspirational words. You stand up and....

This situation could resemble almost any sporting event; football, basketball, hockey, volleyball, wrestling, etc. Yet, to a few professionals, this scenario is played day after day in corporate America. Organizations are beginning to realize that to remain competitive and successful in the next century, the traditional role of managers and leaders will need to shift.

Traditional leadership roles need to be re-examined

Current managers are insufficient in empowering their employees to produce results in the highly competitive, global marketplace. It's no wonder that many Fortune 100 companies are experiencing tremendous pressures and are being forced to down-size their operations, particularly with management, in order to survive.

In today's climate of increasing complexity and change, technological breakthroughs have significantly altered the direction and growth of many fields of human endeavor.

Breakthroughs in physics, computer science, medicine, aerospace and virtually every other scientific discipline have allowed for powerful new ways of thinking. But, in this age of amazing technological advancement, little is known about the actual process or practices that cause breakthroughs. Nowhere is this lack of technology more evident than in the field of management.

In every field of human activity where performance and results count, coaching plays a critical role. In sports and the performing arts, people have coaches to inspire them beyond their limits by bringing out the best in them. This is also true in personal and professional endeavors. By applying the principles of coaching to management, extraordinary results in effectiveness, productivity and creativity can be accomplished.

Mr. Leo Tonkin is a trainer, program developer and a principal of Distinctions, Inc., a nationally-known business coaching and marketing firm. Mr. Tonkin has more than ten years experience working with organizations to develop and implement programs that focus on increasing organizational effectiveness and individual performance. He has personally worked with thousands of individuals from a diverse range of companies such as American Express, IBM, Apple Computers, General Motors, Merrill Lynch, Henry Ford Hospital, Mass Mutual Insurance, Century 21, U.A.W. and many others. He is the author of several programs covering time-management, sales, customer service, strategic planning, creativity, and teambuilding. Mr. Tonkin is also certified to lead "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" program by Dr. Stephen Covey and the "Raving Fans" program by Ken Blanchard. .

Organizations are finally questioning the notion that traditional command-and-control styles of management and leadership are the only way to succeed. Management experts have referred to the use of authoritative, power and control style of management as Transactional Leadership. In this form of management, managers interact with subordinates and provide incentives for good performance and consequences for poor performance.

The prevailing culture of management has been organized to give instructions, delegate, manipulate, convince or tell how to do something. The basic premise of management is an "us or them" mentality. In fact, included in almost every definition of the word manage is a reference to making and keeping one submissive. Even the word used to describe the one being managed, subordinate, is defined as "being placed in or occupying a lower class or rank; submissive to or controlled by authority." When managers in a training session were asked to describe their roles, they wrote down terms such as director, policeman, baby sitter, firefighter and task master. When asked to define their roles based on an empowerment model they included words like coach, trainer, educator, sounding board and intermediary.

The traditional view of management, which is seen as planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling, was first introduced by the French industrialist Henri Fayol in 1916 (Mintzberg 163). The industrial era hints to the reason why management was based on authority, power and control. The focus for most companies during the Industrial Revolution was on product, raw materials and machinery. People worked on assembly lines. They needed to be told what to do, and then heavily supervised. Only technical training was provided, if any. Human interaction was at a bare minimum, therefore, there was little or no need for developing interpersonal skills. If someone was not producing or performing up to standards, management simply got rid of him and brought in someone new. Unfortunately, this manner of management has persisted through the decades. People have remained on the bottom of the list by managers when asked what resources they manage. Machines, money, raw materials, facilities, and the finished product usually takes precedence over the employees (Fournies 20).

As industry evolved into what is now referred to as the information and technological era, more and more companies are realizing that their most valuable assets are their people. The transactional style of management and leadership is now insufficient and inappropriate to accomplish organizational objectives. A new way of managing and leading is beginning to emerge called Transformational Leadership. It is based on having people transform their own interests into aligning with the goals and missions of the team and overall organization.

Command and control versus Cooperate and synergize

Authority, power and control from this perspective of management have been replaced with cooperation, participation and empowerment. The personalities of managers in this role have characteristics such as charisma, interpersonal skills, and relationship building. In the traditional view, managers are centered on doing things, a human doer. However, this new approach is based on how a manager relates, a human being.

This transformational style of management is usually inherent in the basic principles found in the discipline of coaching. Whether in

sports, on stage, or in the arts, coaching plays a significant role in the growth and development of people. "It [coaching] is the epitome of a 'people' profession.", states Ralph J. Sabock in the preface of his book, Coaching: A Realistic Perspective (Sabock xiii). Even though this book was written to prepare an individual to enter the interscholastic coaching profession, the principles discussed throughout the book are relevant to today's corporate environments. The desirable qualities of an athletic coach include the ability to organize, motivate, discipline, recognize talent, foster pride, inspire enthusiasm, and have a desire to win. The roles a coach often assumes is that of a teacher, salesperson, guidance counselor, diplomat, detective, actor, dictator, disciplinarian, psychologist, trainer, and community leader.

There are numerous, valuable lessons from sports that can benefit the business world. Observe any company for a short time and soon references to teamwork, competition, and performance will be heard. Many of today's maxims are even sports related; "He threw us a curve ball", "Let's play hard ball", "Jump the next hurdle", "We struck out on that one." But this is just scratching the surface. Coaching can dramatically impact an organization and empower people to enhance their performance and effectiveness.

Coaching brings out the best in people

Everyone should be coached. No matter one's skills, knowledge, talent, or energy level, unless a person's resources are being coached effectively, he cannot possibly bring about anything close to optimal performance. The challenge for organizations is to understand how to bring out the wealth of talent each employee possesses, and work together as a team in accomplishing key objectives.

To explain how coaching works, the principles of why coaching works must first be understood. We all develop our own perspectives and unwritten rules about the way we do things and so do our organizations. The new buzzword describing these rules is paradigms. Specifically, paradigms are the rules we take for granted, our most basic assumptions about how we live and work. Paradigms often tell us how to be successful. But paradigms can also have a limiting effect. Our paradigms may be so deeply rooted, so unquestioned, that they become barriers to our ability to learn, improve and change. The traditional way of doing something may seem like the only way. This can leave us blinded to new ideas, opportunities and solutions.

Coaching enables people and organizations to discover their underlying paradigms, the way things are done, which may be ineffective, counterproductive and costly. Identifying personal and organizational paradigms and understanding them are the crucial steps towards breaking through barriers that unlock the resistance to change. Coaching is not a quick fix method of empowering people. To make essential changes, people and organizations must alter their perceptions, their paradigms, as a basic process. Coaching focuses on the deep cause of effectiveness, not the surface techniques that bring only temporary improvement or motivational highs.

As one example, most managers believe, without question, that motivated people perform better. Motivating other people's behavior has become an unchallenged and unexamined aspect of what management is all about. What is concealed by this traditional view is how often it leaves those who are motivated feeling manipulated and convinced rather than truly inspired. It also places the job of motivating

on the manager as well as extrinsic stimuli. This is very distinct from developing one's own self-motivation (Warren 22, 28 and Sabock 77).

Coaching happens when the coach frees the self-imposed constraints and limits of the player.

The coach challenges the player to see in new ways that provide real insights and discoveries that allow for extraordinary achievement. A coach interacts with a player so that he sees the field differently and takes the appropriate actions. The role of a movie director could be considered that of a coach. The director's job is to empower the actor to perceive his or her role in a different way and then act from that new view. The conductor enables the members of the orchestra to interpret music in new ways that create whole new symphonies. Likewise, a manager's role is to coach his or her team to take the next step to reach their goals.

The difficulty in coaching is that it is not oriented around telling one how to do something. The quick, easy answers usually do not produce the results. Teaching a child to ride a bicycle is a perfect example that best illustrates this point. Regardless of how many times a child is told what to do, the child first falls. Giving instructions and telling what to do does not produce the desired outcome. The best tips and techniques fail to provide the child with what it will take to ride the bicycle. Even the latest audio-cassette and video program on how to ride a bicycle will be ineffective in enabling a child to ride. It's not until the child discovers the distinction balance that he or she can ride. And once one learns balance, or any distinction, it becomes second nature. It's not a function of how or what to do. There are no formulas or tips to remember. If someone hasn't been on a bicycle for years, he's more than likely to get on the seat and just ride because balance has become a part of him.

This is the major difference between management and coaching. Typically, a manager will give instructions, tell what to do, hand out delegations without explanation, and answer questions. The coach on the other hand inquires, specifies, and asks questions. A coach is more interested in having people become more self-reliant and self-managing then relying on others for the quick and easy answers.

Companies representing the full spectrum of industries are discovering that to succeed, their organizations have to become more effective in the training and development of their people. A coach's job is to unify and align a group of people in order to accomplish something. The shift from managing things to managing people has required companies to reshape and re-prioritize their organizational design, focus and objectives.

Bill Walsh, a former San Francisco 49ers and current Stanford University football coach, is recognized as one of football's greatest figures. He has accomplished what no other coach has done by winning three Super Bowl championships in eight years. His unique style and system of team management has earned himself a place among the legends of the sport. Walsh produces winners through a businesslike approach, much different than the traditional, disciplinarian view of coaching of his predecessors Knute Rockne and Vince Lombardi. In a recent [Harvard Business Review](#) interview Walsh states that: "Those teams that have been most successful are the ones that have demonstrated the greatest commitment to their people. They are the ones that have created the greatest sense of belonging. And they are the ones that have done the most in-house to develop their people. That commitment

has come through in the personality of the organizations. It is true of the [Washington] Redskins, the [Oakland] Raiders, and of course the 49ers."

To create this kind of an organization is not an easy task. For decades, managers have invested their time and energy working up the corporate ladder to a position of power and prestige. To those who see the corporate world as a game of survival of the fittest, where the fittest is always the strongest, toughest, most self-concerned and powerful, learning that the ladder they're climbing is too short to make it over the wall may not be welcomed news. The switch from manager to coach will probably be one of the most difficult tasks an organization will confront in this decade.

To transform one's self-interests into the goals, commitment and vision of the organization will require a "paradigm shift." In almost every endeavor where a significant breakthrough occurred, a break with tradition happened first. Unsolvable problems and situations within a particular paradigm usually provide the catalyst for triggering a shift in the paradigm itself (Barker 52).

When a paradigm shifts, everything that was considered to be "true" before is then perceived and interpreted differently. History demonstrates several key paradigm shifts. Most of the civilized world considered the world to be flat up until the latter part of the fifteenth century. But Columbus created a paradigm shift, which then caused new trade routes to open and commerce to grow. Likewise, the earth was considered the center of the universe, but Copernicus placed the sun at the center and caused a shift in thinking. On a personal level, many people experience a shift in their thinking when faced with a life threatening crisis or when they suddenly encounter a new, unfamiliar role such as becoming a spouse, parent, or upon getting a new position in a company. When a shift occurs, our behaviors, attitudes and actions are correlated with our new perceptions. Rather than focus on the long, hard and repetitive task of developing positive mental attitudes and altering behaviors, one just needs to shift the paradigm and allow the rest to follow (Covey 31).

By applying this phenomenon to organizations, extra-ordinary training and development can take place. Most companies approach training and development initiatives with a trickle down approach. These companies often work on the systems, structures and strategies of the organization first and then manage the staff to adapt to them. They implement company-wide training to introduce new policies, procedures and methods, only to find that long term problems surface soon after. If organizations would shift their training paradigm and focus on people first and work from an inside-out approach, they would find that their corporate culture could change dramatically. This is especially significant when an organization commits to restructuring management philosophy towards the principles of coaching.

For coaching and transformational management to take root, however, organizations must commit to a long term process. A paradigm shift in an organization with a long traditional management history will probably not occur overnight. The process of changing corporate cultures, much like an individual learning a new skill or striving for improvement, happens in relatively brief spurts of progress. Smaller, individual paradigm shifts need to be achieved first, and then collectively with other individuals and teams, before the entire organization has altered.

The degree and depth of organizational change depends on the resistance it will face. Naturally, managers will first perceive any change as threatening to their job security and status. But as managers get past the initial shift and coaching becomes a part of who they are

and what they do, they usually report more job satisfaction than they had as traditional managers. Many managers will think that quality, productivity and profitability will suffer at the expense of such efforts. But they too come around once they see the bottom line results that are produced. Finally, there are those who won't be able to change because they can't break with their traditional ways. Eventually these managers will probably be phased out of leadership roles or leave the company altogether.

As crucial as it might be for organizations to have empowering managers, it is more important that they win the game and put points on the scoreboard. In business that usually means making a profit. An effective organization is doing both. Coach Bill Walsh said it best: "We have to remind ourselves that it's not just a single game that we are trying to win. It is a season and a series of seasons in which the team wins more games than it loses and each team member plays up to his potential. If you are continually developing your skills [and people] and refining your approach, then winning will be the final result."

When the established rules of the game fail to provide effective solutions to problems, a shift must take place.

By applying the principles and strategies of coaching to management, exceptional performance and results can be achieved. When coaching is present in organizations, managers become coaches, departments become teams, employees become valuable players, and satisfied customers become loyal fans. Maybe it's about time our society finally reaps the benefits of one of our favorite pastimes, watching television. Watching ESPN, HBO and the Arts & Entertainment channels may become a source for learning the basics of coaching. You may never know who on your staff will become the next Michael Jordan, Meryl Streep or Luciano Pavarotti. Whichever the case, it has become apparent that to succeed and score results, managers and their organizations need to pick up the ball and run with it. Let's just hope they run in the right direction.

References:

- Barker, Joel Arthur. Future Edge: Discovering The New Paradigms of Success. New York: William Morrow, 1992.
- Covey, Stephen R. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.
- Fournies, Ferdinand F. Coaching For Improved Work Performance. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Liberty Hall Press, 1987.
- Mintzberg, Henry. "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact." Harvard Business Review March-April 1990: 163-176.
- Rapaport, Richard. "To Build A Winning Team: An Interview with Head Coach Bill Walsh." Harvard Business Review Jan.-Feb. 1993: 110-120.
- Sabock, Ralph J. Coaching: A Realistic Perspective. 4th Ed. San Diego: Collegiate Press, 1991.
- Warren, William. Coaching and Motivation: A Practical Guide to Maximum Athletic Performance. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983.