

The future of leadership coaching

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This module is concerned with helping the leader to answer the question: 'What is it that the world of tomorrow needs that I can uniquely offer?'

The future: the emerging context for leadership coaching

The extraordinary success of Western market-driven economies in increasing material well-being is presenting us with a range of new opportunities and challenges. Many of these opportunities and challenges arise because we live in an increasingly interconnected world, where events and actions happening many thousands of miles away have a direct impact on our day-to-day lives. Here are some examples:

- Transnational corporations take a global view on investment and marketing.
- Popular movements (for example, anti-globalisation) can mobilise people internationally.
- Industrial and domestic pollution and emissions affect the global climate.
- We are increasingly aware of global human rights and social justice issues.
- Resources (food, materials and so on) are sourced internationally.
- Terrorism and crime have become global.

To live successfully in the increasingly complex and

unpredictable world that globalisation brings requires our thinking and perceptions to become correspondingly more flexible and sophisticated. More precisely, the complexity of our seeing and thinking must at least match the complexity of the organisations, markets and wider social systems we operate in. We need to be able to see interdependencies, to work cross-culturally, to enable people to work effectively together, to operate in fast-changing environments and to see systemically. This demands that we see and think globally – and that those who lead make the personal and professional journey to seeing and acting from this global perspective.

Living in systems

As humans we spend our lives in systems: in our families, our organisations, our communities, our ethnic groups, our work teams, our nations and our planet. And yet, as Oshry¹ has pointed out, we are largely blind to how the systems we live in impact on our lives. We suffer from spatial blindness, seeing the parts but not the whole; we suffer from temporal blindness, seeing the present but not the past that has brought us to this point in time; we suffer from relational blindness, seeing ourselves as autonomous entities rather than relational beings; and we suffer from process blindness, seeing the individuals within the system but not the system's processes.

As leaders, we have to overcome this blindness and learn to see clearly – and to help others to do so too.

Key learning points

- ◆ Global leaders are required.
- ◆ Leading globally requires a global worldview.
- ◆ There are predictable steps towards gaining a global worldview.
- ◆ Gaining a global worldview requires a shift in consciousness.
- ◆ Coaching can support leaders in developing a global worldview.



When (and if) managers develop beyond the Diplomat stage, they move into the Expert stage. Experts see other people's views as one factor affecting their own actions, rather than what determines their own actions. What becomes important is finding the one 'right' answer to the problem at hand. Whereas Diplomats identify with what makes them the same as others in the group, Experts are more interested in what unique skills they have that enable them to stand out from the group – but they still define themselves in terms of the group.

As managers become increasingly expert, their interest may begin to extend beyond their unique skills towards how to use these skills to achieve goals that will help the organisation to be successful. This is the realm of the Achiever. Achievers are interested in other people's views, in working effectively with them, and in achieving results. Their overall goals and ethical framework, like those of the Diplomat and Expert, are determined by the organisations to which they belong – that is, the authority that guides them is largely external.

For some Achievers, this starts to become frustrating and constraining, and they have a sense of moving beyond defining themselves by the conventions of society, their organisation and their family. Instead,

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The path to these more systemic, complex and global levels of leadership consists of a number of predictable and clearly identifiable stages (Figure 1). (Note that, whilst any one person may have a primary focus at one stage, they will also spend time focusing on other, particularly adjacent, stages. Also note that, when we move from one stage to the next, we don't leave the earlier stage behind but rather include it within the next stage.) The stages presented here, and the labels used to identify them, are based in particular on the work of Hall,² Fisher, Rooke & Torbert³ and Beck & Cowan.⁴

Effective leadership has always been based on self-awareness and self-knowledge. Whilst we begin to acquire this in the earlier stages of our lives (the greyed-out stages in Figure 1), we are limited during these 'conventional' stages as to what we can learn about ourselves. This is because we primarily define ourselves during these stages in terms of the

social norms and conventions of the systems (family, work, society) of which we are a part.

For a person at the Diplomat stage, it is others who define what is valuable, not oneself. The Diplomat will behave so as to fit in to work and social groups, meet others' standards, behave correctly, and maintain face and status. Diplomats can therefore be tactful, loyal and respectful, but may find it difficult to deal with conflict, give or receive criticism, or take unpopular decisions.

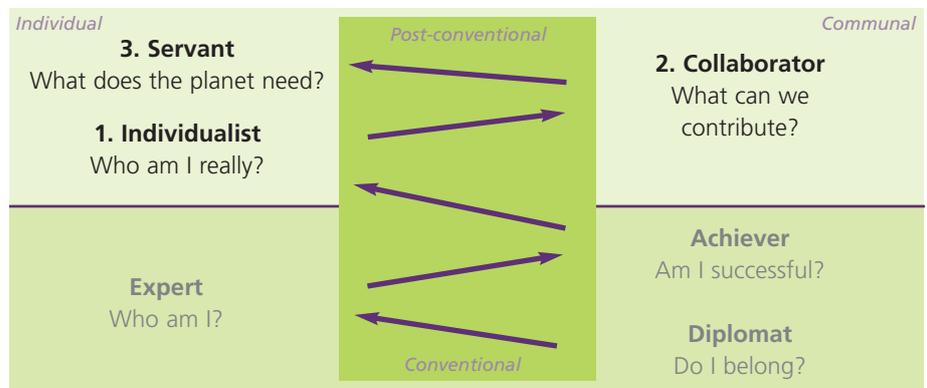


Fig. 1: The leadership path

as they begin to develop their own criteria for what constitutes success and fulfilment, they move into the Individualist phase.

First stage of post-conventional leadership – Individualist

The Individualist phase is the first stage of post-conventional leadership development. People at this stage are less interested in being a highly effective and productive component of the organisation, and more in discovering what particular contribution they may be able to make. This stage involves an exploration of who they are, what their special and unique gifts are, and also recognition of their limitations. The key personal transition they make is in moving the source of authority in their lives from being external to internal – it is this key shift which makes this the start of the leadership journey.

The Individualist focuses on the following:

- Answering the question ‘Who am I really?’
- Motivation. To self-actualise and express myself.
- Ethical choices. Relativistic: many views are possible on a given ethical issue – and all are equally important.
- Developing high-end interpersonal skills, including the ability to show and share emotion appropriately, identify my own and others’ feelings accurately, state anger objectively, affirm the worth of others, project my imagination into another’s world, cope with conflict, and remain calm in times of stress and anxiety.
- A democratic, facilitative, team-oriented, empathetic and people-focused style of leadership.

Second stage of post-conventional leadership – Collaborator

As the Individualist becomes clearer about who they are and what their unique qualities and skills are, they will tend to become somewhat bored with further personal exploration. Their interest will begin to turn towards what they can do with the new levels of self-knowledge they have gained. And so, just as the Expert turned their attention out into the world to find ways to use their skills and stepped into the Achiever phase, so the Individualist looks out into the world to find ways of using their gifts and uniqueness and steps into the Collaborator phase.

The Collaborator focuses on the following:

- Answering the question ‘What can we contribute together to make a difference?’
- Motivation. To find meaning.
- Ethical choices. Based on personal conscience and a set of values to which we are clearly committed and which we can articulate.
- Developing imaginal skills, including the ability to make our values conscious, make sense out of increasingly complex data and synthesise that into new patterns, envision new possibilities where none existed before, integrate our personalities, express our emotions productively and without fear.
- Being aware of our gifts and seeking to discover how to integrate them with the needs of our organisation and of society.

Third stage of post-conventional leadership – Servant

As the Collaborator’s imaginal skills develop and broaden, and become increasingly integrated with their interpersonal skills, a

consciousness shift takes place and a systems perspective emerges. They act to promote quality of life internationally by influencing positive change relative to equality, conflict resolution, creative technology, and ecology. They form mutually beneficial relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, community and wider society. Leaders at this level ensure that they balance the time they give to service with time set aside for intimacy and solitude. They are often involved with multiple organisations, both to maximise their effectiveness and to enrich their global perspective.

The Servant focuses on the following:

- Answering the question ‘What does the planet need?’
- Motivation. To be of service.
- Ethical choices. Informed by an awareness of the rights of all human beings.
- Developing systems skills, including the ability:
 - to see all the parts of the system as they relate to the whole;
 - to plan and design change in systems – institutions, societies and bodies of knowledge – to maximise the growth of the individual parts;
 - to differentiate between personal, interpersonal and system needs;
 - to set priorities creatively in the face of internal and external pressures;
 - to speak with clarity and be understood by people of differing educational levels, cultures and walks of life.
- Recognising their role, and their organisation’s role, in creating a sustainable future for humanity and the planet.

Percentage of leaders at each stage

Stage name	Percentage found
Servant	4%
Collaborator	8%
Individualist	14%
Achiever and before	74%

The table shows the percentage of a group of 1,121 UK and US managers, consultants and MBA students falling into each stage (Fisher, p. 43).⁵

The future of leadership coaching

Leadership coaching must support leaders at each of the three stages of leadership development and, when they are ready and so wish, help them make the journey from one stage to the next. In so doing, there are four territories or arenas which leaders must be able to master if they are to be successful:

Identity

Sense of self, mastery of their personality, personal resilience, managing personal regressions

Intent

Sense of purpose, vision, imagination, motivation, creativity

Action

Strategy, planning, performance, walking their talk

Attraction

Sustaining change, generating results, creating a legacy, sustainability

So, the first thing the coach must do is to support the leader in being effective across all areas of this leadership territory.

But, ultimately, the purpose of leadership coaching is to support the leader in sustaining and improving the organisations and

wider systems for which they are responsible. Figure 2 therefore shows the same four territories from the organisational perspective. This organisational perspective

provides an excellent framework for helping the leader take an integrated global approach to using their unique gifts, skills and qualities in the service of us all.

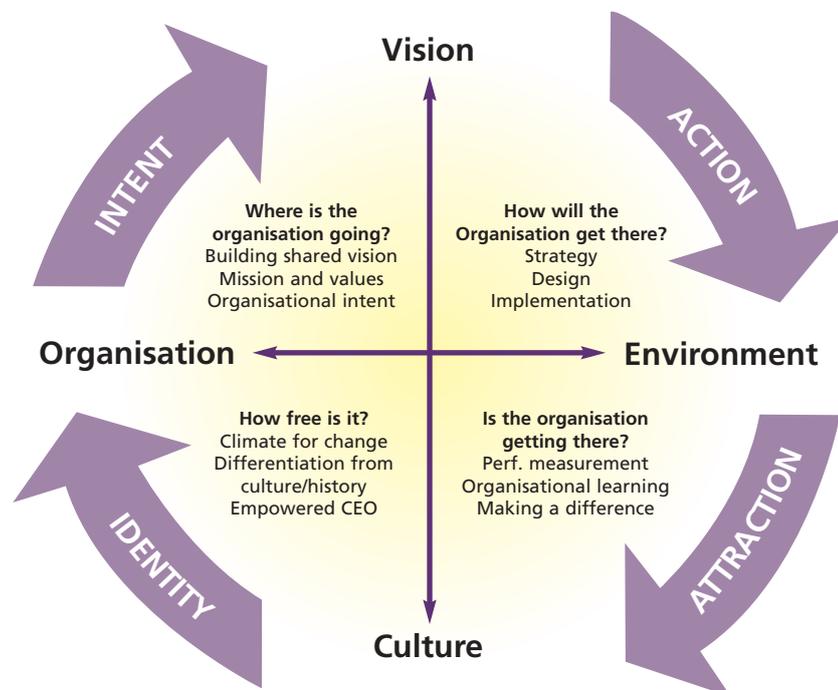


Fig. 2: The four territories of organisational change

References

- 1 Barry Oshry, *Seeing Systems*, Berrett Koehler, 1995.
- 2 Brian Hall, *Values Shift*, Twin Lights, 1994.
- 3 Dalmar Fisher, David Rooke and Bill Torbert, *Personal and Organisational Transformations through Action Enquiry*, Edge/Work Press, 2003.
- 4 Don Beck and Chris Cowan, *Spiral Dynamics*, Blackwell, 1996.
- 5 See note 3.

Further reading

- Bristol, Scott, *Life Journey Map*, www.ljmap.com, 2004.
 Nixon, Bruce, *Global Forces*, Management Books, 2000.
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 Whitmore, John, *Need, Greed or Freedom*, Element Books Limited, 1997.

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