



THE LEADER-AS-COACH MODEL

A NEW CULTURAL CONSTRUCT FOR TODAY'S WORKPLACE

Culture is a popular buzzword these days. It's easy to describe what a healthy culture should look like, but it's much more difficult to attain and maintain one. Culture is simply the way an organization does things in addition to what it encourages and tolerates. Culture encompasses leadership style, multigenerational inclusion, conflict resolution, ethics and morals, diversity orientation, strategic thinking, operational tactics, and so much more. When you get right down to it, though, it's an organization's style, its values, philosophy, and mission all wrapped up in one big corporate personality:

- Is your organization fun, creative, or innovative?
- Is it progressive, paternalistic, formal, or nurturing?
- Is it selfless, connected, compassionate, or judgmental?
- Is it easy to fit in or overly cliquish?
- Do staff members feel an emotional trust to management, knowing that the leadership team cares about them and their interests?



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The leader-as-coach model influences culture significantly. It focuses on values held by senior and midlevel management that heavily influence the work experiences of teams and individual contributors. And although you can't change the culture of your entire organization by yourself, you have the power to create your own subculture in your department or team that influences all members' experiences of working at your company and, more important, working for you.

The leader-as-coach model creates a culture of strategic clarity, clear goals and objectives, high expectations for success, and ongoing accountability. It's based on building a relationship of trust, tapping a person's potential, building commitment, and executing goals. Coaching bases itself on the assumption that everyone can grow and that everyone has the potential to become something better, regardless of the point of departure. It focuses purposely on building trust, challenging paradigms, providing effective feedback, and listening empathically. It challenges people to reframe their point of view, find their own solutions, and set their own goals and achievement markers.

The coaching model stems from the principle of selfless leadership, in which leaders put others' needs ahead of their own and expect them to respond in kind. It accepts the premise that no job is great enough for the human spirit and asks a humble question:

How many of you believe you possess far more talent, ambition, competence, skill, and passion than your current job permits you to express?

And understanding that a majority of workers will acknowledge the limitations placed on them at work by time,

resources, and—yes—their leaders’ personal shortcomings or lack of engagement, selfless leadership attempts to help those being mentored to reinvent themselves, execute their predesignated goals flawlessly, and celebrate achievements and accomplishments.

I know, it sounds too good to be true. Yet, while it’s not always easy to be this type of leader to your employees, it’s something to strive for. It stems from your pure concern for others. It thrives on your willingness to listen, to have someone’s back, and to encourage someone to be their best self—marrying both individual career interests and company interests. It’s about emotional intelligence, active listening, light-handed guidance in which you ask questions more than give answers, and fun and laughter. In short, it’s about otherness.

You’ve likely experienced this already in your career but may not have realized it. Have you ever had a favorite boss? Did you work for someone who made you feel like your opinion mattered, who challenged you to do things you didn’t necessarily feel you were ready for, or who otherwise made you somehow feel special? If so, then you had an amazing coach. That person may have been your immediate supervisor, a team leader, or a department or division head, but you can be thankful that you experienced selfless leadership firsthand. And if you haven’t experienced it up to this point in your career, that’s unfortunate but there’s always hope that you will. Remember that “bad bosses” are likewise important in our careers because they help us define who we are not. They set the outer limit for who we definitely do not wish to become. But that’s not why you purchased this book. The question to ask yourself now as you continue reading is: How will you pay it forward? How will you become that person to those that follow you? Do you want to be known as a person who is excellent at growing teams, turning around flagging

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groups, and developing high-potential employees who may not have seen in themselves the potential that you saw in them?

Selfless leadership, emotional intelligence, and genuine care are the ingredients needed to make a coaching culture work. Never forget, the whole world is watching you. They're watching for the gift you're about to give them. Give a gift of encouragement, genuine concern, lightheartedness, and celebration. The culture of your immediate team may not be reflected company-wide, but your team will become the one that everyone wants to work on, you'll be the leader everyone wants to work for, and results will naturally follow. That's what a coaching culture creates. That's how it changes the personality of the company over time. Best of all, it can start right here, right now, as long as you're willing to be the first domino.