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# Mind on the Job

A **CavanaughLeahy** Communication ♦ Spring 2001 ♦ Issue 10  
& COMPANY

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## 1 A Firsthand Look at Executive Coaching

*inside*  
the  
**MIND**

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**A** hunt with the popular search engine Google for the term “executive coaching” will secure about 22,500 ‘hits.’ That is not so many as “systems thinking” or “knowledge management,” and certainly not in the same universe as “Madonna” at 851,000. Still, it far surpasses a favorite of decades past, “management by objective,” at only 10,300. Who would have thought in the 1970s that by one measure of business culture, executive coaching would enjoy more currency than the management method authored by Peter Drucker?

What does it all mean? **MIND ON THE JOB**, in this our 10th issue, investigates the question. This particular subject holds special interest for us because our President, Pam Cavanaugh, is one of the top coaches in the country. The evidence for that assertion is the consistent acclaim from both those who engage her to do the coaching and those who receive the coaching. After all, those customers are very important judges of the value of such an enterprise. If, as it should, the coaching has started with a clear list of goals on both sides, the person who hired the coach and the executive who has agreed to participate should attest to whether the work achieved those goals.

Last issue, we spoke to 10 coaches. Now we turn to five actual customers. The fact that those who are coached speak at all of their experience is rare. (*We are very grateful to all of our contributors for their time and candor.*) Coaching inspires contradiction. There is touchiness about someone “needing to be” coached, which at times has coaching occur in secret. However, professional literature on coaching offers anecdotes about how getting coaching has become like a country club membership or thick office carpeting – a big time perk. Acknowledging that executives can develop through coaching carries risks and rewards.

Of course, “executive coaching” covers many disparate activities. Everything from improving your speech to changing your career to understanding your personality type to better using tech-

*continued next page . . .*

**A Firsthand Look . . . (from page 1)**

nological and financial tools fits under this rather roomy tent. One of our contributors answered our questions based on his notion of “executive coaching.” Near the end of the interview, he broadly defined it for Marty Leahy. He included (a) one-on-one work with a professional coach, AND (b) the work that he did with all of the members of his executive team at a prior job, as well as (c) coaching by supervisors on the job. This was enlightening to Marty because he was the consultant who worked with that particular executive team, and he does not consider himself a coach!

One of the roles that Marty indisputably embraces is that of ardent researcher. (This was amply shown in his recently granted Doctorate in Human & Organizational Development from The Fielding Institute.) One of the fruits of that passion is evident in the “A 360 on 360s” that he wrote for this issue. So many people now allude to and employ this tool that we thought you might welcome a review of its uses. Or you can go look on Google at one of the 6,680 hits for “360 feedback.” In any case, we hope you enjoy this 10th issue of **MIND ON THE JOB**.

*T.J. Elliott*

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**2** Experiences of Coaching

**Bob Johnson ♦ Vice President ♦ Northeast Region  
NEXTEL**

*What were the benefits of coaching, if any; what difference did coaching make?*

They range from helping one to be more objective to analysis to different ways of looking at things. It gave me the ability to assess things at 50,000 feet when I am operating at 1,000 feet. Various processes and using different metaphors allowed me to get a whole variety of different perspectives on a situation. In general, I think benefits also include things like maturity, working on relationships, leveraging diversity within teams.

*Any risks or “watch-outs” that coaches should be sensitive to?*

I think that it is helpful to be aware of any sensitivities surrounding the person or the role, good or bad; it allows you to cut to the chase.

It is important for the coach to know what you are trying to do for the executive and, at the same time, to be aware of the realities of what the ‘coachee’ is dealing with. It is important to balance coaching deliverables with what the job is asking for. The coach needs to remember that the executive could be in a business crisis with 8,000 disconnects a day.

*Did coaching provide you with a “light bulb” or an “aha” experience/moment?*

Yes, definitely. The biggest *aha* for me was developing increasing confidence in empowerment. This is the death knell for some executives if they can’t get to the point where they are able to empower others. For example, one time when I was going through business plan reviews, one individual on my team challenged the way I was doing it. He said that I was very good at it and used to ‘playing all the instruments in the orchestra,’ yet what I now needed to do was step back and allow others to play. He was right. Coaching has sensitized me to the import of empowerment and how people can struggle with doing that. I was able to immediately approach the business plan review very differently.

*“The coach needs to remember that the executive could be in a business crisis with 8,000 disconnects a day.”*

*Bob Johnson  
Vice President  
Nextel*

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*What impact, if any, did coaching have on your communication and interpersonal skills?*

Overall, I’d say coaching has had me be much more confident and much more calm in how I go about my work. It has also impacted the way I operate in that I am much more likely to ask questions and give options rather than provide answers. Coaching has helped me to lead when that is required and not always manage. I practice and use Jack Welch’s Big 6.

*Would you ever suggest that someone get a coach? Are there indicators that suggest someone could benefit from coaching?*

Yes, there are a number of circumstances. For example, when they are too intense or overreacting. Or when the same answers are all they have to offer again and again. Or when they are dictating. I think another indicator is when the input they provide in a meeting is always coming from the same frame of reference rather than from multiple and different perspectives.

*Are there ways in which those who contract for coaching might measure its effectiveness? Any specific metrics for that?*

I think it is effective if, for example, you see the individual operate as a more polished person who can relate to people at all different levels. At the team level, coaching is effective there if the team members can challenge one another but when they make a decision they all leave singing the same song. Evidence would be meetings that are productive, not argumentative.

**DEFINITION:** *“Coaching provides a place where a leader/manager can safely inquire and expand his/her capacity to learn and act.”*

*Does this definition fit your experience? If yes, how so? Anything missing from this definition?*

This definitely fits. It is supported by the examples I gave earlier. “Safely inquire” is an important quality – if you have the opportunity to do that you will expand your capacity to learn and act.

This is a space outside the fire or it can be a protective shield when you are inside the fire.

*Anything I haven't asked that would be important for us to know?*

Many focus on coaching being an individual thing. There is a huge up side to team coaching. There are not many CEOs willing to take the risk of a coach working with the senior team. I give Ben Scott (former CEO of PrimeCo) and Lowell McAdam (former CEO of PrimeCo and now COO of Verizon Wireless) tremendous credit for being willing to that.

Finally, one other thing I have been coached at various stages in my career and have seen others be coached. I don't see any level where it is not appropriate. I have seen all kinds of people benefit, from the most polished and most senior to the most junior. I consider myself somewhere in between. *[The interviewer challenged the last statement by acknowledging Bob's modesty.]*

**Ralph Faison ♦ Vice President ♦ New Ventures Group  
LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES**

*What were the benefits of coaching, if any; what difference did coaching make?*

The biggest benefit is that as you move up the ranks in an organization, it often gets lonely. You often don't get the feedback that you need, especially regarding interpersonal development skills.

The difference coaching makes is that as you grow in an organization, you hit a point where objective results are not enough for continued growth. What you've done in the past and your past strengths are not sufficient to take you to the future. A seasoned coach provides you a safe haven to ask any questions and provides you with strong advice.

*Any risks or "watch-outs" that coaches should be sensitive to?*

A coach can send a positive or a negative message depending on the culture of the organization. Another risk is that coaching can interrupt everything. It can provide a totally different way of looking at things. An example is when a golf instructor tells you to do these five things differently.

You have to give up how you did things in the past and initially it feels awkward and is very risky.

*Did coaching provide you with a "light bulb" or an "aha" experience/moment?*

It helped me to seek more of a life balance. I don't define myself by my career alone and I rarely work weekends.

**ARE THERE INDICATORS THAT  
SUGGEST SOMEONE COULD BENEFIT  
FROM COACHING?**

*"Yes, . . . when they are too intense or overreacting. Or when the same answers are all they have to offer again and again. Or when they are dictating. . . . When the input they provide in a meeting is always coming from the same frame of reference rather than from multiple and different perspectives."*

*Bob Johnson*

- Vice President
- Nextel

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*Has coaching impacted the way you perform your job?*

I'm very pleased by my performance. I'm not influenced by what I think people want to see but what shareholders require of me and what's best for the company. I'm independent to do the right thing, rather than dependent to please.

*What impact, if any, did coaching have on your communication and interpersonal skills?*

My communication and interpersonal skills have improved. I am more thoughtful and modify my messages to people and their tasks.

*Would you ever suggest that someone get a coach? Are there indicators that suggest someone could benefit from coaching?*

Very bright and aggressive people who are not progressing because of how they relate interpersonally and can't see how it's impacting them.

*Are there ways in which those who contract for coaching might measure its effectiveness?*

It's more of a soft science that translates to better operating results. It's hard to measure. I never had to justify it and I've always viewed it as part of my continuing education.

**DEFINITION:** "Coaching provides a place where a leader/manager can safely inquire and expand his/her capacity to learn and act."

*Does this definition fit your experience? If yes, how so? Anything missing from this definition?*

It's extraordinarily rewarding in that it deals with more than you as part of a company; it deals with the whole person.

*Anything I haven't asked that would be important for us to know?*

In choosing a coach be sure that the chemistry is there. There has to be a trusting bond. You're going to spend a lot of time together, so begin with an initial meeting. Go out to lunch, think about it before you decide, think about the interaction and how comfortable you felt before you make your decision.

**Anonymous VP ♦ Pharmaceutical Company**

*What were the benefits of coaching, if any; what difference did coaching make?*

The biggest benefit is having an impartial assessment and a safe sounding board. Early in your career, you have strong role models. As you move up the ranks, you get less and less feedback and guidance. Coaching is a safe environment to receive feedback and guidance on how to handle all sorts of issues more effectively, as well as learn more about yourself. I was able to see how

*The biggest benefit is that as you move up the ranks in an organization, it often gets lonely. You often don't get the feedback that you need, especially regarding interpersonal development skills."*

Ralph Faison  
Vice President,  
New Ventures Group  
Lucent Technologies

others saw me. It helped me to accept some of the ways I am and get beyond that. It helped me deal more effectively with my people and my boss. I was able to see how I had been very self-protective and a micro manager. I learned to let go and let myself (and my people) make mistakes.

**WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, DID COACHING HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS?**

*"I'm far less defensive. I'm more able to adjust my communications to meet individual needs."*

*Anonymous VP  
• Pharmaceuticals Company  
.....*

*Any risks or "watch-outs" that coaches should be sensitive to?*

The coach should be sensitive to the need for a "getting used to each other" period and not become too personal or analytical too quickly. The coach should not come across as psychoanalyzing.

*Did coaching provide you with a "light bulb" or an "aha" experience/moment?*

The main insight was that I was personally taking responsibility for everything and had a fear of failure, which, coupled together, was overwhelming me and limiting my effectiveness in managing and leading my staff.

*Has coaching impacted the way you perform your job?*

I'm a lot less of a micro manager. I'm less into the detail and more focused on the "big picture." I no longer need to have the answers for people. I'm much more comfortable to help people find the answers for themselves.

*What impact, if any, did coaching have on your communication and interpersonal skills?*

I'm far less defensive. I'm more able to adjust my communications to meet individual needs.

*Would you ever suggest that someone get a coach? Are there indicators that suggest someone could benefit from coaching?*

Everyone would benefit from a coach.

*Are there ways in which those who contract for coaching might measure its effectiveness? Any specific metrics for that?*

A pre-assessment and a post-assessment interview might be effective. A lot of it is what you hear around the water cooler and direct observation of how the individual deals with things. You either notice a change or you don't.

**DEFINITION:** *"Coaching provides a place where a leader/manager can safely inquire and expand his/her capacity to learn and act."*

*Does this definition fit your experience? If yes, how so? Anything missing from this definition?*

"Safely inquire" is the most important part. It also provides a mechanism that allows you to see how you are perceived.

*Anything I haven't asked that would be important for us to know?*

It's important for a person being coached to know that the coach is working for you. They are not judging or criticizing you; they

provide a safe haven. Coaching is an important process that can be both personally and professionally very enlightening.

**Jeannette Galvanek ♦ RETIRED AT&T VP HR**

*What were the benefits of coaching, if any; what difference did coaching make?*

Coaching is a terrific benefit. I have used it often; it is tremendously valuable. I have been coached and have contracted with coaches for others. In fact, I was one of the first people in Human Resources who saw the need for coaching. Years ago at AT&T we were providing very high quality counseling services for executives leaving the business (executive outplacement). I approached Pam's old employer and asked for a service that would support the development of those that we retained.

There is a real need. Supervisors are supervisors; there is an inescapable power difference between supervisor and subordinate and that limits coaching. Further, it is also a question of time. Supervisors used to have time to take care of people and themselves.

They no longer have that time; coaches fill that void. Plus coaches are specialists, like a cardiologist. Supervisors are working inside a dynamic business environment. They are struggling to get their jobs done. They have not had the chance to build coaching skills – they need to skill up but don't have time.

*Any risks or "watch-outs" that coaches should be sensitive to?*

Coaches become part of the problem when they act politically. It is problematic when they make choices based on: "What I do will get me more work." It is unfortunate when coaches operate more from leadership expectations rather than the client need.

Another risk is if they see a person being successful based on making things work where they are. Sometimes this is about figuring out how to get paid and doing what it takes to insure that the client gets where they need to be. "Repair" might not be in anybody's real interest if the person should leave or acknowledge the mismatch of current job assignment. Coaching is not well defined in this set of circumstances. At times, the coach does not take the time to define coaching and its purpose.

*Did coaching provide you with a "light bulb" or an "aha" experience/moment?*

Everyone gets a big "aha." Even more valuable are the "aha's" that occur over time if people get over the fear of feedback. If the client and coach build trust, the client can have multiple "aha's" over time. My "aha" was that people saw me as powerful and I was still working from my inner child framework.

You can grow to become a much stronger leader if you can continue to have "aha's," e.g., have power and afraid to use it or alternately have power and abuse it. What is important here is

follow-through and more feedback along the way, e.g., how am I doing with the use of power? An initial 360° can be very helpful and yet there is a need for other kinds of feedback along the way to support the person's having many *aha's*. It is worth noting that some 360s can be tainted. Culturally normed 360s can sometimes be simply measures of compliance.

*"Without setting five or 10 goals, I don't understand what coaching is other than having lunch."*

*Jeannette Galvanek*  
*Retired AT&T VP HR*  
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*Has coaching impacted the way you perform your job and the way you manage others?*

This depends on what was contracted for. Some coaches take an approach where they just have lunch, a casual, subtle approach. Others want to be clear that the coaching will make an impact on an individual. They will likely create a project plan with the client that will insure making a difference: What are they doing about their business? Do they have their life in order? It is important to look at the whole person. Coaching can improve personal effectiveness by providing tools, feedback, and a plan. That plan must address work-life balance. Some research shows that this is a concern for 98% of employees. This is a very serious matter that should be coming out in coaching. If it is not, the coach is probably one who isn't focused on the individual, the whole person.

*Would you ever suggest that someone get a coach?*

Everybody should have a coach. However, it is usually the bottom 20% and top 20% that do, given dollar constraints.

*Are there ways in which those who contract for coaching might measure its effectiveness? Any specific metrics for that?*

Use a coach effectiveness tool. Create one that would look at the client's business and personal life. Come up with 10 metrics. Ultimately, it is client self-report teams and boss reports that are the ways to measure effectiveness. Some customer feedback in this process is essential. Among the most important metrics should be the content and quality of conversation between coach and coachee. This must include some agreements on focus, including an agreement on movement to what, when, etc. Without setting five or 10 goals, I don't understand what coaching is other than having lunch. The biggest goal might not even be at work, it could be a personal goal that can impact or have an effect on work. We are very good at defining ourselves in terms of business; coaching must continuously come back to looking at the whole person.

*Anything I haven't asked that would be important for us to know?*

There is one thing that bothers me. I am an advocate for professional coaching. Yet, I have attended some recent meetings with coaches and am worried that we have people who are tool oriented, people who are not wise and maybe don't even see wisdom as being important for their work. A coach needs wisdom,

expertise, points of reference from his or her own experience, metaphors, courage . . . all of this is much more than applying favorite tools. There is a danger of coaching becoming a “thing” rather than being about “wise conversations.”

Too much focus on something mechanical and tactical rather than philosophical and developmental is a potential problem. In the last issue of *HBR*, an author talks about level five leadership where one will see the triumph of humility. That is an example of what I mean by philosophy and development, developing humility while working on concrete business and personal goals.

**Beverly McQuigg Martinetz ♦ Director  
Organization and Leadership Development  
AVENTIS PASTEUR — USA**

*[Beverly answered our interview based upon her experience as someone who is responsible for, among other initiatives, an extensive executive coaching program. She was offered her observations of those executives who received coaching.]*

*What were the benefits of coaching, if any; what difference did coaching make?*

There are many. It offers focus, focuses the person on developmental needs, people usually running at 10,000 miles a minute. How do I come across to people? What are my needs? The personalized feedback is very valuable. You get input from people who would never give that to you otherwise.

It is a way of honoring people who have “high potential.” We don’t label people as such in our company but coaching rewards past accomplishments and acknowledges future potential.

Coaching is a strong component of a development program; the data says that coaching is good; it makes a difference. We are especially focusing on high potential employees and senior executives. We are hoping for a trickle-down effect. To that end, what is needed is more training for those being coached to be coaches themselves, guidance on things like how to select a mentee, how to start the process, guidelines, dos and don’ts, etc.

*Any risks or “watch outs” that coaches should be sensitive to?*

You need to be cautious about raising expectations. It must be made clear there is no guarantee for advancement because of being in the program.

*Did coaching provide your people with a “light bulb” or an “aha” experience/moment?*

Yes, for example, one executive had a “light bulb moment” after reading a chapter from a book that the coach recommended on how to handle teams. And the 360 is a good way to get an *aha*; you can’t deny the data. Plus, *ahas* can come when the person is

*continued page 11 . . .*



## A 360 on 360s

by Martin J. Leahy, Ph.D.

**C**oaching seems inseparable from 360-degree programs, the popular term for *Multirater Feedback Systems* (MFS). We reviewed the literature on 360's and learned how they are best used.

The rationale for 360 programs is, like coaching, to help organizations retain and develop employees (and avoid the losses associated with recruiting new people). Academic research on this topic tends towards topics like validity, reliability, bias, discrepancies across raters – matters of interest mostly to instrument designers. The practitioner literature reveals common threads of

concern across all of the articles plus good counsel on how to address these matters. Below are listed some of the most common concerns (in black boldface) and some suggested solutions.

*“Build a solid design for the program. Consider the following questions: What is the purpose of the feedback? What do I want to know? Will this instrument give me that information? For what purpose was this instrument originally designed? Is this instrument fit for this culture? Is this instrument suited for performance appraisal or developmental purposes?”*

**CONCERN: The misuse of 360s to support performance appraisal or compensation decisions**

This is the number one theme. The advice is to be unyielding, restrict its use to development. MFS for regular performance evaluation or deciding on a raise has the potential for too many abuses.

**CONCERN: The lack of accountability of the raters to the rated (and the rated back to the raters)**

This risk cannot be eliminated. It can be mitigated via a careful communications plan. Further, criteria and selection process for the raters, trainings or briefings for the raters, and thoughtful design and delivery of the feedback session can lessen risk.

**CONCERN: What is the best kind of instrument**

Three types are available: off-the-shelf, modified off-the-shelf to fit this company, and customized. There is a very strong preference in the articles we surveyed for instruments custom built for the organization and purpose. Jeannette Galvanek, elsewhere in this newsletter, raises a provocative point: customized instruments that are ‘culturally normed,’ i.e., they are customized to the organization’s prevailing values and practices, can simply measure compliance.

**CONCERN: The overwhelming number of choices and diverse capabilities of 360 instruments — where do you begin to look?**

Beware of the lure of software capabilities, or falling in love with *any* particular instrument; build a solid design for the program. Consider the following questions: What is the purpose of the feedback? What do I want to know? Will this instrument give me that

information? For what purpose was this instrument originally designed? Is this instrument fit for this culture? Is this instrument suited for performance appraisal or developmental purposes?

**CONCERN: How can you actually make 360s most effective, rather than just another corporate initiative or fad?**

Three pieces of advice: (a) create an overall design for how the program will be managed to improve prospects for success and limit risks, (b) engage all constituencies, especially the most resistant, and (c) link the feedback with coaching to insure action and follow through. ♣

**Experiences of Coaching . . . (from page 9)**

given good techniques, practices what is learned, and sees that it works. We have sent a few people to a five-day program but we have gotten away from this in favor of our customized Horizons Coaching program. This is coaching over time rather than a five-day program that may have a long-term effect.

*What other differences did coaching make for these people?*

I have seen the impact of coaching on personal effectiveness in a variety of ways. One veteran coach that we use, for example, is working with a very senior client who is pretty set in his ways; I've seen him mellow and listen better. The really senior people have been successful doing what they have always done, so it is harder for them to change. Their position is: "You have to show me; my time is precious." The coach tells them like it is, they respect that. It can take a long time to develop trust; they need to know that the coach is not going to run to the president. On the other hand, the employees in our Horizon program are young, malleable, like sponges, ready to learn all they can.

*Are there ways in which those who contract for coaching might measure its effectiveness? Any specific metrics for that?*

It is hard to measure. It is like any training program in that way. But informal feedback from peers and others around the person does provide some indication: "I think it's been really good for them."

**DEFINITION:** *"Coaching provides a place where a leader/manager can safely inquire and expand his/her capacity to learn and act."*

*Does this definition fit your experience? If yes, how so? Anything missing from this definition?*

I think it is a good definition. I might add the notion that coaching is a "process," receiving feedback on people's perceptions of you, and learning tools and techniques in order to improve upon the perception to make them as positive as possible. ♣

## CAVANAUGH LEAHY & COMPANY'S EXECUTIVE COACHING

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*Executive Coaching* provides individually customized consulting to valued executives and leaders. The coaching increases personal effectiveness while producing results for the organization. Our process aligns management talent with organizational strategies and expands both the individual's and the organization's capabilities.

### WHO benefits from Executive Coaching?

- Executives, managers, and team leaders accountable for implementing restructuring or change initiatives.
- Individual contributors promoted to leadership positions.
- Executives and managers with interpersonal or communication styles that adversely affect performance.
- Leaders who are challenging their teams to produce extraordinary results.
- Executives faced with career decisions.

### WHY Executive Coaching?

- Enhance the effectiveness of key performers.
- Build new leadership skills essential for successful implementation of corporate restructuring.
- Prepare executives and managers to take on new or increased responsibilities that support the organization's strategies.
- Improved working relationships and communication to increase executive effectiveness and achieve business goals.
- Provide data to make informed succession or career decisions.

### WHAT is Executive Coaching?

- A process which creates awareness and action through confidential communication.
- A process that allows individuals to see new opportunities and go beyond what was previously possible.
- A process which identifies an executive's strengths and developmental needs given the organization's capabilities and strategies.
- A process where the individual uncovers barriers and areas of resistance to job performance and leadership effectiveness.
- A process where an individual discovers opportunities for success.
- A process which provides clarity regarding role, projects or process with defined outcomes and measures.

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Editor: T.J. Elliott  
e-mail address:  
[telliott@cavanaughleahy.com](mailto:telliott@cavanaughleahy.com)  
<http://www.cavanaughleahy.com>

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**The answers are in the organization.™**

We help leaders find them.

**CavanaughLeahy**  
& COMPANY

USTA Building  
70 West Red Oak Lane  
White Plains, NY 10604  
914/395-3427

Princeton Pike Corporate Center  
993 Lenox Drive, Suite 200  
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648  
609/844-7615