

Executives Achieve Business Results with Coach-Like Skills

Several times this year, I've come across CEOs lamenting, "I need my management team to have a solutions-based attitude instead of looking to me for the answer." This is a common challenge that can be overcome by using coach-like skills. Let's take a look at what it means to be coach-like and how to acquire coach-like skills.

It is my belief the most effective executives know how to be coach-like. They are able to

- get the most from their people
- build effective teams
- instill discipline while maintaining high morale
- create new leaders in their wake

These executives have natural coach-like skills or have developed these skills through a chance combination of professional development experiences. The good news is the rest of us can develop conscious competence in executive coach-like skills.

How can you acquire coach-like skills?

An executive, who has the desire, can learn coaching questioning tools such as appreciative inquiry, SPIN, strategic inquiry and others to propel their efforts to acquire coach-like skills.

In the above example, the CEO could utilize appreciative inquiry to discover what the management team members want. Here are some key appreciative inquiry questions that will help the CEO draw-out the information needed from the management team.

1. **What is your peak personal or professional experience? What was it about you that made it a peak experience?** *Answer* – "The last project I managed, which was double the size of anything I had previously managed. It was also exponentially more challenging than anything I had done before. Many more people, partners and client contacts. I had to stretch and grow as a professional everyday. While it was uncomfortable at times, it was very satisfying."
2. **Think about a time when this organization was at its best. A time when all stakeholders saw who the people in this organization really were and what this organization was really about. Tell me about it.** *Answer* – "We had the chance to work for a high-profile, profitable client and we never said no to their requests. We kept a good attitude and found a way to deliver. Everyone was positive and focused on creating options for succeeding instead of excuses."
3. **What are a few things that would heighten the health and vitality of the organization?** *Answer* – "More sharing of ideas and clearly defined roles."

After collecting the answers above, the CEO is able to better communicate, using the language of the management team, how the solutions-based attitude the CEO needs would create more opportunities for employees to stretch and grow everyday as well





Achieve Business Results continued

as increase work satisfaction. Finally, the CEO might add, “if we want to perform to the highest level we are capable of, we have to avoid saying no to our internal as well as external customers and find ways to deliver. I will work on facilitating the increase of idea sharing and defining our roles more clearly.”

However, after reading this position paper, there may be some executives who will try to use coach-like skills, but not see the result they were hoping for. Then, they will probably conclude – “this stuff doesn’t work.” For those executives, here are three thoughts:

- **Let the team member settle into the right mindset.** For example, allow time for the team member to vent before launching into the use of the appreciative inquiry questioning tool. You are not going to have a constructive conversation if the team member is not ready.
- **Be prepared to help the team member along in answering the questions.** The appreciative inquiry questions are meant to make a person think. They cannot be answered spontaneously. Maybe the team member has never considered these types of questions before. Also, the team member may not be as skilled at verbalizing their thoughts as you.
- **Remember that acquiring coach-like skills takes time, just like any other skill.** You begin the journey to acquire coach-like skills with the first step.

Learn how to be coach-like and make your life/work easier by considering the following questions

What would happen if your entire organization had basic training in coach-like skills?

What would be the pay-off for your organization?

How would that impact your willingness to tackle the really tough issues?

Coaching competence is basically helping others find the answer themselves with as little effort from you as possible – and avoid telling them what you think they should do. In the end those around you have more ownership over organizational decisions and the results are better.

Why Darren for Executive Coaching?

Darren is a trained and experienced group coach possessing core coaching competencies, a coaching process and an ethics standard from an accredited university graduate school executive coaching program. He is also a professional facilitator and produces the Texas AEC CEO Roundtable consisting of 100 of the top architecture, engineering and contractor firms in Texas.

About the author. . .

Darren probably delivers the most dramatic and powerful leadership and business development experiences for executives. He is to the executive what a carabiner is to the mountain climber. Darren helps executives reach higher levels than they could alone.

Darren has conducted business in 20 countries across 10 industries and has started and sold two companies. He is a graduate of Texas A&M and has university credentials in marketing, international business and executive coaching. His clients include HKS Architects, Staubach Company, the Texas Society of Association Executives, Mrs Bairds Bread and Kia Automobile.

He speaks regularly on the subjects of strategy, coaching, leadership, international business, and business development. Darren’s audiences have ranged from the Business School at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana to the local chapter of the Associated General Contractors in Austin, Texas. Lastly, Darren is married and he and his wife can successfully field a basketball team. Darren has five children.



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Darren Smith helps executives develop edges to make winning easier. Darren achieves this through consulting on strategy & business development and through coaching & speaking.