

Addendum from
Center for Executive Coaching Textbook:
Seven Habits and a Five-Step Action Plan
for a Culture of Success Through Coaching



ANDREW
NEITLICH

Addendum One

Seven Habits and a Five-Step Action Plan for a Culture of Success Through Coaching

Creating a culture of success through coaching is relatively simple in theory but hard to implement. This addendum defines what a culture of coaching means and then suggests the high-level action steps required. First, organizations with a culture of coaching have the following habits:

Employees at all levels are open to receiving feedback, input, and advice. In fact, they regularly request it from others. It is not easy to hear tough advice and feedback from others. Most leaders, managers, and employees don't do it well. While the guidelines for receiving feedback are straightforward and the type of skill that is taught in \$99 hotel seminars (e.g., thank the other person, treat the advice as a gift, direct it in the way that is most valuable to you, and focus on the issue and not the personal), many people get defensive and are closed to receiving feedback professionally. A culture of coaching starts with employees at all levels being open to advice and feedback. In other words, they are coachable.

Actively strive to get better. Second, a culture of coaching is about mastery. Employees want to keep getting better. They keep raising the bar and demanding the best from themselves and each other. This trait requires an organization with attractive career paths and opportunities for growth and development.



Be willing to stop digging in your heels with stubborn and already known positions and instead conduct a deep, creative inquiry into root causes and innovative solutions. It is easy to have conversations about what's known. It is also easy to stubbornly stick to the same position about an issue so that the issue never gets resolved; for example, watch the political parties in the USA dig in their heels about crucial challenges for the country. In some organizations, employees roll their eyes before a colleague even speaks because they already know what he or she will say. Coaching is about having conversations about what's not known. It is about putting one's position aside and having a dialogue to go beyond rigid thinking and attitudes. Coaching challenges people to leave the past in the past; work together to create new ways of approaching problems; and balance relationships, results, and ego.

Use coaching along with other approaches to develop leaders to grow the organization. A culture of coaching is about developing new capacities in employees. New leaders keep emerging to grow the organization and also allow current leaders to continue to grow and develop in the most strategic ways possible. See the chapter about succession planning for an illustrative approach.

Get important conversations going. The book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins uses the metaphor of a flywheel to talk about one role of a leader. The leader's job is to ask crucial questions about what the organization does best, its values, and its purpose. As the conversations build, so does momentum, the way a flywheel takes a while to turn but eventually becomes a powerful force. A culture of coaching encourages employees to ask deep questions and work together to answer them while always leaving room for new insights and creative approaches.

Create the culture you want to have. A culture of success through coaching is only one aspect of an organization's culture, the same way



that coaching is one skill that a manager should possess. Leadership still has to define the complete culture they want for the organization. A previous chapter discusses how to do this work.

Use coaching as a tool to help people get better and continuously improve the organization. Finally, in a culture of success through coaching, people coach each other to ongoing success. This can happen through formal coaching relationships with internal and external coaches, but most of the time it happens through ongoing dialogue with managers, colleagues, and employees. Everyone plays a coaching role.

Action steps to create this kind of culture include the following:

- Train senior leaders and managers to be effective coaches.
- Reward people for modeling coaching behaviors, especially when they solve key issues or develop top talent through coaching.
- Senior leaders need to model the coaching behavior they expect to see.
- Use coaching as a tool to create other aspects of the desired organizational culture.
- Use both internal and external coaches as one of many tools to help people develop.

As with any kind of culture change, the obvious but hard truth is that senior leadership needs to make coaching a priority and a focus. Otherwise, none of the above action steps matter.

