

1) You mentioned gap analysis, can you explain this?

The easiest way to think of a gap analysis is the delta or difference between where one is today, measured against where she or he wants to be in the future. This applies to individual work, such as one-on-one executive coaching, and group work, such as strategic planning or the development of training programs tailored to the organization. For me, the “where does someone, someone’s or a group want to be,” is the answer to the preliminary question I always ask: “What does success look like; in other words, at the end of the process, project, service, product, etc., it will have been successful, meaning not a waste of time and treasure if what happens?” Believe it or not, that isn’t always easy for a client to answer without some serious thought and dialogue internally and with me.

By way of example, for an individual who is entering into a work-based coaching project, he or she might define success along the lines of: those who report to me view me as caring about them and their careers, not just mine; the group thinks I communicate well; I’m a good delegator; I’m viewed as giving positive feedback not just negative feedback or criticism; and/or, I’m a good coach and mentor to the employees who report to me.

For a business’s strategic plan, it could be: in three- to five-years, we want to expand our business 100%, an overarching goal that is then broken down into what annual and quantifiable goals must be achieved; thereafter, the group will identify the tasks and duties to be achieved on a quarterly basis, the responsible party or parties for achieving same and what the follow-up mechanisms are that need to be put in place to ensure success. For a nonprofit, the overarching goal could be an increase in services, which then means an increase in funding and fundraising, etc.

2) Is this just simply management support?

That’s a great question; thanks for asking. No. The processes can apply to managers, executives, management, leaders or to individuals personally with aspirations and goals they want to achieve in their personal lives and/or their work lives. It also applies to management support from the standpoint that I am often retained by organizations to provide coaching support to a manager. Typically, the organization-directed work is defined as “Joe (or Jane) has great technical skills, but lacks people skills.”

It's important to note that whether I am retained by an individual or an organization, it is a confidential process. If retained by an organization, I agree only to tell an organization whether the person shows up when agreed to, and whether she or he is following through. It is entirely up to the individual as to what, if anything, he or she wants to share with the organization.

Trust is the basis for all relationships and trust can only be achieved with promised confidentiality. From time to time, this gets me into trouble when an organization assumes that I will breach confidentiality because the organization signs the checks. I won't do it. I've lost a few jobs because of that; however, the integrity of the process and my own ethics and values forbade me from breaching confidentiality.

There is a positive way to view organization-directed coaching: to provide these services to an employee is akin to the employer giving a gift to the employee; he or she will acquire skills, if they want to. These skills are theirs for life and are portable, meaning the individual can leave the organization and take the skills with her or him. It's a pretty nice gift from an employer, don't you think?

3) Putting together systems and strategies for companies to follow?

All of the services and products we develop and facilitate are designed to be systems and processes that are easy to implement. I am very pragmatic; after all, there is no sense in developing something that is so academic or, from a practical standpoint is so hard to implement that the plan will sit on the shelf and gather dust. I'm all about easy-to-implement solutions to achieve success . . . however the client might define it, be the client an individual, organization or company.

Once when I embarked upon a company-directed coaching assignment, two pieces of feedback came back for a senior financial executive: subordinates stated "we always know when we screw up but we never know when we do well;" and, from colleagues who only saw the individual in staff meetings when he always had the right answer "this guy is Machiavellian, he lies in wait to make us look bad in front of our boss." So, my two practical pieces of advice to the executive: "don't be phony and don't be fake but surely in the course of the week there is an employee who reports to you that you can

“thank” for having done something nice for you or another, and a second employee to whom you can give an ‘attaboy or attagirl,’ for a job well done.” As regards his colleagues – “once a week go out to lunch with a colleague. You can talk about anything but work.” Within six months, word got out and other employees wanted to move into this senior executive’s group because he was known for giving positive and meaningful feedback. Further, his colleagues got to know him as a person, and no longer attributed Machiavellian motives to him.

4) You are teaching the leaders how to implement and to facilitate what you structure for the companies?

Great question, and the answer is embedded in the question, with a slight twist. I view myself as a facilitator more than a teacher. By that I mean, I believe that each of us has the answers inside of us and as a facilitator my job is to tease those answers out of the individual and/or group.

To me, communication is “listening, asking and telling.” Unfortunately, many of us do too much telling and too little listening and asking. I find by being an attentive listener, or an active listener as it’s referred to in my business, and asking the right questions at the right moment, that the person and/or group gives words to the answer. Of course, that doesn’t always work. Thus, as a trained facilitator, if the answer has yet to emerge I might say “does anyone want to play Devil’s advocate, that is support the opposite, or another point of view?” If not initially, then eventually the point takes shape.

By way of example, I conduct a fair amount of California’s mandatory, two-hour, biannual sexual harassment prevention and anti-bullying training in a highly interactive, fast-paced manner. Even though I follow the same format, each session is different based upon the group assembled, their views and interactions.

5) You teach the managers of the company to run at their highest potential/abilities?

Well, my goal, or the way I define success for me is that I assisted or facilitated the client in achieving his, her or their success. Hopefully, the definition of success is that the person, persons or groups will run at their

highest potential or success. Ultimately, it doesn't matter what I might define as success for another. She, he or a group needs to develop how she, he or it defines success. I get a kick out of facilitating an individual or group to his, her or its "ah ha" moment. I live for that.

6) Is this done one on one, or the whole company?

Well, contrary to advice I received when I started my practice, that is, to focus in on one client group – this was said to me by an individual whose practice was exclusively focused on one-on-one coaching with presidents of family held companies in excess of \$10 million a year -- I have been retained by an individual, groups of individuals, companies, nonprofits, governmental agencies and volunteer associations. I love the variety.

I've also noticed over time that there is a hierarchy of expectations: many individuals who work for governmental agencies are willing to put up with some workplace nonsense – meaning poor managerial practices -- because they believe that if they keep their noses clean, they will have long-standing employment and retire with pension and benefits. By the way, that was the former unstated compact companies offered. Those who work for companies today know that the loyalty factor doesn't mean much – they could be let go at any time for any reason or no reason -- so they are far more demanding and expect better treatment from the organization.

Those who work for nonprofits are paid less, often with minimal benefits, and are there because they love the mission. Their tolerance level for workplace nonsense is lower still. Finally, those who give their time to volunteer associations are the least tolerant. If they believe their offerings are not accepted or appreciated, they will go someplace else.

Of course, those are merely my observations over time and not anything I've statistically validated. I will say thought that I, too, feel that way when I volunteer my time and treasure.