

The Executive Coaching Handbook

Principles and Guidelines for a
Successful Coaching Partnership

Developed by
The Executive Coaching Forum

Third Edition
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Table of Contents

The Need for a Handbook	1
Why a Handbook?	1
Recent Trends in Executive Coaching.....	2
The Current State of Research.....	6
The Executive Coaching Forum.....	14
Handbook Organization	17
Defining Executive Coaching.....	19
What Is Executive Coaching?	19
What Is a Coaching Partnership?	21
What Is Different About Executive Coaching?	23
Overarching Principles for Executive Coaching	27
1. Systems Perspective.....	27
2. Results Orientation	30
3. Business Focus.....	32
4. Partnership.....	34
5. Competence	36
6. Integrity	39
7. Judgment.....	42
Guidelines for Practice.....	45
1. Managing Confidentiality.....	45
2. Pre-coaching Activities.....	48
3. Contracting	50
4. Assessment.....	53
5. Goal Setting.....	56
6. Coaching.....	58
7. Transitioning to Long-Term Development	61
Overview of Guidelines for Each Member of the Executive Coaching Partnership.....	64
Executive's Guidelines	64
Coach's Guidelines	67
Other Partners' Guidelines	70

The Need for a Handbook

Why a Handbook?

In the mid 1990s, as the economy moved into boom years, the market for management books, leadership gurus, and executive coaching exploded. Previously executive coaching had taken place quietly, often in the context of organizational change and business consulting. Problem executives who, although causing havoc in their organizations, still produced exceptional results or possessed rare and valued skills received special attention. It wasn't until the mid to late 90s that executives actively began seeking out coaches on their own—and consultants and clinicians of all types began transforming themselves into coaches to meet the demand. At the same time, organizations began designing leadership programs that incorporated executive coaching advice and feedback to managers, personal as well as professional.

Businesses discovered that executive coaching, a powerful intervention on the individual level, could also generate organization-wide change. Yet executive coaching was often disconnected from corporate leadership development strategy, managed with only a light touch by the human resources organization. As the cost and impact of coaching were acknowledged, businesses, coaches, and executives began to see its potential for misuse and damage. The need for professional guidelines and practices became apparent. The Executive Coaching Forum and this Executive Coaching Handbook responded to this need.

Given the early state of the practice and the dearth of agreed-upon definitions and standards, the need to establish boundaries, best practices, and empirical findings was and still is critical to the long-term success of the field. Even today, there is no common definition of executive coaching, no clear formulation of its

theoretical basis, no easy way to identify and access best practices, no agreed-upon set of qualifications for coaches, no commonly accepted empirical research findings – not even a widely accepted professional association devoted exclusively to executive coaching.

At the time of this writing, however, some progress is apparent. A number of research studies are underway, the Conference Board held its first conference on this topic in early 2003, and noteworthy books and articles on the subject are appearing. The field of executive coaching is coming to terms with the importance and potential dangers of this intervention, as well as the overwhelming need to integrate and strategically align coaching efforts with other organizational initiatives.

The Executive Coaching Handbook and the resources, tools, and materials offered free of charge on the Executive Coaching Forum's website, www.executivecoachingforum.com, are all responses to these issues. They represent our attempt to further the field of executive coaching.

Recent Trends in Executive Coaching

In the past ten years, the meteoric rise of executive coaching in organizations has heightened the need for guidelines, standards, and definitions. Market conditions have forced companies to focus on the ROI of ever-tightening development budgets, especially coaching fees. Succession and development programs for high-potential talent are running at bare bones, if at all. Continual downsizing has stripped organizations of stretch or development positions while adding content and complexity to senior management roles.

For executives, the demands and pace of business life are increasing, creating an expanded need for integrity, accountability, hands-on involvement, and authentic leadership. Because everything takes place in “real-time,” there is no

downtime to reflect, review progress, or rise above the fray to evaluate or change a course of action. Business itself has become global, virtual, and highly interdependent. These trends are forcing new diversity and complexity in problem solving and heightening the need to work in multicultural mode. Coaching can provide an oasis of calm, a place for executives to calibrate strategy, to evaluate themselves and their performance with an objective third party. It may be one of the few ways to get candid feedback, guidance, and the development they need to prepare for the future.

As the demand side of the executive coaching marketplace has opened up, the supply side has exploded with coaches of every type, training, and perspective. As we have already said, there is as yet no professional association, exclusively for executive coaches, to provide definitions, standards, entrance requirements, and evaluation mechanisms. This void has produced responses from all sides: executives, coaches, and sponsoring organizations. Some responses and innovations have furthered the field of executive coaching; others may prove problematic over time.

Responding to the Trends

Executives have come to see the value of executive coaching, both for themselves and their organizations. In most companies there is no longer any stigma to having a coach—in fact coaching is now seen as a normal or even high-prestige development activity. “When only the best get coaches, getting a coach means you’re one of the best,” people are beginning to think. We believe that the reason is, in part, because coaching provides a “time-out-of-time” break, in the face of relentless work demands, for reflection, evaluation, feedback, and purposeful dialogue. It gives leaders a rare breathing space, helping them be and become better leaders. Coaching also provides timely and targeted strategies for improving their less-developed sides and using their strengths to their own

advantage. Because of these very real benefits, executives and other leaders have become more accepting and supportive of coaching in recent years.

Coaching ROI

As economic conditions have worsened in the last several years, many companies have been forced to reassess their leadership development efforts. In many cases, they have had to reign in coaching activity, ensuring that it aligns with their executive and leadership development strategy. In this new environment, coaching can no longer be seen as an ad hoc solution to use freely. The significant dollar amounts spent on coaching are increasingly scrutinized and measured for their return on investment.

In many companies the tracking of coaching outlay and return has proven to be a Herculean effort. Measuring results and returns for learning and development solutions, always difficult, is doubly challenging given the customization and uniqueness of the coaching itself. Organizations have set up processes and programs that determine who gets coaching, how to hire coaches, what should happen in coaching, how to determine whether to continue, and what's being achieved. Procedures and policies for pricing, selecting coaches, matching them to executives, problem resolution, and tracking progress without violating confidentiality have to be established in the context of increasing leadership-development demands and decreasing budgets.

Dealing with Increased Acceptance

Organizations that use coaching extensively have built infrastructures to support the manager who seeks coaching. They have developed processes to help individuals get the coaching they and the organization feel is appropriate and established strict guidelines on the amount, content area, and timeline of coaching. One result of these efforts has been the growing "commoditization" of

coaching in some organizations – the transformation of what was originally a fluid and dynamic process uniquely tailored to an individual leader’s needs to a set of highly regulated tools and packaged products and services. The art, mystery, and chemistry of the coaching relationship become less important than the reproducible mechanics of the coaching process.

Under these circumstances some of the most important benefits of executive coaching, its real potential to produce lasting and meaningful change, may be at risk. The drive to quantify how long, how much, and to what end, to document every single goal, step, and learning action, can reduce coaching to a series of meetings with a predetermined agenda rather than a set of relational experiences built on open dialogue, exploration, and learning. One of the greatest development challenges organizations will face in upcoming years is to balance managing and measuring coaching with meeting the unique learning needs of the individual.

Coaching Credentials

As the number of providers offering coaching services in the marketplace has skyrocketed, many coaches are looking for ways to “credentialize” the practice of coaching in order to differentiate themselves and their offerings. The lack of common definitions, agreed-upon standards, practice guidelines, and an overseeing professional association obviously calls this movement into some question, at least at this time. Competency models do exist, defining the skills and capabilities considered necessary for successful executive coaching, such as interactive listening skills or experience in delivering, analyzing, and debriefing assessment tools. While helpful, these models actually describe threshold competencies – the absolutely minimum skills required to establish a coaching relationship of any kind. Because executive coaching takes place within an organizational context, more subtle and nuanced descriptors are needed (for

example, speaking truth to power while maintaining psychological safety, ability to work in partnership with the individual and organization). Equally important is business acumen, along with depth and breadth of experience in an industry.

The market for executive coaching today requires executive coaches to go after business opportunities and development activities differently than in the past. More than ever, coaches need networks of colleagues for support and business development. Training and ongoing development for executive coaches, especially those with advanced experience and active practices, is difficult to find outside of collegial learning groups.

Given the past decade of rapid growth, it is hard to imagine what the next ten years of executive coaching will bring. There will undoubtedly continue to be a challenge to establish and maintain the balance between the executive's need for highly individualized assistance and the corporation's interests in controlling costs and outcomes. It is critically important that the pendulum not swing too far in either direction in order to keep executive coaching a powerful component of an organization's overall leadership-development strategy.

The Current State of Research

The research basis for executive coaching is, to date, minimal (Kilburg, 2000). Most, though not all, writing in the field is based on what can be termed practice wisdom. Individual executive coaches have, not infrequently, described their practices, techniques, and outcomes in articles and books, and have been the subject of reports in the media. Their descriptions are essential for this emerging field as practitioners struggle to define its phenomena and key variables. Unfortunately, a variety of biases on the part of authors can influence their descriptions of practice wisdom, limiting the degree to which their conclusions can be valid or generalized.

As the field grows and matures, there is a need for more rigorous research on executive coaching. Additional research should help answer a number of questions that have emerged over the past two decades, many of which are described below. Research should also help to resolve, or at least clarify, some of the conflicts that have emerged among various approaches to the practice of executive coaching and provide a reality check on practitioners' claims. Luckily a growing number of researchers have entered the field, and more will no doubt follow.

Sources of Information on Executive Coaching Research

The TECF website, www.executivecoachingforum.com, lists and regularly updates announcements, research programs, and abstracts of all known peer-reviewed research reports and literature reviews. Click on "Research" to access this information. We invite your submissions and feedback.

Three research journals publish peer-reviewed articles on executive coaching:

- *Consulting Psychology Journal*, published by Division 13 of the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org)
- *Personnel Psychology*, loosely affiliated with the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (www.personnelpsychology.com)
- *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, affiliated with NTL and published by Sage Publications (www.sagepub.com)

Two additional practitioner journals have occasional articles on executive coaching with some research basis, though such articles are typically not peer reviewed:

- *Harvard Business Review* (www.hbr.com)
- *Organizational Dynamics*, published by Elsevier Press (www.elsevier.com)

Research on executive coaching that has been conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation can be found at *Dissertation Abstracts*, which can be accessed through a number of library databases including wwwlib.global.umi.com/dissertations.

Finally, a number of professional associations have research-based presentations on executive coaching at their regional and national conferences:

- The Academy of Management, Management Consulting Division (www.aomonline.org)
- The Society for Consulting Psychology, Division 13 of the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org)
- The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (www.siop.org)

In recent years, a number of consulting firms and business roundtable groups have conducted research on executive coaching, though their results are not always widely publicized or shared. Most are not subjected to peer review.

Major Questions in Executive Coaching Research

A partial listing of important research questions to date can be drawn almost directly from the definition of coaching as stated in this Handbook. Executive coaching is viewed as a multiparty set of relationship-based activities involving the client, her coach, and her organization. The goal is to enhance the capability of the executive and her ability to help the organization achieve short- and long-term goals. Each component of the definition suggests a range of largely unexplored research questions that can be organized under six topics:

1. The executive
2. The executive coach
3. The relationship between executive and coach
4. The executive coaching process
5. The organizational context of executive coaching
6. Coaching outcomes

(See Hunt and Weintraub, 2002, for a more thorough discussion of these questions.)

1. The Executive

- Who is most likely to benefit from executive coaching? Who is not?
 - What role do emotional maturity, personality, personal values, psychological defenses, intelligence, career stage, life stage, and other individual attributes of the executive play in executive coaching?
 - How does/should executive coaching relate to other aspects and roles of the executive's life (such as family and health)?
- What kinds of learning and development needs is executive coaching best suited for?
 - Can a useful typology of such needs be developed and validated?
- How can executives maximize the positive impact of executive coaching?
- What role does/should organizational position and role (CEO, VP) play on executive coaching processes and outcomes?
- What role does/should gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation play in executive coaching processes and outcomes?
- How are the expectations that executives bring to coaching shaped?
- How do executive clients define success in executive coaching?

2. The Executive Coach

- What are the appropriate qualifications for an executive coach?
- Should executive coaches be certified? If so, how?
- How should executive coaches be trained or developed?
 - What is the impact of experience and training in organizational leadership, organizational development, individual development, and consulting/counseling techniques?
- How do the executive coach's personality, life stage, career stage, and values influence his effectiveness as a coach?
- How does the executive coach's gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation influence coaching processes and outcomes?
- How does the executive coach define success in executive coaching?

3. The Relationship Between Executive and Coach

- What factors influence the initial match between the executive and her coach?
- How can/should the coach handle the executive's expectations of or assumptions about coaching?
- What role do conscious and unconscious aspects of the relationship between executive and coach play in the success or failure of the coaching?
- How does/should the relationship between executive and coach evolve over time?
- What ethical issues can and will emerge in the relationship between executive and coach?

4. The Executive Coaching Process

- What critical success factors are required for successful contracting between executive and coach? Under what conditions?
- What assessment processes are best suited to particular executives, executive issues, organizational contexts, and desired outcomes?
- What goal-setting processes are best suited to particular executives, executive issues, organizational contexts, and desired outcomes?
- What coaching activities or techniques are best suited to particular executives, executive issues, organizational contexts, and desired outcomes?
- What is the role of planned versus unplanned (emergent) learning opportunities in the success of executive coaching?
- How long should coaching last? How frequently should executive and coach meet to achieve the desired outcomes with specific issues and within particular organizational contexts?
- What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of executive coaching that takes place in person, by telephone, or via the Internet?
 - When should such communications tactics be used? When should they not be used?
- What theoretical frame or frames of reference are best suited to guide the executive coaching process? Under what circumstances?
 - Experiential learning (action, reflection, feedback)
 - Adult development

- Social systems interventions
- Psychodynamic
- Emotional intelligence
- Competency modeling
- What role does confidentiality play in executive coaching? What is/should be the limits of confidentiality?
 - How does confidentiality influence the potential for organizational or team learning?
- How can executive coaching best relate to other forms of leadership development such as job rotation, task force assignments, and classroom-based executive education?
- How should multiple coaching needs within the same team be handled? By one coach working with multiple team members, or multiple coaches each working with an individual team member? What factors influence the choice between the two options?
- When should team coaching supplement or supplant individual coaching? Under what conditions?

5. The Organizational Context of Executive Coaching

- What factors (industry, location, size, organizational culture, and business economics) shape an organization's use of executive coaching?
- How does executive coaching relate best to the larger organizational system within which the coaching takes place?
 - How should executive coaching fit with other human resources and leadership development structures and processes?
- How does the context of the referral for executive coaching influence the executive, executive coach, coaching process, and outcome? What is the impact of:
 - A culture of trust or mistrust?
 - A strong focus on performance?
 - An organization's values or mission?
 - Downsizing or other restructuring measures?
- How does the relationship between the executive and his immediate boss influence executive coaching?
 - How can the executive coach best improve this relationship?

- When should the executive coach try to influence this relationship?
- When should an executive consider bringing in a coach to help other individuals or an executive team?
- What ethical responsibilities does an executive have when bringing in a coach to work with an individual or team?
- How should the organization monitor the executive, the coach, the coaching process, and coaching outcomes?

6. Coaching Outcomes

- How does the coaching process change the executive?
 - How does executive coaching influence the executive's behavior, personal development, career development, leadership style, family life, and health?
- Does executive coaching help the executive's performance on the job? If so, under what conditions?
- Does executive coaching improve the following competencies, and under what conditions?
 - Strategy definition and execution
 - Vision setting and communications
 - Role relationships
 - Teamwork
 - Organizational and team learning
 - Product, process, or organizational innovation
- What kind of learning takes place as a result of executive coaching?
- Does coaching influence the executive's ethical decision-making and actions? If so, how?
- Is remedial executive coaching to prevent derailment possible? If so, under what conditions?
 - What are the limits of remedial coaching?
- How do organizations change by virtue of executive coaching?
- How can ROI for executive coaching best be assessed?
 - Is it possible to assess ROI for executive coaching?
 - Is it desirable and helpful to executives, organizations, and society to assess ROI?

A Summary of the Research

We have presented a rather daunting list of potential research questions. Obviously the list can be prioritized, at least to a degree. Some studies are capable of addressing multiple questions. When undertaking research, it is clear that we cannot just ask “Does executive coaching work?” or “What is the ROI on executive coaching?” Research in executive coaching is every bit as complex as in the field of counseling in general, which has been underway for decades. Both are complex, relationship-based interventions in which intervener, client, relationship, problem or goal, and context all play a role. They are also interventions in which society has a considerable economic and moral stake.

The reality remains, however, that as a multibillion-dollar enterprise, executive coaching cannot rely on practice wisdom as its only guide. Executives, their families, and their employing organizations have a compelling need for solid answers to most of the questions above. Similarly, researchers, particularly those from management and industrial/organizational/consulting psychology, have a tremendous opportunity in providing answers to such questions. The failure to adequately describe the outcomes, individual and organizational, of executive coaching and, in particular, the processes that lead to those outcomes, creates the potential that executive coaching will be guilty of providing “flawed advice” (Argyris, 2000).

The research effort requires both theory building and the theoretical testing of research designs. Theory building will be most useful if it is rooted in the data, an approach to research that builds “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Because grounded theory relies on the very careful reporting of data from cases, it should benefit from the strength of the field, the work of its practitioners. Careful and systematic reporting of cases will be much more useful in the long run than publications that are heavy on theory but short on data.

Theory building isn't the same as theory testing, however. Ultimately, in order to justify the considerable investments being made in executive coaching, it would be most helpful to demonstrate, through the comparison of treatment and control groups, which procedures have merit under a particular set of conditions. This can be done. A recent work by Smither et. al. (2003), using a treatment and control group experimental design, tests the assumption that 360 degree assessments supplemented with coaching yield better organizational results than the 360 alone. (Executive coaches will be pleased to note that this experimental design confirmed that coaching *is* of value, at least under the circumstances described in the study.)

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The Executive Coaching Forum

The purpose of the Executive Coaching Forum (TECF) is to establish definitions, guidelines, and standards for executive coaching, a practice area tightly defined

by the population it serves and the nature of the three-party contract among executive, coach, and sponsoring company.

Our charter is to improve leadership and organizational effectiveness by establishing best practices and advancing the understanding of executive coaching among all members of the coaching partnership and among the general public. We achieve these ends by conducting activities and making information available for establishing best practices, educating the public, and improving professional development and networking.

Background

In the spring of 1999, a group of executive coaches and executive development and human resource professionals in the Greater Boston area began a regular series of meetings. As we discussed how to develop and maintain the highest standards for the practice of executive coaching, we developed principles and guidelines for use in our own practices and organizations. Our goal in this Handbook is to share these proposed standards with the greater community. We hope to stimulate a continuing dialog and process that enhances the professionalism of executive coaching.

Over the past four years TECF has expanded its mission beyond the distribution of this Handbook to provide a virtual network on the World Wide Web for anyone supplying, receiving, seeking, learning, managing, or supporting executive coaching. Our website, www.executivecoachingforum.com, has provided a variety of free resources since May of 2001. They include this Handbook, a virtual Forum, links to other executive coaching resources, and executive coaching tools for executives, coaches, and HR professionals. Today, over 6000 people a month visit our site from all over the United States and dozens of other countries. This Handbook and other TECF resources are used

regularly by many Fortune 500 companies and other organizations, large and small, in many industries.

Future Development of Executive Coaching Standards and Guidelines

We plan to continually revise and improve *The Executive Coaching Handbook* based on your experience and feedback. We recognize that we are practicing in a newly defined arena and look forward to a time when we can make use of valid and reliable outcome studies, stories, and examples from practitioners. Future standards for executive coaching should continue to draw on related fields, including organization development and consulting psychology.

In the many conversations that have led to the drafting of this document, we uncovered myriad issues still to be addressed. These include training and credentials, licensing, and professional associations. We are tackling some of the issues through our website and virtual Forum. Our hope is that this Handbook and the Forum will continue to enhance executive coaching and address the issues arising out of this developing professional field for the mutual benefit of leaders, organizations, and the people they serve.

Our Board

Members of TECF's Board of Directors are listed below in alphabetical order:

Susan A. Ennis, M.Ed.
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Handbook Organization

The Executive Coaching Handbook is divided into four sections as follows:

Defining Executive Coaching describes executive coaching and the partnership required for maximum success. We believe executive coaching is most successful as a three-way partnership among coach, executive, and the executive's organization. Each partner has an obligation and responsibility to contribute to the success of the coaching process. Although the primary work is between executive and coach, coaching is always an organizational intervention and, as such, should be conducted within the context of the organization's goals and objectives.

Overarching Principles for Executive Coaching describes a set of values or goals that guide the coaching process. These principles provide a compass that the coach, the executive, and other members of the organization will use to set, maintain, and correct their course of action.

Guidelines for Practice provide procedural help for all coaching partners. These guidelines define the components of the process and outline the commitments that each partner must make.

Overview of Guidelines for Each Member of the Executive Coaching Partnership is a quick-reference guide for executives, coaches, and other interested parties in the executive's organization.

The Third Edition

Major changes to the third edition of the Handbook include:

- An update on recent trends in the field of executive coaching, including a discussion of the “commoditization” of coaching.
- An expanded definition of executive coaching and discussion of the differences between executive coaching and other forms of coaching and development.
- A summary of research to date on executive coaching, plus an agenda for future research in the field.

Contributors to This Handbook

Original drafters of Handbook are Susan Ennis, Judy Otto, Lewis Stern, Michele Vitti, M.A., and Nancy Yahanda, Ed.D. Other Human Resource and Management Consulting professionals from leading organizations in the Greater Boston business community also provided input to the first edition. They include Betty Bailey, Wendy Capland, William Hodgetts, Mary Jane Knudson, Kitti Lawrence, Lynne Richer, Casey Strumpf, and Ellen Wingard. Additional feedback for subsequent editions has come from executive coaching professionals from New Hampshire to Alabama and Tennessee, Minnesota and Ontario to Texas and California, and Great Britain to Chile.

Larissa Hordynsky and Lew Stern edited the original version of this Handbook. The third edition has been edited and updated by Susan Ennis, Bob Goodman, Larissa Hordynsky, Bill Hodgetts, James Hunt, Judy Otto, and Lew Stern. Bill Hodgetts oversaw the production and final editing of the Third Edition.

To help TECF improve its offerings and enhance executive coaching as a viable development solution, please review our website at www.executivecoachingforum.com.

E-mail your feedback and suggestions on the Handbook to Dr. Lew Stern, Stern Consulting, sternconsulting@comcast.net

Defining Executive Coaching

What Is Executive Coaching?

Executive coaching is a developing field. As such, its definition is still the subject of discussion and debate among practitioners, researchers, and consumers.

Executive coaching involves an executive, his coach, and his organizational context (as represented by the interests of his organization and supervisor, including the fact that the organization typically pays for coaching services). All are key stakeholders in the process. This fact by itself would appear to differentiate executive coaching from other interventions, such as career counseling and life coaching.

While both career counseling and life coaching can lend concepts and practice techniques that an executive coach might use, they focus solely on the individual client and his needs and goals. Executive coaching, in our view, focuses on the needs and goals of both the executive and the sponsoring organization. In that spirit, we offer the following definition of executive coaching.

Executive coaching is an experiential and individualized leader development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short- and long-term organizational goals. It is conducted through one-on-one interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect. The organization, an executive, and the executive coach work in partnership to achieve maximum impact.

Definition of Terms

Experiential. The development of the leader is accomplished primarily by practical, on-the-job approaches rather than through classroom or more abstract methods.

Individualized. The goals and specific activities are tailored to the unique aspects of the individual and the organizational system.

Leader development process: Executive coaching focuses on developing the executive's ability to influence, motivate, and lead others. Rather than relying on tactical problem solving or basic skill acquisition, executive coaching develops strategic thinking skills.

Leader: We use the term broadly to mean any individual who has the potential of making a significant contribution to the mission and purpose of the organization.

One-on-one: The primary coaching activities take place between the individual leader and the coach.

Build capability: Developing new ways of thinking, feeling, acting, learning, leading, and relating to others builds individual and organizational effectiveness.

Data from multiple perspectives: In order for the executive and her principal stakeholders to understand, clarify, and commit to appropriate coaching goals, various data collection methods are used to identify key factors and skills required in the organizational context. The appropriate use of interviews and standardized instruments assures accuracy and validity of data gathered from people representing a range of perspectives within the organization.

Mutual trust and respect: Adult learning works best when the executive and the coach, along with other members of the organization, treat each other as equals, focus on their mutual strengths, and believe in each others' integrity and commitment to both coaching and the organization.

Three Levels of Learning

Executive coaching involves three levels of learning:

1. Tactical problem solving
2. Developing leadership capabilities and new ways of thinking and acting that generalize to other situations and roles
3. “Learning how to learn”: developing skills and habits of self-reflection that ensure that learning will continue after coaching ends

The third level is an important and sometimes overlooked goal of coaching. Its aims are to eliminate an executive's long-term dependency on his coach and teach habits of learning and self-reflection that will last a lifetime, enabling him to keep developing throughout his career.

What Is a Coaching Partnership?

The coaching partnership is a win-win approach in which all partners plan the process together, communicate openly, and work cooperatively toward the ultimate accomplishment of overarching organizational objectives.

1. The executive, the coach, and other key stakeholders in the organization collaborate to create a partnership to ensure that the executive’s learning advances the organization’s needs and critical business mandates.

The executive coach can be external to the organization or an employee.

2. The partnership is based on agreed-upon ground rules, time frames, and specific goals and measures of success.
3. The coaching partnership uses tailored goals and approaches, including:
 - Creation of a development plan
 - Skill building
 - Performance improvement
 - Development for future assignments
 - Exploration, definition, and implementation of the executive’s leadership and the organization’s business objectives.

(From Robert Witherspoon and Randall P. White, *Four Essential Ways that Coaching Can Help Executives*, Center for Creative Leadership, 1997.)

4. The coaching process can, but need not necessarily, include:

- Pre-coaching needs analysis and planning
 - Contracting
 - Data gathering
 - Goal setting and development of coaching plan
 - Implementation of coaching plan
 - Measuring and reporting results
 - Transitioning to long-term development.
5. The coach applies several of the following practices, among others:
 - Problem solving and planning
 - Rehearsal (role play) and on-the-job practice
 - Feedback
 - Dialogue
 - Clarification of roles, assumptions, and priorities
 - Teaching and applying a variety of management and leadership tools
 - Referral to other developmental resources.
 6. The focus of the partnership is on using the executive's strengths and building the key competencies needed to achieve strategic business objectives.
 7. The partnership involves key stakeholders in the coaching process (called "other partners"), including:
 - the executive's manager
 - senior management
 - Human Resources
 - Organizational Development or Effectiveness
 - Executive Development
 - peers, including strategic business partners from other organizations
 - direct reports
 - other key people in the executive's life.
 8. Executive coaching is paid for by the organization that employs the executive.

9. A successful coaching partnership is guided by clear personal values, ethical guidelines, and experiences that establish the credibility of the coaching process and maintain the welfare of the executive and her coworkers.

What Is Different About Executive Coaching?

As coaching has grown in popularity over the past few years, it is only natural that some authors have tried to differentiate among types of coaching. Some of these categories define coaching type by its *goals* or *ends*. Career coaching, for instance, is defined as coaching designed to help individuals make enlightened career choices. Other attempts at categorization make distinctions based on the *means* used in a particular kind of coaching. As an example, presentation and communication skills coaching employs video feedback.

The practice of executive coaching may involve many of the types of coaching described below. Thus an executive coaching engagement may over time touch on the executive's career or personal life issues involving work/life balance, and use video feedback to work on some particular behavioral or communication problem. Two factors always distinguish executive coaching from these other types, however:

- It always involves a partnership among executive, coach, and organization.
- The individual goals of an executive coaching engagement must always link back and be subordinated to strategic organizational objectives.

A discussion of some common coaching types follows.

Personal/Life Coaching

The personal/life coach helps individuals gain awareness of and clarify their personal goals and priorities, better understand their thoughts, feelings, and options, and take appropriate actions to change their lives, accomplish their goals, and feel more fulfilled.

Career Coaching

The career coach helps individuals identify what they want and need from their career, then make decisions and take the needed actions to accomplish their career objectives in balance with the other parts of their lives.

Group Coaching

Group coaches work with individuals in groups. The focus can range from leadership development to career development, stress management to team building. Group coaching combines the benefits of individual coaching with the resources of groups. Individuals learn from each other and the interactions that take place within the group setting.

Performance Coaching

Performance coaches help employees at all levels better understand the requirements of their jobs, the competencies needed to fulfill those requirements, any gaps in their current performance, and opportunities to improve performance. Coaches then work with the employees, their bosses, and others in their workplace to help the employees fill performance gaps and develop plans for further professional development.

Newly Assigned Leader Coaching

Coaches of individuals assigned or hired into new leadership roles help these leaders to “onboard.” The goal of the coaching is to clarify with the leader’s key constituents the most important responsibilities of her new role, her deliverables in the first few months of the new assignment, and ways to integrate the team she will lead with the organization. The major focus of this type of coaching is on helping the new leader to assimilate and achieve her business objectives.

Relationship Coaching

The relationship coach helps two or more people to form, change, or improve their interactions. The context can be work, personal, or other settings.

High-Potential or Developmental Coaching

The coach works with organizations to develop the potential of individuals who have been identified as key to the organization's future or are part of the organization's succession plan. The focus of the coaching may include assessment, competency development, or assistance planning and implementing strategic projects.

Coaching to Provide Feedback Debriefing and Development Planning

Organizations that use assessment or 360 feedback processes often utilize coaches to help employees interpret the results of their assessments and feedback. In addition, coaches work with individuals to make career decisions and establish professional development plans based on feedback, assessment results, and other relevant data.

Targeted Behavioral Coaching

Coaches who provide targeted behavioral coaching help individuals to change specific behaviors or habits or learn new, more effective ways to work and interact with others. This type of coaching often helps individuals who are otherwise very successful in their current jobs or are taking on new responsibilities that require a change in specific behaviors.

Legacy Coaching

The legacy coach helps leaders who are retiring from a key role to decide on the legacy they would like to leave behind. The coach also provides counsel on transitioning out of the leadership role.

Succession Coaching

The succession coach helps assess potential candidates for senior management positions and prepares them for promotion to more senior roles. This type of coaching may be used in any organization that is experiencing growth or turnover in its leadership ranks. It is especially helpful in family businesses to maintain the viability of the firm. Since assessment is often part of this intervention, clear expectations and groundrules for confidentiality are essential. It may be necessary in some companies to use separate consultants for assessment and coaching.

Presentation/Communication Skills Coaching

This type of coaching helps individuals gain self-awareness about how they are perceived by others and why they are perceived in that way. Clients learn new ways to interact with others. The use of videorecording with feedback allows clients to see themselves as others do. The coach helps clients change the way they communicate and influence others by changing their words, how they say those words, and the body language they use to convey their intended messages.

Team Coaching

One or more team coaches work with the leader and members of a team to establish their team mission, vision, strategy, and rules of engagement with one another. The team leader and members may be coached individually to facilitate team meetings and other interactions, build the effectiveness of the group as a high-performance team, and achieve team goals.

Overarching Principles for Executive Coaching

Overarching principles are the values or aspirational goals that guide the coaching process. These principles provide a compass that the coach, the executive, and other members of the executive's organization will use to set, maintain, and correct their course of action.

1. Systems Perspective

Executive coaching is one of many approaches or types of interventions that can be used to promote organizational and leadership development. The goal of developing a single leader must always be pursued within the larger objective of organizational success. Since executive coaching should be conducted as one of the components of an overall plan for organizational development, executive and coach must both be aware of the larger objectives.

Often the components of the executive coaching process are single, discrete activities in a larger organizational development initiative. These components include pre-coaching needs analysis and planning, contracting, data gathering, goal setting, coaching, measuring and reporting results, and transitioning to long-term development. Such coaching activities do not usually have the impact of full executive coaching unless they are conducted as part of the process described under Guidelines for Practice in this Handbook.

The coach must have enough expertise in organizational dynamics and business management to conduct the coaching with awareness and understanding of the systems issues. Approaching executive coaching from a systems perspective requires the coach to recognize and appreciate the

complex organizational dynamics in which the executive operates. The coach ensures a systemic approach through continual awareness of the impact of the coaching process on everyone in the system and vice versa. Accordingly, the coach encourages a shift in the executive's viewpoint, from seeing himself as separate to recognizing his interdependence with other people and processes in the organization. This approach encourages respect for the complexity of organizational life and an ability to penetrate beyond this complexity to the underlying structures. In effect, the coach helps the executive to see both "the forest and the trees."

Coaching from a systems perspective helps coach and the executive assess development needs. By thinking in terms of the big picture and core issues, both partners will understand long- and short-term strategies and how all the pieces of the organization fit together into a whole. Systems thinking also encourages all partners to appreciate the impact of the executive's behavioral change on other facets of the organization.

Executive's Commitments

- Explore changes in vision, values, and behaviors.
- Examine how your own behaviors and actions affect the systems in which you operate.
- Work in open exploration with your coach; help your coach to understand the forces of the organizational system.
- During the coaching process, take responsibility for your actions and remain aware of the impact of your behavioral changes on others and the organization as a whole.

Coach's Commitments

- See the executive, his position, and the organization through multiple lenses and perspectives.

- ❑ Maintain an objective and impartial perspective by resisting collusion with the executive or the organization.
- ❑ Recognize and appreciate the complexity of the organizational structure in which the executive functions.
- ❑ Encourage the executive to explore both long- and short-term views.
- ❑ Recognize the interaction of all parts in the whole – especially how change in one of the executive’s behaviors may affect other behaviors and other people.
- ❑ Help the executive distinguish between high- and low-leverage changes. Encourage commitment to the highest-leverage actions to achieve results.

Other Partners’ Commitments

- ❑ Identify and share organizational information that may help the coach and the executive recognize and understand the context, organizational forces, business-related issues, and financial constraints they must factor into the coaching.
- ❑ Guide the coach regarding organizational changes that may influence the coaching.
- ❑ Be willing to examine and possibly change aspects of the organizational system in order to improve both the executive’s and the organization’s performance.

2. Results Orientation

Executive coaching is planned and executed with a focus on specific, desired results. The executive, her coach, and the organization begin by deciding the ultimate goals of the coaching. Then they agree on specific results for each goal. Key members of the coaching partnership sign off on a written coaching plan that specifies expected deadlines for accomplishing each goal.

Appropriate measurements are applied to each goal, including follow-up and feedback reports. Actual activities, during the coaching sessions and in between, focus specifically on achieving the agreed-upon goals for the executive and her organization.

Executive's Commitments

- Take responsibility for focusing the coaching on the results you care about most.
- Commit adequate time between coaching sessions to work on the results.
- Prepare well for each coaching session.
- Monitor your own results and communicate with coaching stakeholders about your accomplishments and the gaps that still exist.
- Enlist support to attain results.

Coach's Commitments

- Push the executive and her organization to be specific about desired accomplishments and how results will be measured.
- Structure each coaching session with a results-driven agenda, following up on previous meetings and the actions taken between sessions.
- Facilitate communication between the executive and the organization about what the executive is working on, her progress, and her support needs.

- ❑ Plan follow-up meetings to track progress toward coaching goals. Drive these meetings even in the face of the organization's work demands.
- ❑ Continually check in with the executive to update coaching goals based on changes in her role, the business environment, and priorities.
- ❑ Focus coaching sessions on specific issues, executive development, and action items that contribute to the coaching goals.

Other Partners' Commitments

- ❑ Communicate directly about what you most want and need the executive to do.
- ❑ Hold the executive and the coach accountable to the agreed-upon goals.
- ❑ Give constant feedback, both positive and negative, to help both the executive and coach stay on track.
- ❑ Demonstrate your trust in the executive.
- ❑ Follow through with the commitments you make as part of the coaching to provide support, attend meetings, communicate with others, and remove barriers.

3. Business Focus

Executive coaching is primarily concerned with the development of the executive in the context of organizational needs. The coaching objective is to maximize the executive's effectiveness and his contribution to the organization. The coach develops an understanding of the broader business context in which the executive operates, with particular emphasis on key business initiatives directly relevant to the executive. The executive and coach then agree upon specific results that best reflect the organization's business objectives. Successful executive coaching links a business focus with human processes by closely aligning the executive's development with critical business needs.

Executive's Commitments

- As soon as coaching begins, inform your coach of any relevant information about your company, its business strategy, your key initiatives, and how your role fits into the overall strategy.
- Regularly update your coach on any changes in business direction or outlook that might influence business strategy, your role, or your measures of success. Adapt your development needs as appropriate.
- Take ultimate responsibility for aligning your coaching with the organization's business focus.

Coach's Commitments

- Strive to maximize the executive's contribution to the organization's needs.
- Maintain an ongoing awareness of the executive's business and leadership development objectives, market outlook, competition, products and services, and clients or customers.

- ❑ Understand the indicators of success and key business metrics that determine how the organization evaluates the executive's performance and results.
- ❑ Be flexible in adapting the executive's development needs to changing business priorities.

Other Partners' Commitments

- ❑ Provide the coach with enough information to understand the context for the coaching. Such information may include an overview of the organization, strategic and business planning documents, organizational charts, and key business initiatives.
- ❑ Whenever possible, inform the coach of changes in the organization that may affect the executive, including mergers and acquisitions, restructuring or downsizing, changes in leadership, key roles and relationships, and relevant business initiatives.

4. Partnership

Although executive coaching focuses primarily on individual work with an executive, it is ultimately an organizational intervention. The executive and her coach are obviously at the center of the process, but other stakeholders are also involved. They may include the executive's manager, her direct reports, the Human Resources business partner or generalist, the individual responsible for executive development, training, or organizational development, and other executives or consultants. The time commitment and level of involvement will vary for each stakeholder. However, for the coaching outcome to be of the greatest benefit for the organization as a whole, all stakeholders must see themselves as partners in the coaching process.

Executive's Commitments

- Assume ownership of your learning. Use your coach as a consultant to help you maximize your unique learning style.
- Be forthright about what is and isn't working in coaching sessions.
- Engage wholeheartedly in the agreed-upon coaching assignments.
- Take required actions for learning, and reflect on those actions.

Coach's Commitments

- Maintain the highest level of professionalism in serving both the executive and the organization as your clients.
- Communicate openly about the progress of the coaching with the executive and other stakeholders (within the limits of agreed-upon confidentiality).
- Invest in the professional and personal success of the executive and in the success of her organization.

Other Partners' Commitments

- View the coach as a partner with the organization, working to increase both organizational and executive learning.
- Provide feedback, within the confines of confidentiality agreements, to both the coach and the executive in the initial data-gathering phase and throughout the coaching.
- Invest in a successful outcome by becoming familiar with and consistently applying the overarching principles and guidelines set out in this Handbook.

5. Competence

Executive coaching requires the use of highly skilled and experienced professional coaches. These coaches maintain high standards of competence and exercise careful judgment in determining how best to serve their clients' needs, choosing the most appropriate methods from their range of expertise.

We believe that competence of an executive coach is not determined by any arbitrary academic degree or coaching certification (although many such degrees or certifications may represent completion of education, training, and objective evaluation on some of the following relevant topics and capabilities). Rather, effective executive coaches are knowledgeable and competent in applying the following areas of expertise: Individual and leadership assessment; adult learning; organizational systems and development; change management; leadership development; business knowledge and expertise (e.g. strategic planning, finance, sales, marketing, the executive's industry and business environment, etc.); and other special areas of expertise demanded by the needs and coaching goals of the executive they coach (e.g. career development, board relations, team building, organizational structure, conflict management, other specific business functions and specialties). They fully understand and adhere to the principles and guidelines in this Handbook. And finally, competent executive coaches are perceived by the executives they coach as capable, independent, practical, and interested in the executive and his/her business, flexible, and able to serve as a good role model.

Executive coaches recognize the limitations of their expertise and provide only those services for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They constantly strive to increase their competence through client

interactions, continuing their education and staying up to date with best practices in coaching.

Executive's Commitments

- Determine your own criteria for a coach, including style, training, and specific areas of competence, expertise, and experience. Apply these criteria to selecting the best coach for *you*.
- Take an active role in your own development by providing feedback to the coach on how the coaching is progressing and what gaps still exist.
- Communicate with stakeholders of your coaching about progress and results.
- Provide your organization and your coach with feedback, both positive and negative, about the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process.

Coach's Commitments

- Consistently operate at the highest level of competence.
- Accurately represent to clients your training, experience, areas of expertise, and limitations.
- Understand the requirements of each coaching engagement. Be objective and flexible in choosing methods to meet these requirements.
- Be aware of your limitations; decline assignments that are beyond your experience, knowledge, capability, or interest, or where there is not a good match between you and the executive.
- Maintain a network of contacts with other qualified professionals and refer clients when you are not the best possible resource.
- Update your knowledge of the client organization's core business as well as best practices in coaching.
- Extend your knowledge and skills through continuing education and other professional development activities.

- Properly apply psychological and organizational assessment techniques, tests, or instruments. Use only those for which you are qualified or certified.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Maintain high standards in screening and recommending executive coaches for assignments.
- If you are responsible for providing coaching referrals or information to your organization, keep current on the reputation of coaches and best coaching practices.
- Select coaches based on their competence and fit with the executive's and the client organization's needs.
- Monitor the effectiveness of coaching in the organization and provide feedback to both the coaches and the executives.
- Evaluate the competency of coaches and their results to determine their future use in your organization.

6. Integrity

Upon beginning executive coaching, the executive is placing significant trust in the coach and the organization. He is allowing himself to be vulnerable and open. To ensure that he remains receptive to feedback, new ideas, and learning, the organization, coach, and other stakeholders must establish and maintain a psychologically safe and respectful environment.

The relationship between the executive and his coach is sensitive and often private. To maintain this relationship, all stakeholders must be clear in their presentation of issues, organizational information, coaching goals, coaching activities, and ground rules for confidentiality. All partners must adhere to clearly articulated guidelines and rules of engagement. Breaches of trust or actions that run counter to agreements and guidelines are extremely serious, especially if the executive suffers negative consequences such as a loss of reputation, income, or relationships. All parties must therefore function at the highest levels of integrity and candor when involved in executive coaching activities.

Executive's Commitments

- Trust your coach and the coaching process once you are assured of appropriate safeguards. Remain open, willing to learn, and appropriately vulnerable.
- Take an active role in establishing appropriate guidelines for your coaching.
- Adhere to agreements of confidentiality, anonymity, and information sharing not only about you, but also about everyone involved.
- Work within the coaching contract and its learning goals, unless all parties revise these goals. (For example, do not treat a developmental coaching contract as a job-search opportunity.)
- Be honest and candid with your coach about you and your situation.

- Follow up on your commitments.
- Provide your coach and the organization with forthright and constructive performance-improvement feedback.

Coach's Commitments

- Develop and adhere to a set of professional guidelines, especially in the areas of confidentiality, conflict of interest, and expertise.
- Abide by the organization's existing values, ethical practices, confidentiality and proprietary agreements, business practices, and Human Resource policies.
- Honor the relationship you have established with both the executive and the organization, seeking resolution when conflicts arise.
- Help the organization to develop guidelines on how its managers and employees will learn in their jobs. Follow and embellish an organization's learning contract. Strictly apply existing standards for dealing with personal data, or provide such standards if the organization does not have any.
- Discuss with the executive organizational requests for information about him and his coaching, including status updates, feedback data, and input for reviews.
- Act in the executive's best interests and well-being.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Provide coaching guidelines, standards, and business practices that meet the needs of all parties.
- Present your perspective on the need for coaching, the executive's situation, the organizational context, performance concerns, and organizational goals for coaching in a realistic and forthright manner.
- Inform all parties if the goals or information you have provided change significantly during the course of the coaching.
- Establish and adhere to standards for the learning contract, including purpose and objectives, timelines, scope and types of assessment, measures of success, identification and roles of stakeholders,

confidentiality agreements, use of personal and coaching information, and distribution of information.

- ❑ Establish a problem-resolution process for coaching issues, especially ethical practices.
- ❑ Provide both executive and coach with ongoing feedback and support.
- ❑ Function within the learning and business agreements. Avoid putting the coach or executive in difficult positions by requesting feedback or personal data, input for performance reviews, or promotion discussions.

7. Judgment

Executive coaching is a balance of science, art, and expert improvisation. No matter how many guidelines are developed and followed, successful coaching requires that you continually step back, evaluate the situation, weigh the options, and apply good judgment for well-balanced decisions. An executive's influence is determined not only by her attributes and skills, but also by how others perceive her, plus her match to the needs, circumstances, and culture of the organization. All coaching partners offer different perspectives which, combined with good judgment, provide the executive with a dynamic learning experience.

There is no recipe for the perfect coaching experience. Along the way, unpredictable challenges, conflicts, and opportunities arise. Whether these situations help or hinder the executive's development depends upon the judgment stakeholders' exercise in an ever-changing work environment.

Executive's Commitments

- Maintain an open mind and be willing to change it.
- Focus on the greater good.
- Weigh all perspectives.
- Ask for help.
- Be flexible.
- Try new approaches.
- Accept the credit and blame when they are yours. Admit your strengths and weaknesses to be able to deal with them effectively.
- Make decisions by balancing hard data with intuition.
- Be honest and direct.

- Take reasonable risks.

Coach's Commitments

- Always maintain a high level of professionalism.
- Do not mix personal and professional relationships that could bias your judgment in a coaching situation.
- Avoid any activities that could result in a conflict of interest.
- Build and maintain a communication network with all coaching partners.
- Listen attentively, with an open mind.
- Be honest and direct about your intentions and points of view.
- Prevent misunderstandings by explaining your activities beforehand whenever they could be misunderstood.
- Do nothing that could be misinterpreted as an impropriety within the standards of the executive's organization.
- Tailor your approach to the priorities and preferences of the executive and the coaching partnership.
- Bring the members of the partnership together to facilitate decision-making.
- Hear all relevant perspectives and mediate conflicts.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Focus on the development and success of the organization and the executive.
- Be honest and direct about your goals and perspectives on the organization and the executive.
- Consider all available information before making a judgment.
- Be open-minded.
- Be flexible.

- ❑ Support the executive and coach in following through with the judgments they make about the coaching.
- ❑ Be balanced in your judgments regarding the coaching: short vs. long term, work vs. personal life, data vs. intuition, and individual vs. organizational good.

Guidelines for Practice

These guidelines provide procedural help for all partners in the coaching process. They define the components of the coaching and outline the commitments that each partner makes.

1. Managing Confidentiality

The executive and other members of the organization must be able to open up and share information with the coach and one another without fear that the information will be passed on inappropriately or without their approval.

Because each coaching situation is unique, it is important for all partners to develop a formal, written confidentiality agreement before the coaching begins. This agreement specifies what information will and will not be shared, in which circumstances, with whom, and how. The agreement helps all coaching partners remain sensitive to confidentiality issues from each other's points of view. Coaching partners should communicate with other members of the partnership before sharing any information with anyone outside the partnership.

Coach's Commitments

- ❑ **Guidelines:** Work within the proprietary and confidentiality guidelines noted in the organization's financial, legal, and business contracts and documents.
- ❑ **Organizational information:** In general, within the boundaries of the law, keep all organizational information confidential unless it is otherwise available to the public.

Exception to this guideline: You may be required to reveal to the appropriate representatives of the organization, and possibly to legal authorities, any information regarding illegal or unethical improprieties or circumstances

that pose a physical or emotional threat to any individual, group, or organization.

- ❑ **Information about the executive:** Do not share with anyone except the executive himself any details regarding that executive unless members of the coaching partnership have agreed otherwise.

Exception to this guideline: You are often obligated to provide the organization with a summary of your conclusions on the executive's current and potential ability to serve in his role. Share this summary with the executive and get his input as appropriate. Obtain a detailed agreement from all partners on what this summary will and will not include before the coaching begins.

- ❑ **Feedback from others about the executive:** You may often get feedback, usually under promise of anonymity, from members of the organization or other people familiar with the executive. Members of the coaching partnership should agree on the anonymity and confidentiality of such information before it is collected. You should also obtain agreement, before coaching begins, on exactly how anonymously the feedback will be reported: no identification, identification by category of person (work group, level, etc.) or by specific name. You are obliged to the people from whom you obtain this feedback to be clear up front about the terms of this anonymity and confidentiality and to work strictly within these terms. Present any feedback to the executive in verbatim or summary form.

Commitments of the Executive and Other Partners

- ❑ Members of the organization who, as a result of coaching, learn confidential information about the executive, keep that information confidential unless otherwise agreed before the coaching begins.
- ❑ The executive responds to feedback from others in non-defensive ways, without second-guessing who might have said what or retaliating for feedback that is difficult to hear. This non-defensive response maximizes the trust the executive will share with others in the future.
- ❑ All members of the coaching partnership ensure that no confidential information coming out of the coaching process is shared electronically unless they can control access to that information.
- ❑ Before coaching begins, all partners consider how the confidentiality of each of the following types of information will be managed. They agree on

what will or will not be shared, with whom, by whom, when, in what form, and under what circumstances:

- Assessment results
 - Coaching goals
 - Job hunting and career aspirations
 - 360-degree feedback
 - Performance appraisals
 - Interpersonal conflicts
 - Details of coaching discussions
 - Proprietary or organizationally sensitive information
- The organization identifies an internal resource who can advise coaches and stakeholders on questions of confidentiality and other sensitive topics, and who can help resolve these issues.

2. Pre-coaching Activities

Certain activities can determine if coaching is appropriate in the first place, help select the most appropriate coach, and prepare both coach and executive for the process. This important set of behind-the-scenes activities, usually conducted by HR, includes sourcing, selecting, and orienting coaches, consulting with executives on their needs, matching coach to executive, and establishing standards for practice. The intent of these pre-coaching activities is to ensure the best possible experience and outcomes for the executive and the organization.

Executive's Commitments

- Consult with appropriate stakeholders to determine if executive coaching is a viable option for you. Consider your organization's overall development focus, your specific learning needs, and the skills and experience of available coaches.
- Conduct exploratory interviews with several coaches before selecting the one who is best for you.
- Handle all business and financial contract requirements yourself, or make sure appropriate people in your organization handle them.
- Provide your coach with the necessary background information about your organization, specific business documents, and personal information.
- Begin the coaching process with a willingness to learn.

Coach's Commitments

- Participate in the organization's process for selecting, matching, and orienting executive coaches.
- Provide the organization and the executive with requested background information about you and your practice, your rates, business practices, and references.
- Partner with the Human Resources staff and other stakeholders as needed.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Establish business practices and standards for executive coaching.
- Develop a coach selection and orientation process.
- Apply criteria for analyzing coaching needs and matching the executive with the most appropriate coach.
- Provide feedback to the coaches you do not select.
- Consult with the executive to provide guidance and support in determining coaching needs, requirements, and desired outcomes.
- Partner with coaches to ensure their best fit with the organization and the executive.

3. Contracting

The purpose of contracting in executive coaching is to ensure productive outcomes, clarify roles, prevent misunderstandings, establish learning goals, and define business and interpersonal practices. There are three major components of contracting: the Learning Contract, the Business/Legal/Financial Contracts, and the Personal Contract between the executive and the coach.

The Learning Contract includes:

- Purpose and objectives
- Timelines
- Scope and types of assessment
- Milestones
- Measures of success
- Identification and roles of stakeholders
- Confidentiality agreements
- Guidelines for the use of personal and coaching information
- Guidelines for the communication and distribution of information

Business/Legal/Financial Contracts include:

- Purpose and objectives
- Executive coaching standards and guidelines
- Organizationally sponsored proprietary and confidentiality statements
- Guidelines for relevant business practices
- Total costs of service
- Who is paying for coaching services
- Fee and payment schedules
- Guidelines for billing procedures
- Agreements on expense reimbursements

- Confirmation of the coach's professional liability insurance

Personal Contracts between the coach and the executive include:

- Guidelines on honesty, openness, and reliability between executive and coach
- Understanding of the coach's theoretical and practical approach and how coaching sessions will be structured
- Agreements on scheduling, punctuality, and cancellation of meetings
- Scoping of how much pre-work coach and executive will do before each coaching session
- Guidelines on giving and receiving feedback
- Understanding of when the coach will be available to the executive and vice versa, and how contact will be made
- Agreements on follow-up and documentation
- Confirmation of locations and times for meetings and phone calls

Executive's Commitments

- Actively participate in establishing learning and personal contracts.
- As your organization deems appropriate, participate in establishing, monitoring, and administering business/legal/financial contract(s) with the coach.
- Adhere to the learning contract and use it to gauge progress and success.
- Adhere to the personal contract and hold the coach to it as well.

Coach's Commitments

- Share your own standards and guidelines for contracting with the executive and organization while respecting and agreeing to use the organization's standards.
- Actively use the learning contract to plan and deliver coaching and to assess progress and results.
- Use the personal contract as the set of guidelines to follow in all interactions with the executive; hold the executive to the guidelines as well.

- Negotiate the terms of the contracts in good faith or have the appropriate representative(s) from your practice do so. Comply with the terms of the contract in full, or reestablish them as mutually agreeable between your practice and the executive's organization.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Establish and disseminate standards for learning contracts in your organization.
- Actively participate in establishing and supporting the executive's learning contract.
- Respect the personal contract as established between the coach and executive.
- Ensure that the coach has and uses business/legal/financial contractual information.
- Expedite the contracting and payment process in your organization in support of the executive and the coach.

4. Assessment

The assessment phase of executive coaching provides both the coach and the executive with important information upon which to base a developmental action plan. The assessment is customized, taking into account the needs of the executive and the norms and culture of the organization. The coach can select among a wide variety of assessment instruments, including personality, learning, interest, and leadership style indicators. Observing the executive in action in her usual work setting provides assessment data, as does interviewing her, her peers, direct reports, manager, and other stakeholders. In some cases the coach administers a formal 360-degree assessment.

There are times when an executive or her organization chooses not to initiate a full executive coaching process. Sometimes, rather than providing full coaching, the executive participates in feedback debriefing/development planning. This process can be appropriate for gathering data, receiving feedback, and creating a development plan. It is often conducted without an executive coaching partnership as recommended in this Handbook. Without that partnership, however, it can be difficult for the executive to implement change in oneself or in the system.

When separate assessment and development planning has been done and coaching is added after the fact, it may be necessary to include others in further data gathering, review, and goal setting. When assessment and planning are done without a formal coaching phase, some coaching should accompany the presentation and review of the results. This will help the executive not only understand the data and their implications, but also make the best use of the information to increase self-awareness and identify development areas with the greatest potential for success.

In addition to assessing the executive, it is also valuable to assess the team and organization with and within which the executive works. Such additional assessments are an important part of the systems perspective of executive coaching. By understanding the team and organizational environment, the executive and her coach can better determine what to change and how to achieve that change.

Additional assessments include such variables as the organizational culture, team communication, organizational trust, quality, employee satisfaction, efficiency, and profitability. These systems factors may indicate how the organization operates, the results achieved, or predictive measures of likely success. They can be assessed through direct observation, questionnaires, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and other methods. The data collected on the organizational system are often valuable to share with others besides the executive. If the larger assessment is contemplated, the coaching partnership needs to decide ahead of time how to deal with the data and include these decisions in the learning contract.

Executive's Commitments

- Maintain an open attitude toward feedback and other assessment results, considering all information as hypotheses to be proved or disproved.
- Invest the required time to expedite the assessment phase.
- Partner with the coach to identify situations, such as meetings and events, which might provide on you and your organization.
- Ask questions and digest feedback to make the best use of assessment information.

Coach's Commitments

- Be knowledgeable in a broad range of assessment methodologies.

- Administer only those instruments for which you have been fully trained/certified or otherwise adequately prepared.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the executive by protecting the assessment data.
- Provide a safe, supportive environment in which to deliver assessment feedback. Deliver feedback in ways that encourage the executive to act upon her assessment.
- Offer a clear context for the strengths and limitations of the testing process.
- Help the executive use her assessment data to create a development action plan.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Respect the agreed-upon level of confidentiality for executive coaching data.
- Provide information about the executive and the organization.
- Partner with the coach and executive to identify ways for the coach to directly observe the executive and the organization.

5. Goal Setting

Executive coaching is driven by specific goals agreed upon by all members of the coaching partnership. These goals focus on achievements and changes the executive can target, both for himself and for his organization. Initial goals are established when coaching begins and revised or refined as coaching progresses. Based on whether they should be achieved within weeks, months, or over a longer time period, goals can be divided into short-, mid-, and long-term targets.

Goals are based on valid and reliable data that exemplify how the executive should learn new skills, change his behavior, work on organizational priorities, or achieve specific business results. After a specified time period, progress is measured against goals and they are updated to adapt to the executive's changing capabilities and the organization's evolving priorities. Goal achievement is measured both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Executive's Commitments

- Collaborate with and listen to your stakeholders to become aware of how others perceive your needs for change and development.
- Be honest about your own priorities for coaching.
- Clarify specifically what you will need to do so that others perceive you as achieving your goals.
- Invest time in the coaching and on the job based on the established goals.

Coach's Commitments

- Facilitate collaboration between the executive and his stakeholders to identify and agree upon coaching goals.
- Accept responsibility only for coaching activities that are based on specific, measurable goals.

- Help members of the coaching partnership gather valid and reliable data as a basis for establishing goals.
- Document the coaching goals and communicate them to all partners.
- Assess coaching progress and adjust goals based on interim results and changing priorities.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Be honest and direct about your goals for the coaching.
- Collaborate with the executive and other partners to agree on specific, measurable, achievable, challenging, time-bound, and practical goals.
- Base the goals on valid and reliable data about the executive's performance and organizational priorities.
- Provide ongoing feedback to both executive and coach on the executive's progress toward his goals.
- Support the executive's efforts to achieve his goals.
- Allow the executive to take the agreed-upon time to achieve his goals before changing his responsibilities or the resources he needs.

6. Coaching

The quality of the coaching relationship is a key element of success. The coach creates a safe environment in which the executive can feel comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn and develop. Drawing from a broad knowledge base and a solid repertoire of learning tools, the coach offers guidance and activities that help the executive meet her learning goals. Conversations explore the executive's current work situation to find practical, business-focused "learning lab" opportunities.

The practical activity of coaching is based on principles of adult learning: awareness, action, and reflection. Using data gathered from the assessment phase of the process, the coach engages the executive in discussion and activities designed to:

- Enhance self-awareness of the implications of typical behaviors
- Learn skills, build competencies, change behaviors, and achieve results
- Reflect on ways to improve and refine skills and behaviors

Learning tools and activities may include, but are not limited to, purposeful conversation, rehearsal and role-plays, videotaping, supportive confrontation and inquiry, relevant reading, work analysis and planning, and strategic planning.

After the assessment is complete and goals are established, additional forms of coaching or development besides executive coaching may be required as part of the executive's learning. These types of coaching and development activities include, among others, career coaching, management development training, personal coaching, presentation skills training, coaching on dressing for success, organizational development consultation, process reengineering, and video coaching. When the coach has expertise in these areas and they fall within the scope of the learning contract, the coach may provide the

assistance directly. If the coach is not qualified, or the additional coaching is beyond the scope of the learning contract, other arrangements are made. The coach may make appropriate referrals or work with other members of the organization to obtain the additional help.

Executive's Commitments

- Maintain an open attitude toward experimenting with new perspectives and behaviors.
- Willingly be vulnerable and take risks.
- Focus on your own growth within the context of your current and future organizational role.
- Transfer learning gained through coaching to your day-to-day work.
- Exchange feedback with your coach about the helpfulness of the coaching.
- Seek feedback from others in the organization about the results of your coaching.

Coach's Commitments

- Adhere to the standards and guidelines for practice outlined in this Handbook.
- Maintain the coaching focus on the executive's learning goals.
- Prepare relevant action items for all coaching meetings.
- Role-model effective leadership practices.
- Apply adult learning principles during coaching.
- Participate actively in all meetings with the executive and other stakeholders.
- Offer truthful and relevant feedback.
- Create an environment that supports exploration and change.
- Make appropriate referrals to other resources when you are not the best source for additional assistance.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Maintain a supportive and patient attitude toward the change process.
- Provide feedback to both the executive and the coach on progress and concerns.
- Offer to mentor, coach, role model, and support the executive from your own perspective within the organization.
- Assist the executive and coach in finding additional resources within or outside the organization when help beyond the scope of the coaching or the coach's area of expertise is needed.

7. Transitioning to Long-Term Development

Upon completing the coaching sessions, the executive and his coach take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the executive will be able to continue his development. Applying the results of the coaching within the context of the executive's long-term development is an important part of this process. It usually includes the joint preparation of a long-term development plan identifying future areas of focus and action steps. The coach may also recommend a range of internal and external resources relevant to the executive's long-term development needs.

In most cases transitioning includes handing off the development plan to the executive's manager or another stakeholder who agrees to monitor future progress in partnership with the executive. The coach, executive, and other stakeholder incorporate into the long-term plan a regular review of progress toward objectives or goal reassessment. A successful executive coaching process serves as a catalyst for the executive's long-term development.

Executive's Commitments

- When the coaching process is complete, discuss its results with your coach; including how successfully you feel your development needs have been addressed.
- Identify any areas where gaps might exist or further progress could be made.
- Identify any areas that may become more critical to address in your anticipated future roles.
- Participate in formulating a long-term development plan identifying specific areas of focus and action steps.
- Identify a manager or other organizational stakeholder who will take responsibility for monitoring your future development.

- ❑ Hold yourself accountable for adhering to your action plans, including a regular review of progress with your manager or other stakeholder.
- ❑ Provide feedback to your coach on performance, strengths, and development needs.
- ❑ Provide your organization with a forthright assessment of the coach's capabilities and organizational fit.

Coach's Commitments

- ❑ Use your knowledge and expertise to guide the executive and other stakeholders in developing a long-range plan that targets areas of focus and action steps.
- ❑ Recommend internal and external means of development that best fit the needs of the executive and the organization.
- ❑ Communicate with the executive's manager or other stakeholders to ensure commitment to his future development, including regular progress reviews.
- ❑ After the coaching ends, make yourself available for questions and clarification.
- ❑ Check in with the executive occasionally, as appropriate, to maintain the relationship.

Other Partners' Commitments

- ❑ Support the executive's future development, including a long-term development plan.
- ❑ Facilitate internal and external means of development for the executive including, but not limited to, rotational assignments, stretch assignments, mentoring opportunities, task force leadership or participation, and internal or external seminars or courses.
- ❑ Share constructive feedback about the executive's progress toward development objectives.
- ❑ Evaluate the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process for future use in the organization.

- Provide feedback to the coach on performance, strengths, and development needs.

Overview of Guidelines for Each Member of the Executive Coaching Partnership

Executive's Guidelines

Managing Confidentiality

- Partner with the coach and other members of your organization to write a confidentiality agreement that specifies what information will and will not be shared, in which circumstances, with whom, and how, including guidelines on electronic forms of communication.
- Whenever there is a question regarding how information is or should be handled, communicate directly with other members of the coaching partnership to come to an agreement.
- Respond to feedback from others in non-defensive ways, without second-guessing who might have said what or retaliating for feedback that is difficult to hear.

Pre-coaching Activities

- Consult with your stakeholders to determine if executive coaching is right for you, establish the appropriate goals, and select the best coach.
- Work in partnership with others to make sure all business and financial contracts are expedited.
- Inform your coach about you, your organization, and your situation, and begin the process with a willingness to learn

Contracting

- Actively participate in establishing a learning contract and a personal contract for your coaching.
- As appropriate in your organization, participate in establishing, monitoring, and administering business/legal/financial contract(s) with your coach.

- Adhere to the learning and personal contracts. Use them to guide what you do in activities related to your coaching, including how you gauge your progress and success.

Assessment

- Invest the needed time to expedite your assessment.
- Maintain an open attitude toward feedback and other assessment results.
- Work collaboratively with your coach to identify and ask questions about situations that might provide insight into you and your organization.
- Make the best use of feedback and other assessment information to change you and your organization as needed.

Goal Setting

- Collaborate with stakeholders to understand how others perceive your needs for change and development.
- Be honest about your own priorities for coaching.
- Clarify what you need to do to achieve your goals.
- Invest the time in coaching and on the job to achieve your goals.

Coaching

- Be open and willing to try new things and take appropriate risks.
- Focus on what you need to do to learn and take action within the context of your work role.
- Exchange feedback with your coach and others in your organization about your performance and how the coaching has helped you achieve the desired results.

Transitioning to Long-Term Development

- Work with your coach and others in your organization to identify improvements and opportunities for further progress.
- Participate in formulating a long-term plan for your continued development.

- ❑ Establish an agreement with an appropriate person in your organization to support and monitor your future development.
- ❑ Follow through with your plan and invest the time needed to achieve your long-term development goals.
- ❑ Communicate with your coach and the appropriate people in your organization about the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process.

Coach's Guidelines

Managing Confidentiality

- Work within the proprietary and confidentiality guidelines of the organization's contracts and documents.
- In general, within the boundaries of the law, keep all organizational information confidential unless it is otherwise available to the public.
- Do not share with anyone except the executive herself any details regarding that executive unless members of the coaching partnership have agreed otherwise.
- When getting feedback from others about the executive, be clear up front about the terms of confidentiality and work strictly within these terms.

Pre-coaching Activities

- Participate in the organization's selection and orientation process for coaches.
- Provide the needed information about you and your practice.
- Partner with the executive and other members of the organization to facilitate decision making and communication regarding the coaching.

Contracting

- Share your own standards and guidelines for contracting with the executive and organization while respecting and agreeing to use the organization's standards as feasible.
- Actively use the learning and personal contracts to plan and deliver coaching and to assess progress and results.
- Negotiate the terms of the contracts in good faith and comply with them in full, or reestablish them as mutually agreeable and in a timely fashion.

Assessment

- Be knowledgeable in a broad range of assessment methodologies. Administer only those for which you have been fully trained or otherwise

adequately prepared, offering a clear context for their strengths and limitations.

- Deliver feedback in a safe, supportive environment and in ways that encourage the executive to constructively act upon the assessment.
- Help the executive use the assessment data to create a development action plan.

Goal Setting

- Facilitate collaboration between the executive and her stakeholders to identify and agree upon specific and measurable coaching goals.
- Document the coaching goals and communicate them in writing to all members of the coaching partnership.
- As the coaching progresses, adjust goals based on interim results and changing circumstances and priorities.

Coaching

- Adhere to the standards and guidelines for practice outlined in this Handbook.
- Maintain the coaching focus on the goals that have been agreed upon by the partnership.
- Participate actively in all meetings with the executive and her stakeholders, preparing relevant action items, role-modeling, applying adult learning principles, and creating an environment that supports exploration and change.
- Offer truthful and relevant feedback during coaching in helpful and supportive ways.

Transitioning to Long-Term Development

- Facilitate, guide, and make recommendations for a long-term development plan for the executive based on the coaching experience and your expertise.
- Communicate with the executive's manager and/or stakeholders to ensure commitment to the executive's future development.

- ❑ After the coaching ends, make yourself available for questions and clarification. Check in with the executive occasionally, as appropriate, to maintain the relationship and her learning momentum.

Other Partners' Guidelines

Managing Confidentiality

- Actively participate in agreeing on what information will or will not be shared, with whom, by whom, when, in what form, and under what circumstances.
- Keep any information learned about the executive as a result of the coaching confidential, unless otherwise agreed before the coaching begins.
- Ensure that no confidential information coming out of the coaching process is shared electronically unless you can control access to that information.
- Identify an internal resource that can advise you and the coach on questions of confidentiality and other sensitive topics and can help resolve these issues.

Pre-coaching Activities

- Establish and follow standard practices for selecting, matching, and orienting coaches for specific projects.
- Work in partnership with the executive and coach to determine coaching needs, requirements, and desired outcomes.
- Clear any barriers for coaching contracts and activities to be completed.

Contracting

- Ensure that standards for learning contracts are established and disseminated in your organization; become familiar with those standards.
- Actively participate in establishing and supporting the executive's learning contract.
- As appropriate, actively participate in establishing and supporting business/legal/financial contract(s) for the coaching.
- As appropriate, facilitate the formal contracting and payment process in your organization.

Assessment

- Respect the agreed-upon level of confidentiality for information that comes out of the executive coaching process.
- Provide honest, accurate, and complete information about the executive and the organization.
- Participate in identifying and facilitating ways for the coach to directly observe the executive and the organization.

Goal Setting

- Be honest and direct about your goals for the coaching.
- Collaborate with the executive and other members of the partnership to agree on appropriate coaching goals.
- Provide ongoing feedback to both executive and coach on the executive's progress toward his goals.
- Support the executive's efforts to achieve his goals, allowing him to take the agreed-upon time to achieve them before changing his responsibilities or the resources he needs.

Coaching

- Maintain a supportive and patient attitude toward the change process.
- Provide feedback to both the executive and the coach on progress and concerns.
- Offer to mentor, coach, role model, and support the executive from your own perspective within the organization.
- Make suggestions and help the executive get the support he needs from others in the organization.

Transitioning to Long-Term Development

- Actively participate in creating a long-term development plan for the executive.
- Facilitate internal and external means of development.

- ❑ Share ongoing constructive feedback with the executive about his progress toward development objectives.
- ❑ Evaluate the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process; provide the coach and others in the organization with feedback to maximize the effectiveness of future coaching.