

coaching in the



A Management  
Strategy for  
Achieving  
Excellence

library

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# Coaching in the Library

a management strategy for achieving excellence

SECOND EDITION

RUTH F. METZ

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION • CHICAGO 2011

**RUTH METZ** is a consultant, coach, and trainer specializing in library management, organizational development, and leadership development. Her firm, Ruth Metz Associates ([www.librarycoach.com](http://www.librarycoach.com)), specializes in helping community and library leaders as they plan, manage, and develop their libraries. Metz is a librarian and coach with many years of practical management experience in libraries and public agencies. She coaches library leaders, managers, and boards as well as other public sector managers and governing bodies. Through coaching, consulting, and training, Metz helps clients develop a coaching culture in their organizations.

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Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11      5 4 3 2 1

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ISBN-13: 978-0-8389-1037-5

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Metz, Ruth F.

Coaching in the library : a management strategy for achieving excellence / Ruth F. Metz. -- 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8389-1037-5 (alk. paper)

1. Library personnel management--United States. 2. Mentoring in library science--United States. I. Title.

Z682.2.U5M48 2010

023'.9--dc22

2010027235

Cover design by Karen Sheets de Gracia

Text design in Berkeley, Scala Sans, and Gotham by Adrianna Sutton

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# introduction

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COACHING is a multidimensional concept. That is, it has many possible applications on many different levels. Thus, the full meaning of coaching can be grasped only by understanding its purpose, which varies from situation to situation. In general, however, coaching is the purposeful and skillful effort by one individual to help another achieve specific performance goals. Whether the coach is working with an individual or group (the “player”), she facilitates the player’s attainment of the player’s goals. The success of this effort depends on the cooperation of both parties. The player is willing to be challenged, supported, and influenced by the coach. The coach enables this willingness throughout the stages of coaching.

Coaching is an important organizational tool because people in today’s workforce at every level constantly have to work on the interface of their knowledge, skills, and experience in a changing and somewhat unpredictable environment. Coaching is not just something that engages people’s efficiency. It increases individual and organizational effectiveness through changing times. Coaching has a multiplier effect. It enhances the library’s assets. The more able the individual is to dynamically apply his skills to an ever-changing environment, the more valuable he is to the organization.

## WHY DO LIBRARIES NEED COACHING?

The greatest challenge to library leaders is to enable their organizations to continuously adapt to this ever-changing, ever more complex environment. For while it is hard to imagine a more exciting time for libraries, it is nevertheless a time of many, many challenges. Coaching in libraries is more important than ever for helping our organizations and the individuals who lead them and work in them.

For instance, library leaders know they need to lead the continuous redevelopment of libraries. Yet many believe that they do not have the organizational capacity to go about structuring and successfully implementing what libraries urgently need: the evolution of twenty-first-century service, organizational, and funding models. The ability

to effectively tackle such institutional challenges is fundamental to the success of leaders and the survival of libraries.

The main reason to integrate coaching into library organizations is to enable these institutions to successfully adapt to the changes they face. People in today's workforce at every level constantly have to work on the interface of their knowledge, skills, and experience in a changing and somewhat unpredictable environment. The coach plays a key role by being the "outside" person who has no bias, no agenda, other than to help the individual adjust her already valuable skills in a dynamic world. Coaching assumes that there is no limit to how effective a person or an organization can become.

Coaching provides time to step back and reflect on one's own behavior and influence. "Reflective practice" is a part of the learning process and has become an important feature of professional training programs in many disciplines.<sup>1</sup> For most people, real reflective practice needs another person, such as a coach, who can ask appropriate questions so that the reflection is objective.

People who work in libraries are not only constantly faced with knowledge gaps in changing technology, but also with how to manage the integration of the technology into their ongoing work. The walls around the library are not as solid as they once were. Less than a decade ago, the staffing structure and titles were set and staid. The work of libraries today calls for a much more diverse array of knowledge, skills, and abilities than ever before. The expectation is for more flexibility. Library workers are constantly being expected to do what they were not expected to do before. People who work in libraries have to be constantly learning and adapting to new technologies and working in collaboration with others.

At the same time that technology is changing the work of libraries, other factors are impacting the volatility of the workplace. For example, the competition among the different generations of library workers has become intense. The library workforce spans three generations: the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. The current economic downturn has kept many aging Baby Boomers in the workforce, and has also resulted in fewer new jobs. There is a sense of frustration and even resentment that these older workers have not made room for the younger generations. People of color represent a progressively larger proportion of the

workforce, and this will continue to grow. Global migration will continue to diversify the workforce. The mix of various perspectives and values in the future library workplace will contrast dramatically to the more homogeneous workplace of the last thirty years.

Individuals in the library workforce are also facing very challenging work-life decisions. Many who planned to leave are staying on because of the economic downturn. The care of children, the elderly, and the disabled are straining workers' capacity to work full time and to make ends meet. The International Coach Federation's (ICF's) "2009 Global Coaching Client Study" reports that 36 percent of coaching clients put work-life balance as one of the top three motivators for seeking coaching.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, some librarians who were recruited into the profession with the promise that there would be jobs as the Baby Boomer generation retired in great numbers are leaving by the side exits for other careers.<sup>3</sup> These conditions mean the need for coaching is ever-present and increasing.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH COACHING IN GENERAL?

Libraries are not alone in these challenges. The global coaching industry is one of the fastest growing in the world. The ICF, with over 16,000 members in over 90 countries, has had a 645 percent increase in membership since 1999. It certifies coaches: nearly 1,200 in 2007, a sixfold increase over the 200 certified in 2004. Over 14,000 articles on coaching were published in 2008, a 52 percent increase over 2007.

Coaching has become more accessible to more people. The taxonomy of coaching categories has expanded with the market: life, career, career transition, enjoyment, family, finances, grief, health, job, leadership development, management, parenting, personal, relationship, spiritual, and a variety of other specialties. The forms or modes of coaching are changing as well. Face-to-face coaching is being supplemented with telephone and Internet coaching.

Where once coaching was for the business elite, the benefits of coaching are now well known and dispersed across industries and throughout organizations, penetrating into all levels of the workplace. The role of coaching as perceived by leaders has grown. Furthermore, the application of coaching

has become more strategic, with organizations integrating coaching with other learning experiences, developmental processes, and internal human resources (HR) processes. There is growing organizational demand for leadership development systems that prepare tomorrow's leaders. The changing workforce is apt to challenge long-standing norms that affect how emergent leaders develop as leaders. Coaching can play a significant role in showing the way.

Research supports the thesis that coaching, developing others, and giving feedback are critical skills of effective leaders. Yet these skills are often rated by chief executives among the lowest.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, many organizations today expect their executives to be "leader coaches." Leader coaches are executives who are intentional about developing direct reports, peers, and emergent leaders and, accordingly, their own skills for coaching. Many organizations have adopted the ability to coach direct reports and peers as a core competency for their chief executives.

There is a growing expectation in both the private and public sectors for organizational leaders to integrate coaching into their organizations. Organizations are developing a practice of coaching: building communities of coaches, integrating coaching with performance systems and development processes, and applying coaching to organizational initiatives.

Many organizations are moving from individual leadership development to collective leadership development. That is, it isn't only the leader but the leadership team, the management team, and the cross-functional team that develop their collective leadership capacity. Organizations are integrating coaching with other learning practices. They are building their internal coaching capacity. This takes the form of classroom instruction and skills practice, shadow coaching, ongoing workshops, and individual coaching that help the coach improve his coaching. Organizations are combining internal and external coaching, accessing the variety of specializations and expertise, and building a cadre of coaches that they can easily access.<sup>5</sup>

In effect, organizations are creating a new norm in organizational learning and, in the process, developing a culture of coaching. The evolution of coaching in organizations is toward greater normalcy and transparency. This new paradigm is superseding the more compartmentalized and elit-

ist approach of the past. It is creating cultures of coaching within organizations and dialogue about coaching within the organization's community of coaches. In these communities of coaching, people are developing a shared vocabulary and knowledge where concepts, approaches, and ideas can be discussed and resources shared. The practice of coaching is having a cascading effect throughout organizations, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of both individuals and teams.

There is at present an emphasis in the coaching industry on quantifying the return on investment (ROI). Organizations want to know what they are getting for their expenditures on executive coaching, in particular. This is a difficult task because the bottom line is generally influenced by many factors and often indirectly by the CEO's behaviors and performance.

An overemphasis on quantitative measures can underestimate what the client has learned or can focus too narrowly on his development. However, in coaching, measuring results is crucial because it tells a person what he has accomplished as the result of coaching and enables him to examine the effect of his performance on the organization.

The conversation about results begins at the start of the coaching relationship and is revisited throughout. Results are generally measured in terms of behavioral change, performance improvement, and service improvement. Service improvement is often difficult to tie directly to coaching because many factors can be at play. In general, measuring results is done through formal self-assessment, informal feedback from stakeholders, and formal feedback obtained through surveys and other instruments.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH COACHING IN LIBRARIES?

Today, there is a different foundation in the library industry for coaching compared to just a few years ago. People who are developing their careers in libraries and newcomers to the library workplace are familiar with the concept of coaching. In their education and training, they have been encouraged to think positively about coaching for themselves and their organizations. Many are more ready and more inclined to be introspective about their role in the workplace and to accept the need for constant adaptability. They are aware of the benefits of

coaching. Their friends and associates in and out of the library have had direct exposure to coaching. Coaching is more and more recognized in the library world and is more accepted as standard practice.

There is a growing readiness and expectation for coaching in today's library workplace. For example, the Urban Libraries Council's Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) program graduated seventy-five "fellows" between 2001 and 2005.<sup>6</sup> Executive coaching and reflective practice were part of the program. These are some of the new leaders stepping into executive positions around the country.

One of the ELI fellows and now the director of a large metropolitan library says she became an advocate for coaching in libraries after experiencing it both in the ELI program and in her workplace. She said she became a convert because coaching helped her develop her effectiveness as a leader through several successive, increasingly responsible promotions within her organization. Now she elects coaching for herself, encourages it for her management team and staff, and budgets for it. Coaching was also a component of a 2007 Institute of Library and Museum Services grant to help fund the recruitment, matriculation, and early career development of 150 minority students in master's-level library and information studies programs.<sup>7</sup>

These alumni are bringing coaching and reflective practice into library organizations with them as their careers advance. Workshops and online courses have introduced coaching as a concept in libraries. For example, California's InfoPeople library staff training program introduced coaching in libraries in 2003 and has continued to feature programs that build coaching skills. Dynix Institute's online training programs have also featured coaching. Several national library leadership development programs feature mentoring and coaching.

While there is a growing awareness and use of coaching in some libraries, its use is still not widespread. Furthermore, its use is generally not strategically focused on improving the overall effectiveness of library organizations.

## HOW CAN LIBRARIES USE COACHING?

It is time for library leaders to think about coaching as more than a tool for their own development, improving substandard performance in others, or

developing a leadership bench. We have to get away from the idea that all coaching is problem-solving and that you call in a coach when a problem needs to be corrected.

It is time to become purposeful about the application of coaching on a broad scale. Library leaders can authorize and influence the development of a "coaching system" in their organizations that supports the learning and development of individuals and the organization as a whole. A coaching system can in turn be integrated into ongoing "systems" such as learning, performance management, and leadership development.

Integrating coaching wisely into the organization begins with intentionality and an understanding of organizational need. Intentionality means that the library leader makes the case for an integration of coaching practice into organizational development efforts in response to a set of identified needs. She authorizes it and is involved in its design and its evolution.

In the midst of the current severe economic downturn when budgets are strained, readers may dismiss the notion of integrating coaching into their organizations as unaffordable, impractical, or both. However, the economic downturn is all the more reason to use coaching. Typically, library organizations are spending 65 percent or more of their budget on personnel. Coaching leverages human capital.

Libraries can afford coaching by purposefully cultivating coaching behaviors in their workforce. For example, coaching behaviors and skills can be developed in the library's leader, in managers and supervisors, and in the library's human resources department. Work units and teams can learn coaching behaviors and apply them with one another. A library can develop a cadre of internal coaches whose work portfolio includes selected coaching assignments. The library's core competencies for new hires can include coaching, and the library's new personnel appointments can be made accordingly.

The library can use external coaches for assignments that the organization itself cannot fulfill. External coaches may be available through a parent organization or an exchange arrangement with a peer institution. It is likely that the organization is already allocating funds in HR and other units for a variety of personnel learning activities, including conferences, workshops, training, and supervision. Leaders should insist that these modes channel



learning that is aligned with initiatives for developing a more effective organization.

The effort needed will vary from library to library. Some library organizations may be well positioned for development while others are not. Working on the organization is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Library leaders, however, must take the long view. Just as they are grappling with service models of the future, they must also grapple with what library organizations of the future must be. These two dimensions of the library are interdependent.

### WHAT DOES STRATEGIC COACHING LOOK LIKE?

Imagine you are the director of a library whose operating costs are rising at a higher rate than its revenues. Costs are rising by 10 percent per year while revenues are increasing by 3 percent per year. The deficit is largely structural; that is, it is ongoing and will continue to grow, because it is largely driven by fixed obligations. For example, the library is contractually obligated to a salary schedule, salary increases or cost of living adjustments, retirement contributions as a percentage of compensation, and health care premiums. These costs are growing at 15 percent per year. Meanwhile, other operating costs such as telecommunications, utilities, office supplies, vendor contracts, interdepartmental charges from the parent jurisdiction, and so forth are also growing, at an overall rate of 6 percent.

The overall result is that it is costing more to operate the library each year than the library is receiving in revenues. A library may be fortunate to have built an operating reserve fund and it uses this for a few years to offset its structural deficit. Most libraries would not be in that position, and so they are forced to reduce hours, staffing, collections, and administrative and technical support in rounds as the revenue-to-expenses situation worsens. Even the library with a reserve fund eventually will succumb to these rounds of reductions.

When branch closures are proposed, the community becomes embroiled in a pitched battle over limited resources. To make matters worse, revenues in the next few years are expected to be reduced even further. While this takes place, the library is trying to introduce and apply new technology to serve the public. However, it is strapped for resources that its leaders and staff believe it needs to be responsive, competitive, and viable. The library

needs to develop and contract at the same time.

The new library director believes that part of the solution is in developing new service models that can deliver today's and tomorrow's needed services and that cost less to provide. However, there are many obstacles to creating new service models. Some staff are resistant to change; managers and supervisors in some cases are overly concerned with appeasing staff and seem to have lost sight of community needs. The senior managers have never developed a sense of team leadership. They aren't skilled in working with staff to develop alternative service models. There is no organizational compass to give them bearings for designing new service models. Some managers will be retiring soon, but there is no apparent "bench" of aspiring leaders to follow them. The structural budget deficit has been managed with the use of reserve funds, and staff and the community have been unaware that operating costs are outstripping revenues. The economic downturn has further reduced revenues, adding urgency to the problem.

Strategic coaching for this organization would begin with the leader and then with the leader and executive team together. Several purposes would be served simultaneously. Coaching would help them establish a focus for organizational development while providing action learning for team leadership. They would also begin an organizational needs assessment and an overall strategy for developing the organization according to those needs: the need to develop new service models, to resolve the structural budget deficit, to engage staff, to develop succession leaders, and to help staff through change transitions, including their own career and work-life balance transitions.

This library would benefit from multidimensional coaching to

- Support the library director in clarifying and prioritizing executive direction
- Build executive, management, and team leadership capacity
- Facilitate the process of developing new service models and a sustainable budget
- Develop new leaders and a leadership bench
- Ensure success after promotions or new hires
- Develop coaching behaviors in the library director, managers, and supervisors
- Sustain effective individual and group performance

Whether the coaching is for individuals or groups, it has an overarching purpose to improve organizational effectiveness. Just as libraries have a strategic plan of service, they need a strategic plan for organizational development. Coaching strategically helps organizations respond to the reality of their situation. It is a process that requires time and multiple interactions.

When a library leader can influence the energies of the organization in a positive and progressive direction, the community will respond with its support. In the twenty-first century, libraries that cannot make and sustain this fundamental connection will not be sustained by the community.

## HOW DO I FIND A COACH?

### *What Am I Looking for in a Coach?*

Coaching has many dimensions and purposes. Finding the right coach begins with being able to describe as you see it the situation and the need. Think about and write down the need and what outcomes you would like to see. Also write down any particular requirements the situation may call for in the coach. Then you are in a position to talk about your needs with prospective coaches or with trusted colleagues for possible referrals.

For many, talking the situation over first with a confidant will help clarify the issues, the knowledge and skills needed, and the desired outcomes. In so doing, you hear yourself—sometimes for the first time—talk about the situation. If you are the library director, your confidant may be your deputy director, your HR director, or a library director colleague: someone in whom you can confide.

The give-and-take of your confidential conversation helps you clarify your own thoughts, as does the perspective of another trusted person. By clarifying your own thoughts, you will be better able to know what you are looking for in a coach and to target your search. You will also be better prepared to have an initial conversation with one or more prospective coaches.

The coach has to be a person that the individual or the group can trust in the sense that the coach is credible in an interpersonal way. The prospective coach who takes the position that he has all the answers and that the client is only there to listen to the coach is not credible in an interpersonal way. The coach shouldn't take the attitude that you've

done everything wrong and now he'll tell you how to do it right.

A good coach comes in with an attitude that is respectful and recognizes that coaching is a balanced relationship. The coach's advice needs to be exactly tied to the real situation as the person or group sees it. The coach has to respect the breadth of knowledge and understanding of those inside the organization. A good coach takes time to assess the situation.

### *Where Do I Look for a Coach?*

Coaches can be internal or external. If you have built coaching muscle within your organization, you can look internally first. Your human resources department or parent HR might be able to provide coaching or a referral. Some libraries have established a cadre of coaches—internal, external, or both—that they call into service as needed.

Finding a coach that specializes in libraries is difficult at this time. For example, at present, a Google search for library coaches will lead you to just one source: mine. However, there are library consultants who may fit the bill. The "Selected Resources" section of this book identifies library consultant search websites and a few additional resources to help you find coaches who are familiar with the library industry.

Several generic coaching industry websites offer free coach-finding and referral. The "Selected Resources" section of this book lists several coaching industry find-a-coach websites. Keep in mind that the search structures of coaching industry websites are geared toward the business sector rather than the public sector, at this time. Thus, at the time of this writing you wouldn't be able to search for coaches that specialize in libraries, academics, or schools. You will therefore have to be resourceful in your search.

As previously stated, the coaching industry is one of the fastest growing on the globe. According to an ICF spokesperson, there are over 120 training programs, and only 20 are accredited by the ICF. Establishing a credentialing program that has global credibility and holds value is at the top of the industry's priority list. The ICF, for example, is working to bring its certification program into compliance with the International Standards Organization's standards for bodies that certify persons. A spokesperson for the Institute for Professional

Excellence in Coaching said that the global market will need 100,000 coaches in the next five years to meet the expected demand. For some time, it will continue to be a buyer-beware market.

Given these conditions, referral through library industry channels is as viable an option as any for finding a coach. When you are not able to find a coach through referral and need to rely on a finding resource or the telephone book, it is advisable to limit your search to certified coaches.

Interview any prospective coaches. The interview, of course, should be directed at learning about them, their credentials and experience, and fees. Fees vary widely depending upon credentials and locale, from \$60/hour to \$400/hour. Packages for services over time are generally less expensive than an hourly rate.

In interviewing prospective coaches, be as interested in their questions as you are in their credentials and fees. A good prospect is someone who restates your need in a way that captures the essence of the issue. The interview should help you understand your need better than when you started. If the interview doesn't do that for you, keep looking.

For coaching to work, a person has to be willing to be coached. It has to be the right coach. The individual and the coach have to be clear about what they are doing. One of the reasons coaching fails is that people don't understand what it is. It is not therapy, though it may be therapeutic.

## BEAUTIFUL POSSIBILITIES

Technology is enabling people, institutions, and organizations to share information and be creative in ways that are new and exciting. Libraries have played an important role in making the benefits of technology accessible to a broad base of people. Perhaps this is why public awareness and satisfaction with libraries is at an all-time high.

According to the American Library Association, an uncommissioned 2008 Harris poll found that almost all Americans say they view their local library as an important educational resource.<sup>8</sup> Seven out of ten agree that their local library is a pillar of the community, a community center, a family destination, and a cultural center. For many, many people, libraries have been a transformational force in their lives. It is this transformational quality that influences both library users and nonusers alike in supporting public funding for libraries.<sup>9</sup>

We know that it is a challenge of immense proportions for libraries to survive in the decades ahead. Their survival is as much a consequence of adaptable, flexible, and durable organizations as it is a matter of adapting services for an ever-changing marketplace. These are two sides of the same coin. You don't get one without the other.

Coaching by itself will not transform an organization. However, it is a powerful tool in helping individuals and groups in the organization to make the transitions that come with change. Change is a constant; it is a catalyst for more change. An organization that understands this and intentionally aids the workforce in making transitions will survive better than one that simply reacts to one change after another.

Coaching actively and willingly supports people in libraries as they learn. It is our consistency of interaction in the face of constant change that leads to stability, predictability, and a more durable workplace. This durability gives people a firm place to stand, even amidst constant change. It is the ultimate place from which to be consistently effective as an organization and community institution.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

One of the purposes of *Coaching in the Library* is to develop your sensitivity to conditions that threaten the effectiveness of your own library. This is accomplished through using many examples and presenting these in a variety of ways. The examples, scenarios, and applications are all paths in the book that lead to the same goal: to cultivate in you an observant attitude about what threatens performance and to help you get a feel for what constitutes superior performance.

The style and approach of this book are intended to help you envision an environment that you may never have experienced. This is also to suggest that the workplace environment is not simply imposed on you, but can be influenced for the better through an observant awareness of what threatens performance and through a conscious choice of actions.

The term *player* in this book refers to the person who is coached. The term *supervisor* is used generically. That is, it refers here not to a personnel classification but to the function of supervision. In this book, a supervisor can be the library director, a manager, a supervisor, a librarian, or any person who is responsible for formally evaluating the performance

of another person in the library. Coaches can come from outside the library or from inside. Anyone inside the library organization with the willingness, skills, and abilities is a potential coach.

The basic approach used in this book is to describe and illustrate what it means to coach, why it is important to coach, and how to coach. Because coaching is a multidimensional concept, the examples and applications offer a range of situations, from simple to complex. This approach reinforces for the reader that every coaching situation is different. There is no “one” way, but there are many ways to make use of effective coaching behaviors. Modeling is the best teacher. The examples and applications in this book model coaching in practical library situations.

The chapter organization is essentially the same throughout the book. Each chapter is arranged in five sections: the prelude sets the scene, or context, for the chapter. It is followed by what, why, and how sections. To illustrate the how of coaching, the application at the end of the chapter applies one or more of the coaching concepts described in that chapter. For example, the chapter 1 application applies the coaching process framework (observation, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment) to a coaching intervention.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of performance factors, which include performance barriers and pathways to excellence. These are observational categories based on commonsense experience. All chapters describe how coaching can help cultivate pathways to excellence.

The scope of *Coaching in the Library* moves beyond how libraries typically use coaching. Chapter 1, “Coaching Overview,” describes the basic structure of coaching. Chapter 2, “The Effective Coach,” describes and illustrates basic coaching behaviors. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 describe and illustrate coaching for individuals, teams, leaders, and managers, respectively. The chapters on coaching teams, leaders, and managers focus on what is distinctive about coaching these people. Chapter 7, “Coaching and Organizational Effectiveness,” illustrates the role of coaching in library rejuvenation and transformation.

The intended audience includes library leaders, HR directors, managers, supervisors, and teams. In addition, this book will be of interest to any employee who serves as a team member, mentor, or peer coach and to anyone who functions in an

informal coaching role with a coworker. It will also be of interest to individuals who are being coached or to those who are considering coaching others.

The overarching reason to coach is to gradually make the library more and more effective in serving its community. The library’s *community* includes all those communities served by the library regardless of the library type: the communities of the academic library, public library, school library, and special library. Many people prefer to read about a subject in a familiar context; therefore, some of the examples in this book are set in a particular type of library. Mostly, they concern common library workplace experiences. After all, these work settings involve people, and coaching is about people.

The examples and applications in this book are based on over thirty years of experience and are rendered as composites of experiences. Any resemblance to individuals, organizations, or incidents is coincidental.

## NOTES

1. Chris Argyris. Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on what you are about to do, what you are doing while you are doing it, and what you have done having done it.

2. International Coach Federation, “International Coach Federation 2009 Global Coaching Client Study,” 2009.

3. From interview with Lorelle R. Swader, director, Office for Human Resource Development and Recruitment, American Library Association.

4. Corporate Leadership Council, *Voice of the Leader: A Quantitative Analysis of Leadership Bench Strength and Development Strategies* (Washington, DC: Corporate Executive Board, 2001).

5. Center for Creative Leadership, *The CCL Handbook of Coaching: A Guide for the Leader Coach*, ed. Sharon Ting and Peter Scisco (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

6. The Executive Leadership Institute program was extant in 2000–2003. It included a coaching component. See the “Executive Leadership Institute Evaluation Report” prepared by the Center for Creative Leadership for the Urban Libraries Council, September 2008, [http://www.urbanlibraries.org/associations/9851/files/CCL\\_pub.pdf](http://www.urbanlibraries.org/associations/9851/files/CCL_pub.pdf).

7. Under the 2007 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded the American Library Association a grant of \$872,920 to help fund the recruitment, matriculation, and early career development of 150 minority students in master’s-level library and information studies programs and to provide mentoring and coaching of 60 additional students from underrepresented backgrounds.

8. Harris Poll, ALA, 2008, <http://www.ala.org/ala/newspresscenter/news/pressreleases2008/September2008/ORSharris.cfm>.

9. OCLC report, “From Awareness to Funding: A Study of Library Support in America,” 2008, <http://www.oclc.org/reports/funding/default.htm>.

# 1 coaching overview

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## PRELUDE

When I ask library employees to describe the work environment they would prefer to have, their answers tend to be remarkably similar. Typically, the description goes like this:

- Tolerance consistently prevails throughout the organization.
- People are energized, cheerful, flexible, positive, and knowledgeable.
- The work is balanced between the challenging and the tedious.
- Work is shared.
- Everyone shares ideas.
- People are willing to be team players.
- Everyone enjoys his or her job.
- Change is embraced.
- People are focused on the same whole vision.
- They are happy to come to work.

When I ask the same people if they think the workplace environment they described is actually possible, the response is mixed. A few believe it is possible; others believe just as strongly that it is not. Most are somewhere in between. Typically, some will say, “It depends on the library director.”

Is this ideal kind of workplace possible? Yes, it is. The director plays an important role in providing the leadership for it. However, the workplace we say we want depends on what happens, day in and day out, at the individual level. Every person in the organization is either making the workplace better or making it worse. There is no neutral ground. Each decision, action, and behavior makes the organization either more effective or less so. The following example illustrates this. It occurred in an organization whose situation had so deteriorated that one individual was on the verge of suing the employer.

Tom claimed that management did nothing to correct the hostile work environment in his work unit. In fact, management had failed to see the seriousness of the situation and to take corrective measures. This lack of action made the situation worse.

Still, the initial hostility was not between employees and management. It was the result of behavior exhibited by individuals in the work unit toward one another. In this case, it was rooted in one person's intolerance of another's sexual orientation. The hostility began with two people and eventually spread to everyone in the unit. People on the fringes of the dispute eventually took sides. There was no neutral ground.

The environment became the antithesis of the desired workplace. Everyone's work was negatively affected. Productivity declined; other work units were impacted. Resentment began to grow throughout the organization.

Fortunately, management finally did take action. In addition to short-term remedies, management also provided coaching for individuals in the unit, including the unit's new manager. First, the coach helped individuals work through the crisis. Then for many months the coach worked with the group and individuals in the group to help them build the skills they needed to work effectively together.

Coaching is not a solution to every situation. However, it is a tool for improving the effectiveness of individuals and of teams—and in doing so, of the organization as a whole.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO COACH

Coaching is the purposeful and skillful effort by one individual to help another achieve specific performance goals. The coach facilitates the player's attainment of the player's goals. The success of this effort depends on the cooperation of both parties. The player is willing to be challenged, supported, and influenced by the coach. The coach enables this willingness throughout the stages of coaching. However, the full meaning of coaching can only be grasped by understanding its purpose, which varies from situation to situation.

Coaching is a multidimensional concept. That is, it has many possible applications on many different levels. Pretend for a moment that from a vantage point outside and above the building, you are literally looking into the library. For several

moments, you are able to observe all of the coaching as it is happening. Every coaching situation is a pulsing light. You have the ability to look in on, observe, and hear each coaching interaction. There, at the reference desk, is one between two coworkers. There's another on the loading dock. There's one moving down the hallway. Over in the office is another between an employee and her supervisor. In another office, a consultant is coaching the director. The digital-divide project team is meeting on the mezzanine, where the team leader is at the moment coaching the team. The senior leaders are in a communications work session in the basement. They've been working on improving communication throughout the organization. They are in a biweekly debriefing session with their coach from HR.

You are aware of every meeting, every gathering, every e-mail, and every phone conversation where coaching is happening. You hear parts of each coaching dialogue. You observe coaching in various forms and applications. From this vantage point, you see an organization that has internalized coaching practices and behaviors. It occurs to you that these independent interactions are part of a multidimensional learning process that is happening throughout the organization.

The meaning of coaching changes, too, depending on whether it describes an event, a style, or a strategy. Saying that a manager has a *coaching style* suggests that his dominant mode of interaction is facilitative rather than directive, for instance. *Coaching strategy*, on the other hand, refers to the approach that will be taken in coaching a particular situation. Any attempt to define coaching must acknowledge these various applications and dimensions, all with somewhat different purposes.

## *Tutoring, Counseling, and Mentoring*

In the course of coaching individuals, the coach may tutor, mentor, and counsel individuals, too. These functions are sometimes needed to help individuals achieve their performance goals. People generally use these terms and the term *coaching* interchangeably. In this book, however, each has a different meaning.

*Tutoring* is a form of instruction in a particular task or for a particular occasion. For example, the coach might tutor an individual in preparing a presentation for the library board. Developing the pre-



sensation style, duration, approach, and so on are the subjects of the tutoring. Worried about doing this well, the player confides this fear to the coach. The coach learns that some of the anxiety is due to the player's lack of preparation. The player knows his subject, but he doesn't know how to present to this particular audience. The coach treats the player's anxiety by talking the player through a presentation format.

A coach may need to counsel an individual who confides in the course of a coaching interaction that he feels despondent over the loss of a loved one. *Counseling* means "to offer advice, opinion, direction, or recommendations on the basis of the consultation that occurs." This does not suggest that the workplace coach attempts to provide psychological or other counseling in the place of professional providers. However, in the course of coaching, individuals will convey to, confide in, and even ask the coach for her opinion, advice, direction, or recommendations on personal matters.

Individual workers are whole people. Their life circumstances and events have an impact on their performance. Helping performance generally means addressing the individual's well-being. The coach will become aware of such influences. She must responsibly decide the appropriate course for each unique situation.

*Mentoring* is guidance from someone who has gone before. For example, a mentor has firsthand knowledge and experience in a career path that the player wants to pursue. A librarian may be a mentor for someone who aspires to become a librarian, or a person who has climbed the corporate ladder may be a mentor for a middle manager. The mentor role assumes that the mentor has experience, knowledge, and contacts that can help a particular individual achieve a specific career goal.

Tutoring, counseling, and mentoring happen both inside and outside the coaching relationship. It is possible to mentor, tutor, or counsel individuals apart from the coaching process, and vice versa.

It is not always essential that the coach have expertise in the library field to coach people who work in libraries. On the other hand, in some situations it is essential. For instance, some libraries engage reference and other specialty coaches when the performance goal is specific to improving a particular skill set. Libraries also use "peer coaching" to improve reference and other specialized skills.

There are times, of course, where knowledge of the library industry or management is very helpful as a backdrop. Whether or not the coaching situation requires a particular expertise, the basic structure of coaching is essentially the same.

Much of the coaching discussed in this book has to do with helping individuals get past the barriers that impede their performance. What people typically struggle with is not their reference or specialty capability; it is a struggle with personal, interpersonal, and organizational performance barriers. Coaching is suited to providing this as nothing else can. Training, courses, conferences, and so on do not endeavor to directly improve the performance of individuals in the personal way that coaching does.

### *The Substance of Coaching*

There is one constant in all coaching, regardless of its breadth, depth, or application. That constant is *change for the better*. Whether the application is a single coaching dialogue between an employee and a supervisor or a long-term organizational development strategy, coaching is about facilitating change for the better.

What is the substance of coaching? The following scenarios include ten coaching situations. Thematically, these coaching situations are generally related to interpersonal, performance, and process issues. All three themes can play a part, but typically one is dominant.

Scenario 1 is predominantly about interpersonal ineffectiveness. Interpersonal conflict can stall work at every level of the organization. The inability of individuals to effectively resolve normal workplace conflict and to accept individual differences is often a factor in hindering the performance of individuals and teams. The extent of the harm this causes to organizations depends on how pervasive the conflict is. Still, it keeps even very effective organizations from being as effective as they could be.

The process theme dominates scenarios 5, 8, and 10. In these situations, people are having difficulty accomplishing an assignment. These assignments all involve several individuals having to collaborate to achieve a goal. Processes can break down. Process is simply a matter of how one moves from the starting point to the destination. In the workplace, individuals vary in their ability to do this. A group of individuals attempting together to

get from the starting point to the destination will invariably have different ideas about how to do it. Individuals and teams are more successful when they have a process strategy. Generally, this is the focus of coaching the individual, group, or team that becomes bogged down in the journey.

For example, in the headset situation, scenario 10, both advocates and opponents of headsets are firmly entrenched in their viewpoints. They don't know how to resolve the impasse. Some aren't even aware that they have a responsibility to do so. There is also an element of process coaching in scenario 3. Kathy may be impatient working with others. It is probably also true that she does not know how

to successfully bring the assigned people together to do the assignment.

The performance theme dominates scenarios 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9. The purpose of coaching in these scenarios ranges from improving lagging performance in scenario 2 to achieving superior performance in scenario 7 to coaching someone out of the organization in scenario 4. All of the scenarios directly or indirectly involve improving overall performance of the individual or team and the organization. Coaching can be about performance or about anything that impacts performance, such as career change, development, advancement, personal crisis, or interpersonal conflict.

## COACHING SCENARIO SAMPLER

### Scenario 1

Some librarians complain—among themselves and to the new manager—about a librarian coworker. They say Sam has not carried his weight in the department for years. No one has spoken directly with Sam about this, however. The new manager, Maria, finds that the work group does not know how to effectively manage other routine conflicts as well. Maria knows that coaching may take a while, but the complaints have presented an opportunity for it. She will begin coaching individuals and modeling how to effectively resolve typical interpersonal conflict.

### Scenario 2

Patricia files a grievance because she is assigned temporarily outside her department to a project she does not want to do. While awaiting resolution of the grievance, she reports to the reassignment. However, she is rude, uncooperative, and unproductive. The reassignment is upheld. Patricia returns to the new work site but remains uncooperative. Upon meeting with Patricia and hearing her out, the manager, Jorge, concludes that Patricia is angry about having no choice in the reassignment. At the same time, Jorge explores Patricia's interests and career goals. Jorge is able to suggest some work assignment options to match those interests and goals. He explains that the reassignment and having Patricia's full cooperation are

not negotiable. However, there is opportunity in her new assignment to do work that interests her and may advance her career goals.

### Scenario 3

Kathy, a librarian, and three other librarians are to collaborate on a project. Kathy turns in the team product, but she has completed it without input or help from the others. Kathy said it was difficult to find time to meet together. She had no response from an e-mail inquiry to do the work online. Her supervisor, Nathaniel, knows that this promising young librarian aspires to advancement and leadership positions. He also believes that Kathy has leadership potential, but she is impatient working with others. Nathaniel meets with Kathy to coach her about how to engage and sustain the participation of teammates.

### Scenario 4

After two years in higher-level management, Jerry is frequently absent and is having progressively more health and performance problems. Coaching to improve his performance has failed to get sustained, positive results in one crucial area: making decisions that make him unpopular with staff. Jerry admits his performance is lagging because he dislikes the adversarial role he feels is inherent in being a manager. In coaching sessions with his supervisor, Jewell, he speaks of changing careers.



At the same time, he acknowledges that he enjoys the status and salary of his position. It is increasingly clear to Jewell that Jerry is immobilized as well as unmotivated to resolve the dilemma himself. Jewell gives Jerry an ultimatum: he can consistently meet the performance standards of his current position for six months or be demoted to a more suitable position, be terminated, or resign. Jewell offers to provide a coach or a career counselor to help Jerry reach his decision within ten days.

### Scenario 5

Perviz, a library services manager, assigns a research project to a team of four reference staff members. She believes that teaming up is necessary to involve the right stakeholders in the research design and process. It is also an opportunity to gauge the ability of these individuals to work collaboratively with unfamiliar coworkers from remote locations. When Perviz discovers that the project has bogged down, she meets with the team to learn why. She finds that the leader is frustrated with the unresponsiveness of the other team members and that they, in turn, are frustrated with the leader for charging ahead without them. Perviz facilitates the team members' airing of their grievances, helps them develop some ground rules for working together, and refocuses the team on its task.

### Scenario 6

Latisha confides to John, her supervisor, that she is frustrated with a support department that has failed to meet her expectations even after she had provided them with written instructions and several clarifying e-mails. She is about ready to pull rank and take her grievance to the library director. John listens and troubleshoots the problem with Latisha. John's observations and musings from his own detached perspective essentially lead Latisha to question her initial assumptions about the support department's motives. From her newfound perspective, Latisha is able to see that pulling rank is not her only choice—or her best choice—in rectifying the problem. John and Latisha reason together about a different communication approach that Latisha is willing to try.

### Scenario 7

In a meeting, Kenji, a new librarian, expresses his frustration at being underutilized in his department. Luisa, a manager who is present at the meeting, fears that Kenji's job satisfaction and professional development are at risk. Luisa invites Kenji to lunch to learn about his career interests. She inquires about Kenji's professional goals and his satisfaction with his job. Luisa focuses Kenji on his goals. She also explores with Kenji ways to use his disappointing experience as a newcomer to influence his colleagues to improve the experience for future newcomers.

### Scenario 8

A staff committee is expected to develop recommendations regarding the library's integration of text-messaging questions from the public into the service program. They have met several times, but their discussions repeatedly are inconclusive. An interested manager attends one of the meetings and observes that two or three members of the committee dominate a discussion that is highly emotional. This takes the meeting off course. The manager concludes that the committee lacks a method for doing its work and ground rules for conducting its meetings. The manager volunteers to be a process coach, working with and advising the committee chair, in order to help the committee get its feet on the ground.

### Scenario 9

The digital preservation program has stalled. The library risks losing two new staff members that Steve's supervisor hired to work alongside Steve. The supervisor investigates and learns that Steve is sabotaging the performance of the new staff. He is withholding information from them, refusing to plan with them, and then complaining about them to other staff. Steve has been the champion of the program, starting it and nurturing it into a first-class operation. He has been so successful that the program is expanding with funding he has obtained through grants and bequests. However, he feels he is losing control of the program with the addition of the new staff members. When coaching fails to influence the needed changes

*(continued)*

in Steve, he is disciplined. Steve requests a re-assignment. The new staff members are counseled, but they decide to leave the library.

#### **Scenario 10**

Some staff members want library users to use computer headsets in the library to help manage noise levels. Others balk, claiming that headsets are a public health risk. The im-

passe has staff frustrated and at odds with one another. Neither side has data to support its position. Their manager, Kiyo, redefines the problem in writing. She lays out parameters for analyzing the feasibility of headsets from the library user's point of view. She then assigns a small staff team to conduct the analysis and to report findings and recommendations based on data.

### *Performance Barriers and Pathways to Excellence*

The following pages make frequent reference to performance barriers and performance pathways or pathways to excellence. (See figure 1.1, “Ten Performance Factors.”) Coaching helps individuals and teams surmount *performance barriers* and cultivate *pathways to excellence*.

Performance barriers are factors that negatively influence performance. Pathways to excellence or performance pathways (the terms are interchangeable) are desirable factors that positively influence performance. Figure 1.1 is not a comprehensive list of performance factors by any means. The list is observational, composed of nontechnical categories based on commonsense experience.

Performance barriers obstruct individual and team performance. Performance pathways enable individuals and teams to excel. Just as one or more of the performance factors can influence individual and team effectiveness, so can they influence the effectiveness of the whole organization.

Sometimes one or more performance factors are so pervasive as to seem characteristic of the entire organization. For instance, what appears to be a lack of commitment from staff may actually be the effect of a dominant performance barrier in the organization, as when whole organizations appear more or less driven by the notion that “more is better,” barrier factor 6. At its worst, this notion overemphasizes production at the expense of process, relationships, principles, and other organizational essentials. One effect is that many people are pulled into that cycle by the centrifugal force of those who are so compelled. Another effect is that individual worth is often undermined to the detriment of morale and commitment. That which makes the organization appear productive in the short term in fact makes the organization less effective in the long term.

### *Who Does Coaching?*

It is possible for anyone to coach if he or she has a mind to and has the basic skills, abilities, and characteristics. Conversations happen regularly in the organization about what isn't working and who did what to whom. These conversations are opportunities for making things better through coaching. This is one reason to encourage the development of coaching capability at every level of the organization.

Certainly, coaching needs to be in the tool kit of every supervisor at every level of the organization. Anyone who is doing performance evaluation should have basic coaching skills. Because people use the term casually and have different experiences of coaching, it makes sense to provide basic coaching training so there is a common coaching structure in the organization. Coaches can mentor one another as they apply and build skills.

Some external consultants specialize in coaching. It makes sense to develop our coaching expertise internally as well as to import coaches periodically. The coaching situation, how long it will take, who is available to coach in the organization, and other factors make contracting for external coaches a valuable alternative or complement to the internal work of the organization. It is a good idea to have a cadre of coaches in the wings. Therefore, building internal coaching strength and having one or more consultant coaches in whom you trust is good insurance.

### *When to Coach*

Coaching is purposeful and its timing is important. Coaches do not simply react without thinking. They consider a situation and may check in with others before they decide to coach. Generally, coaching is planned in advance. However, there are times when a situation can't wait, such as in a

FIGURE 1.1 TEN PERFORMANCE FACTORS

PERFORMANCE BARRIERS

1. **Weak ego**  
Has needy ego  
Needs praise or credit  
Lets ego become overinvolved in the task or issue
2. **Either/or thinking**  
Is compulsive about policy enforcement  
Is uncomfortable with having to make judgment calls  
Imposes own standard of morality on others
3. **Interpersonal immaturity**  
Believes conflict is negative  
Infers meaning without checking assumptions  
Avoids “difficult” conversations
4. **Untreated fear**  
Uses fear to rationalize or justify  
Resorts to reprisal  
Criticizes or blames  
Holds unexpressed expectations
5. **Lack of boundaries**  
Has unrealistic expectations of others and self  
Feels there is no other view but own; no one else counts  
Does not know what the job is or isn’t
6. **Notion that more is better**  
Feels that production is everything  
Perceives people as commodities  
Believes that no amount of effort is ever enough  
Gets ego rewards for suffering  
Works harder and still does not get things done  
Has an addiction to crisis
7. **Doing the wrong work**  
Has underutilized talents and ability  
Does the work known, not the work the organization needs (operates in the safe zone)  
Has self-centered view of the job
8. **Institutional contradictions**  
Practices expediency management  
Emphasizes the impression of caring  
Works at cross-purposes  
Provides short-term fixes
9. **Weak accountability**  
Practices avoidance  
Lacks follow-through  
Lacks discipline to set or accomplish goals
10. **Intolerance**  
Feels differences are bad, threatening, or to be feared  
Is closed-minded, authoritarian, or judgmental  
Feels others’ perspectives are not worth hearing  
Is exclusive and opposes others  
Believes own way is the best way—even the only way

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

1. **Strong ego**  
Has quiet ego, ego balance, and ego management  
Communicates about the right things—the work of the organization; not overly focused on self
2. **Comfortable in the gray zone**  
Is comfortable with ambiguity  
Can make necessary judgment calls  
Differentiates personal and organizational standards and appropriately acts on them
3. **Interpersonal maturity**  
Believes there is life after conflict  
Checks out assumptions  
Can have a “difficult” conversation
4. **Treated fear**  
Is willing to learn  
Is willing to risk  
Is willing to question  
Is willing to be responsible and accountable
5. **Appropriate boundaries**  
Recognizes there are other perspectives  
Knows that the clearer the boundaries, the better people can work  
Provides some structure and some form
6. **Notion that better is more**  
Feels that product and relationships matter  
Considers all people in the equation  
Gets ego rewards for balance in work and life  
Works smarter, not harder  
Believes in sufficiency of time, people, self  
Knows that not everything is a crisis
7. **Doing the right work**  
Balances challenge and the mundane of work  
Challenges self to learn and grow  
Job viewed in context of larger organizational purpose
8. **Institutional alignment**  
Helps the institution become its ideal  
Practices authentic caring  
Uses practices that are purposefully aligned with principles  
Carefully weighs long-term benefit
9. **Strong accountability**  
Faces and deals with situations  
Provides consistent follow-through  
Enjoys sense of accomplishment
10. **Tolerance**  
Feels differences are interesting and has an eager curiosity about them  
Is open-minded and nonjudging  
Believes others’ perspectives are worth hearing  
Is inclusive and integrates others  
Practices a live-and-let-live attitude

*coaching intervention.* You will see a coaching intervention in this chapter's "Application" section.

Sometimes the "coachable" moment arrives unexpectedly. There is often tacit agreement, and the coaching occurs. For example, coaching happens in a conversation or during a lunch meeting without a formal reference to the fact. Coaching involves noticing what is going on with individuals. When you do that, the present may be the time to make the coaching overture. Coaching includes deciding on a moment's notice to make an overture, even before the needs are named or formal agreements are made.

Coaching isn't the answer to every situation. An assessment of the situation helps the coach make this determination. The likely outcome may not warrant the time and effort it will take to produce results. Furthermore, coaching may not be an affordable option, or it may not be the appropriate course, because some situations need to be managed rather than coached. On the other hand, as you will see in the application at the end of this chapter, a little coaching goes a long way. There are times when the coach must quickly decide to intervene to address an immediate problem.

Some situations need to be managed before coaching can be applied. In the example in the "Prelude" section involving Tom, management had failed to see the seriousness of the interpersonal conflict in a work unit until it became a crisis. Managing the crisis so that stability could be re-established was the first priority. For the short term, managing included being directive with staff about ground rules, appointing an interim manager, and hiring a coach to help stabilize relationships so that the work of the unit could continue. Later, coaching also played a role in building the interpersonal skills of the staff members and the coaching skills of the manager.

Anyone who coaches and is also a manager typically must decide when a situation calls for coaching, when it calls for management, and whether and in what proportion and sequence it calls for both. Sometimes supervisors are inclined to coach a situation when they should be managing it or vice versa. Training and coaching for supervisors can help them become increasingly adept and efficient at making these pivotal decisions.

Coaching and management processes are not mutually exclusive. Every situation is unique and must be thoughtfully assessed. Coaching frequently has a role

in making things better in the library, but it is not the only solution nor is it always the best solution.

### *Mindfulness and Coaching*

Mindfulness is one of the distinguishing characteristics of coaches. They observe what others don't see and, in the course of coaching, draw the players' attention to those things. Mindfulness means that coaches are consciously aware of what is happening around them in the workplace; it is a requirement of coaching. Why is this important? The reality is that people in the workplace become absorbed in tasks and distracted for various reasons. They can miss the subtle and the not-so-subtle data that are right around them. This was the case, for instance, in the "Prelude" example when managers overlooked Tom's hostile work environment until he threatened to sue them.

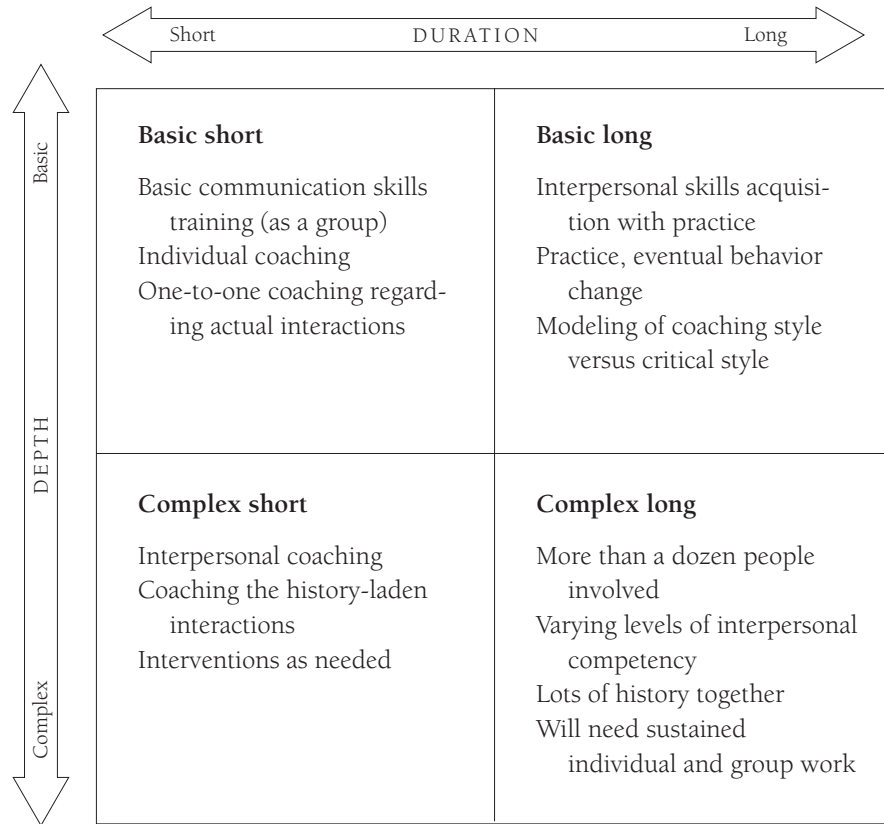
When people are absorbed, they miss important clues and signals. Coaches must almost always be mindfully aware in the workplace. This conscious awareness alerts them to situations they can influence for the better or may give them information that will be important later, even if there isn't an immediate need to coach. It isn't as if the coach is only walking around being mindful of coaching situations. Rather, it is that the coach develops this quiet, observing capability and has it turned on in the workplace. The organizational milieu is full of information about what is going on. Coaches' observational abilities are strengthened as they condition themselves to be mindfully aware in the organization. As you will see in this chapter's application, conscious awareness can save the day.

### *Levels of Coaching*

The levels of coaching vary from basic to complex and from short-term to long-term. The level of coaching is a decision coaches make based on their preliminary assessments of situations. In a preliminary assessment, coaches consider what needs to be accomplished in the context of applicable variables.

The coaching level assessment two-by-two is a tool for analyzing a coaching situation. Dividing a square into quadrants creates a two-by-two: two quadrants on top, two beneath. Values, such as "duration" and "depth," are assigned to the vertical and horizontal axes of the square. The coach uses this tool to structure thoughts by considering

FIGURE 1.2 Two-by-Two Coaching Level Considerations for Scenario 1



all the quadrants when thinking about a particular situation. The coach makes note of coaching considerations pertaining to a particular situation in the applicable quadrant or quadrants.

The analysis generally shows that there are things the coach can do right away without having to take an all-or-nothing approach. Using a two-by-two helps a coach get a feel for the level of coaching the situation will require by allowing her to look at more than one factor at a time.

What may seem obvious about a coaching situation often isn't, until you do the two-by-two assessment. It is a helpful exercise, if only to validate the coach's instinctive assessment. For example, figure 1.2 shows the coaching-level considerations for scenario 1 (presented earlier in this chapter). The coach makes notes in the appropriate quadrant as she thinks through the circumstances of the situation.

Scenario 1 is a very complex situation requiring a long-term effort. Even so, there are some basic strategies the coach can pursue short term that will improve conditions in the department. There are also strategies the coach will need to continue if

individuals are to choose to behave differently with one another. The coach wants the department members to learn how to resolve normal workplace conflict. Being able to do this is the basis of a high-performance work unit. The coach's written comments in all of the four quadrants indicates that there are many considerations and possible strategies, and therefore many levels of coaching possible.

I know that coaching is needed at many levels in this department. There are more than a dozen individuals, and all are at varying levels of interpersonal ability. For some, coaching to build interpersonal skills will be basic while for others this will be more complex. People can be introduced or reacquainted with basic skills fairly quickly and easily, but real behavioral change will take time for practice, reinforcement, and repeated success.

Some possible strategies include initiating a basic communications refresher for the group, either as a whole or in smaller groups, and reinforcing the basic skills in individual and one-to-one coaching. These belong essentially in the basic and short-term quadrant.

There are three or four individuals in the department who have more interpersonal difficulty than the others. If they can improve, that would go a long way toward improving the overall effectiveness of the department. I can work with them one-on-one and also coach them as they and another member of the department practice having difficult conversations. These strategies belong in the complex, short-term quadrant.

Of course, if interpersonal relations improve in the department, it will be because people keep practicing. The whole department has gotten into the habit of finding fault with one another. Their comments to and especially about one another generally concern what someone else has done wrong and rarely what someone has done well. They give each other little positive feedback, and difficult conversations are strictly off-limits.

I must consider how far I can take all of this, and I must think this through at the start. It won't help the department if I start them on a course I cannot help them finish. Such a course will entail my modeling a coaching style rather than a critical style of interaction. I'll need to continue coaching individuals and interactions between members of the department while they gradually integrate the basic skills. These strategies belong in the basic, long-term quadrant.

There are several long-standing feuds in the department. Strategies to improve interpersonal relations between feuding individuals are generally complex and certainly can require long-term coaching. My role may be to refer one or more individuals to counseling or to recommend private coaching. The level of coaching and the amount of it that I can do in the department may be enough for the willing individual. However, the recalcitrant individual may not warrant the level of effort, compared with other strategies. Coaching interventions will undoubtedly be needed to stabilize these difficult personalities from time to time. Otherwise, it may be that these individuals will need to be managed rather than coached: with ground rules, directives, and consequences to those involved.

Using the two-by-two shows coaches that a seemingly daunting situation can be addressed in increments that gradually make things better. It helps coaches plan for resources and approaches they might not think about without this kind of analysis.

Scenario 1 considerations reveal that coaching can occur at every level. In contrast, the consider-

ations in scenario 4 result in plotting the level of coaching in the complex/urgent quadrant. (See figure 1.3.) Note that the variables along the axes are different for each scenario. The coach determines these variables.

In scenario 4, the ultimatum for a decision within a brief, fixed time period makes this an urgent situation. The high stakes for Jerry and the library also make this a complex coaching situation. Therefore, the coach has made urgency one of the variables and complexity the other in the two-by-two.

As the coach visually makes her way around the quadrants, she realizes that there is essentially nothing about this case that fits into the left (not urgent) side of the two-by-two. Therefore, she gravitates to the urgent/complex and urgent/not complex quadrants of the two-by-two and there muses about this case.

I know that Jerry's supervisor has stipulated that Jerry must make a decision about his future with the library within ten days. This makes the situation urgent.

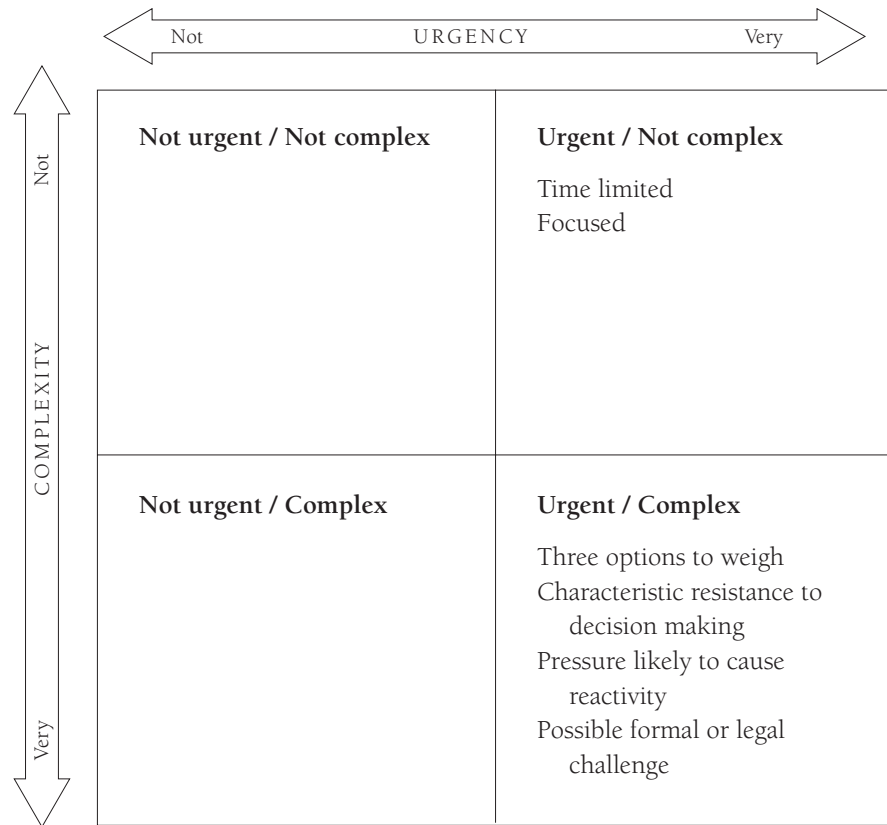
Business as usual is not one of Jerry's options: He may not retain his current position, title, and salary without making the decision that he will perform satisfactorily in that position. If he makes that decision, he has been told he will be terminated unless he consistently performs satisfactorily for six months. His other two options are a demotion or his resignation. The substance of my coaching is limited and focused on helping Jerry make one of three decisions. However, the stakes are high for Jerry and the library, and this makes for a complex coaching situation.

My job as coach is to help Jerry think through his options, weigh them, and make a decision that is in his best interests. The decision, of course, is ultimately Jerry's. Since Jerry has been unable to commit himself to his current position or to leave it for something else of his own accord, I suspect Jerry will feel extremely pressured by the ultimatum. Jerry has admitted that his performance is unsatisfactory and acknowledges that meeting the standards of the job goes against his grain. Nevertheless, he may feel entitled to the job, and the pressure of the ultimatum may force him into a different decision: to legally challenge library management in a lawsuit. This adds to the complexity of the coaching.

Using a tool like the coaching level two-by-two helps coaches think through the work ahead. They can see options that may not initially appear obvious. They find their focus when, as in Jerry's sce-



FIGURE 1.3 Two-by-Two Coaching Level Considerations for Scenario 4



nario, the stakes are high, matters are urgent, or time is limited. This helps coaches think about their coaching strategies. It helps them weigh the likely benefits of various strategies relative to the resources it will take to treat the situations. The two-by-two also helps them assess how much time will be needed in relation to the amount of time and resources available. Coaches will want to consider how much effort over what period of time will be directed toward the player's improvement.

The coaching relationship often remains in place for a long time, even though coaching interactions have become infrequent or are not engaged in regularly. The following example shows a spontaneous coaching interaction occurring between the coach and Maya. The coaching level in this initial interaction is basic and short-term. However, it is the start of a coaching relationship that gradually involves complex, long-term goals.

Maya unexpectedly dropped into my office. She was looking for immediate feedback from me about a written job application narrative she was submitting

the next day. Time was a significant factor in determining the level of coaching I could undertake with Maya because we only had about thirty minutes.

After I read Maya's job application narrative, I focused my feedback on the most obvious impressions. The narrative was for a supervisory position in the library. Maya had written this narrative in response to a question requiring her to explain her supervisory experience. However, she had never been employed in a supervisory position. Two things were obvious from my reading: First, Maya had not made a strong case for herself in what she had written. Second, what Maya had written also sounded unsure. I said as much to Maya, and she was receptive. With a few questions, I was able to elicit Maya's supervisory experiences in and out of the library.

She told me that this discussion had helped her see the value of that experience and its applicability to the job she was seeking. At the beginning Maya said, "I hadn't seen the relevancy of that part of my past. I also had not thought through what makes a position supervisory."

I found that with coaching, Maya became more

confident about her suitability for the job. Consequently, she made changes in her application that increased her confidence and made her application more compelling.

The level of coaching is revisited along the way. Circumstances change as the coaching process evolves. Contextual factors influence the decisions about when and whether to coach. For example, in scenario 4, circumstances will change when Jerry makes a choice from among his options. Other considerations that enter into determining the level of coaching are how much the player must learn to achieve a goal, the difficulty of what the player must be able to consistently do, and the dedication of the player.

For example, Maya's immediate goal was to submit a competitive application for a supervisory job. This required basic coaching. However, suppose that Maya's long-term goal was to become a library manager. The distance Maya must go to become competitive for a management position is substantial: she has held no supervisory position at all, so she would be starting as an entry-level supervisor. She would probably spend perhaps three years learning policies and procedures, personnel administration, unit operations, and basic budgeting and planning. In this case, Maya would need to acquire the skills and abilities of a manager through supervising at various levels. She would need to prepare herself through reading and course work or classes. Maya would have a lot to learn. Under these circumstances, coaching Maya would be a long-term process.

Furthermore, coaching Maya for a managerial position would be additionally complex if she has difficulty working with and motivating others. As a supervisor, she must be consistently able to do this. Learning how to effectively motivate others to produce the work would mean that Maya would need to change some of her well-established behaviors, and this would be a long-term, complex process.

The level of coaching complexity is influenced by the dedication of the learner. Suppose Maya's main motivation to become a manager is to earn more money than she does as a librarian. How willing and able is she to do the work involved in achieving the goal? How willing and able is she to do what is difficult for her? The chances are that Maya's interest and determination would wane as she grapples with the aspects of supervision that she finds unpleasant or unnatural to her.

## Coaching: A Process

Coaching is a process. As you've started to see in the two-by-two coaching level assessments, coaches facilitate a process that will result in a change for the better. Coaches help individuals or teams move from where they are to a chosen destination. The coach and the individual or team are in a coaching relationship while en route to the destination. This process generally entails more than a single coaching interaction.

Not only is coaching an overall process, but each individual coaching interaction is a process unto itself. Even in a single coaching dialogue, there is a starting point and a destination; there is a beginning and an end. Throughout the process, whether it is a single session or many sessions over a long time, the information gleaned informs the process. The coach provides specific feedback, encouragement, and an accurate reflection of progress while cultivating a relationship of trust and support with the player.

This process of coaching requires a sustained effort. Even a single coaching interaction requires some follow-up. More often, coaching is a protracted process because it takes time for people to improve and to develop. The player is headed toward a goal but frequently is on a zigzag trajectory. The coach provides feedback, and the player corrects course, gradually homing in on the goal. This is typically how people learn, and naturally setbacks along the way are to be expected.

There are two structural patterns you will repeatedly use in the process of coaching. These are the *stages of coaching* and the *coaching process framework*. These two structural patterns will serve you well: the first when you are in a coaching interaction with a player, and the second when you are mentally processing a coaching situation. The first is a pattern of interaction with the player. The second is an intellectual construct the coach uses to understand the nature of a particular coaching case. Both of these structural patterns are demonstrated in one or more of the coaching applications at the end of the chapters.

## The Stages of Coaching

Coaching consists of the initial, content, and wrap-up stages. Coaches work through these sequential stages in conducting coaching interactions. Each



stage has a different objective: to introduce, to get to the substance, and to bring closure. The stages of coaching can also be applied to the coaching relationship, consisting of many interactions over a period of time. Even in a long-term coaching relationship, there are initial, content, and wrap-up stages of that relationship.

### *The Initial Stage*

During the initial stage the coaching relationship is established. The coach and the player have come together to work on something in particular. In the initial stage, that particular something is named by them, and they agree to proceed. This agreement may be easy, quick, and almost tacit. On the other hand, the initial stage of coaching can take time and considerable skill just to arrive at the coaching agreement.

For instance, a person whose performance is lacking may be reluctant to be coached. Yet the person's effectiveness, advancement, and even her continued employment might depend on being open to coaching. Skilled coaching actually begins in the initial stage, when the coach must help the reluctant player see how it is in the player's interest to accept coaching.

The initial stage of coaching is the presenting stage. The issue is put on the table by either the coach or the player, and the coach and player agree to have a substantive dialogue. For example, in scenario 6:

Latisha initiated the coaching session with John and presented her frustration with a support department. Her frustration with the support department was the presenting issue.

Gaining the player's agreement is dependent on the player's ability to trust the coach. Sometimes trust is already established at the point of presentation. At other times enough trust must be established in short order for things to move forward. It is crucial to establish enough trust that the player agrees to proceed.

### *The Content Stage*

The content stage of coaching centers on understanding the real nature of the presented issue. It is in the content stage that the coach and player examine and develop their understanding of the issue. This is achieved through dialogue that leads

to clarity and understanding. The coach and player home in on the issue.

With Latisha, John listened and was sympathetic, and then gradually shifted into an examination of what was at the heart of Latisha's frustration. (This shift was the beginning of the content stage.) With a few thoughtful questions, John helped Latisha discover that her frustration came from having received a product from the department that failed to reflect her careful instructions. Latisha felt she had done her best to communicate what she wanted, yet the product was far off the mark. She had begun to think that the departmental representatives she had worked with were discounting her. She was ready to go over someone's head now to get satisfactory work.

John helped Latisha reason with herself about what to make of the department's unsatisfactory response. Was it personal? Was Latisha being intentionally discounted? Was this caliber of work typical in her experience of this department? What else might be going on so that the work missed the mark?

The content stage also explores options and possible courses of action the player might take to address the real issue.

### *The Wrap-up Stage*

The wrap-up stage of coaching brings closure to the session or, when the coaching has entailed multiple episodes, to the process. There is a resolution about what will be done as the result of understanding gained in the coaching session.

Latisha's realization that this caliber of work was atypical led her to conclude that the department was probably swamped with work and not following instructions as well as usual. Latisha decided that she would personally speak to the department manager and ask for his help in getting the product redone to specifications.

In this stage, the coach summarizes the issue and any agreements about next steps. The coach acknowledges the player's effort and validates the work that has been done by the player. The coach encourages the player, projecting confidence in the player's ability to accomplish what is ahead.

Although the stages of coaching are essentially the same for every coaching situation, the amount of coaching needed in each situation varies in

complexity and duration. The strategy is relatively simple in the coaching interaction with Latisha. All three stages were completed in a twenty-minute coaching dialogue. What the scenario did not say was that this was one dialogue in a long-term coaching process in which the coach and Latisha were working together to cultivate a stronger ego in Latisha. A stronger ego would help her more easily get the response she needs from others and effectively communicate her workplace needs. This, in turn, would help her accomplish her performance goals.

No matter how compelling a case the coach makes, coaching cannot be effective without the true cooperation of the player. Coaching cannot be forced. It is the player who actually does the work, makes the improvements, and changes behavior. The coach helps from the sidelines by giving feedback to the player, naming the player's accomplishments, and noting when the player is backsliding. The coach provides encouragement and an accurate reflection of progress.

#### *Coaching Process Framework*

The coaching process framework is a structure for coaches to use as they think through coaching situations. It has four elements:

- observation
- diagnosis
- prognosis
- treatment

Within this framework, the coach intellectually processes the situation while moving from problem to solution. This mental processing gets the coach to the crux of the matter.

Observation means coaches take in data and information, initially and throughout the process. Coaches also diagnose the condition; that is, they identify the condition from the signs and symptoms they observed. Essentially, the diagnosis is a decision the coach reaches based on observation and analysis of information. It is a conclusion about the nature of the problem.

The prognosis is a reasoned, experienced speculation about the outcome of the present situation given various alternative courses. It involves looking at and weighing options for treating the condition. Coaches ask, "What is the probability that this condition can be successfully treated? What will it take?"

Treatment is the chosen remedy for the condition—the action element of coaching. It is what will be done to treat the condition. Treatment includes follow-up by coaches to monitor the progress and the condition of the player.

#### *Coaching Affects Consequences*

The wonderful thing about coaching is that when things go wrong, coaching can help make the best of it. We are imperfect, and we live in an imperfect world. Things don't always go as planned, mistakes happen, events occur, and people react unpredictably. When things go wrong, we have a tendency to panic, to blame, and to react. Under these conditions, reality may be distorted, for it is viewed through the filter of our experiences.

As a detached observer, the coach can help assess the true damage and provide feedback. Since the coach is also mindful about organizational effectiveness, he brings a perspective to the situation that is apt to be broader than that of the person who is in the middle of a controversy.

As shown in scenario 6, even minor occurrences between individuals have consequences for organizational effectiveness:

John, the coach, listens, reflects, and asks clarifying questions. He poses questions and does not try to solve the problem. The questions are those that occur to him as Latisha's story unfolds. They are the right questions because they have come out of his intent to understand. From a detached perspective, what John makes of the situation after hearing the story is that staff of the offending department are probably not willfully defying or slighting Latisha. Latisha is just not getting through to them.

"After all," Latisha says, "this is certainly uncharacteristic of the department's past performance."

John listens and reflects. Then Latisha comes up with a different approach to communicate what she needs. Her approach gets her the results she wants.

What the coach did, though seemingly innocuous and simple, enabled Latisha to work through her frustration before taking it to the offending department or to the director. John listened attentively, posed insightful questions, made thoughtful observations, and gave honest feedback. John allowed himself to be a sounding board for Latisha, who then discovered her own solution.

### *Short-Term versus Long-Term Results*

Coaching is a tool for producing both short-term and long-term results. For example:

Ellen, a prized employee, suddenly announces to her manager that she is leaving library employment. In the short term, the coach, Darla, persuades Ellen to defer her decision.

In the coaching session, Darla learns that Ellen feels completely overwhelmed by her work. The coach is able to listen and to acknowledge Ellen. In the ensuing dialogue, the session results in a temporary workload relief plan that satisfies Ellen. Ellen also observes how Darla works with her to reset priorities, defer projects, and provide her with additional help. Darla assures Ellen that finding a long-term solution is of the utmost importance and outlines on a sheet of paper the next steps, according to their agreement. This outline includes a schedule of regular meetings to check on the success of the temporary work plan and to provide an opportunity for Darla to assess and coach, as appropriate.

Of course, this is a short-term remedy. The employee has signaled extreme distress, seemingly without warning—a sign that all is not well. Is something going on with the employee, the workload, the manager, communication between them, all of these, and maybe more?

The manager knows that she must begin a process of fact-finding to diagnose the situation. The meetings she and Ellen have agreed to will help diagnose the problem.

The long-term result may be that Ellen leaves the organization. It may be that some work process improvements take place or that the manager learns that she must check in more frequently with some employees than others. Ellen may learn that she can ask for help much sooner or that workload realignment is permissible.

### *Coaching Terms, Techniques, and Tools*

The relational map of coaching terms (figure 1.4) is a guide to the terminology frequently used in *Coaching in the Library*. These terms are all elements of an organic, not mechanical, coaching structure. The map shows the categories of terms you have already encountered (the definitions, levels, stages,

process framework, attributes, and tools) or will encounter later in this book. The following sections of this chapter build on this lexicon by explaining the types of coaching relationships and techniques.

#### *Coaching Relationships*

Terms like *coaching situation*, *coaching interaction*, *coaching meeting*, and *coaching dialogue* provide a common vocabulary for talking about the coaching relationship. A *coaching situation* is the context in which coaching occurs. The scenarios, examples, and applications in this book are all coaching situations that practically or potentially involve a coaching relationship. A coaching situation may require several or many coaching interactions, meetings, and dialogues.

A *coaching interaction* occurs between the coach and the player or players. This interaction may happen in a face-to-face meeting, over the telephone, in an e-mail exchange, and so on. It is an interaction in which both parties are purposefully addressing the player's performance or related issues. The interaction includes a *coaching dialogue*. This is the give-and-take conversation that occurs between the coach and the player.

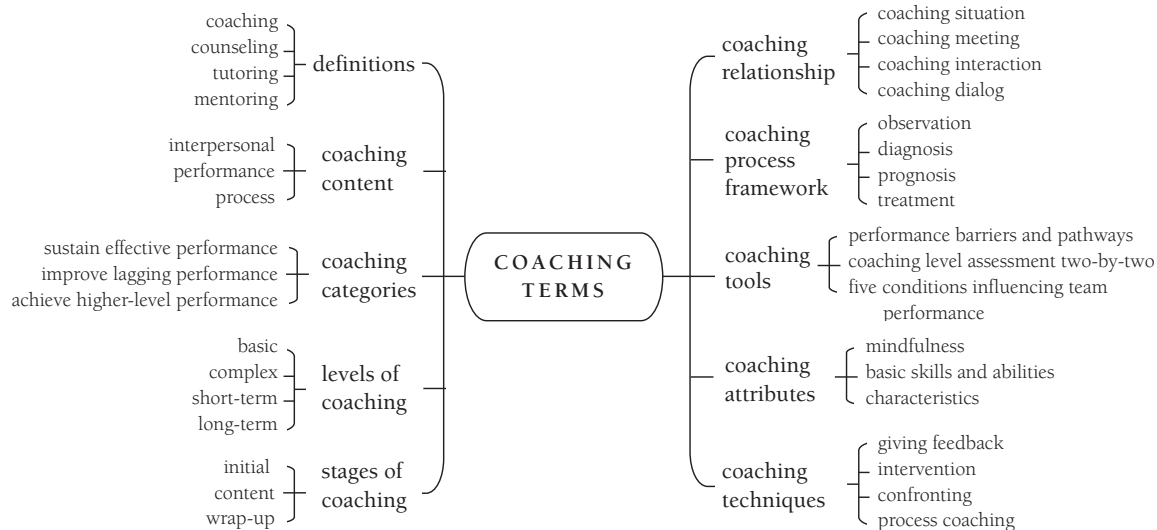
A *coaching meeting* may or may not be a formal, prearranged one. It may be a chance meeting in the hallway, a telephone session, or a coaching interaction that unexpectedly comes about during a casual lunch. It includes an interaction in which both parties are purposefully addressing the player's performance or related issues.

#### *Coaching Techniques*

Confronting, giving feedback, the coaching intervention, and process coaching are coaching techniques that frequently come into play. All are described in greater detail later in the book and are demonstrated in examples and applications.

*Confronting* means that the coach skillfully draws the player's attention to a performance-related behavior, occurrence, or condition for which the player is responsible. Here's a simple example. Monica, an employee of the library, dropped off some supplies at one of the library facilities. Monica parked in the loading zone near the employee entrance. As she prepared to unload the supplies from her car, she realized she did not have her key to enter the building. Fortunately, a shift was ending and an employee was exiting the building

FIGURE 1.4 Relational Map of Coaching Terms



just as the box-laden Monica was approaching the door. Monica asked one, and then another fellow employee to hold the door open for her while she unloaded a couple of boxes from her car. The first employee said she couldn't because she was on her way home. The second deliberated for the twenty seconds it would have taken him to oblige Monica, then acquiesced.

What the coach does with an incident like this is to follow up with Monica and her fellow employees. In this case, it was possible to identify the second employee, Jim. The point of following up with Monica is to understand what occurred, to attend to Monica, and to coach her, too. Why coach Monica? Monica was reluctant to tell anyone in authority about the incident. She didn't want to get anyone in trouble. However, Monica had told a coworker, and the story was making the rounds. Understandably, Monica was focused on how this incident affected her. But Jim's behavior might be typical of how he treats other employees and library users. Monica needs to know that bringing the incident to someone's attention was the right thing to do. She also needs to know that the consequences for the customer must always be considered. Finally, she needs to know that "getting Jim in trouble" is not the inevitable consequence of her reporting the incident to a supervisor.

The point of following up with Jim is to influence how he handles future situations of this

kind. Jim explained that he deliberated because he was absorbed in his work. He was just trying to do his job. The coach, his supervisor in this case, explained that there is more to doing the job than just doing the work. Doing the job means taking the time to help a fellow employee. The coach wanted Jim to consider in the future the possible consequences of his actions. How had Monica felt? How might a customer or library board member feel if he had been the one asking for Jim's help? The coaching dialogue clarified expectations and priorities for Jim.

By coaching Monica and Jim, the supervisor made things better with Monica and Jim. Now Jim had some guidelines for handling similar occurrences. He admitted he hadn't thought about any of those consequences, and he certainly hadn't meant to offend Monica. He really hadn't been thinking. That, he now realized, was the problem. The job includes being mindful and thinking about the consequences of one's actions.

Ordinarily, what might have happened with regard to this incident? There might not have been follow-up with Monica or Jim. The follow-up with Monica might have addressed only the facts; there might have been no attention to her emotional state. There might have been no coaching of Monica, and there might have been no follow-up with Jim. After all, it took time for the coach to follow up to the extent that she did. The interaction with Jim

might have been critical rather than constructive; Jim's supervisor might have been directive or blaming. There might have been no dialogue between the supervisor and Jim to verify the incident. There might have been no coaching Jim about expectations and consequences. The supervisor might simply have assumed that there was no excuse, no circumstance that might explain Jim's behavior. She might have dashed off an e-mail admonishing him for what he had reportedly done. None of this would have made things better.

As it happened, the coach was also a bridge. Monica learned that people care about how she is treated at the library. Jim learned that people care about his behavior, too. He learned that there are consequences to ordinary decisions. He learned that people matter in this library. Jim learned that his behavior had been inappropriate and why. He learned a lesson in balancing priorities. He learned that there was more to doing the job than just doing the work. By coaching Monica and Jim, the coach not only changed for the better the consequences of this particular incident; she also reinforced the importance of treating internal and external customers with respect, a basic tenet of this library.

No matter who you are in the organization, you are either making the library better or you are making it worse. When you coach well you are making it better. Coaching and a coaching attitude help create a humane organization. Coaching helps individuals, teams, and the entire institution balance themselves amidst constant change. It does this by improving the quality and consistency of interaction in the workplace. It is, after all, our consistency of interaction, rather than the codification of rules, policies, and procedures, that leads to predictability and stability. Coaching strengthens individual and organizational durability. It poises individuals and teams in an otherwise unpredictable environment. This is the ultimate position from which to be consistently effective.

*Giving feedback* is a staple of coaching, and the way the coach does this is crucial to successful coaching. *Feedback* is a return of information from the coach to the player about the player's behavior, action, or other aspect of performance. For example, the coach was giving Jim feedback when she told him that Monica had not known what to make of Jim's hesitation to help her. Jim otherwise had given no thought to following up with Monica. Given this feedback, Jim realized that he should

have a conversation with Monica to clear this up.

A *coaching intervention* occurs when the coach intercedes on behalf of the player to influence a particular course of events. The decision to do a coaching intervention is often spontaneous. For example, in scenario 7 Luisa, the manager, initiated a coaching intervention. She saw that Kenji was discouraged and might be considering leaving the library. Luisa took time to encourage Kenji. A coaching intervention is generally precipitated by a coach's observation of something that needs immediate attention, such as that shown in the application at the end of this chapter.

*Process coaching* is a technique coaches use to help players troubleshoot workplace processes that bog down. Frequently, the technique is applicable in team coaching situations, but it is not limited to them. There is an application of process coaching in chapter 6. Several managers are being coached as they manage a hiring process. The coaching is not confined to process alone, but it includes coaching the managers individually and as a team when they encounter difficulties along the way.

## WHY COACH?

Coaching makes things better in the workplace. It develops a humane organization and improves individual and organizational durability. In coaching, you are helping others help themselves and are making conditions better in the library. Likewise, if you are not helping people help themselves, you are making conditions worse. No matter who you are, no matter what your job or role, you are either making the workplace better or you are making the workplace worse. There is no neutral ground.

Coaching and a coaching attitude help create a humane organization. This is positive for the people who work there. A coaching organization—as opposed to a blaming organization—is a humane and effective alternative to the norm. It is also good for recruitment. A humane workplace is an employment incentive for most people. A coaching organization sends the message to the workforce that individual development is a high priority.

Individuals and teams need a consistent, durable place to stand in a changing and challenging workplace. Coaching helps individuals and teams balance themselves in a constantly changing and unpredictable workplace. Like the martial artist in the ready position, individuals or teams who are coached are

poised for any eventuality. This is the ultimate position from which to be consistently effective.

Coaching is a tool for creating this durability. It is a reservoir that nourishes workplace resiliency and the ability to yield and rebound. It creates an environment that supports the new work and the constant learning in our library organizations.

## HOW TO COACH

There is a basic structural pattern for mentally processing a situation: the coaching process framework

of observation, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. Whether the coaching situation occurs on the spur of the moment or is planned in advance, this basic framework reliably supports effective coaching.

The following application illustrates the basic coaching framework in a coaching intervention. A manager decides in a matter of moments to do a coaching intervention with a distraught employee. Note that throughout the process, the coach is attending to the person he is coaching.

## APPLICATION

### THE MINDFUL COACH APPLIES THE BASIC COACHING FRAMEWORK IN A COACHING INTERVENTION

#### Observation

Naturally, people have difficulty at times in the workplace. These difficulties have an impact on their performance. Mindfulness allows the coach to notice these difficulties, often before others are consciously aware of them. Thus, situations can be addressed before they worsen. The following is how the coach recounted the story:

It was mindfulness one afternoon that alerted me that Rebecca was distraught. I was walking down a hallway when I overheard her interaction with a coworker. Later, I realized I was picking up on what was an unusual reaction. It registered in my awareness. I instinctively veered off course and toward her. I asked Rebecca if everything was all right. She responded defensively and sarcastically. The tenor of her response confirmed that something was not right.

By being mindful in the workplace the coach was aware of and observed what was going on around him. He paid attention to what he observed. He inquired about his observations to verify his perceptions. He avoided making assumptions and didn't immediately react, letting the data inform him about what was happening with Rebecca as he walked by her work area.

I was on my way to a meeting and at a loss as to what to say at the moment. I paused briefly to visually observe her in a brief couple of moments, at the same time establishing soft eye contact, a natural expression of concern, while taking in her body language. "Okay," I said, though not convinced, then continued on my way. In a few seconds, I circled back to Rebecca and asked her to come with me. I led the way without knowing if she would follow or exactly what I would say or do if she did. She followed me. I found a nearby office that happened to be vacant at the moment. On the way and for the first few interminable seconds in the office, I hurriedly scanned my thoughts for how to begin this encounter. I knew a lot depended on my first words.

Based on the coach's instincts, he decided to follow up and analyze what he observed. Notice that the coach took the interaction out of Rebecca's work area to a private area. He had to think on his feet as he and Rebecca made their way to an empty office. He knew that what he would say first to Rebecca was crucial because she was defensive. He wanted her to trust him enough to stay. Fortunately, she had



followed the coach, and this gave him a chance to further assess the situation. Rebecca's reaction to his first inquiry will let him know if he will have to take a different approach with her. This will be the basis for determining a course of action.

My purpose is to make things better, not worse. My first words must convey this to Rebecca. I took a deep breath and began to speak. I explained, "When I asked a few minutes before if everything was OK, I really meant were *you* OK. You seemed distressed, and I was concerned. That's why I stopped to ask. I still am concerned. Is there anything I can do to help?"

I could see Rebecca relax her defensive posture somewhat. She took a deep breath and began to speak. She spoke slowly at first; then her pace picked up as one worry after another spilled out. She spoke for many minutes. I listened without saying a word. It wasn't the time to ask a single question. I listened attentively. I was momentarily distracted by my own anxiety. The manager part of my mind wanted to know more about some of these worries so that I could fix them. However, I quickly reminded myself that now was not the time to do anything but listen. If I wanted to understand, I must bring my full attention to listening.

Minutes later, Rebecca's pace began to slow. Her body posture, her facial expression, and her voice softened. She paused, and I waited. When she next spoke, she thanked me for taking the time to care. I told her she was welcome.

### Diagnosis

I realized from all she had said that I could not help Rebecca resolve any of her worries. I also knew that her level of anxiety was very high, alarmingly so for her to simply return to her work. That was the immediate issue. Rebecca was not in any condition to return to work. The longer-term issue was whether or not Rebecca was getting the professional help she obviously needed.

I told Rebecca that I thought she was not in condition to return to work. She nodded her agreement. I asked her if she had sought help for all that she was dealing with. She acknowledged that these worries were big and little,

short-term and long-term. She said she had been feeling depressed and sometimes just the opposite. She had been to the doctor on the advice of a friend because she was worried about herself.

Notice that the coach sized up the situation by integrating what he observed and the additional information he got from Rebecca. The coach determined that Rebecca's problem was not something he could coach her about because she needed more help than he could provide. He also defined a related issue: that Rebecca was not fit to return to work.

### Prognosis

The coach defined the problem and then he considered what to do. He thought about the consequences of next steps and weighed the level of effort he should put into the situation. He considered the available resources. He took various factors into consideration, including his circumstances, and homed in on the best course of action under the circumstances. He wanted the best, most appropriate course of action—the path that addresses the problem. Of the possibilities, what could be done to help the situation within the time available? What were the most important things to do, and in what order?

I thought of going to the personnel department, but Rebecca might have already been there. I considered whether Rebecca's supervisor or I could help her. Then I realized that this situation needed to be handed over to a skilled counseling professional. I asked Rebecca if she was being counseled. She said she had called personnel just moments before I came along but only got through to voice mail. That frustrated her and she didn't leave a message. It suggested, however, that she was probably willing to go to counseling if I helped her connect with a counselor.

### Treatment

I knew that making it possible for her to see someone immediately was something I could facilitate. It should be a skilled counselor and someone who would make Rebecca a priority.

(continued)

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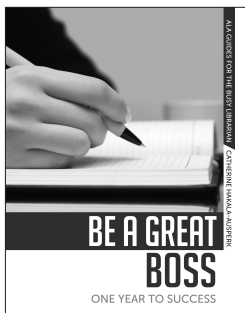
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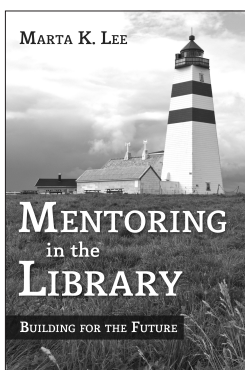


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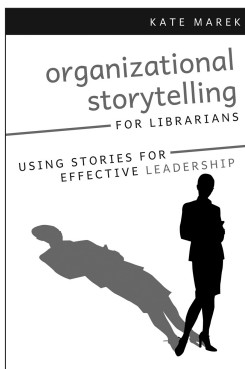


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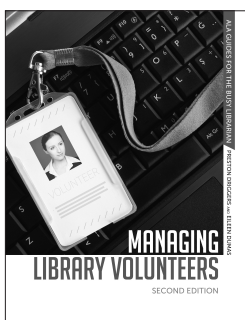


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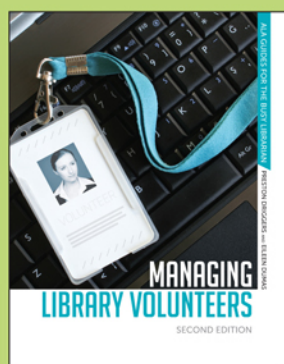
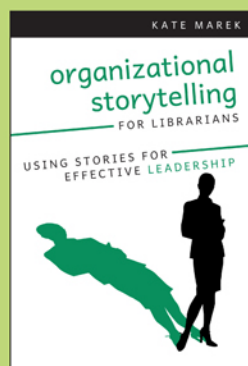
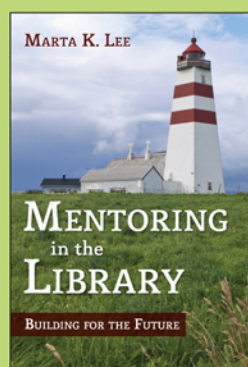
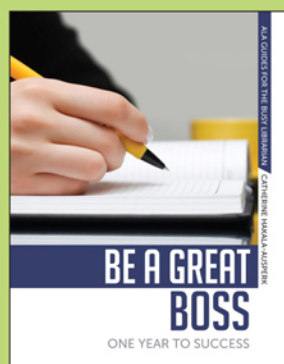
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