This second edition of Leadership Coaching brings together the latest thinking on the most relevant and effective techniques to use when coaching leaders. Written by international thought-leaders and practitioners, this guide will help you get the best from your clients whether you’re a new or experienced coach.

Drawing on evidence-based thinking and global perspectives from some of the world’s top leadership thinkers and coaching practitioners, this book provides state-of-the-art coverage of leadership models and explains how to use them effectively to benefit your coaching relationships. Its coverage ranges from brand-new content on cutting-edge topics such as strength-based leadership and conversational leadership to more traditional frameworks such as Porter’s strategy model and Goleman’s model of leadership styles. Today’s business leaders face more challenges than ever but through its use of rigorous research and real-life case studies, this book will enable you to deal effectively with these challenges and will ensure your success as an expert leadership coach.

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Established in 2002, The Association for Coaching® (AC) is one of the leading, independent, not-for-profit coaching bodies with the aim to advance the profession of coaching worldwide. Its members are made up of professional coaches, educators and providers of coaching, and organizations building coaching cultures, in over 50 countries.

www.associationforcoaching.com “promoting excellence & ethics in coaching”.

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This book is filled with useful models, insights and profound thinking that can serve any serious coach.
W Timothy Gallwey, author of The Inner Game of Tennis, The Inner Game of Work and The Inner Game of Stress

This book contains the latest thinking on coaching and leadership. The chapters are well researched and provide practical advice. It is a must-read for anyone involved in coaching.
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LEADERSHIP COACHING
WORKING WITH LEADERS TO DEVELOP ELITE PERFORMANCE

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Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of leadership coaching. In the first section I explore the benefits that models and concepts offer the coach in working with managers in organizations. In doing this, it is recognized that models are shorthand ways to view the world and they can be helpful in exploring the diverse ways of leading others. In addition they can be useful heuristics for managers in guiding their decision making.

In the second section I discuss the growing evidence base in leadership coaching. While many coaches work in this domain, the evidence of coaching’s impact (at least in scientific terms) is still relatively weak when compared with other organizational interventions. However, this is slowly changing with increasing numbers of coaching studies being published. This chapter includes a brief account of this growing evidence. In the final part of the chapter I briefly discuss ways in which the coach can use models and frameworks in their work and review one model that I find useful in my own coaching practice.

The opportunities of concepts and frameworks

There is no shortage of leadership models. Walk into any bookshop or library and there will be plenty of choice in the section on leadership and management. Most offer the reader a unique model, sometimes developed from research but more often the product of the author’s thoughts and experiences. Examples include John Kotter and Marshall Goldsmith, who have both offered multiple insights into leadership and how leaders can improve what they do. Many are personal accounts of well-known leaders such as Louis Gerstner, former Chief Executive of IBM, or Richard Branson, who offer their perspectives on what it takes to be a successful leader.
Leadership Coaching

Sadly many readers, and some writers, interpret these models as universal truths: a model that can be applied in both sunshine and rain. However, it is misleading and unhelpful if leadership theories are expressed in this way. The context is important, as many of the writers in this book and others have emphasized (Grint, 2005; Porter and McLaughlin, 2006). The best leaders select from a wide palette and make informed choices about their interventions and the approaches that suit the individuals, the culture, the context and the specific situation.

I would argue that models are useful heuristics for leaders, but they are not the answer. Conceptual models offer the leader (and the coach) a number of advantages when discussing leadership and leadership dilemmas. First, they offer a lens through which to view the situation. Such a lens provides positioning points that can frame the problem, like longitude and latitude. The model does not exist by itself but these points help to measure, assess and explore the issue. Second, models offer both the coach and the manager a common language with which they can talk about the issue. Models use different words and phrases to describe leadership behaviours. They can be helpful and provide a common way to engage with and discuss the issue. In some instances the issue itself may be outside the manager’s awareness and the coaching conversation can help deepen their reflection and self-awareness. Third, models can help normalize events, enabling managers to recognize that they are not alone in experiencing these events, and also challenge their perspective when wider issues have been left unconsidered. Finally, in some cases the model has been developed into a questionnaire. The questionnaire offers feedback for managers on their personal situations or styles and, combined with the common language, can help in building a plan of action. We have explored this concept in more detail in an earlier book, *Psychometrics in Coaching*, but a few of the authors in this book have linked their models to accompanying questionnaires.

Coaches need to be able to draw on a range of useful models, which they should be able to describe and discuss with their coachees. However, in doing this the coach needs to be confident that the approach fits with the learning style of the coachee, and that the model’s language or insight provides a shorthand aid that would help cut through a longer discussion of the problem.

Evidence-based coaching: the importance of research

There has been a growing body of research in coaching over the past decade (see for example Passmore, Peterson and Freire, 2013) and much of this has focused on the benefits of coaching within organizations. However, the area of coaching’s contribution to leadership is still relatively under-researched when compared with other areas of leadership development. Organizations are asking more questions about their HR development decisions: What
are the benefits of this approach? What is the return on investment? Does it really work?

I would argue that coaching can contribute in a number of ways to leadership development. The first is in helping leaders and managers to transfer learning from the classroom to the workplace, personalizing the material, and making links from theory to practice and from conceptual to previous knowledge. While this is limited in its scope, Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997) argued that such benefits could be achieved through combining training with coaching to enhance learning.

A second benefit of leadership coaching is to enhance skills. As noted above, learning is part of this process, but applying conceptual learning to a new behavioural skill is a specific aspect of it. In this part, leaders with their coaches can use coaching to develop the new skills identified from the learning engagement, through developing a personal plan about how they may apply the new learning, as well as considering the barriers and assessing who may support their new behaviour change. What we know is that forming new habits is difficult, and that support from our wider network is a critical part in successfully breaking habits or forming new ones.

A third area is the development of greater self-awareness. This may come from training; however, the Socratic questions of coaching can also bring new insights and learning. This may be achieved through reflecting on feedback or through discussion about a model.

One model I frequently use in my own practice is the six leadership styles described by Fitzsimmons and Guise (2010). Leaders can often relate well to the six styles, as these are simple to describe and are few enough to remember without reference to notes. From personal experience, many managers often observe that they use two or three styles frequently and ignore the others. Discussing the styles with managers offers two useful paths for conversation, depending on the coachee and the stage of the coaching contract and its goals. The first is to explore why these one or two styles have been ignored. Frequent examples are pace setting and commanding. These can be ignored by some managers as they want to be liked and hold the view that a more authoritative style would be conflictual and negative. This opens the arena of self-esteem, the nature of being a manager and what team members look for in a manager. The second area is to focus on the development of these absent aspects of behaviour, and explore in what situations and in what ways the manager could authentically use these styles.

A fourth potential benefit of leadership coaching is through enhancing the motivation of managers. The role of managing others can be difficult and challenging, and in senior positions can be an isolated one. It is not surprising that being able to talk in confidence to someone who does not have a personal interest in the outcomes is viewed by leaders as intrinsically motivating. This may result from goal setting, which in itself has strong motivational properties, as well as the use of interventions such as motivational interviewing that foster a desire to overcome ambivalence (Anstiss and Passmore, 2012; Anstiss and Passmore, 2013).
The fifth area where coaching can demonstrate a positive contribution in leaders is in helping them to develop stronger personal confidence or self-regard (Evers, Brouwers and Tomic, 2006). This confidence may come through reflection on strengths and recognition that these strengths are adequate to achieve the tasks in hand. Alternatively, it may come from developing plans to address perceived weaknesses.

The final area where coaching can impact on leadership is through well-being. A host of studies have been undertaken in this area. These include the positive effects of coaching on stress reduction (Taylor, 1997; Palmer and Gyllensten, 2008) and in building resilience and hope (Green, Grant and Rynsaardt, 2007).

Others have argued that the impact of coaching on leaders is slightly different, preferring the headings: people management, relationships with managers, goal setting and prioritization, engagement and productivity, and dialogue and communication (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). More recently meta-analysis research has shown the value of coaching. This evidence appears to confirm that coaching produces a similar effect size to other respected interventions such as feedback and leadership training. But what can be concluded is that the evidence from coaching research demonstrates the value of coaching as a significant tool for leadership development.

I have drawn together a selection of studies in Table 1.1. They show a sample of the studies that have been undertaken by research in the area of leadership development coaching. There have been relatively few publications focusing on the topic but both Consulting Psychology Journal and the International Coaching Psychology Review have published special editions on leadership coaching. These contributions have drawn on the experiences of coaching practitioners and offer case studies of the application (Goldsmith, 2009) and value of leadership coaching (Linley, Woolston and Biswas-Diener, 2009), as well as offering models for leadership development within coaching (Kemp, 2009).

**Table 1.1** A brief sample of leadership coaching research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Brief summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evers, W J, Brouwers, A and Tomic, W (2006)</td>
<td>A study involving 60 federal government managers. The study found the coached group scored significantly higher than the control group on two variables: outcome expectancies to act in a balanced way and self-efficacy beliefs to set one’s own goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this final section of this chapter, as an illustration of what is to follow in the remaining chapters of this book I explore one leadership model that may be returning to popularity, servant leadership, and how coaches can use this model and others in their coaching practice (Greenleaf, 1977).

Greenleaf offered a different approach from many models of leadership, one that emphasizes service to others, a sense of community and the sharing of power and decision making.

While the 10 labels offered in Figure 1.1 do not directly accord with the model or language used by Greenleaf (1977), the approach and the themes are consistent with the overall approach of servant leadership. Its focus is on changing from traditional leadership of controlling to empowering, from the more traditional directing to coaching.

### Working with senior leaders: servant leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Brief summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrett, P T (2007)</td>
<td>A study involving 84 managers in group coaching and a control group. The study found that group coaching reduced burnout but did not increase productivity when compared with the control group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowles, S et al (2007)</td>
<td>A study involving 59 middle and senior managers. The study found the coach group improved more than the uncoached group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feggetter, A J W (2007)</td>
<td>A study involving 10 high-potential UK military personnel. The study concluded that coaching had a positive ROI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czigan, T K (2008)</td>
<td>A PhD study examining the development of leadership competencies using multi-rater feedback. The study found coaching contributed towards the development of the competences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kombarakaran et al (2008)</td>
<td>A study of 114 USA managers. The study found coaching had positive effect on people management, relationships with managers, goal setting and prioritization, engagement and productivity, and dialogue and communication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key components of servant leadership

**The servant leadership model**

The first three themes in Figure 1.1 of team development, stewardship and community building reflect the outward-facing approach of the leader towards stakeholders and employees. The servant manager recognizes the value of developing others, not only for their future contribution to profits or in their current role, but in the wider belief that human development is a virtue that will bring both tangible and intangible benefits to the individual, the organization and the community.

The focus is towards building the community. In the past 50 years institutions have become increasingly removed from a single local community, from which they draw their employees and which they serve. As a result organizations can become disconnected from these communities. This is just as true for public sector bodies, local councils and health trusts as it is for multinationals. Most organizations now need to find ways to reconnect. This may be through charity giving to local projects, or positively encouraging senior staff to live locally and contribute to the community with time off for service on local bodies.

The last of these building blocks, stewardship, is the recognition that the chief executive and senior managers are not the organization, but simply hold the organization in trust for future generations.

The next set of four themes, listening, awareness, empathy and persuasion, are the core skills of effective interpersonal behaviour. Listening is often an underused skill. Leaders in Western culture, as contrasted with Japan for example, are more used to expressing their opinions in the hope of influencing the debate. Like many of us, leaders when listening can be just waiting for their turn to talk. Real listening involves not just hearing the words but paying attention to the body language, including changes in breathing, skin colouration and body animation. It also involves aiming to listen beyond the words into the context of what the speaker really means,
and checking this out with them through summaries and paraphrasing. Leaders also benefit from awareness both of others and of themselves. This may draw on awareness of their personality, their preferences, their changing emotions and a recognition that others are different. Managers are then conscious of days when they feel sad or happy, and this, along with other factors, can be managed as part of their interactions with others.

The two elements described above lead towards the third element in this set: empathy. This is the ability to understand the world of others ‘as if it were our own’. Empathy can be easy for those we are close to or relate to, but can take effort when we do not know someone or when we recognize wide differences between them and us.

The last element is the skill of being able to persuade. Servant leaders need to be able to listen, empathize and maintain personal awareness, and these skills can be used to influence others. Empathy contrasts with a more directive or commanding style, which instructs and gives out orders. In this element the servant leader is seeking to gain the commitment of others, through reflecting back their values, concerns and views in the communication to produce a win–win outcome. This may come, for example, by consulting staff and including their views as factors in the decision, and when communicating the decision by linking this back to the feedback from staff.

The final set of three – foresight, vision and transformation – is about the longer-term relationships. Leaders need to be able to scan the environment, make sense of the mass of information and translate this into useful information for their teams. They need to hold to a clear vision about where they and the organization are going, and most importantly communicate this in a language that staff can understand. Finally they need to be able to bring about transformational change, responding to the environment and taking forward their vision. Such transformations should affect both the organization and the individuals in a positive way.

**Using the model with coachees**

The 10 elements in Figure 1.1 are a useful set of themes that leaders can consider. In coaching where I have a coachee who is reflective and interested in ideas, and the focus is on leadership development, I would explore what makes a good leader. In most instances I find that such coachees talk about their personal experiences or their views of a leader who they admire. One frequently quoted example is Richard Branson; another is Nelson Mandela. In these instances I would encourage the coachees to talk about their perceptions of these individuals and what they do that makes them great leaders. This leads us into building a set of competences, and at this point a leadership model can be useful.

Having gained agreement to talk about a model, I tend to briefly describe the model and if, like Greenleaf’s ideas, it contains a number of elements or important relationships, I would write these down for the coachees to help them visualize the model. The 10 categories are easy to remember,
Leadership Coaching

so it’s the type of model that as a coach you can keep in your head, and the use of modern language gives it resonance for today’s manager.

One way to move forward would be to ask coachees to rate themselves from 1 to 10 for each of the elements, with 10 being an exceptional personal strength and 1 being ‘I need to do significantly better in this area’. As self-perceptions give only one perspective, I would then invite the coachees to repeat the rating and imagine it was their boss who was rating them.

The rating provides a great starting point for discussion. One direction is to explore the differences between self and ‘imagined boss’ rating. It can be useful to get coachees to think about the evidence in each element, and having reflected on this make amendments to both their and their imagined boss rating so that these reflect a stronger evidence-based view rather than an initial reaction.

With the ratings available, the coach can explore with coachees their views on what matters most in their roles. In general I would argue that, with a model such as this, all aspects are important but I recognize that some are more important than others and this varies between roles. Having identified the important aspects and the areas of lower rating, I would invite the coachee to select areas to focus on for a discussion, selecting two or three for a coaching session.

The discussion would encourage the coachee to talk about what they do, and what an exceptional performer might do in this element. Take listening as an example. Coachees may reflect back that they do listen but that it takes time they don’t have, so they often find that they interrupt staff or talk over them. We might then explore techniques for them to encourage their staff to stay focused and use a ‘lift speech’ approach – delivering their message in a limited time. Alongside this we might explore the perceptions of staff when their managers talk over them, and also how the coachee might develop patience to be able to stay focused and fully attentive for the whole conversation. These two or three elements might in turn lead the coachee to develop an action plan of 6–10 objectives that they will go away with and try out. In closing I tend to encourage coachees to think about how they will stay on track towards these goals over the next three or four weeks. In particular I encourage them to think about who will hold them to account and who will support and encourage them when they are doing well. Ensuring support mechanisms are in place increases the likelihood of the manager returning, having found that he or she has successfully maintained these new behaviours throughout the period.

A second way to explore these elements would be to invite coachees to tell a story about their experience of each. This approach works better with coachees who are more extroverted and who enjoy the narrative as opposed to a more numerical rating approach. The end process however is similar in encouraging them to think about what they are doing well and what aspects from the model they could choose to strengthen.

The model also provides a useful aid in two further ways. First, I have found that many managers enjoy reading about business and leadership, so
being able to recommend a book or magazine article from *Harvard Business Review*, *People Management* or the *Director*, for example, is helpful. The recommendation often follows a conversation in shorthand about the model, and getting the manager to read the long version encourages them to re-engage with the material. To support this process, I tend to ask the manager to consider a series of questions that I suggest will be the basis for our conversation next time. These questions might relate to: What aspects of the model are critical for the organization/manager now? What would the manager add to the model to make it a more appropriate fit? What does the manager need to change about his or her style? How are they going to do this?

Lastly, a model can be used as an evaluation device. The coach might usefully return with the coachee to consider the leader’s progress against the model, after six months. This can be particularly effective when managers are asked to rate themselves and the original scores are then compared with the self-rating. The contrast again provides data about what changes have taken place and why these have occurred. With the manager’s agreement it would be possible to use the model in a self and boss-rating exercise in the tripartite closure meeting, when the coach, coachee and coachee’s manager meet to review the progress made.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter I have offered a brief review of the emerging literature on coaching’s contribution to leadership development. The conclusion is that coaching is a useful tool in this process, and the research evidence from studies is beginning to demonstrate this value in scientific research terms beyond case study and personal experience. The chapter then offered a model of leadership and set out how leadership models can be a useful aid in the coaching relationship to enhance leadership development.

As with psychometrics or coaching models, the application of a leadership model requires a judgement by the coach about what will be of most use and value for the coachee. Models can be a shorthand guide to helping leaders understand themselves, provide them with a language for developmental conversations and offer them a heuristic to take into the office for their future development and decision making.

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Taylor, L M (1997) The relation between resilience, coaching, coping skills training, and perceived stress during a career threatening milestone, DAI-B, 58 (05) (Nov), p 2738
This second edition of Leadership Coaching brings together the latest thinking on the most relevant and effective techniques to use when coaching leaders. Written by international thought-leaders and practitioners, this guide will help you get the best from your clients whether you’re a new or experienced coach.

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Jonathan Passmore is an award-winning professor of psychology with an international reputation for his work in coaching, change and leadership. He is managing director of Embrion and consults and speaks at conferences across the world. He is the editor of the prestigious Kogan Page Association for Coaching series, and Wiley-Blackwell’s Industrial & Organizational Psychology Handbook series and is also a co-author of Top Business Psychology Models and Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management (published by Kogan Page).

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