

The Benefits of Coaching for Rising Gen Leadership

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Greg McCann is a certified leadership coach and is founder and principal of McCann & Associates. He's also presenting on "The Benefits of Coaching" for Leadership at the 2018 FOX Rising Gen Forum (<https://www.familyoffice.com/learning-programs/forums/2018-fox-rising-gen-forum>) on October 22 in Chicago.

As a member of the rising gen living in today's complex, rapidly changing world, one of the best ways to give yourself every chance to succeed as a leader, both personally and professionally, is to use coaching in two ways. First as a resource- getting yourself a coach along with developing at least one peer coaching relationship in your life. Secondly- see coaching as one style of your own overall leadership toolkit. Coaching will change your life while making you a more effective leader!

I have been a coach for twenty years and have had coaches at several key points in my life. What I have seen and experienced so many times is the coachee, when they feel safe yet challenged, can truly gain a profound insight related to their self-awareness (e.g. *I advocate way too much, we use money as an emotional bargaining chip in my family, my being late shouldn't be about how busy I am, but about how it impacts others*). From this insight, this greater awareness, comes the ability to be more effective- to turn these unconscious patterns into conscious choices. This is what good leaders work on; this is the core of leadership development. Let's look at leadership, what coaching is (and isn't), and coaching both as a resource as well as a leadership style.

All leadership development is built on the foundation of self-awareness and empathy

You are already leading

If you want to know if you are leading, turn around and see who is following you. In other words, don't define leadership as some title or pinnacle of success waiting for you in the far-off future. See your leadership development right in front of you as you lead an important conversation with your ideas, lead an effort in your family, or at your temple, or in that charity you volunteer at, or by coaching your daughter's softball team. To quote one thought leader, Lyndon Rego (<https://www.ccl.org/people/lyndon-rego/>), "*All leadership development is built on the foundation of self-awareness and empathy.*" When I ask groups that I work with to list the characteristics of the best leaders they have ever followed, the list is about character, not technical competency. It all starts with how you show up and how you connect with the people you are leading.

A good coach is...anchored in the foundational belief that the wisdom is within you



What is coaching?

Many people think of an athletic coach when they first think of coaching: someone who tells you what to do and how to do it. Another lens through which to view coaching focuses on creating a safe and neutral environment where you can process the stuff going on in your personal and professional life. It might be a conflict with a colleague, a health challenge, a great opportunity, or even your family's succession plans. The coach, whether they are a peer or a professional, will be there to help you think through your options, challenge your assumptions, refrain from giving specific advice, and stay anchored in the foundational belief that the wisdom is within you. It is difficult to sit down with your spouse, your boss, your employees, or often even a friend and say something like, "*I wonder what quitting my job and taking six months off would be like?*" If someone has skin in the game, they are prone to react, advocate for their interests, or give advice (an approach most of us overuse). A coach shows up differently and helps you show up differently.

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Peer coaching and professional coaching

A professional coach is someone who is trained, experienced, and educated on the skills of coaching. They are clear on what boundaries to set with the coachee, when to push or challenge them, and can listen deeply to what is being said; and often, more importantly, what is not said. *(Please see below for a list of resources of some notable organizations that provide coaching)*

Peer coaching is working with a trusted colleague, ideally one whom you are neither in direct competition with or manage (or are managed by). It follows the same guidelines and processes but with two significant differences. First, peer coaching may not get as deep, given the experience and training level is different. Secondly, since you are navigating a relationship outside the coaching relationship with this person, some greater boundaries might be warranted. You might not tell your peer coach about a failure, or even ethical lapse at work if you both are in the same industry.

Why do coaching?

Most of us don't have a safe neutral place to process ideas, rethink assumptions, gain self-awareness, deepen our empathy of others, be challenged, and get trustworthy feedback. Consider- can you truly own your strengths, your weaknesses, and your blind spots? Who do you trust to give you honest, objective feedback? Are you working on bringing patterns into awareness to make them choices (e.g. time management, balancing advocating and accommodating)? How aligned is your reputation (i.e. how others perceive your character) with how you perceive your character? Until you can fully and confidently answer these questions, you have the opportunity to invest in your leadership development.

Coaching as a leadership style (or gear)

Especially early in our leadership development, we tend to overuse our preferred approach to leadership. We might use command and control where we advocate for our ideas. We might want to build consensus and buy-in for our idea, or we might even want the team to develop their own idea (and thus accommodate a great deal). Analogous to gears in a car, all these approaches can be an effective choice in the right circumstance, but no gear is the right gear all the time. Don't get stuck in one gear!

Consider coaching as one gear to use and add to your leadership resources. It is okay to use coaching as a leadership style when you are a managing or being managed (yes, you can even *coach up* to your boss). Imagine you have a direct report or even one of your children who has made the same mistake a few times. This might be a place to help them see the pattern, what assumptions underlie it, and if they might try some new approach. This is vastly different than just giving advice and has the potential to have a longer lasting impact.

Resources

1. Center for Creative Leadership (<https://www.ccl.org/>)
2. ICF – International Coaching Federation (<http://coachfederation.org>)
3. Institute of Coaching, McLean Hospital, Harvard Medical School (<https://instituteofcoaching.org/>)
4. Family Office Exchange (<http://www.familyoffice.com>)



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