

Executive Leadership Coaching: Developing Advocacy and Image Skills

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Abstract

Executives are responsible for bringing an appropriate set of attributes, values and behaviors to their accomplishment of difficult leadership tasks. They are assessed on the nature of their potential and their performance. The observable and assessed key indicators are frequently communication variables. Communication skill is a major and consistent focus of performance evaluation. For example the role of “the spokesperson” for the corporate entity, how he or she serves as an advocate and manages the impression they make is crucial to the corporate reputation. Executives must exhibit superior leadership ability, demonstrating an awareness that organizations have changed, with greater demands for transparency and authentic and interactive leadership communication. Consistent exceptional performance is the key to success. A communication coach can assist with the refinement of communication skill, tactics and impression management. The best coach is one who is capable of collaborating with the executive to accomplish the behavioral refinements that lead to an exceptional communication style.

This discussion considers requirements, stages and approaches to the coaching task. It provides a schematic that can be valuable in the coaching and training of executives who aspire to be more successful in their leadership communication tasks. As the schematic unfolds in the discussion the key verbal cues of composition, salience and credibility are explained. The second section of the schematic focuses on nonverbal cues and develops the key nonverbal cues of credibility, likeability, interpersonal attractiveness, and dominance.

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The terrain in the workplace has changed for many high performing executives who as they move up the ladder of responsibility are increasingly called upon to communicate in ways that are different and more refined than demands they have previously faced. For example as executives venture outside the confines of their particular corporate culture and move into the role of “the spokesperson” for the corporate entity, how he or she serves as an advocate and manages the impression they make is crucial to the corporate reputation. An executive who demonstrates superior leadership ability holds an awareness that organizations have changed, with greater demands for transparency and authentic and interactive leadership communication. Some theorists view the new environment in the workplace and government as “the enterprise culture” (Burchell, 1993, Elliott and Attkinson, 1998, Sennett, 1998, Cameron, 2000). In the enterprise culture executives are valued first as individuals who bring superior qualities to a position and secondly for the ability to work with and influence a team. Consistent exceptional performance is the key to success. Executives are responsible for bringing an appropriate set of attributes, values and behaviors to their accomplishment of difficult tasks. Individuals are assessed on the nature of their potential and their performance. The observable and assessed indicators are frequently communication variables. Communication skill is a major and consistent focus of performance evaluation. “The popularity of executive coaching is most likely driven by the twin forces of turbulent organizational environments and the heightened criticality of effective leadership” (Bassi, Cheney, and Lewis, 1998, p. 53).

A communication coach can assist with the refinement of communication skill, tactics and impression management. The assistance may be provided by a corporate communication trained professional within the organization and an outside expert coach (Bassie, Cheney and Lewis, 1998, Dutton, 1997, Eggers and Clark, 2000, Filipczak, 1998, Grossman, 1996, Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck, 1999, Judge, and Cowell, 1997, Leeds, 1996, O’Brien, 1997, Synder, 1995, Smith, 1993). “Executive coaching is a field in its infancy, so it’s no surprise that companies and consultants are looking in all directions to find effective programs”(Olesen, 1996, p. 25). This discussion presents and illustrates the position that a seasoned communication evaluator and skills coach, with requisite rhetorical knowledge and corporate savvy is an appropriate advocacy and image coach choice.

The best coach is one who is capable of collaborating with the executive to accomplish the behavioral refinements that lead to an exceptional communication style (Caudron, 1996, Gabriel, 1996). The proficient coach must know how to promote change based on sound theory and methods. However, this role for the coach goes far beyond teaching. “Because executive coaching targets high performers, the focus is less on teaching new techniques than on helping the executives become their best” (Witherspoon & White, 1996). Consequently the coaching task is multifaceted, rigorous and requires finesse in dealing with issues of face. Persons with experience as communication skills educators often are an excellent fit for this task.

Approaching the Coaching Task

Any coach or educator conducting communication improvement instruction realizes the fallacy of the blank slate. Learners/coachees are not a blank slate. They bring an array of habits and preconceptions about the communication process to the instructional setting. Rather than simplify the helping/learning process, this fact complicates it. The professional who is a member of Toastmasters, and the executive who seeks coaching have usually made a self-conscious selection of the kind of communication excellence they seek to achieve. They have decided to apply their potential to the communication tasks that lead to further success. In either coaching situation it means that the coachee has an established degree of expertise, recognized potential, and some record of success, which has served to freeze some behavioral traits into habitual patterns. A common example in the corporate world is the executive who has recently moved from one focused area of responsibility to a broader management decision-making role. The communication techniques that were efficient in the previous setting may be inappropriate in the boardroom. For example in contemporary parlance this executive must learn to “manage up,” which means to conduct influence effectively with those at the executive decision making level. This process requires the unfreezing of a set of behaviors and requires that the coach does three basic things. First, analyze the needed change and provide a rationale for the change, followed by a compelling explanation that illustrates how to accomplish the change, and then provide repetitive practice to set the new behavior in place. This simplistic tripartite method reflects what most coachees would expect because it fits culturally established patterns of learning. We know that in English language based western cultural settings listeners tend to organize the information into three key points. Consequently the overarching pattern of coaching is neither unfamiliar nor complex. The “Communication Training Model” (Goldhaber, 1993) reflects these three elements and adds post-training evaluation and feedback as a final step. In training coaches provide direct feedback. In the world of business the critical feedback is provided by decision makers’ responses to executive proposals. Hence the pattern of the coaching task appears to be rudimentary, yet the specific abilities to carry through the coaching are not.

The *first stage* of the tripartite approach, analyze the needed change and provide a rationale for the change, requires a sophisticated ability to bring theory and contemporary communication needs to the client in a concise manner that has impact. The initial element of this needs analysis is the ability to recognize expeditiously the strengths and weaknesses of the executive’s communication. Routine communication analytic factors include delivery technique, and a range of nonverbal enhancements to the verbal message. The rhetorical factors of arrangement and style are also familiar in assessing the nature of the pattern of ideas, the supporting materials and features of language use. However the ability to do a faithful analysis of invention and language application in the corporate setting depends upon the coach’s ability to understand the culture and the linguistic, relationship, and task exigencies of the business or organizational environment that comprises the client’s daily reality.

Another component of this initial stage of coaching is the provision of substantial rationale to the client regarding the coach’s focus to provide personal improvement. Frequently the client feels a lack of desired effectiveness, but doesn’t know why or what the improvement issues are. Interspersed with the discussion of assessment the coach should be capable of providing a brief explanation of how and why particular strengths or weaknesses have an impact on others’ perception of the performance of the executive communicator. A knowledge of rhetorical theory and a focused discussion of the principles of communication competence will

frequently suffice. It is surprising that many exceptionally well-educated executives have never studied communication and the principles that appear to be commonplace to the communication coach appear as pearls of wisdom to the client. However there is a caveat to this observation; the principles should be explained within the context of the client's communication culture and the explanation must be suggestive rather than prescriptive. For example, the power of narrative explanations is evident when attempting to clarify why a particular behavior is problematic. A good coach has consciously considered and planned for the use of some illustrative anecdotes.

The *second stage* of coaching is to provide a compelling explanation of how to accomplish the change in rhetorical performance. Here is where the seasoned coach has substantial advantage over the communication coach with limited experience in performance coaching. For example the coaching of effective presentation requires attention to the quality of language and the ability to phrase key ideas in a memorable manner. Executive presentations are generally expected to be concise. The techniques that enable the focus of ideas into an immediately distinguishable and memorable pattern are significant applications in executive presentations.

Executives' most frequent communication concern is to improve delivery technique. The speech coach must understand and apply training methods to foster vocal variety, disciplined body language, emphatic and natural gestures, and the management of stage presence. The most obvious performance elements to coach are the standard features of effective delivery. However the executive is not just concerned with a few fine points of delivery, but is holistically concerned with a range of features of impression management. This requires an awareness of appropriate nonverbal and verbal behavior within a particular context. The broad industry or government context and the rhetorical exigencies engendered by the particular organizational culture have a significant impact on the communication choices of the executive and whether or not those choice lead to success.

The *third stage* of coaching is the facilitation of repetitive practice to accomplish modification of the communication behavior. The client rarely has adequate time to practice as fully as the coach desires, yet the powerful impact of one-on-one coaching must be reinforced with the client. Busy people learn best through coaching transactions. The most productive practice is conducted with a coach's active involvement to provide immediate feedback. Practice sessions are carefully structured with exercises designed to accomplish some particular improvement goals. The use of videotaping and replay analysis is a powerful and essential tool. A strong coach-coachee relationship is essential to enable the feedback to be taken as a focus on behavior to be modified, not as a criticism of the individual being coached. The practice should take place far enough in advance of the communication event that the presenter has some time for self-reflection and self-reinforcement of the methods learned in the coaching sessions, i.e., positive visioning of optimum performance may be a powerful outcome of effective coaching.

As I entered the offices of the Executive in charge of corporate audit of one of the world's largest investment banks I asked myself, what can I do to help or to coach an obviously accomplished executive leader such as this person? I soon discovered he had a clear focus for the time he would spend with me. This executive wanted to fine tune the image he was going to create in an upcoming opportunity to speak to the Board of Directors. "Tell me what I can do to

improve" was not only his statement, but a familiar initial statement from first meetings with executive coaches. The many executives who have been coachees to my consultative communication coaching have sought assistance to grow and refine their communication skills because they recognized that personal success was based not only on what they knew and how they made decisions, but how effectively they communicated and managed their personal image. When applied to executive leaders, image can be an abstract and elusive concept. What makes a leader appealing to stakeholders? Why do some brilliant executives fall short of success in their attempts to influence? There are neither simple nor monolithic answers to questions such as these. Executive image develops from a complex system of factors that are observed and assessed longitudinally by a person's colleagues. Over time colleagues' empiricism reflects upon the executive's performance, consistency, and growth in skill. But a coach can speed this process. There are cues to be gleaned from the communication behavior of an individual. These cues can lead to some modifiable characteristics that a coach can assist a coachee to improve.

Schematic for Coaching Executive Advocacy and Image

In this discussion some basic verbal and nonverbal cues are delineated that can serve as analytic guide to how an executive's communication performance effects the perception of image. These criteria have been developed through the author's three decades of coaching experience and evolve from Bennett's (1988) elements of image making and Leather's (1990) elements of impression management. When contemplating how image is created by observable communication characteristics, it is sometimes difficult to separate the verbal from the nonverbal, just as it is almost impossible to separate the substance/content of the message from the image factors. Yet in this discussion delineates composition and salience as verbal factors, credibility as both verbal and nonverbal, and then considers likeability, interpersonal attractiveness, and dominance as nonverbal factors. The schematic presented in the appendix provides a summary of the criteria discussed as primary to an executive's image and the task of managing impression in challenging communication situations. The schematic takes a global perspective on communication behavior. The schematic is intended to respect the sense that executive image is viewed by colleagues as a cohesive whole, but is in reality a complex mix of systematic and interdependent features.

Verbal Cues

Executive rhetoric has as its starting point the language and syntax the rhetor selects to symbolize the message and elements of the desire image. The busy executive processes and disseminates information. Many others depend upon her ability to deal with complex data and paradoxical situations in a concise, coherent and memorable manner. The image that the executive conveys is analogous to the sort of image the politician works to achieve. Both the politician and the executive use information to motivate and influence. Bennett (1988) looks at the image coming fundamentally from three verbal elements: "message composition, message salience, and message credibility" (p. 73). These elements are interdependent in developing an overall positive impression of the executive's rhetoric.

The composition of an executive message should convey a simple theme that is concise, coherent, and memorable. Those that need information or that will be influenced must be able to

immediately comprehend, understand and remember the message. Executive statements are usually brief whether the situation is a public setting, large internal meeting, or a small group decision meeting. Syntax and *sentence structure is more concise* than in written style. Complex and compound sentences may feel appropriate to the speaker, but they can be confusing to listen to. Oral style is most effective when it is concise and to the point. Listeners in the corporate environment most commonly complain that their colleagues' presentations are too verbose and unfocused.

Successful corporate messages convey a sense of *coherence* that centers on a theme. A coherent message is carefully framed and clearly organized in order for the organizational pattern to be apparent to the listener (Baldwin, Perry, Moffit, 2004). A sense of coherence should be built into any carefully prepared presentation, but the awareness of theme and order must also be present during a question and answer period. When the listener is able to easily discern the organization of the message, it appears to be the expression of a disciplined and alert mind. Often an effective way to structure a response to a question is to present a trio of reasons with a preview of the reasons in the opening portion of the response. Another pattern that aids coherence is the technique of building a general conclusion based on an anecdote. A coherent message employs complete sentences without unnecessary interruptions. Listeners usually react to the time it takes a speaker to answer a question, "response latency," as another significant feature of coherence (Leathers, 1990). Excessive use of pause in responding indicates either a lack of knowledge or a hesitancy to answer. A person who speaks in sentence fragments or fails to complete sentences also damages the coherence of the message.

To be *memorable* is the major goal of any substantive corporate message. "A talent for digesting a speech into a memorable phrase is a characteristic of eloquent persons" (Jamieson, 1988, p. 90). Audiences are more likely to remember statements that are familiar, metaphorical, humorous and placed in the first portion of a presentation. The use of *primacy* is a simple technique that is often taught to persons preparing to answer questions, or make brief statements, in challenging situations such as a news conference. Studies in persuasion demonstrate that in most situations listeners best remember what is placed first in a message. (Gass & Seiter, 2007, Miller & Campbell, 1959, Furnham, 1986, Rosnow & Robinson, 1967). Roger Ailes, a former communication coach to President Reagan, and today in charge of Fox television, believes that the first seven seconds of each statement or response are most significant (1988). For example this means that in a press conference the first sentence of each executive response should be memorable enough to catch the audience's fancy and the media's attention as a reportable phrase. To operationalize this feature executives are coached to state their answer in a clear powerful sentence before moving into an explanation of the position they are taking. Rhetoricians have long recognized that statements that "strike a familiar chord," to use a metaphor, are powerful because the audience brings their experience to bear in understanding the statement. For example, when President Ronald Reagan used his now famous "there you go again" phrase in his campaign debate with Walter Mondale, audiences recalled the frustration they experienced when they had been in situations where that phrase was appropriate. Even though Reagan's phrase lacked a clear referent, it was powerful because it was familiar.

Meetings and public events are replete with familiar themes and phrases. Themes are repeated so that they become *familiar*. An executive leader can be successful with a theme that

powerfully reflects the corporate culture. For example, a theme regarding the change in the treatment of vendors was coined when the Xerox company in its quality handbook stated, and executives repeated: “Xerox treats the vendors as part of the extended family” (Xerox Corporation, 1990, p. 11). This theme was repeated by Xerox executives to remind the internal “family” how to treat the extended “family.”

The concept of “extended family” is an attempt to use powerful *metaphor*. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which one idea is used in place of another to suggest a comparison or likeness. The former President of the magazine group of the Meredith Corporation, Jim Autry (1991), states the importance of metaphor use for developing executives: “Becoming a manager has much to do with using the metaphors; becoming a good manager has much to do with using the metaphors; and becoming a leader has much to do with changing the metaphors” (p. 71).

Of the various techniques employed to make statements memorable, *humor* may be the most difficult to employ because of the risks involved in predicting audience reactions. It may be a way of saying one thing and meaning another because it often stems from sarcasm or irony and the intention is to build rapport (Tannen, 1986). Humor is a highly skilled art and few learn to employ it effectively. Yet it is powerful because in general listeners respond favorably to someone with a sense of humor. Being perceived as humorless is a detriment. For example, in an analysis of presidential humor Gardner (1986) concludes that: “Sad to say, many voters don’t object to mediocrity in their president, but they absolutely insist on a sense of humor” (p. 14).

Executive communication must be concise, coherent, and memorable, but it will not be effective unless it is also *salient*. Salient statements create a powerful image that stands out in a manner that focuses listeners’ attention. “Creating an image requires more than inventing a catch theme or slogan. Images come into being only when the symbolic component or message becomes a frequent point of departure for the popular imagination (Bennett, 1988, p. 75). To be salient *the theme must be repeated*. (Courtwright & Sumdde, 2007). The executive must repeat the theme often enough that there is a broad awareness that this is a defining theme that symbolizes her leadership.

Even when others repeat a theme it is not likely to be perceived as credible and reflect *credibility* unless it is accepted by listeners. To be acceptable it must appear to be grounded in *common sense*. “Common sense tells us that arguments are more credible when they include sound logic, solid evidence, or reference to authorities” (Bennett, 1988, p. 77). But common sense also means commonly accepted values, or adapting to the “gatekeeper” function of the listener’s brain that filters the message through some preconceived notions (Decker, 1991). Understanding the organizational culture, the sense of common values held within the organization, and thus the common sense that the organization promotes, is essential to what Witherspoon (1997) calls “transformational leadership.”

Colleagues expect that statements appear credible in order to accept the message. The perception that sound evidence, logic and the weight of authoritative opinion supports the executive’s statements is key. For many educated persons the sense that the communicator is employing logos, logical proof, as opposed to pathos, emotional proof, is in itself an emotional proof factor. With the abundant information and data available to decision makers today, no

executive communicator can overlook the importance of using *factual* and *authoritative* support. When there is a need to reduce others' uncertainty on key issues, having appropriate support and data has a substantial impact on reducing their cognitive dissonance. An aura of comfort results when the message and the messenger coalesce to produce credibility.

"The reputation of handling spoken interaction competently" is a useful definitional approach to credibility. (Howell, 1982) But that reputation is complex as Kotter (1998) points out:

Another big challenge to leadership efforts is credibility—getting people to believe the message. Many things contribute to credibility: the track record of the person delivering the message, the content of the message itself, the communicator's reputation for integrity and trustworthiness, and the consistency between words and deeds (p.46).

Extensive studies of perceptions of leadership compiled by Kouzes and Posner (1993) found "surprising consistency" in results that indicated: people called for leaders who were honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. These descriptions of the nature of credibility suggest that it draws as much from nonverbal indices as from verbal characteristics.

Nonverbal Cues

The factor that contributes most to colleague's impressions of an executive is her communication style. When it is apparent that there is a negative impact from one or more of the nonverbal image dimensions, coaching can assist with alterations. Impression management is the conscious attempt to control communicative behaviors and cues for the purposes of making a desired impression. Leathers and Ross (1990) identify four image dimensions and their sub-dimensions as *credibility*, (competence, trustworthiness), *likeability*, *interpersonal attractiveness*, (interestingness, emotional expressivity, sociability), and *dominance*, (power, assertiveness).

An executive's *credibility* should be strong in both competence and trustworthiness. It is natural since colleagues do consciously or unconsciously monitor physical behavior and paralinguistic cues. Americans are accustomed to watching television images of the competent leader who is practiced and polished. According to Donaghy (1980), competence is defined as a degree of expertness. A person appears *competent* if she seems confident in what she is saying. Her posture, body movement and facial expressions cannot signal nervousness or insecurity. Vocal non-fluencies, such as excess pauses or pause-filling "ahs" and "ums" can also have a negative impact.

"Increasing numbers of leaders and observers argue that the ability to create and maintain trust is one, if not the most, important ability of executive leaders today" (Judge, 1999, p. 148). Followers expect the leader to be trustworthy, look for it as an identity trait, and expect the leader to reinforce it every day (Fombrum, 1996). *Trustworthiness* is measured by how much the executive appears to believe and feel what she says. Listeners' reliance on nonverbal cues rather than verbal messages is especially important when the nonverbal behaviors conflict with the verbal message. Listeners observe the presenter for cues to sincerity. As Eckman (1985) describes in his aptly titled book, *Telling Lies*, when we say something that is not true, our nonverbal cues may be indicating our deceit.

For the person who desires to influence others a key characteristic is *likeability*. Public figures and politicians require it and executive leaders usually need it. As Roger Ailes (1988) points out:

If you could master one element of personal communication that is more powerful than anything we've discussed, it is the quality of being likeable. I call it the magic bullet, because if your audience likes you, they'll forgive just about everything else you do wrong. If they don't like you, you can hit every rule right on target and it doesn't matter (p. 69).

Nonverbal communication theorists have difficulty defining this perceptual trait, because likeability resides in the eye of the beholder. It is most often dependent upon nonverbal communication (Knapp & Hall, 2006). A concept akin to likeability is charisma. What is charisma? An attempt at a process definition describes the outcome. A charismatic person is capable of creating the sense of a high quality dyadic interaction with each person in the group, even though the situation is not dyadic.

An executive's *interpersonal attractiveness* is comprised of her physical appearance, interestingness, emotional expressivity, and sociability. For example, in their studies Laser and Mathie (1982) found that men with thick eyebrows, thin faces, or thin lips were seen as less warm, less receptive, more tense, more suspicious, more stern and more lax than men with normal or thin eyebrows, broad or long faces, and normal or thick lips. Persons who manage their appearance through professional dress and grooming make the most of this norm. *Interestingness* is an elusive concept to determine. It is a factor derived from the overall style of a person's communication and attentiveness to what is in the mind of the listener. When reacting to presenters, listeners desire that the speaker be both an interesting person and have content that stimulates their interest. *Emotional expressivity* indicates to listeners what a speaker is thinking and feeling. The ability to show controlled exhilaration, frustration, concern, hurt and anger is a highly valued human quality. Most people are drawn to others who they perceive as caring and sensitive. The appearance of being *sociable* is tied directly to how a person responds to others interpersonally. The sociable person is a skilled conversationalist, gracious and easy to talk to. The ability to retain a dynamic yet social quality is important for the executive.

Dominance refers to the ability to assert control and have others respect that leadership. A person with this quality exhibits a sense of *power*, of being in control of self and situation. It is important to note that dominance does not infer coercion or the identity of being dangerous (Giacalone, Riordan, & Rosenfield, 1995). She must be assertive in expressing her point of view and in standing up for herself and her positions. Most of all, to appear dominant, an executive must manage tension-leaking behaviors that signal insecurity. Dominance springs from a style that is both forceful and disciplined.

Challenges for Leadership Communication Coaching

Coaching is a complex activity and coaching skill evolves with experience just as a teacher's skill develops with reflection upon the seasoning of instructional repetition. In addition to experience some guidance may be gained from the pedagogical literature of communication training and development including works like Dewine (2001), Arnold and McClure (1996), and Ray (1993).

Coaching executives is stimulating and satisfying experience because the clients are highly motivated to improve their communication competence. There are unique needs and challenges in executive communication coaching not encountered in other forms of management development. Included in those considerations are the following.

A knowledge of organizational communication theory is an essential quality of the effective coach. The academic discipline has a rich literature and body of research that cuts across many foci of the discipline. For example it is interesting to note that rhetorical analytic techniques are coalescing with organizational communication research and theory to an increasing degree. Contemporary management philosophy places emphasis on organizational culture and communication variables, and often expresses these ideas in a simplistic manner. It is important for the executive coach to be able to provide a theoretic explanation of the simplistic principles provided in management trade books and popular management communication training programs.

A sense of confident maturity is invaluable. This quality is difficult to describe because it is primarily based upon the coach's experience and personal style of disciplined communication. Executives respect others who are confident and bring their knowledge to the table in a clearly focused manner. The executive coach must be capable of establishing a productive relationship with the client in a very short amount of time. The ability to empathize in a sincere manner is essential, as is the application of appropriate good humor. An axial coaching characteristic is the ability to sense when to interject an appropriate anecdote and when to remain silent.

Knowing the client's organization enhances the coach's ability to establish and develop the coaching relationship. Basic information about a corporate entity is readily available from a multitude of sources. Initial coach/client relationship building conversation is expedited by having a basic knowledge of the organization.

Successful coaching requires that *essential coaching structure* be established. The client wishes to know what to expect. The three basic steps previously developed should be discussed with the client including some detailed explanation of what each step may entail. It is important to set a time-line expectation. For example the client who anticipates that one or two coaching sessions will have a lasting impact is probably not setting realistic expectations.

Active listening that effectively reflects back to the client the degree to which understanding is shared is an essential coaching skill. Proud persons in positions of power and influence find it difficult to acknowledge shortfalls in their personal performance. When improvement issues are discussed it needs to take the form of transactional communication where the client has substantial influence in defining the issue. The skillful coach listens between the lines and employs probe questions that draw out the client's concerns.

It is important for the coach to accept the fact that *the coach may not be in control of the interaction*. The coaching relationship is not analogous to a teaching relationship and the coaching approach must be appropriately tempered with an executive coachee. After the establishment of basic structural expectations, the most effective flow of the coaching session may be set by the client's concerns. Most executives are accustomed to control and often wish to

manipulate the performance improvement agenda. Successful coaches blend non-directive and directive approaches. It is also important to realize that the executive coach is not expected to attempt therapy, but executives do expect the coach to do some counseling around their problems.

Successful coaches pay careful attention to their own nonverbal demeanor. Executives are accustomed to watching and learning appropriate communication behaviors from those in their environment that they respect. Therefore the coach is often considered a model of communication behavior and it seldom works to ask a client to use a communication behavior that the coach does not, or cannot, personally apply.

Successful coaching in the corporate world requires a realization that the goal is to put the focus on coaching, not evaluation. Positive feedback, encouragement and the enhancement of communication strengths, is at the heart of successful executive coaching.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has examined the multitude of challenges and features that may be approached in successful coaching approach to the development of executive leadership communication. It describes a schematic that can be valuable in the coaching and training of executives who aspire to be more successful at their leadership communication tasks. Initially the schema enables assessment, a step which is crucial to the success of communication coaching. Assessment enables self awareness and “self-images influence the form of self-presentation (Shaw, 1997, p 303). Assessment encourages the executive to see the range of advocacy and image qualities that can impact their success. In order to develop and sustain long term organizational effectiveness executive leaders need to be aware of the impressions they make (Collins, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). The coachee collaborating with the coach determine the focus of communication enhancement training. With appropriate targeting of improvement factors, the results can be substantial synergistic improvement can occur.

Executive coaching is an established feature of executive performance development in many American corporations. The need for competent coaches is evident. There are numerous persons with varied backgrounds who pass themselves off as coaches, but their aptitude may fail to include those of the seasoned communication evaluator and skills coach. The ideal coach has extensive communication coaching and performance evaluation experience coupled with a substantial ability to motivate and foster attitude adjustment.

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Appendix

Schematic of Leadership Advocacy & Image

Evaluating Executive Effectiveness

Verbal Cues

- ◆ **Composition** of the message
 - ✓ Are the executive's statements concise?
 - Use of oral sentence style
 - ✓ Are the executive's statements coherent?
 - Use of complete sentences
 - ✓ Are the executive's statements memorable?
 - Use of primacy
 - Use of the familiar
 - Use of metaphor
 - Use of humor
- ◆ **Salience** of the message
 - ✓ Are the executive's thematic statements repeated?
- ◆ **Credibility** of the message and the executive
 - ✓ statements grounded in common sense?
 - ✓ Do the executive's statements appear to be credible?
 - Factual support
 - Authoritative support

Nonverbal Cues

- ✓ Does the executive appear competent?
- ✓ Does the executive appear trustworthy?
- ◆ **Likeability** of the executive
- ◆ **Interpersonal Attractiveness** of the executive
 - ✓ Is the executive's physical appearance appealing?
 - ✓ Is the executive interesting?
 - ✓ Does the executive express emotion?
 - ✓ Does the executive appear to be sociable?
- ◆ **Dominance** of the executive
 - ✓ Does the executive exhibit a sense of power?
 - ✓ Is the executive manner assertive?
 - ✓ Does the executive exhibit tension leaking behavior?