

Are You Coachable?

As a leader, you now must be.



by Peter J. Dean

TODAY, EMERGING leaders need to remain *coachable*. As executives move up, they hear *less feedback* about their leadership impact. By seeking, receiving and using feedback from another executive, HR professional or LD coach, *executives maintain the potential to be more reflective, effective, visionary and successful.*

Without coaching, executives can cause career derailment. Here are the symptoms: Inflated self-importance; ego gone awry; inability to work with different people; overuse of *position power*; poor use of communication and influence skills, inability to form functioning teams, inability to change. Executives must short-circuit the causes of derailment with personal resiliency and interpersonal awareness.

With much of the blame for *economic uncertainty* being put on a *lack of good executive leadership*, we must re-examine our notions about leadership. The traditional, fear-based, boss-centered, command-and-control type of *management* still used too frequently is seriously flawed and has failed to prevent executives from following their own selfish agenda. Also, productivity is confined by this type of *management*. Workers must not be held captive by a few managers who selfishly hold *leadership* hostage from others. Executives must move on to a *more integrated understanding of leadership* involving all stakeholders, with an integrative focus on completing the mission to achieve the strategic vision. We need to allow leadership practices to flow to all areas of the company.

If the influence on an executive's practice of *leadership* was derived from traditional, linear models of *management* of the past, he or she may not be prepared for the non-linear world of a global economy. To lead and inspire others, an executive must know the story of *leadership* and how it differs from the story of *management*. Also, some practices of *management* may even be harmful to the practice of

leadership. There are executives who are not coachable, and their career and their people suffer in silence.

Executives who remain coachable will avoid this situation and prevent professional derailment. Remaining coachable is driven *by* and succeeds *because* of the executive's ability to remain open to personal feedback. If one truly wants to learn *leadership*, it is important to make an honest and earnest attempt to learn, grow and develop specific collaborative skills. Coaching helps executives apply positive *leadership* behaviors, and avoid actions that cause derailment.

Finally, coaching provides an excellent start for an executive to build a *leadership library* and knowledge in the field of leadership studies. Leader development is not about obtaining a *corner office* or a *lofty position title*.

It is about mastering the fundamentals of leader development:

- Understanding the short-term focus of *management*, but using the long-term view of *leadership*;
- Monitoring and managing a healthy ego, emotional intelligence and ethics;
- Using effectively five *sources of power*: *Intrapersonal Power, Knowledge Power, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Position Power, and Political Power*;
- Learning to use and expand a *coachable leader's* sphere of influence beyond the sole use of position power;
- Communicating comprehensively (*Dialoguing, Listening, Empathizing, Attending, Presenting Yourself, Speaking and Networking*);
- Learning the *dynamics of work groups* as they develop into effective teams;
- Aligning *work systems* using the interplay between *individual performance, team performance* and *work systems*.

If coachable, an executive can seize *opportunities for leadership* that exist in everyday interactions with colleagues, bosses, customers, analysts, bankers, and vendors. How to recognize a coachable executive? He or she exhibits a healthy ego, integrity, fair-play, participation, productivity, responsibility, emotional intelligence, knowledge of how to use power and influence, comprehensive communication, know-how in developing teams collaboratively and in envisioning strategic change.

It's a long list of attributes. A *coachable executive* wants to master each one. LE

Peter J. Dean, Ph.D., is president of Leaders By Design, the LD and coaching division of The Leader's Edge, and author of Leadership for Everyone (McGraw-Hill). www.the-leaders-edge.com

ACTION: Coach your managers and leaders.

