



Cylient Insight Series

Coaching-Based Leadership

What It Is and Why It Matters

If you're not learning at the speed of change in your industry, you're falling behind. In a world where the pace of change is quickening, it won't be long before you're out of the race. Coaching-based leadership can keep you and your organization up to speed, and even moving ahead of the pack, by turning day-to-day interactions into opportunities to learn, develop and grow.

Coaching-based leadership instills the ability to "learn how to learn" in individuals and in organizations. That's the engine that generates engagement and innovation, and turns new ideas into reality. Learning is the sustainable competitive advantage.

What is coaching-based leadership?

It's when leaders and managers use the basic skills of professional coaches in their day-to-day conversations to engage others in finding their own solutions "in the moment." Coaching-based leadership transforms day-to-day challenges – such as addressing a sticky situation with a customer or resolving a difference with a colleague – into learning opportunities.

Coaching-based leadership can be as simple as asking a question that creates insight, such as, "How might you be able to influence this situation?" instead of telling the person how to fix a problem. It also takes place when managers offer insights to encourage people to look at situations from different perspectives and see options they hadn't considered before.

How is this different from what leaders do now?

Traditionally, leaders and managers are trained to solve problems. The hallmark of problem-solving is figuring out what's wrong with something and then fixing it. This approach works well with technical, tactical "things." People, on the other hand, generally don't like to be treated like problems to be fixed.

Leaders who take a problem-solving approach to managing tend to impose their solutions on others. Problem-solving managers typically ask enough questions to understand what they think the problem is, then they tell people what they think they should do to fix it.

The problem with problem-solving is it rarely creates the engagement needed for meaningful change. Over time this approach disempowers people and teaches them to wait to be told what to do. The most one can hope for with a problem-solving approach is compliance. There is no learning here. That's hardly a recipe for success in a rapidly changing world.

How is coaching-based leadership different?

Managers who practice coaching-based leadership are trained to see disconnects, frustrations and new challenges as opportunities to engage others to learn "in the moment." Rather than setting aside specific times for long coaching conversations, these leaders weave coaching approaches – such as asking questions that create insight or offering insightful observations – into their day-to-day conversations. As a result, people are able to see new possibilities in situations that seemed stuck, and move into action.

Coaching-based managers view their role differently from problem solvers. They understand it is their responsibility to help others to learn and realize more of their potential. They see potential in all people, including their direct reports, colleagues, business partners, and managers, even their family and friends. These managers use their own insight to ignite the insight of others, enabling them to make meaningful changes in their lives. The focus is always on helping others to realize more of what matters most to them.

What is the role of insight?

All authentic coaching—no matter how it is expressed—is powered by the translation of insight into meaningful action. That is, the coach uses various approaches to ignite the insight of another person. It's that "aha" experience that creates real learning and real engagement.

When a person experiences insight he becomes engaged with the idea that is created. It's the engagement that motivates the person to put the new learning into action. That's where the power of coaching to create real and meaningful change comes from. It's fueled by insight. This is true in both long-term coaching engagements and in the day-to-day interactions of coaching-based leadership.

“The person who experiences the insight is the person who learns and becomes engaged.”

As a cautionary note, just because you're asking questions doesn't mean you're coaching. Problem solvers ask all kinds of questions. It's the intention behind the questions that matters. A manager who is trying to solve the problem will ask data-gathering questions in order to determine what he thinks needs to be done. Then he may use questions to maneuver the other person to commit to accepting his predetermined answer. That's not coaching; that's problem-solving with questions.

Problem-solvers focus on creating insight for themselves, while coaching-based leaders focus on creating insight for others. The person who experiences the insight is the person who learns and becomes engaged. That's why problem-solving requires compliance to get results while coaching engages people to take action.

How is day-to-day coaching different from longer-term coaching engagements?

Longer-term coaching engagements have the luxury of time; the time for longer conversations and the commitment to continue the dialogue over many months. Coaching-based leadership, on the other hand, gets to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible because the learning happens in the moment. While longer-term coaching engagements are guided by specific written goals, coaching-based leadership creates forward momentum in specific situations by encouraging immediate learning from experience.

Why does coaching-based leadership matter?

Change has changed. It's happening faster, the changes are often more disruptive, and there's no end in sight. The organizations that will thrive in this new chaotic space are those who can learn, and keep on learning, as fast as – or even faster than – the rate of change in their industries.

Years ago, when the environment was more stable and predictable, strategies with time horizons of five years or longer could be established and executed. In that environment, it made sense to define management as controlling resources and then training people to do as they were told. In our current times of constant innovation we need people to be able to think for themselves, read patterns and respond to emerging trends, and quickly pull together people with different ideas and perspectives to work together and make things happen.

Many of the legacy leadership values of yesteryear now get in the way. Leaders who believe they have to have all the answers, and who punish people for taking risks or for getting something wrong, drain the vital lifeblood of initiative and innovation out of organizations. We need to let go of just executing orders and embrace the ability to act in-the-moment based on what we learn.

Change happens in-the-moment when people face their fears and decide to do something differently. Coaching-based leadership gives people the tools and perspectives needed to support others through the learning process needed to make change happen. Not just once, but everyday. Coaching greases the wheel of change by turning everyday challenges into opportunities to learn. When learning becomes part of the fabric of the organization, change is seen as the opportunity it is, rather than a bewildering force to be feared and resisted.

How does coaching-based leadership benefit the organization?

Our focus, at Cylient, is transforming organizations by making coaching-based leadership a way of life. Our flagship workshop, Coaching in the Moment® instills coaching capabilities at all levels of the organization. The stories our clients share regarding how coaching-based leadership transformed challenges into opportunities are both heart-warming and inspirational. People report having conversations they didn't know how to have before, resolving disagreements with peers, engaging people they'd almost given up on, guiding others to take on new challenges, and much more.

While stories are great, data are even better. There is no point investing in coaching-based leadership if it isn't delivering bottom-line results. A study was recently conducted of a business unit of a global tire manufacturer where all 140 leaders completed Cylient's Coaching in the Moment® workshop. *The results demonstrated...*

98%

of the leaders effectively applied what they learned from the workshop, and specifically were better at conducting difficult conversations, resolving issues, giving feedback, and developing others.

personal productivity

81%

of the respondents indicated that their productivity increased as a result of their participation in a Coaching in the Moment workshop. The average productivity increase was 7%.

sales increase

16%

of the respondents indicated that sales increased with the overall increase estimated to be 1%.

COST reduction

32%

of the respondents indicated that their actions led to reduced costs with an average overall reduction estimated to be 2%.

OVER 80%

indicated that applying what they learned had impacted intangibles such as improved communication with employees, improved teamwork and increased collaboration with peers.

team productivity

68%

of the respondents indicated that the productivity of their work teams increased with an average increase of 6%.

OVER 160%

Return on investment (with all costs of the project considered) was over 160%.

How do you get started with coaching-based leadership in your organization?

We're often asked how to instill coaching-based leadership in large organizations with thousands of leaders. It seems like a daunting task, however, it's important to take it one step at a time. There are three things to keep in mind:

1. "Work With the Willing"

You don't have to begin at the top. And everyone doesn't have to be onboard to get started. Begin with the people who are willing to try something new. Typically, these are the people who will benefit most from learning to use coaching approaches. They may be the people on the frontline of a change initiative or in a division facing a new challenge. Or they may simply be the key influencers who tend to lead the way in your organization. Discover who the willing are in your organization and begin your work with them.

2. Provide Support for Learning and Application

Support the early adopters to successfully integrate coaching-based leadership into their day-to-day activities. Identify the kinds of follow-up support that will work best for them. It's important to have a variety of options available to align with different learning preferences and work circumstances. Examples include: job aids, e-learning, apps for

smart phones, peer coaching and many other kinds of learning opportunities.

As these early adopters become more confident in their coaching capabilities, ask them to partner with you to recruit others to experience coaching development workshops. Continue this process until the "buzz" about the value of coaching creates so much pull that people are asking to attend the coaching workshops so they can be part of the action.

3. Build an Extended Learning Network

Continue to look for ways that people can support each other in the learning process and deepen their experience with coaching-based leadership. Share success stories and encourage people to let others know how coaching is making a difference for them. This attracts more people who are willing to learn about coaching and helps to build the kind of learning network needed to make coaching a way of life.

How does coaching-based leadership deliver sustainable competitive advantage?

You don't have to look too far to see how disruptive change is reshaping industries in sometimes astonishing ways. The shelf life of knowledge and skills is getting shorter and shorter. Coaching-based leadership enables organizations to keep pace with, and even lead transformational change because coaching-based leadership makes change happen faster.

More importantly, the process of moving to coaching-based leadership embeds the perspectives and capabilities needed to continuously embrace change as an opportunity. That's a sustainable advantage in a world of constant change. That's what coaching-based leadership delivers.



Cylient creates Change-Able® organizations by making coaching-based leadership a way of life. Change-Able organizations move through any kind of change more quickly, smoothly and successfully, and they are able to continue to evolve and grow over time. That's because people are able to have the conversations needed to make change happen "in the moment" when they matter most. We would love to partner with you to make your organization Change-Able. Visit www.cylient.com or call us at 515.276.2020 to learn more about our full complement of offerings to integrate coaching-based leadership into the fabric of your organization.

Dianna Anderson, MCC

Dianna is the CEO of Cylient and a recognized thought leader in the area of coaching-based leadership. She translates the insights she has gained from her experiences as a Master Certified Coach and organization change consultant into the creation of innovative learning experiences and initiatives that create lasting business value. Cylient has taught thousands of people to make coaching a way of life. Dianna and her husband, Merrill Anderson, co-authored *Coaching that Counts*, a widely recognized source for the business case on coaching in organizations. Dianna received her MBA from the Ivey School of Business in Canada. She may be reached at dianna@cylient.com.

Merrill C. Anderson, Ph.D., ACC

Merrill Anderson is a leadership coach and organization change architect with over twenty-five years of experience drawn from both Fortune 500 leadership positions and consulting with over 100 companies in a dozen countries. Merrill has a Ph.D. from New York University, has taught graduate-level courses at Benedictine, Drake and Pepperdine universities, and has over 120 publications and professional presentations to his credit.





1.877.788.6465 WWW.CYLIENT.COM