

A Leadership Opportunity

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Integral Coaching for Business Leadership

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Coaching in business requires embracing the individual and their organization. We could look at this as working in the tension between the individual and the organization or at the point at which they intersect. Either will do. The former, however, offers us the opportunity to think about the energy in the relationship of the individual and the system of which they are a part.

When we are able to include both the individual and the system, we are taking a path that could be considered integral. There are several ways to think about integral:

1. Developing mental models that transcend and include other models,
2. Considering the developmental path of the individual in relation to the system, and
3. Thinking about the individual and the system as both/and, rather than either/or, thus seeing them as inherently linked.

The first option sensitizes us to seek the best and the most useful constructs we can find to guide how we coach business leaders. We can draw on the work of many leadership theorists and seek ways of including their perspective in clarifying mental models of leadership. This is integral in that it requires us to integrate elements of various models to come up with the client's construct.

An example of this first approach would be to explore the



elements of effective leadership offered by various theorists and practitioners and help the client incorporate them or adapt them into their mental models. A business leader who relies on heroic notions of leadership can discover how to differentiate and identify when that approach is useful and when it is not. S/he can then look to alternatives to build a more complex repertoire of models to guide action. Modification might draw on ideas of shared leadership, teamwork or delegation.

The second option allows us to differentiate the leader and the system, but to focus on the individual's integral development. Following Ken Wilber's lead, development would be about the individual as body, mind, spirit and soul- four distinct developmental streams- in the context of the business as a system. This is where it is likely that most coaching would approach being integral.

The client sets boundaries and limits within these areas. Coaching may challenge these by testing assumptions and beliefs, moving to second and third level learning, etc. In any case, the focus is on the client and helping the client move in desired directions, following the streams of their choice.

The closest we would be to coaching in relation to the system would be to develop scenarios and consider the implications of choices and actions for the business as a system. This would assure that the client makes choices that have been clarified and evaluated before action is taken. Nevertheless, development is still about the individual.

This is where theories and models of developmental psychology may be useful. They can be used to help clients understand the implications of stages of development. Or they can be used to make assessments about emotional intelligence and other factors that some models deem to be important for individual development and maturation.

The third option adds to individual development, the notion of system development. It recognizes the importance of considering both dimensions and their relationships, particularly the quality of harmony and tension between

them. These are coaching openings.

If an individual goes through stages of development in body, mind, spirit and soul, what about the system? While there are models of the stages of development of corporations, there are no developmental models that are widely referenced of leadership system development (one approach is offered by the author in *A Leadership Opportunity*, Russ Volckmann. Since consideration in this option of both individual and system is required, such a model would be highly useful.

Times of rapid change and turbulence require us to consider development as an individual and collective act. It is integral. Here are the elements of a model that might guide us:

1. Getting people on the same page. This would include getting clear about the formation of the system around purpose and the clarification of the individual leader's commitment to that purpose.
2. Effectively using leadership resources. A leadership organization needs to be developed that creates structures and processes for the use of time, energy, access to information and influence within the structure. This requires, in turn, development of leader competencies in order for him/her to make an effective contribution to this organization.
3. Inspiring the leadership team. When we consider business leadership, we are often thinking about executive leadership. A different approach to teamwork is important here. Leadership teamwork requires that the focus be on something that is critical for all leaders to be involved in. They perform best when inspired by a common goal and supported by an effective organization. These are often situations for which there is little or no precedent. It requires the individual leader's capacity for innovation in being an effective player on the team.
4. Bringing vitality to relationships with stakeholders. Stakeholders are employees, customers, investors, etc. This

level of development involves leaders in connecting with stakeholders in an entrepreneurial fashion as demands and expectations change. Only when all four levels are well-developed can the business thrive and business objectives be achieved.

This is not a linear model. It is a model, however, that permits us to track change in any direction and to make sense of the individual and system requirements of any situation. It is an integral approach. The skills and practices of leaders and individuals can be included, as can the levels of complexity of the system in which leaders operate.

Implications for Coaching

This model provides a useful template for working with business leaders in a way that allows them to organize their thinking and the identification of action steps for the individual and the system. The model provides an opening for identifying what is important to the individual (espoused theory) and how the individual's behaviors relate to that (theory in action).

Examples of questions that might be used include:

- What are the business objectives that need to be served by your leadership?
- What is the purpose of leadership in meeting those objectives?
- What are you committed to? How do you demonstrate that?
- What resources are important to leaders?
- What are your skills and strengths in providing needed resources?
- What issues require teamwork?
- What is important to you about teamwork?
- What stakeholders do you connect with?
- How can you work with them to achieve business objectives?

Many more questions could be used in coaching an individual leader. And there are parallel questions that might be asked

of the members of a leadership system.

This approach to coaching leaders provides coordination and guidance in coaching individual leaders and the systems of which they are a part. The approach is one of integral coaching. It is integral because it relies on an integral framework to guide the coaching process.

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Even everyday people succeed
with **everyday**
wealth

