

## SENSING PHASE

To determine the appropriateness of a coaching relationship, requires an initial enquiry, which will call on the individual to disclose personal vulnerabilities, specific personality traits, that may in fact be sabotaging the executive's honest attempt to be an effective leader and manager.

It becomes very apparent in these essential conversations that my proposed role is understood. My personal values, ethics and relationship norms need to be clearly stated as well. Accordingly, this sensing phase, is a "two way street" – a collaboration.

I communicate to a potential coachee/client that an initial intake like a filtration process to determine if the proposed relationship is a good fit, should take place. This focuses specifically on the individual's STRUGGLE(S) much more so than their vision, strategy, and goals, because the struggle(s) give a much more informative and accurate picture of what the main reason for coaching/consulting is in most cases. My "struggle experiences" with numerous executives, include, self-confidence, conflict avoidance, accountability, trust, arrogance and vulnerability issues.

Author's David Dotlich and Peter Cairo in their seminal book, *Why CEOs Fail*, identified and went into great detail to describe eleven derailers (behaviors) that undermine executive careers. I have integrated their thoughts into my practice. Also, leadership authors, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner postulate that without this deeper enquiry, resulting in personal development, the executive's *credibility* will be in question, as they attempt to build and lead an effective team. They purport and I concur that "Leadership concerns the capacity to build and maintain a high-performance team, and leadership should be evaluated in terms of the performance of the team."

Based on my knowledge, team performance and goals are more *easily* achieved when struggles (dysfunctional dispositions) are identified and the causes of the struggles are addressed and, besides, clients are usually *very* clear and aware of their struggles and *very* hazy around their goals. So ponder on the following questions:

1. What prompted you to search for a coach?
2. What *specifically* were you hoping a coach would help you to do?
3. Why do you feel you need a coach to accomplish this? (What is making it difficult to do this alone?)
4. What have you *already* tried in relation to this?
5. How successful have each of these approaches been?
6. Why do *you* think you have still not accomplished this?
7. What made you reach out to *me* specifically?
8. What makes you think that I may be able to help you to accomplish this?

Once the individual answers this 'on paper' or has the conversation with me I know that they are: a) Precise that they have a problem b) Comprehend that their other attempts/approaches haven't worked for them c) Unambiguous that they want me to help them d) Straightforward why they want me as their coach. This means that *if* we move forward to an engagement (we may not if the answers are to "thin" (without substance), that I have a good level of understanding of their struggle(s), that they are the kind of authentic, thoughtful and self-examining person that I like to work with, that they will take the time to think through responses and communicate them with me and not hide, obscure or defend their actions as we work together and, very importantly, it means that I can approach the engagement as a effective helper/confidant rather than a promoter or advocator of products (methodologies) and services.

Note: The above comments, narrative and advice are credited to many other practitioners and mentors over the past 30 years. If I could recall all of their names, I would give the proper acclaim.