

# Coaching Distinctions for LEADERS

By Michaleen K. Lewis MS-OD, PCC, CPLP

As the leader of your organization, you are tasked to create a focused, productive and engaged workforce for a higher level of success all around. You've probably attended an array of workshops, podcasts and have read numerous books on how to complete this challenge. The vast definition of an "expert" on the topic of coaching can be confusing. What is *your* approach; would it be best to be a coach, a mentor, a consultant or a counselor for your organization? In fact, **what is your definition** of coaching and other related experts? My experience as an ICF Certified Coach has taught me that the greatest value to an organization comes from a leader who is also an effective coach; one who coaches in every 1:1 *and* group encounter. Coaching is all about *WHO WE ARE BEING* as a person. This article will explain how true this is for you and how YOU can make the best use of your time and resources coaching across our diverse workforce populations.

**Coaching is a thought-provoking and creative, interactive process helping individuals and organizations be inspired to develop more rapidly and produce more satisfying results.** As a result of coaching, you can set better goals, take more action, make better decisions faster than on your own and more fully use your natural talents.

**Professional coaches are educated to listen and observe, to customize their approach to the individual client's needs, and to elicit solutions and strategies from the client.** They believe that the client is naturally innovative and resourceful. The coach's job is to provide support to enhance these skills, assets, and creativity the client already possesses. While the coach sees and shares objective perspectives, the client is responsible for taking the steps to produce the results he or she desires.

Coaches align with leaders in becoming more productive in their own personal and professional lives supporting the ultimate goals of enhancing professional performance and producing a better quality of life for themselves as well as for those in their organizations.

**"Coaching is an ongoing relationship which focuses on clients taking action toward the realization of their visions, goals or desires. Coaching uses a process of inquiry and personal discovery to build the client's level of awareness and responsibility and provides the client with structure, support and feedback. The coaching process helps clients both define & achieve professional and personal goals faster & with more ease than would be possible otherwise."**  
**ICF – International Coach Federation.**

## Coaches:<sup>1</sup>

- **Help people set better goals and then reach those goals.**
- **Ask their clients to do more than they would have done on their own.**
- **Help their client to focus better so as to produce results more quickly.**
- **Provide clients with the tools, support and structure to accomplish more.**

As a leader, you wear many hats of various sizes and shapes. Donning the "coach" cap, your role is to: ask many questions, help compile and summarize information, test assumptions and limitations, brainstorm and offer different perspectives, and finally, together, inspire possibilities to move into action. Your role is to support your team member's movement forward, encourage each to take a risk or a new opportunity, support them as they make a tough decision and engage each of them, bringing new ideas to light. It is your role to believe in them, especially when they MAY NOT see their own strengths / talents or future potential!

## THE CHALLENGE!

**AS A LEADER**, it is VERY EASY to be an advisor or the expert - always telling - especially if you have also risen through the ranks because you KNOW what you would do. HOLD BACK!

At first consideration, identify where each individual is at in their career/current position or situation. If they are NEW – you may want to direct or teach them vs. just ask questions - otherwise they will become frustrated because they don't have the knowledge you possess. As much as you think they *should know* about a specific situation, they may still need your guidance. As they bloom into their own confidence and ability, strongly consider being more coach-like – asking much MORE questions. It's about recognizing where each direct report is located in the broad spectrum of comprehension, then engaging each to find their own answers - ensuing internal motivation – the best kind for accomplishing any goal!

UNRAVELING THE TRUTH: There is a myth that a coach needs to know the client's specific industry or have had the job of the leader. **NOT TRUE.** Great coaches ask lots of illuminating questions to help **the leader** define and become CLEAR on their own, creating actions to gain momentum. If a client leader wants specific job or industry advice – support them to seek out a MENTOR. As coaches, we encourage people to ALSO seek mentors to help them navigate in their own environment/field/ former position in parallel with coaching.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted to and integrated with information from Coach U: [www.coachu.com](http://www.coachu.com), International Coach Federation: [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org).

## COACHES ARE experts in the PROCESS – How can LEADERS DO THE SAME?

The method of *holding the space* to allow each person to uncover their own STRENGTHS and MOTIVATION is what a coach does. We believe the BEST answers live inside the individual; our charge as the coach, is to draw it out. A good analogy may be in the silliness YET patient wisdom from the movies; *The Wizard of Oz and Star Wars*. Remember when Glenda the Good Witch says to Dorothy, and similar Yoda said to Luke Skywalker, “You’ve always had the power,” we too, as coaches, share the same sentiment, believing the power is within you, our role is not to tell you what to do!

As a LEADER COACH, help your team explore who they are, what they want, keeping them focused and aligned (organizationally, professionally and personally), co-creating a strategy and follow-up with supporting - ensuring attainment. A heartfelt sense of accomplishment shows up as you, the Leader, being the *silent partner* who walks beside your staff member as **THEY** go for it!

**AS A LEADER**, what elements of these definitions and behaviors can you model in maximizing the potential of your own teams & ORGANIZATIONS? How can you craft what you read above and meld it into WHO you want to be AS A LEADER?

**YOUR CHALLENGE:** *Commit to incorporating COACHING into every 1:1 discussion. Yes! it does take more time at the start... however, the ROI & people engagement yields first-rate, even surprising RESULTS!*

## DISTINCTIONS

What is the DIFFERENCE between *Coaching, Consulting, Sports Coaching, Mentoring, Counseling | Therapy, Manager as Coach, Friends & Family Support?*<sup>1</sup>

**Consulting:** A consultant is considered to be an “EXPERT” on specific subject matter information. Instead of telling a client what to do, a coach asks succinct questions enabling the client to recognize what is needed to move forward. Some consultants are also very good at asking questions, yet they also give us recommendations. Consultants enter into a situation and may or may NOT be the implementer of the suggestions made. A coach’s role is to stay with the client leader supporting their implementation and sustainability learning new skills, needed changes, ensuring goals attained.

**Sports Coaching:** Coaching includes several principles from sports coaching, like teamwork, going for the goal, being your best. Depending on the level, sports coaches are “tellers” meaning they create the plays, etc. Unlike sports coaching, most professional coaching is not formal competition or win/lose based. Leaders set the strategy not coaches. Coaches hold or facilitate the PROCESS and don’t tell you what to do; their role is to keep leaders aligned and focused on the organizational strategy, seeking win/win solutions throughout the engagement.

**Mentoring:** Mentors can also be utilized both formally and informally. Mentoring usually happens INSIDE an organization or an industry. The more knowledgeable mentor takes on a protégé or mentee under their wings. Their role is to give advice, counsel, guide, be a navigator and can also be seen as being a “teller.” Some mentors integrate coaching by asking lots of questions as well as give advice. Mentors who are high influencers may be seen to have the opportunity to introduce the associate to more prominent leaders who may play a strong part in their development and/or promotion. YET, it should not be expected. Mentoring is more about being there for them, answering “how they handled” a scenario. Mentors are viewed as being a guide in a support position to help an individuals’ career and/or life!

**Counseling | Therapy:** Professional therapists / counselors have had numerous years of formal education and are qualified and licensed to deal with and handle mental health issues. Whenever an individual wants to get “deep” or delve into the past of the WHYS of a situation, the ethical coach quickly spots this is not their forte and immediately refers out to a licensed professional. Coaches start in the *NOW / THE PRESENT* moving towards the wants and desires of client’s future with a strategy and action steps to get there.

**Manager as Coach:** A certain “power” is present when a manager coaches their direct report. Performance expectations and related concerns emerge. Anticipated results may be heavily weighted and possibly judged differently because of the power of being the manager. Coaching can be done if set up ahead of time in a win-win agreement for both performance (JIT/ remedial) & developmental career opportunities.

**Friends & Family Support:** Friends and family are great and may create a certain “influence” over the client. It may be a tricky situation, as each may have hidden agendas and reasons wanting change or no change. The comfort or non-comfort level in the relationship can impede the outcome. Although they care for the client, they may/may not sabotage efforts depending on their own beliefs of what the client “should” or should not do or be and may NOT *REALLY* support what the client truly desires. We all need an outside view, not having allegiance to the one being coached.

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*This article was adapted from “Coaching Distinctions” also written by Micki K. Lewis via Linkage, Inc., distributed to over 65,000 Global Leaders.*

**About the Author:** AGP – ALIGNED GROWTH PARTNERS’ (alignedgrowth.com) Alliance Partner Micki Lewis is an Executive Coach, Strategic Consultant and Leader Development Strategist. Helping clients develop themselves to see clearly has been Lewis’ passion. First, helping people SEE CLEARLY in the Ophthalmic Industry to now coaching, consulting with leaders to BECOME CLEAR & strategically FOCUSED!

Lewis began her Optical Industry Career in High School, working in a lab then attained AS Optometric Technology, Triton College, River Grove, IL. Past certified ABOC, COA, Ms. Lewis managing optical departments then moved into sales & marketing in ophthalmic frames & lenses (SOLA). At SOLA Micki was chosen 1/6 National Speakers creating and presenting accredited educational sessions across North America. Lewis’ educational journey continued achieving her BA in Organizational Leadership then MS in Management & Organizational Behavior, Benedictine University, Lisle, IL. Lewis is a Professionally Certified Coach (PCC) sanctioned by the International Coach Federation (ICF) and Certified Professional in Workplace Performance (CPLP). Lewis has coached 100’s of LEADERS. Past President of Chicago Association for Talent Development (ATD) and Board Director for additional global associations. She is a featured author of *Real-World Career Development Strategies that WORK* and has written 24+ articles, earning 10+ Industry Assessment and Certifications. Ms. Lewis integrates her passion and expertise for Coaching, Leadership Development and Organizational Effectiveness in all offerings. Together WITH YOU, Lewis designs, builds and implements aligned Leadership & Talent Development Systems particularly formulated for YOU and YOUR Organizational SUCCESS!