

Executive and Performance Coaching

*"I never cease to be amazed at the power of the coaching process to draw out the skills or talent that was previously hidden within an individual, and which invariably finds a way to solve a problem previously thought unsolvable."
(John Russel, Managing Director, Harley-Davidson Europe Ltd.)*

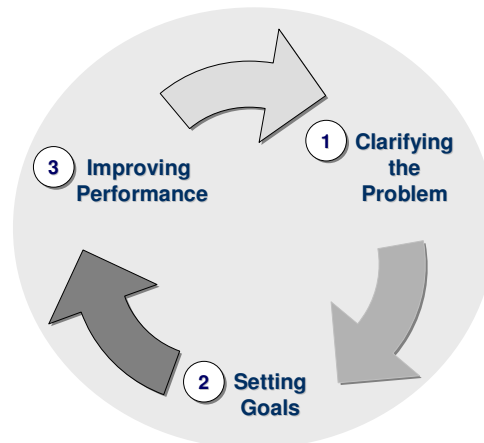
N Vision Learning Solutions specializes in two types of coaching: **Executive Coaching** and **Performance Coaching**. It is important to make a clear distinction between the two.

Performance Coaching

Performance Coaching is aimed at helping any individual, regardless of the nature and organizational level of their role, improve and sustain aspects of their performance that relate specifically to defined performance problems.

For example, a person may be failing repeatedly to deliver key presentations with authority and impact when facing executive groups. This would be a classic case of a performance problem that can be clearly specified and for which improvement goals can be measurably defined. The focus on a performance problem and the attainment of new performance standards lies at the heart of Performance Coaching. In this sense, there is a conceptual similarity to sports coaching.

Performance coaching is a key component of Executive Coaching and typically involves the following stages:



Stage 1: Clarifying the problem

The focus of this stage is to encourage the individual to articulate their perception of their performance problem and to help them explore and clarify the nature and impact of the problem.

It is important to have the individual talk through their problem and to understand it more objectively. Quite often, this process of exploration and clarification of what the problem really is will enable the problem to be reframed into a more specific cause of the identified gap in performance.

The strategy of the coach, from the outset, is to **empower** the individual to analyze, explore and to make their own conclusions and decisions. In this way the coaching remains centered with the individual. The individual must own what is being explored and developed throughout the session. If the coach is too proactive in suggesting areas for the individual to explore or raises a lot of potential solutions to the individual's stated problem, the coach runs a serious risk of never allowing the individual identify their real problem and leaving them not feeling in charge of their own situation. At worst, the individual may feel that the coach has defined and solved their problem for them.

The goal of Performance Coaching is sustained improvement in performance and sustaining performance improvement can only be achieved by an individual who really owns their problem, its solution and the process for achieving the improvement. This is why the person-centered approach is absolutely crucial to effective coaching.

The outcome of this stage is a clear shared understanding of the elements of performance that the individual wants to improve – clearly articulated and owned by the individual.

Stage 2: Setting Goals

With the focus of the coaching conversation now clear, the next stage is to define the specific goals of performance that the individual wishes to achieve. For example, in the case of the person who wants to develop their presentation skill, they may not want to become the archetypical charismatic presenter but more, someone who is able to maintain the interest of an audience with a very clear and well structured message. The coaching task in this case would be quite different from coaching someone who wanted to become more energized and dynamic.

In the goal setting stage, the coach is working hard to help the individual visualize the outcomes of their performance and the behavior they are wishing to develop. The more clearly performance goals can be defined, the more effective and sustained the change in behavior.

Throughout the process, the coach will be looking for ways in which to help the individual develop new thinking about their performance standards and as necessary will challenge the quality of the ideas being generated. Attention to 'raising the bar' of performance is never far from the mind of the Performance Coach.

In addition to setting a short term goal, it is helpful and potentially very motivational for the individual to consider an aspirational level of performance beyond the short-term goal. The analogy for a mountaineer would be to position the coaching for the ascent of a mountain in the context of an even more stretching future climb in the range of mountains beyond.

Throughout the goal setting session, the coach is actively tuned in to the mood of the individual to ensure that they are staying emotionally connected to the goals being set and agreed – the ownership by the individual of the performance goals being paramount.

Stage 3: Improving Performance

With the problem clear and the goals of performance agreed, the Performance Coaching process now moves to developing a plan for bridging the gap between the individual's current capability and that required to achieve the new performance goals.

The first task is for the coach to help the individual describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the new performance. The coach will be active in listening, summarizing and challenging the individual to 'dig deeper' into developing creative ways of reaching their new goals. All these ideas are recorded by the coach. The next task is to agree the specific agenda of development activity, the resource required and the time frame.

Where knowledge is needed, the resource will be identified – the coach may be able to provide input but more likely, in the case of technical or organizational political knowledge, people from within the individual's organization will need to be identified and invited to mentor. Where skill and attitude are required, the coach will input, model, role play and coach the necessary competencies. This becomes a live and powerful learning experience for the individual and stays focused on developing specific skills and attitudes.

The 'improving performance' agenda and the monitoring of the individual's performance become an ongoing dialog between the individual and their performance coach. This needs to be managed professionally within the framework of an informal **contract** agreed between the individual, their nominating manager and the coach.

Performance coaching is a key component of Executive Coaching.

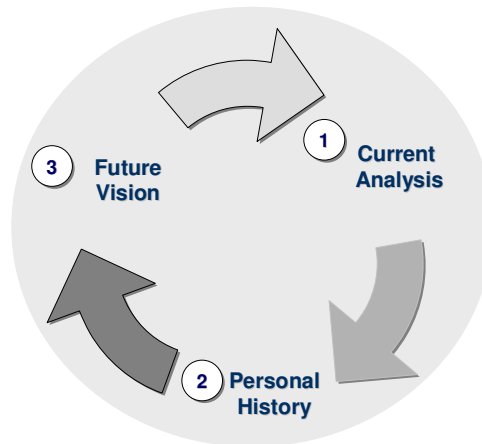
Executive Coaching

Executive Coaching, in contrast, takes a more holistic perspective of the person and their personal dynamics. It is aimed specifically at people who are involved in the challenge of engaging others to perform. So, while Executive Coaching will always have performance improvement as an end goal, as indeed does any coaching process, it is involved much more deeply than Performance Coaching with the more emotional elements of interpersonal connection, execution, inspiration and transformation. It is these aspects of a person's capability that ultimately determine the effectiveness of their engagement with people and as a consequence, the quality of their leadership and influence.

The N Vision Executive Coaching process described below has been developed with the watchful eye and support of Ed Norman, senior partner to N Vision Learning Solutions and founder of Executive Development International. Ed's twenty years plus of coaching sessions with a wide range of executives across a diverse set of cultures gives him a qualified background to draw from. The shape of an individual's coaching program in terms of length and number of sessions is determined by a range of factors that include:

- Executive level
- Role complexity
- Organizational culture & behavioral demands
- Individual self-awareness
- Personal background & culture
- Previous personal development
- Learning orientation
- Personal ambition & determination to succeed

Whilst each coaching session is unique to the individual, a pattern of coaching has emerged. The key elements are summarized below:



Stage 1: Current Analysis

This involves an in depth **analysis** of the individual's **current** situation. This will include a detailed mapping out of the key demands and drivers of their current role. It will examine and explore the individual's thoughts and feelings about the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. This analysis can be enriched by the use of other data from a variety of sources e.g. assessment feedback processes, performance appraisals, psychometric instruments and learning events.

The output from this stage will be a comprehensive review of the person's performance and behavioral profile taken from both the individual's **inside-out** perspective and the **outside-in** views of others.

During this analysis, the key patterns of the individual's performance and behavior, their motivational drivers, their definition of success and its assumptions will be examined and explored.

Stage 2: Personal History

As a general rule, because we are all products of our experience, the individual will discover that some of the key patterns of their behavior are in fact, anchored in well established tracks that they have been using, possibly unknowingly for many years.

Stage 2 gives the individual the opportunity to explore and review their **personal history** in the context of incidents and decisions that had an impact on the way they decided to perform. These were decisions that worked best at the time but may now no longer be 'fit for purpose' in their current environments.

These issues are deeply personal and their exploration will reveal the earlier development of emotional and thinking patterns that are now no longer relevant and supportive of performance necessary to meet the needs and demands of today and beyond. This is a key stage in the process and provides the value added in helping the individual really see and feel how their attitudes and behavior can be changed and improved in the context of their current role and their future aspiration and vision. Inevitably the future will begin to emerge as an issue for the individual and leads onto the third key stage in the coaching process.

Stage 3: Future Vision

The purpose of this stage is for the individual to develop a strong and emotionally compelling **future vision** of where they want to take their role and career, how they need to develop and, resulting from that, to build a clear practical plan of campaign that addresses both work and personal development.

The critical element in this stage is for the individual to create a future vision to which they are emotionally attached. The person must be emotionally charged to their action plan. Without the expression of emotion, there is no effective and lasting personal change and development.

Executive Coaching Program Duration

As stated earlier, it is difficult to judge precisely at the outset the length and shape of an N Vision Executive Coaching program. Sessions are offered on a half day or whole day basis. It would be usual for a person to have a whole day for their first session. The first session will clarify the complexity of the individual's situation, map out the key issues and determine the likely number of sessions required. Previous experience suggests a range of one to a maximum of four days spaced over a period of a year, sometimes including an observation of the individual in action. The norm is one day followed by a second full day or two half days.

Driving Principle

This is an intensive interpersonal approach designed to help the individual explore and learn more about their own personal process of thinking and feeling.

The overriding objective of Executive Coaching is to help the person understand the key elements of **how** they perform and to challenge their effectiveness to meet the changing demands of their today and their envisioned future.

Most importantly, underpinning all the above, is the strong focus on helping the individual develop autonomy and responsibility for managing their own process for change and ongoing self development.

Confidentiality

The other crucial aspect of the ongoing contract between coach and individual is the management of confidentiality. The N Vision practice is that the notes written by the coach during the session are the property of the coach and individual alone. However, at the end of each session, the coach and individual will agree the key outcomes of the coaching that the individual will share with the key parties making the investment. This statement of outcomes will also form the framework that the individual will agree that the coach can use in any feedback conversation with interested parties in the organization e.g. the individual's manager or Human Resources.