



## **The Purpose of Executive Coaching (Part VI)**

### **Making Great Choices and Decisions in Management – Every Day**

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If you are a senior executive, you probably reached this level because you are a person who is willing to make decisions...and perhaps you are rather good at it.

So take a minute or two to think about how you generally make decisions.

Ask yourself the following questions. How willing are you to take risks? How much time do you spend in analyzing facts? How often do you involve other people in your decision making process? Who are the people – if any – you typically involve? Colleagues? Subordinates? Your superior? Perhaps even outsiders like your spouse or trusted friends?

Thought about it?

The higher up you are in management, the more difficult it seems to let other people get involved in your decision making process. This is true for several reasons:

- 1) The higher your position, the higher are the expectations of your own ability to make good decisions;
- 2) The higher your position, the more you might feel that it is your duty to make decisions by yourself and that it is not acceptable especially for major decisions to involve your subordinates; and
- 3) The higher your position, the more complex the criteria to be considered in the decision making process, i.e. less and less people will actually be competent enough to understand this complexity. This could be true for peers as well as for outsiders like friends or partners.

It is easy to anticipate that if one person needs to make decisions largely by herself/himself, the quality of the decisions becomes harder to maintain. Bias

and blind spots combined with a lack of reflection with a competent 'mirror' often lead to poor decisions, especially by top executives.

### **What can be done?**

If you lack reliable feedback and feed-forward partners, a competent and experienced executive coach can help. Provided that the coach has sufficient corporate management experience and the necessary coaching competence, options for important decisions can be discussed with and challenged by the coach.

Let me give you an example. One of my clients, the managing director of a medium sized company, was struggling for several months with the performance of one of his managers, a single lady in her mid-30's. While she had a lot of good qualities, like excellent product knowledge and the ability to build good rapport with colleagues and customers, there was a problem with her working attitude. She left the office everyday at around 6.30 pm, i.e. the end of her regular work time.

While this company does not have a culture of requiring its employees to stay very late, it is expected especially from the managers to stay longer occasionally if the business requires it.

Several discussions with the manager didn't lead to any substantial change. The managing director started to fear that her behavior would impact on the overall morale of his organization.

So the question was: do we keep her or make her redundant?

During our coaching session we further analyzed the issue and the behavior of this manager. While in the beginning it seemed that this attitude was rooted in her belief that working longer hours wouldn't bring any benefits for her, it later turned out that having sufficient free time for private activities was a core value for her. Any incentives to stay longer were not effective in changing her attitude because her personal values were much stronger.

It also turned out that other related values like "life should be easy at all times" were not exactly aligned with the corporate values of this company, to say the least.

Since changing someone's personal values is a very difficult task, almost an impossible one in a corporate setting, the answer to the question of whether or not to keep this manager became crystal clear.

**Summary:** Continuous coaching is particularly useful for executives in top management positions as they often lack any effective feedback systems. An experienced and competent executive coach can help such executives avoid or at least minimize wrong decisions that can prove expensive.



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