

Leading Ways: MAXIMIZING COACHING

In a leadership role, knowing your type and temperament can be very beneficial. Along with self reflection and good feedback from others, we inevitably start to become better leaders and managers. However, to get the greatest use of this information, it needs to be incorporated into an overall leadership profile with a plan for continuous improvement. One great way to focus this improvement is by working with a leadership coach.

DEVELOPMENT

The keys to effective leadership development are very simple and straight-forward.

First, **focus** on a few critical goals that are relevant to your current challenges as a leader. Be sure that the list is informed by the 360⁰ data, MBTI, FIRO-B, and at least one conversation with the person(s) you report to. These priorities should be turned into a conscious written plan using the goal setting questions below or some other structure. This plan should incorporate structured performance reviews, discussions with coaches, and interactions with peers and supervisors.

The second step is to look for growth opportunities in your **daily work**. For example, if the message of one goal is to “be more strategic,” then look for ways to understand this challenge in the context of your current assignments. Take five minutes a day to think about where the opportunities to be more strategic may lie in that day’s meetings and conversations.

Third, **monitor and reflect** on the outcomes. If your goal is to “be more strategic” then how will you know when you are successful? Identify those things that will mark progress, like “Understanding the current work in a broader future context” or “creating common ground for everyone to grasp the project” would be two ways to observe the larger goal of “being more strategic.” Developing the capacity to be **self-aware** and **reflective** of the impact of these changes is critical at this point.

Creating a positive environment for **continuous feedback** from a variety of sources is the fourth step in this development framework. Big, formal sessions are not nearly as valuable as quick, immediate, and to-the-point feedback that is tied to behavior change. A supervisor, close peer, or even trusted subordinate – particularly one that is good at the skill you would like to improve upon – are all candidates for people who could give good feedback.

Finally, understanding what you have learned about how you improve, and then **applying it to the next goal** is critical.

COACHING

One great way to focus on improvement is by working with a leadership coach. As part of this leadership program, you will receive coaching.

The purpose of this coaching is to:

- Help you interpret your 360⁰ and MBTI assessments
- Identify your leadership strengths and areas for development
- Select leadership goals you want to work on during the program
- Determine action steps toward those goals

Your coach will have already reviewed your MBTI and 360⁰ reports prior to your first coaching session.

IN PRACTICE

The process I use typically begins with a short interview with the individual who is the focus of the feedback report (this can take place either by phone or in person). With this interview and a brief survey I try to get an idea about how the person sees their development needs. This informs the next phase which will be interviews with key individuals to help build a better 360⁰ report. The quality of the 360⁰ feedback is that input is gathered from all three directions in the organization, up/down/and out. Depending on the individual's role and position I might suggest we include key customers or clients in these interviews as well.

All this input is compiled into a report that will focus on identifying strengths and development needs specific to the individual. It will also include some preliminary assessment on my part regarding the priority for the development work that would follow. Both are used as the basis for a discussion where we develop a clear picture of the person's "leadership profile," what they need to do to be successful in their position, and a plan for using strengths and taking needed steps in their development. I sometimes compliment this data with some of the leadership psychometrics that I have used in programs such as MBTI and FIRO-B.

This is a complete process at this point and is intended to leave the individual with a plan that they can act on, with specific goals and milestones to bring into their day to day work. However, many clients benefit from a coaching process that allows for additional time, typically from six months to a year. This can provide the individual the opportunity to tackle larger personal and organizational goals while still benefiting from the support of the coach to keep them on track and help in solidifying the leadership skills they have learned