Wearing Multiple Hats?
Challenges for Managers-as-Coaches and
Their Organizations[*]

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This article explores the challenges for individuals and organizations of adding coaching to the repertoire of managers. In complex and dynamic environments, a manager becomes responsible for developing people for continuous learning, which transforms him or her into a manager-as-coach. However, the resulting expanded capacities and skills require a manager's ability to navigate a new ambiguity in roles and identity; this article uses the metaphor of "wearing multiple hats" to represent the challenges that managers face when they add coaching to their repertoire. To prepare them to do so, the development of a manager-as-coach should go beyond an instrumental approach to embrace a transformation learning approach that includes not only skill acquisition, but shifts in values and mindsets. Additionally, organizations should be supportive by promoting a more distributed and horizontal culture of leadership.

Key words: coaching education, executive coaching, manager coach, role ambiguity, transformative learning

Organizations are increasingly turning to coaching as one key strategy in responding to the growing uncertainty, change, and complexity in today's world. The use of specialized external and internal coaching to support the learning and development of executives, managers, and employees has been on the rise over the past 10 years on a global scale (Bresser, 2013). Also on the rise is the development of more coaching capability in managers (Beattie et al., 2014).

We use the metaphor of *wearing multiple hats* to represent those challenges that managers face when they add coaching to their repertoire. By broadening the range of responsibilities to include facilitator of learning and development, the manager-as-coach must be able to navigate multiple roles and increased complexity.

This article first outlines three major trends leading to the current emergence of the manager-as-coach figure in organizations. Second, it discusses the challenges that managers-as-coaches experience, as well as the kinds of capacities and skills managers need to be effective. Finally, the article focuses on the role of transformational learning and organizational culture in effective practice and development of managers-as-coaches.

Context

The move to add coaching to managers' repertoires of responsibilities is an adaptive response that shows up as three major trends in organizations. The first major trend is that continuous learning and development is becoming a core function in organizations (McComb, 2012), and in that context, managers are expanding their repertoires of responsibilities to include facilitating learning in staff. This focus on learning and development in organizations is intended to better equip employees with skills that will allow them to be responsive to the growing complexity, plurality, and uncertainty in the workplace (Mcguire, Stoner, & Mylona, 2008; Senge, 1990). Additionally, this focus also aids recruiting by making organizations more attractive and thus helping them address the fierce competition for attracting and retaining talent (Gibb, 2003; Hagel, 2012). Finally, the quick ascension of younger and less experienced employees into management roles as a result of rapid scaling in many business enterprises, or sudden waves of retirements in public agencies, requires that organizations intensify their efforts to develop their less experienced managers so they have the requisite competencies for their new roles (Gibb, 2003).

The second major trend explaining the rise of the manager as coach is in the shift of the locus of responsibility for people development from the human resources department to managers (Ladyshewsky, 2010), who become responsible for identifying developmental gaps and creating learning opportunities for their employees. Indeed, managers throughout the organization, because they work closely with their staff, are viewed as being more cognizant of, and thus more responsive to, the context-specific needs of their staff and

department (Gibb, 2003). While workplace learning programs designed and delivered by a centralized human resources department certainly seem useful for acquiring standardized and generalized knowledge, they appear limited in their ability to respond to the unique and varied learning needs of people in the organization (Mezirow, 2000).

The third major trend, which encompasses the two trends above, is the increased attention to developing a leadership culture in organizations. Many view conscious and systemic attention to developing people and distributing learning throughout the organization as a defining characteristic of leadership, which while complementary, is distinct from management (Anderson, 2013; Dunoon, 2008; Rost, 1993). Therefore, a leadership culture is one that couples learning and leadership and fosters this pairing as an intrinsic part of organizational life (Anderson, 2013). In that context, managers need to expand their perspective to not only include learning but also leadership as a distributed function in the organization, of which they are expected to be a model. By practicing coaching, the manager exemplifies and promotes both leadership and learning (McCarthy & Milner, 2013; McComb, 2012).

Table 1 summarizes the three trends and outlines the consequences for the role of managers.

Table 1: Three Trends to Understand the Emergence of the Manager-as-Coach Figure

Context	Consequences for the Role of Managers
Continuous learning and development as a core function in organizations	Managers need to expand their repertoire of responsibilities to include facilitating learning in staff.
Shift in the locus of responsibility for people development from HR to managers	Managers will become responsible for identifying developmental gaps and aspirations and for creating learning opportunities for their employees to acquire new skills and capacities.
Increased attention to developing a leadership culture in organizations	Managers need to expand their perspective to include not only learning but also leadership as a distributed function in the organization, of which they are expected to be a model.

The Complexity of Developing Manager as Coach

Developing the manager-as-coach as a primary strategy in response to these three major trends is no simple matter. Adding coaching skills to the repertoires of managers' responsibilities goes far beyond the issue of increased workloads or added skills. It requires the ability to wear a multiple range of hats, some of which can feel contradictory.

First, what are the requisite skills and behaviors managers need to be effective coaches? According to a meta-analysis of managerial coaching studies, Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2006) identified the following attributes of effective managerial coaching: the ability to create a learning environment, being caring and supportive, providing regular feedback, and demonstrating skillful communication. These behaviors reflect two sets of skills: interpersonal and cognitive. Interpersonal skills include empathy, support, encouragement, reassurance, and genuine concern for people and their development (Beattie, 2002; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Hamlin, 2004). Cognitive skills include broadening employees' perspectives, reflective thinking (Beattie, 2002), and delegation (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999).

Managers then need to "coach," which means endorsing a non-directive posture based on more positive, humanistic, and motivating communication styles (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2006) to empower people to make their own decisions. The demonstration of such skills means that managers need to expand their role from a supervisory orientation, which is more directive, evaluative, and task focused, to a facilitative orientation, which is more supportive, enabling, and relationally focused (Elliott & Reynolds, 2002; Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012). This means that managerial coaching requires a different mindset, competencies, and skills for managers (Ladyshewsky, 2010). As Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) note, managers "must learn to 'unfreeze' or let go of old behaviors associated with the 'command and control' paradigm" to transition to the "empowering and facilitating paradigm" (767).

As well as developing an awareness of the need to add skills to one's repertoire, managers need to be willing and motivated to do so. However,

according to Ellinger and Bostrom (1999), it is far from simple. Indeed, despite the longstanding view that employee development is an important managerial responsibility, from a practical perspective, few managers regard themselves as facilitators of learning. They "perceive it to be a distraction from work, are not rewarded or recognized, or assume it is the responsibility of the training and human resource departments" (766).

   Finally, some researchers (Anderson, 2013; McCarthy & Milner, 2013) suggest that managerial coaching should become its own coaching specialty: coaching for a manager means something different than coaching for an internal or external coach. Indeed, by adding coaching to a manager's repertoire of responsibilities, managerial coaching is something other than a "'limited' or 'cut-down' version of specialized coaching" (Anderson, 2013). Managerial coaching entails specific challenges, such as navigating multiple roles and identities and being able to move back and forth between a supervisory and facilitative orientation (McCarthy & Milner, 2013), acceptance of becoming a learner (Hamlin et al., 2006; Ladyshewsky, 2010), and seeing a shift in power dynamics between managers and employees. Indeed, when managers empower employees to take a more active part in their work, they share some power previously attached to the figure of the expert. In short, managers-as-coaches should, first and foremost, be able to effectively respond to added complexity in organizations. This has implications for developing coaching skills in managers. Instead of the same coach training programs designed for specialized coaches, education programs that are designed for the unique needs of the manager as coach are necessary (McCarthy & Milner, 2013). These findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: What It Takes to Develop Managers-as-Coaches

Awareness and coaching skills acquisition	Managers should be aware that specific interpersonal and cognitive skills are needed to adopt a facilitative posture and then acquire these skills.
Motivation to perform the job	Managers should view coaching as relevant and part of the manager's job.
Ability to navigate increased complexity	Managers should be able to wear multiple hats.

Educating Managers-as-Coaches: The Role of Transformative Learning

The move to coaching for managers involves awareness, skill acquisition, the motivation to do the job, and the ability to navigate increased complexity in organizations. This increased repertoire of skills and responsibilities requires more than the acquisition of specific coaching skills. The literature has identified several key factors: increased self-awareness (McLean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and shifts in values and mindsets, all of which reflect more complex "orders of consciousness" (Hall, 1994; Kegan, 2000; McCauley, Kanaga, & Lafferty, 2010).

   With the above in mind, the development of a manager as coach capable of wearing multiple hats calls for learning programs that go beyond coach *training* to coach *education*. We refer to coach training programs as ones that feature instrumental learning, which emphasize theory, methods, and skills. The emphasis is on developing capabilities and practical application, with the objective for the learner to acquire abilities, related attitudes, and dispositions to promote confident action (i.e., description, observation, and feedback; Bennett, 2012). In addition to the components involved in coach training, coach education features transformative learning that includes attention to shifts in development, mindset, values, and intelligences (Mezirow, 2000) that address the complexity and sophistication that McCarthy and Milner (2013) describe. Indeed, the emphasis of coaching education is on critical thinking and knowledge exploration, to allow people to push existing boundaries, reconfigure the intellectual architecture of a problem, and identify challenges or opportunities (Bennett, 2012). Coach education that promotes transformative learning should not only include immersive learning programs, but also everyday in-the-midst-of-action learning as well (Allen & Roberts, 2011; Otter, 2012). Again, the sophistication and complexity needed to develop coaching capabilities in managers and the ability to wear multiple hats requires some individualization and ongoing attention that is best achieved through coaching, mentoring, and communities of practice,

to support the learning that immersive learning events provide (Allen & Roberts, 2011; Hawkins & Smith, 2006).

Table 3: Manager-as-Coach Training Versus Manager-as-Coach Education

	Manager-as-Coach Training	**Manager-as-Coach Education**
Type of learning	Instrumental	Transformative
Format of learning	Immersive only	Immersive and in-the-midst-of-action
Emphasis	Practical application/ capability	Critical thinking, knowledge, and self-exploration
Outcomes	New knowledge, skills, and methods	New knowledge, skills, and methods and shifts in behaviors, attitudes, values, and mindset

The Centrality of Culture

In addition to focusing on the acquisition of skills at an individual level, organizations must also ensure that their culture supports the actions and development of managers-as-coaches. Necessary shifts in the organizational culture are recognized as having a positive influence on the development of manager as coach. Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) identify the importance of incorporating assessment of coach capability as part a manager's performance appraisal. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2006) go further by coming up with the concept of *coaching culture*. Far from being a quick-fix process, coaching gets embedded in the DNA of the organization. According to Anderson (2013), incorporating managerial coaching into the organizational life and attending to the developmental and cultural shifts required for its effectiveness, one is indirectly cultivating more leadership capacity, particularly leadership that is more relational and plural, which she refers to as the "Trojan horse effect" (17). She writes that "organizations that decide to pursue . . . managerial coaching . . . may get more than they expect. To be effective managerial coaching requires a fundamental reconsideration of models of leadership and a corresponding review of leadership development" (18). Thus for Anderson, the coaching shift is better apprehended through the lens of and for its consequences on leadership. When managers add coaching into their repertoires of responsibilities to attend to the

learning and development needs of people, incorporating into the everyday work activity of the organization, it is also distributed throughout the organization. In this way, a more distributed and horizontal orientation of leadership begins to complement prevailing leader-centric and vertical orientations of leadership (Anderson, 2013; Dunoon, 2008; Otter, 2012).

Conclusion

The figure of manager-as-coach has emerged in organizations as a result of combined trends, such as an increased focus on continuous learning, a shift of HR responsibilities on managers' shoulders and an increased attention to developing a leadership culture in the organization. In this article, we have used the metaphor of wearing multiple hats to represent the challenges that managers face when they add coaching to their repertoire. This shift requires not only a broadened range of responsibilities but also an ability to navigate multiple roles and increased complexity. To successfully embrace this change, managers need to develop specific skills, behaviors, attitudes, and mindsets. To that effect, we suggest that mere coaching skills acquisition, characteristic of coaching training, is insufficient and that a transformative learning approach through coaching education is needed. Coaching education not only attends to the acquisition of new behaviors, values, and mindsets; it also attends to the challenge posed by the requirement for managers to wear multiple hats. Lastly, we emphasize the role of organizational culture in responding to the challenges presented by developing the manager as coach. Paradoxically, growing a culture of leadership is seen as key to the effective practice and development of manager as coach, while also being one of the outcomes of developing managerial coaching. Navigating this paradox by incorporating transformative learning into the culture is suggested as one effective strategy.

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