



Unlocking Potential

**Bridging the Gap Between
Performance and Possibility**

Do you have a team with potential that just isn't quite reaching its stride?

You see glimpses of **brilliance**, but something is holding them back.



If your team is not performing optimally, how do you bridge the gap between their potential and their current performance?

The answer might not lie in more directives, tighter management, or even mentoring. Instead, the key could be coaching.





Between 2015 and 2019 the number of leaders taking coaching increased by 46% (Sonthalia, S., 2024), reflecting its growing integration into leadership development and organisational strategy. *Why? Because it works.*

Companies that embed coaching see higher engagement, stronger leadership pipelines, and improved performance.

So how do you become a coaching leader?

Choose the Right Strategy

Leadership is not one-dimensional. As leaders, we move between multiple roles, each suited to different contexts. At any time, you might be:

-  **Leading** Setting the vision and inspiring others to follow
-  **Managing** Operationalising strategy and ensuring efficiency
-  **Mentoring** Sharing expertise and guiding career development
-  **Coaching** Facilitating growth through inquiry and reflection

Great leaders seamlessly transition between these roles. However, of all these roles, when it comes to unlocking potential, coaching holds a unique and transformative power. (DiGirolamo, J. A., & Tkach, J. T., 2020).

What Is Coaching, and Why Does It Matter?

Coaching is not about fixing people or providing solutions. It's about unlocking capability by creating the space for individuals to develop their own insights, take ownership, and grow. Unlike authoritarian leadership approaches that rely on status and control, coaching cultivates curiosity, autonomy, and self-driven accountability. It offers a vital alternative to 'power-over' approaches, instead encouraging 'power-with'. It invites leaders to engage in powerful conversations that shift mindsets, build confidence, and drive sustainable performance.

Coaching as the Unlock to Transformation

Coaching enhances performance because it is inherently transformative. It uplifts not just what people do, but how they show up in the world by cultivating change at the deepest levels. At its core, coaching is an expansive and creative process that broadens awareness and identifies choices, empowering individuals to respond to their environment from a place of intention. It deepens self-awareness, enabling people to recognise their default patterns, values, and drivers, and in doing so, establishes the foundation for informed choices.

Coaching facilitates a process whereby individuals discover their own solutions, tapping into intrinsic motivation and leading to greater ownership of their actions. By creating a space for non-judgemental reflection, reframing challenges, and strengthening a growth mindset, coaching builds resilience and adaptability.

Over time, this cultivates the confidence to navigate uncertainty and complexity with clarity and courage. Similarly, in this environment, the foundational components of psychological safety are laid, unlocking innovation, continuous growth, and experimentation with risk taking. Coaching also strengthens accountability by supporting individuals to commit to their goals and follow through with purposeful action. Because coaching fosters individual choice, people can choose how they respond, so transformation not only becomes possible, but inevitable.





The Coaching Mindset

Coaching offers benefits that extend well beyond nurturing individual team members in one-on-one sessions. By adopting a coaching mindset, you cultivate a leadership style that permeates every interaction, creating a consistent and supportive environment. This approach not only enhances individual growth but also fosters a collaborative culture, where continuous learning and development are integral to everyday leadership.

Shifting from traditional leadership, a coaching mindset prioritises inquiry over instruction and curiosity over certainty. Instead of providing immediate answers, a coaching leader asks powerful questions and listens deeply, remaining fully present during conversations. They trust their team members to chart their own course and encourage reflection and learning, rather than prescribing ready-made solutions. In embracing this approach, leaders transition from being problem-solvers to facilitators, empowering their teams to build self-efficacy and confidence in their decision-making.

Coaching in Action

So, how do you integrate coaching into your leadership practice?

Start with these key principles:



Shift from telling to asking

Replace advice with thoughtful questions that encourage critical thinking.



Create a safe space for exploration

Trust and psychological safety are the foundation of effective coaching conversations.



Embrace discomfort

Growth happens when people are challenged to think differently.



Commit to deep listening

Coaching is not about jumping in with solutions but truly hearing what lies beneath the surface.



Encourage ownership and action

Effective coaching helps individuals clarify their next steps and take accountability for their own progress.



The Future of Leadership is Regenerative and Empowering

As the business world navigates increasing complexity and rapid change, leadership approaches must adapt and evolve. When faced with the uncertainty change brings about, some leaders gravitate toward command-and-control styles that offer simple answers and a clear hierarchy; however, the long-term path to sustainable success lies in fostering workplaces that are regenerative, adaptive, and human-centered.

Coaching is not a soft skill; it is a critical competency for modern leadership.

Leaders who coach, create organisations where people are not just managed but truly empowered. They build teams that think independently, collaborate effectively, and take ownership of their development.

The question is not whether coaching works, it's whether we, as leaders, are ready to embrace it. Are we willing to step back, trust our teams, and lead through inquiry rather than instruction? If we are, we unlock not just the potential of our teams, but also our own leadership capacity.

Coaching is not just a tool; it is a way of being.

And for those willing to adopt this mindset, the rewards are transformational, for individuals, teams, and the broader business landscape.

References

Sonthalia, S. (2024). Evaluating the impact of embodying the coaching mindset on leaders' paradigm of power. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 17(2), 248–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2024.2312282>

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