



## Thread Advisory

### A LEADERSHIP COACHING JOURNEY

Three years ago, I decided to take a professional coaching certification at Corporate Coach Academy so that I could incorporate leadership coaching as part of my advisory services, knowing that I was doing it using a solid methodology that was proven and that could enable me to confidently support my clients in their development journey.

Three years later, I am proud to have been able to support many senior and emerging leaders in their development and growth journey. I am always energized and feel accomplished witnessing how those leaders who choose to commit to their coaching journey, flourish and confidently confront their own doubts, fears and insecurities. We all have them! But some of us choose to either ignore them or accept them. But it doesn't have to be that way!

So, what do I do as a leadership coach?

- **Enable an environment of absolute trust.** As most of my clients may not know me, or may know me in a different capacity, they need to first ascertain if I am the right coach for them. This is the first step towards building a successful coaching relationship. They need to be certain that they can trust me to support them in their journey without being judged. They need to be certain that they can open up and tell me things that will not end up in the ears of their management team, supervisor or anyone for that matter. Building trust takes time, and therefore coaching is not a process that can be accelerated or managed at the same speed for everyone. Each person has their own trust level and will become comfortable and certain at their own pace. So, as a coach, I need to ensure that every interaction enables the construct of a trustworthy relationship.
- **Listen to what they are saying.** This sounds so simple, but it is perhaps the MOST critical and difficult aspect of coaching. I need to carefully listen to every word a leader is saying, and I need to be able to understand the meaning of what they are saying. This can only be achieved by asking questions, by clarifying, by getting leaders to go deeper and reflect the meaning of their words. At times, something said in the middle of a sentence, is what matters. And if we are not carefully listening, we may miss it, thus missing the point altogether. That is why, coaching is not about asking question after question after question about different topics. It is about asking question, after question, after question about the same topic as we go deeper and deeper seeking to understand.
- **Empower leaders to verbalize their limiting beliefs.** My favorite question after a certain point during a coaching relationship is: "what is the worst that can happen?" This is such an empowering question, which always amazes me. Looking at the leaders' face once they realize that many of their fears are created in their own heads, and are magnified by their own inability to visualize a different point of view. When they are confronted with the question, and they are given the right space, they are most of the time able to rationalize that many of their fears are not "real", and even if they are, they are not as unsurmountable as they think them to be. It is through this type of questions that leaders start seeing themselves in a different light, and are able to start charting their path towards acceptance and empowerment.
- **Encourage leaders to reflect.** Silence and inner thinking are a necessary part of a coaching relationship. The session does not always need to be filled with chatter, questions and answers. At times, leaders need the space to reflect, to

realize that they may not have the answer, that they may need to think about something there and then. And what best time to do it than during the session. The coaching session is their “me-time” and as such, they should be entitled to use it in any way that is most beneficial to them. And if having 15 minutes of quiet so that they can write down some of their thoughts is what works, then by all means I will naturally enable the space for them to feel that they can do it, without even realizing that I am there. I need to become invisible, so that I don’t interfere with their thinking.

- **Hold them accountable for taking charge.** Only when leaders commit to alter the way they think or act, will there be any tangible progress or change. And change is not easy! So, establishing clear objectives or expected outcomes, and charting a course of action is an integral part of the coaching journey. Taking small but definite steps, evaluating how these steps make an impact and adjusting the course along the way, will eventually take center-stage and be the core focus of at least 40% to 50% of the coaching sessions. And it is at this point, when leaders will immediately realize that the power of change and taking control of their journey is within them! It is at this point when they realize that I only acted as a “mirror” allowing them to see themselves clearer, rather than in a different way. It is at this point when I will gladly know that it only will take a few more sessions for leaders to be able to continue their self-development journey independently and confidently.
- **Remind them that all the tools for success are within reach.** There will be times when leaders may feel that things are not going as expected, and they may fall back on their past behaviours or traits. This is normal, and it happens to all of us while we undertake a journey of change / growth. So, it is not about avoiding the fall, but recognizing we are falling, taking corrective action and moving forward through learning about the challenge and how to deal with it if we encounter it again. More and more, leaders will find that they are able to manage these challenges on their own without having to use the coaching support regularly. In my coaching relationships with leaders, I encourage them to decide and determine when is the right time to conclude or pause the support they seek, keeping the door always open for when they need additional support. Coaching is not a prescriptive process that can be delivered in a determined number of sessions. It is a process that is taken by each leader differently, and this is what I like about it. Even when there is a process that is applied around how the coaching sessions are held, there is great flexibility around the timing, intensity and frequency depending on the individual leader’s circumstances.

So, it is through practicing these guiding principles that I have been able to build a solid leadership coaching practice as part of my advisory services. Now more than ever, as leaders strive to provide the right level of support and guidance to their team members to get out of the challenges brought about by Covid-19, leaders themselves need to seek the support they need, so they can continue being there for their team members and their organization.

If you are a leader seeking a professional leadership coach or if your organization would like to engage the support of a leadership coach for your senior / middle / emerging leaders, please reach out to me at [claudia@thread-advisory.com](mailto:claudia@thread-advisory.com).

