



## **Some Principles and Practices for Leadership Agility Coaching**

### **Some Leadership Agility Coaching Principles**

Leadership Agility coaching brings additional perspectives and methods to leadership coaching. It builds on practices common to any effective coaching relationship and is intended to supplement and help integrate (not replace) one's existing coaching philosophy and repertoire.

- Includes a collaborative assessment – formal and/or informal - using the Leadership Agility model. Can be used in conjunction with other assessments. For nuances in assessing agility level, see Chapter 9 in the book.
- Leadership development goals are set collaboratively with the client and are linked both to the assessment and to specific “initiatives” the client is undertaking as part of his or her work.
- Motivation for development is often stimulated by external challenges, feedback and support, but ultimately must come from within.
- Development takes place through “practice” (reflective action). There is significant room for development within each level of agility.
- In each coaching session, full incorporation of a leadership agility approach requires that the coach to be able to mentally link client challenges and initiatives with the three action arenas and with the types of agility identified in the Leadership Agility Compass.
- Working with “level of awareness and intent” is a core method in leadership agility coaching. (See pp. 212-14 of the book).
- Coaching methods consistent with later stages of development can be used effectively with clients currently at earlier stages, provided there is adequate attention to their current developmental stage.

### **Key Leadership Agility Assessment Methods**

- Informal assessment using the book (e.g. using the three Ed's)

- Leadership Agility 360
- Leadership Agility Accelerator
- Power Style Profile

### **Building Blocks: Using the Model in Coaching Relationships**

While working with clients, it often works best to apply the Leadership Agility model in the following general sequence:

#### **1. Level of agility and power style**

Clarify the client's current level of leadership agility and the level to which they realistically aspire. Remember that transformations between levels take time, and there is a lot of room for growth within each level.

#### **2. Initiatives and action arenas**

An "initiative" refers to any line of action a leader initiates with an intention of bringing about an improved situation. The Leadership Agility model identifies three types of initiatives, which focus on successively larger human systems:

- Pivotal conversations, where the focus is on person-to-person conversation and relationship.
- Leading teams, where the focus is on improving the performance of a team of direct reports, or a project team, etc.
- Leading organizational change, where the focus is on improving organizational functioning and/or enabling the organization to bring about important changes in its larger environment.

Once a client has clarified his or her coaching goals, see if you can also clarify a primary action arena for each goal.

Of course, even if an initiative falls primarily within one arena, other arenas may also become relevant at various points in time. For example, initiatives that involve leading organizational change typically include the other two arenas at some point. When talking about pivotal conversations, there is always a larger team and/or organizational context, etc.

#### **3. Types of agility**

Once a client has clarified his or her coaching goals, see if you can link these behaviors with particular types of agility in the Leadership Agility Compass: context-setting, stakeholder, creative, or self-leadership agility. (Why is it helpful to connect the client's target behaviors

to specific types of agility? See “cognitive and emotional capacities” below).

A few additional points:

- Remember that each of the four types of agility involves moving through a process or cycle of reflective action. In each of the four types of agility, the content changes, but the underlying process of reflective action is common to all.
- Most likely, a client will not explicitly focus on self-leadership agility, so you may need to take the lead in bringing this dimension into focus. Most coaches at least implicitly take their client through the self-leadership cycle. The leadership agility approach provides a reminder that you can also help your clients learn to practice self-leadership on their own, especially as they transition out of the coaching relationship.

#### **4. Cognitive/emotional capacities**

One reason it is helpful to make mental links between a client’s target behaviors and the different kinds of agility is because this will help you to identify the specific cognitive/emotional capacities needed to support the new or enhanced behaviors. For example, if a client is working on becoming a better listener, this is an aspect of stakeholder agility, which is supported by two cognitive/ emotional capacities: “stakeholder understanding” and “power style.”

Once you have identified the cognitive/emotional capacities needed to support a behavior that a client is working on, it is helpful to know the specific capacities that correspond to the levels of agility that are relevant for that particular client. For example, if a client is working on the Achiever-Catalyst transformation, it’s useful to know how “stakeholder understanding” and “power style” evolve as a leader grows from the Achiever level into the Catalyst level.

#### **5. Level of awareness and intent**

Keep in mind the “level of awareness and intent” at the core of the client’s current level of agility, and the “level of awareness and intent” at the core of the agility level to which they aspire. (See pages 212-14 of the book).

Gear your questions, comments, and coaching assignments so they help the client “practice,” and thereby develop, new capacities and behaviors, using the level of awareness and intent that underlies the agility level to which they aspire.

Note that building-blocks 3-5, outlined above, move through the Leadership Agility Compass from its outer circle, to its inner circle, to its innermost circle.