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and then the authors present a map to do exactly that."

—MARSHALL GOLDSMITH

Author of the Number 1 *New York Times* Bestseller, *Triggers*

USING CONVERSATION TO
STRENGTHEN YOUR CULTURE

Everyday Coaching

VIRGINIA BIANCO-MATHIS
AND LISA NABORS

More Praise for *Everyday Coaching*

“*Everyday Coaching* challenges leaders to create coaching cultures, and then the authors present a map to do exactly that. The stories, conversations, and tools Virginia Bianco-Mathis and Lisa Nabors share will help leaders everywhere begin a pay-it-forward journey with unlimited results!”

—Marshall Goldsmith

Author of the Number 1 *New York Times* Bestseller, *Triggers*

“*Everyday Coaching* is an inspiring must-read for any executive who wants to increase his or her bottom line: a practical guide for establishing the highly touted coaching culture in your company. Filled with clear, step-by-step, no-nonsense instructions to bring a coaching mindset to an organization, *Everyday Coaching* also explains why a coaching culture will enable significant benefits. Business coaches will love this book, because it offers a proven recipe for successfully implementing a coaching culture.”

—Kathy Harman, MCC, CSM

Author, *PRISM Teams*

“Virginia Bianco-Mathis and Lisa Nabors are two of the top coaching gurus in the world, and *Everyday Coaching* captures their wisdom and experiences in a remarkably clear and practical way. I highly recommend this book for anyone who wishes to effectively coach and lead others.”

—Dr. Michael Marquardt

Founder and Past President

World Institute for Action Learning

“This is a must-read, must-use guide for leaders who want to transform their people through coaching. With a great ear for office dialogue, the authors demonstrate how purposeful choices in language can lead to enormous results.”

—Carol Goldsmith, PCC
NLP Trainer, ICF Leader, Mentor Coach
The Discovery Coach

“Virginia Bianco-Mathis and Lisa Nabors present an exciting vision on expanded organizational coaching in *Everyday Coaching*. They demonstrate the value of a coaching organization, show how employees can use dialogue skills and informal coaching practices to create this model, and illustrate how leaders can make it happen.”

—Craig Runde
Co-Author, *Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader*
and *Building Conflict Competent Teams*

“Virginia Bianco-Mathis and Lisa Nabors have worked with me and my whole management team for several years. Each of us has improved as individuals, and our entire company has put into practice what our leaders have learned through individual coaching. *Everyday Coaching* presents an exciting opportunity to institutionalize coaching throughout the enterprise and maximize the power of our people. What a powerful and practical idea!”

—Bryan S. Ware
Chief Executive Officer
Haystax Technology



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Everyday Coaching

VIRGINIA BIANCO-MATHIS
AND LISA NABORS

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Preface

In 2002, we introduced a coaching model for leaders that encouraged them to look at themselves and the ways in which they interacted with their teams and organizations. We suggested that they had a tremendous opportunity to leverage language in support of creating dynamic, results-oriented, and fun workplaces. In 2008, we looked at the bigger picture and shared our thinking as to how organizations could create coaching programs in support of relationships and results. We continued to emphasize that language is the driver of learning and development. We showed how dialogue can create strong teams with members who consistently deliver high-quality results and have fun while they do so. In 2017, we took the next logical step and expanded our thinking to include everyone within organizations.

Many authors and practitioners—Patrick Lencioni, Andy Andrews, Tom Rath, Marshall Goldsmith, Peter Senge, Laura Whitworth, Kim Scott, Brené Brown—have highlighted the human need to be seen and the power that is unleashed when that need is met. The content of this book will help you in your efforts to “see” yourself and others. In so doing, you will create an organization that is fueled by caring, direct communication between individuals who are committed to achieving extraordinary results.

In this book, we work from the premise that each person within an organization can learn a new language—dialogue—and use it to create a coaching culture characterized by excellence and continuous learning. Every person can bring their best ideas forward and collaborate with colleagues to coach, question, brainstorm, problem solve, and find solutions in a high-energy, solution-focused way. They can coach and be coached. We are excited to endorse the idea that everyone can learn something new; everyone can improve their skills; everyone can help their colleagues, customers, and stakeholders; and everyone can show up, every day, knowing that what they say and do can make a difference. We invite you to read this book, apply the content, and make a difference.

Acknowledgments

We have the best desktop publisher on the planet and we worship her. We have an equally stellar graphic artist whom we would be lost without. The team at ATD are a gift and we appreciate everything they do. We are blessed to live and work with people who are loving, smart, funny, curious, driven, and imperfect. We learn something every day from these individuals, our families, our clients, our students, our colleagues, our friends, and the many folks we meet during the course of our daily lives. We look forward to seeing everyone, every day, and we are grateful for the opportunity to do so. Finally, we acknowledge each other. After 30 years, we are embedded in each other's hearts and minds in a way that enables us to be more together than the sum of our parts. We "see" each other and we value what we "see." We know how lucky we are.

Virginia Bianco-Mathis

Lisa Nabors

August 2017

Introduction

Three years ago, we had completed a pilot of a special coaching program with Seyfarth Shaw LLP, a major international law firm. We were collating the measurement data and found ourselves marveling at the incredible results. The ripple effect of the program went well beyond our expectations and those of the client. So why was it so successful?

We created an internal cadre of coaches beginning with a one-day coaching boot camp. These coaches were top partners in the firm who took a day away from their many clients and court cases to learn basic coaching skills. Armed with job aids, guidelines, sample scenarios (both written and video), and an expert coach to call on every month, each attorney took on two coachees for eight months. The following year, the program was geographically expanded and eight more coaches were trained. The third year, eight more coaches were trained, and we planned to add an additional format—team coaching—to the program in the future. By the third year, some of the coachees had become coaches, and the coaching mindset had spread throughout the firm.

How did we get the attention of high-level law firm partners? The legal profession is going through a transition. Law firms are struggling to address the beliefs of younger generations, including Millennials, and engagement is becoming a serious issue. Young attorneys are taking positions at law firms, staying long enough to make money to pay off their student loans, and then leaving for other legal-related jobs in government, associations, and universities. Based on our experience working with law firms, the traditional law firm culture—uneven work-life balance, structured approaches, limited collegiality—is no longer viable in today's world. The managing partners of forward-thinking law firms are tackling this issue head-on.

So, how does a law firm create a more fluid atmosphere of engagement, provide more conversation and personal attention, identify long-term professionals earlier in their careers, give more personalized feedback, and

help make associates feel appreciated and valued? And, in doing so, how do they increase the bottom line?

The coaching program we've described accomplished all this and more. The measurement data surfaced the following results: younger attorneys began bringing in clients earlier, the branding and public image of the firm became better because of an increase in publications, associates shared that they felt acknowledged and heard, and partners began giving more frequent and balanced feedback. Most important, everyone involved said they found themselves using the coaching skills in other parts of their lives, including how they interacted with clients. In one case, a client asked to only work with a "coaching" attorney because "the way he interacts with us is very energizing."

What was responsible for this turnaround? The coaching solution essentially became the catalyst for a major organization development effort. The culture changed. The language and tools of coaching—dialogue, powerful questions, advocacy, inquiry, global listening, personal accountability, action plans, and outcome tracking—became common place in the hallways and behind closed doors. Confronting sensitive issues, recognizing the reasoning behind opinions and actions, and reaching higher levels of understanding helped in solving problems and attaining higher levels of performance. With junior attorneys becoming more productive and engaged, the entire firm experienced growth and leadership at every level. The hidden potential of the firm was released.

Once we saw the success at Seyfarth Shaw, we asked, "How can we help other organizations gain this advantage?" We began to duplicate and enhance this approach within other organizations. The results were equally positive. And from there, this book began to take shape.

Building a Coaching Culture

Our 2008 book, *Organizational Coaching*, continues to serve an important purpose as a handbook for learning and practicing more structured coaching within organizations. With our success with Seyfarth Shaw and the emphasis on a total systems approach toward coaching, we began to see that anyone in an organization could become a coach. When more and more people within an organization learn coaching skills, the culture of the entire organization begins to change, which positively affects daily behaviors and conversations, problem solving, strategic thinking, personal growth, action planning toward

defined measures, and mutual support. The concept of people giving one another meaningful and actionable feedback becomes the norm and not something that only occurs during annual performance appraisals. Furthermore, sharing insights to improve performance becomes acceptable and expected at all levels—up, down, and across. All employees have permission to ask questions to further learning.

Why is this permission given and even expected? Because everyone has been trained to do so with integrity and a special set of skills that makes dialogue powerful. With appropriate training and role modeling, leaders, managers, and co-workers take on the tenets of coaching:

- They believe that everyone is talented and can perform at a higher level.
- They believe that it is their job to help themselves and others unlock potential.
- They focus on solutions and actions.
- They deliver honest feedback even when the message might be difficult to hear, and they do it with appropriate dialogue skills and care.
- They focus on each interaction and their listeners.
- They listen for what is being said and not said.
- They stay in the moment.
- They hold a vision of possibility for themselves and others.
- They support others in achieving visions and desired outcomes.

Think of the possibilities when everyone in an organization is working and interacting with this mindset. In his first edition of *Masterful Coaching*, executive coach and thought leader Robert Hargrove (1995, 16) defined coaching as, “Challenging and supporting people in achieving higher levels of performance while allowing them to bring out the best in themselves and those around them.” Additionally, colleagues and managers have all been trained to use conversation tools for transparent and supportive interactions. As a result, trust emerges. Employees, co-workers, bosses, and leaders begin to treat one another with respect and honesty, and not as objects. The continued practice of these skills begins to shape attitudes and behaviors and within two years, a culture can be transformed.

So how do you sustain this culture over time? As we learned from our work with Seyfarth Shaw, the organization must hardwire the new behaviors by instituting support structures. This can include:

- adding group coaching
- encouraging peer coaching
- assigning a coach to every new employee for six months
- assigning a coach to every newly promoted employee (no matter the level)
- offering coaching refresher courses (in person and online) to sustain the culture of coaching
- providing periodic coaching examples from YouTube with real employees
- volunteering to share coachees' successes
- offering coaching objectives with every performance evaluation
- instituting coaching into every management and leadership learning activity.

The implementation of coaching infrastructures is further addressed in chapter 8.

Coaching is part of mainstream corporate culture across the globe. While coaching was at one time associated with fixing toxic behavior at the top, the most frequently cited reasons to engage a coach are now developing high potentials, facilitating transitions, acting as a sounding board, and addressing derailing behavior (Coutu and Kauffman 2009). As coaching continues to evolve, it is useful to note that leading-edge organizations are strategically moving toward the development of coaching cultures. If we consider that “culture is the way we think, feel and act in relation to our workplace,” a coaching culture is one where coaching is “the predominant style of managing and working together” (Sherpa Coaching 2017).

The International Coach Federation’s 2016 *Global Coaching Study* notes that “the use of coaching skills and approaches has expanded beyond professionally trained coach practitioners to include managers, leaders, and human resources and talent development professionals who apply these competencies in their daily workplace interactions” (ICF 2016, 3). This study also reports that coaching within organizations continues to increase every year and with it the credibility of coaching programs.

Coaching is recognized as a proven and accepted method for improving both tangible and intangible performance practices (Table I-1). Because of this, organizations are getting smarter in considering “the whole person”

when measuring coaching results, and they are considering individual behavioral-based improvement, impact beyond the individual receiving coaching, and business results. This includes formulas and data on return on investment (ROI), financial impact, and impact on business metrics.

Lastly, this trend toward an organization-wide coaching culture is further emphasized by another finding from Sherpa Coaching. Namely, when participants were asked, “Why use coaching in your organization?” the answers went beyond individual and team impact to include major organization development efforts such as change management, growth, and productivity (2016, 32). Thus, in more innovative organizations, coaching is no longer being viewed as isolated one-on-one interactions between two people or with a team, but as broader within the context of being able to make a difference throughout the enterprise. You may determine the extent to which coaching affects the following positive results, as has been already proven in the research literature.

Table I-1. Measurable Coaching Results

Behavioral Results	Business Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » More timely, direct communication » Quicker, more complete decisions » Increased employee engagement » More flexibility » Greater resilience » Stronger intra- and inter-departmental collaboration » More effective meetings » Decreased conflict » Less duplicative work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increased profits » Increased employee retention » Strengthened customer relationships » Sales and productivity goals and targets met or exceeded » Increased presence with customers » Shortened time to market » New hires onboarded more effectively » Learning transfer more quickly achieved » Organization adapts more quickly to change

Underlying Theory and Approach

As behavioral practitioners, we support a cognitive coaching approach. Namely, the coach becomes a thought partner with the coachee. Coaches—whether a boss, employee, colleague, or professional practitioner—help

coachees identify limits in their thinking and aid them in adopting more accurate, useful reasoning and thinking patterns. This in turn leads to better relationships with others, improved decision making, and higher levels of performance (Stober and Grant 2006). The basis of cognitive coaching is the notion of “mental models.” A mental model is a belief you may have about the world that causes you to act and behave in certain ways.

For example, you may believe that yelling is the best way to get your staff to perform well. This mental model might have come from your experience with past bosses or your own need for control. A technique that your boss, professional coach, or even an employee might use to give you feedback is something we call “the continuum of beliefs”—a picture of how your mental model influences your behavior and results (Table I-2). By discussing your existing and possible new beliefs, behaviors, and results, you might more clearly recognize how your existing thought pattern is causing the very result you are trying to avoid! With this insight, you can gradually entertain different mindsets and behaviors that can lead to more productive results.

Coaching someone from an old to new behavior doesn’t happen overnight. Yet, with everyone using coaching approaches, the likelihood of adopting more successful behaviors increases substantially. This cognitive tool, and others covered in this book, represents the kind of theoretical underpinning that supports our organizational model. Such cognitive tools help you create a strong coaching base and produce evidence-based results.

The Purpose of This Book

Everyday Coaching is meant to be read by anyone who works in an organization and wants to learn and adopt a new way of working, talking, interacting, and succeeding. The premise is that the practice of using dialogue and tools in organizational coaching should be accessible to everyone—not just professional coaches—and that such accessibility and on-the-job behavior can transform an entire organization. Even if the rest of your organization doesn’t adopt this premise, you can have a positive impact on your own performance and interactions with those around you.

Table I-2. Beliefs, Behaviors, and Results

Old Belief	Old Behavior	Old Result
I must yell to get people to do what I want.	I yell at my staff.	Staff members avoid me. They don't think things through and just do what I say. They don't respond in team meetings. I don't get what I want; quarterly goals are not met.
New Belief	New Behavior	New Result
People want to participate, and I can create more buy-in by listening to and including team members.	I hold open team meetings. I demonstrate that I'm listening by acknowledging feedback and incorporating the ideas of others into the plan. I practice dialogue, don't yell, invite others into the conversation, and form a partnership with others in getting the work done.	Staff are energized. Conversations are lively and participative. Staff take ownership for the results. They approach me with ideas and support. Quarterly goals are met.

Adapted and used with permission from Bianco-Mathis, Nabors, and Roman (2002, 112)

Coaching should happen up, down, and across. Specifically, you can practice coaching as a leader, manager, colleague, or professional coach by:

- managing or coordinating: as a supervisor, leader, or team lead [coaching down]
- contributing: as a staff person, employee, or team member [coaching up]
- collaborating: as a colleague, peer, consultant, or professional coach [coaching across].

Not every person can become a professional coach. There are specific requirements and credentialing for that role (see www.coachfederation.org for examples and more information). However, anyone can learn coaching language and can use those skills in daily interactions. As we will explain later, coaching can happen under many different circumstances:

- a normal coach and coachee relationship for six months
- a sales manager conducting monthly coaching visits with her salespeople

- a colleague coaching a team member on a new system; two team members walking down the hall and exploring how to form a better working relationship
- an employee approaching a boss and advocating for more ongoing feedback
- a director coaching his team on using a more consultative approach with internal customers.

This book introduces the Seven Cs Coaching Map, a series of seven steps you can learn and follow when approaching coaching situations. Although the map is addressed linearly, it often unfolds iteratively. Each chapter provides practical examples to help you utilize the rhythm and nuances of coaching dialogue. Coaching tool job aids are shared throughout, and you can download a graphic of the map at <http://strategicperformance.net/downloads/7c>.

Part 1, “Connecting Through Coaching,” discusses the concept of changing our conversations (chapter 1) and utilizing the tools of dialogue: global listening, powerful questioning, and supportive advocacy (chapter 2). This part provides the foundation on which coaching organizations can be built.

Part 2, “Navigating the Seven Cs,” includes four chapters covering the coaching map:

1. “Capture Context and Clarify Purpose”
2. “Collect and Feed Back Data”
3. “Create Options and Construct a Plan”
4. “Commit to Action and Celebrate Success.”

Finally, Part 3, “Building a Coaching Culture,” discusses how to empower an entire organization, retool the organizational DNA, and then create, implement, and align systems toward a new way of thinking and achieving high performance.

At the end of each chapter is a section called “Making It Real.” Here, you will be asked to reflect on key chapter concepts and develop an action-oriented goal you can apply on the job. These exercises will help you hardwire your brain and integrate new information creatively and mindfully.

Our goal is to help you reframe how you look at organizations and your role as a champion of coaching language, the unleashing of potential, and the excitement of more positive working environments and results.

PART 1:

Connecting Through Coaching

Part 1 contains the underlying philosophy of this book. It highlights the importance of language and intention in managing coaching conversations, whether it's a structured coaching session with a professional coach or a fluid conversation in the hallway between colleagues. Also introduced are the Seven Cs Coaching Map and the powerful language of dialogue—the essence of fostering shared meanings and goal achievement for individuals and entire organizations.

1

Changing the Conversation

Changing the language you use with others can build relationships, strengthen communication, increase the speed of work, and create higher-quality results. The right conversations contribute to curiosity, learning, and action. Consider the following coaching examples and note how they illustrate the seven Cs.

Imagine you are a director within an IT company and you decided several months ago to work with a coach. You and your team work very well together, but you realized you would like to improve in the areas of delegation and making feedback stick. Because your company allows directors and senior leaders to obtain an outside coach from a pool of pre-identified resources, you interviewed two possible coaches based on a connection you felt after reviewing their resumes and background.

You ultimately chose Charles. You have had a great six-month coaching experience with him. First, you and Charles established ground rules and agreements on measurable goals, action plans, homework assignments, tools, field practice, length and frequency of meetings, confidentiality, and expectations. You knew you had chosen the right coach because you felt comfortable and safe.

Charles made it clear that he was there to help you discover and leverage the beliefs, actions, and results that would lead you to success (Capture Context). Charles asked you insightful questions to get to the core of what you wanted to achieve and what that would look like six to eight months out (Clarify Purpose). To gain further input, you and Charles agreed that he would interview your six direct reports to obtain feedback on your leadership

approach. Charles collated these data and presented you with four themes to consider and reflect upon (Collect and Feed Back Data).

You and Charles studied each theme and considered a range of possible ideas and actions that could help you achieve your objectives (Create Options). This led to the creation of an action plan, complete with desired end results and field assignments that you would pursue over the next several months (Construct a Plan). Every two weeks, you and Charles discussed the results of your practice, zeroed in on further behavioral tips, focused on how to stay on track, and created ways to reach your goal—inviting others in your department to support you and asking other executives to share their winning strategies (Commit to Action).

Although there were several challenges involving excessive travel and one very difficult employee, you began to integrate and practice your new skills and tools. Over time, you and others could see that your way of making sure employees were engaged in their work and moving toward accountable results led to an entire shift in increased performance. There was a part of you that would have liked the process to have happened in half the time, but you realized it was necessary to exert consistent effort and commitment over time to choose and make new skills a part of your daily repertoire (Celebrate Success).

If you look at Table 1-1, you can see that we moved through the entire Seven Cs Coaching Map. You might consider the example with Charles a successful coaching situation.

Table 1-1. Seven Cs Coaching Map

Capture Context Capture the details and parameters of the situation by asking questions that surface the problems or opportunities to be explored.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Assess the situation: use powerful questions and global listening.» Determine the best approach and ascertain roles, readiness, and commitment.» Establish ground rules, rules of engagement, expectations, and process.» Surface problem or opportunity areas to explore.
Clarify Purpose Clarify the specific goal(s) and objective(s) that the coachee wants to achieve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Pinpoint the results the coachee wishes to achieve.» Determine performance versus potential.» Determine the existing situation compared with desired results.

Step	Actions and Tools
Collect and Feed Back Data Consider data gathered through a variety of methods to further inform purpose and potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Gather data through methods that fit the situation: performance appraisals, observation, and surveys. » Sort data into themes. » Add themes to purpose and objectives to enrich pathways and insights. » Discuss perception versus reality and the consequences of doing nothing. » Be straight “with care.”
Create Options Create possible options for achieving the goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Brainstorm options. » Discuss pros and cons of different pathways. » Zero in on the most productive option(s) to pursue. » Discuss chosen option(s) in terms of future steps, reality testing, challenges, and skills or knowledge.
Construct a Plan Construct an action plan with objectives, desired results, steps, benchmarks, and field assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construct an action plan with clear next steps. » Consider benchmarks, homework tasks, practice assignments, and measures of movement.
Commit to Action Commit to specific actions to practice and try in between each coaching meeting or until each desired goal is achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Refer to and update action plan in between and at each coaching meeting. » Choose actions to pursue for the next meeting. » Determine present beliefs, behavior, and results in contrast to future beliefs, behaviors, and results. » Develop winning strategies. » Manage ego, impatience, fear, and other barriers.
Celebrate Success Celebrate each step forward, mapping progress, breakthroughs, improvement, and interim and final results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Track and assess progress with an action plan and other behavior tools. » Enroll others to observe and give feedback. » Employ regular self-assessments. » Note minor and major steps toward desired goals. » Reflect on and reinforce developed skills and behaviors supporting desired results. » Turn new behaviors and results into daily activities. » Practice “self-coaching.”

But this coaching map can be applied to everyday workplace interactions, too. Let’s consider a second example.

You’re walking to a meeting with Gail, one of your co-workers in the marketing department. You admire Gail’s experience with statistical analysis of marketing data. While walking, Gail expresses her concern over a second

presentation she's scheduled to give to the executive group on her recent market analysis. She thinks the first presentation went well, but notes that the executives didn't seem excited to take the actions she was recommending.

You ask Gail a few questions to zero in on what she thinks went well and where she believes she could have done better (Capture Context). You ask, "Pretend that your next presentation is fabulous. Share with me why it is fabulous—what are you doing and what are the results?" (Clarify Purpose). With a bit more conversation (Collect and Feed Back Data), you help Gail narrow down the areas she wants to "nail" and what she wants to happen because of her presentation. You support Gail and encourage her to think of ways she can work on her presentation to achieve her stated goals (Create Options). She decides to sit down with her co-worker Mark and ask for feedback because he was at her first presentation. She also decides to observe Jose, another co-worker, the next day when he gives his presentation to the board and to also ask Nancy, an executive known for her great presentations, to help her with messaging and delivery (Construct a Plan and Commit to Action).

Gail thanks you for your thoughts. You share with her that you found it helpful to get Nancy's help last year and that you are sure she will find Nancy's input worthwhile. Then you say, "You know, because Mark will also be at your second presentation, I wonder if you can ask him to help you during the meeting in some way. Can you think of some ways he might do that?" After more conversation, Gail believes it would be wise to have Mark take notes during her presentation so she can make sure she's able to put her ideas into practice. You share with Gail that you think this is a well-thought-out plan and that she will likely be successful in getting the senior team to implement her recommended actions (Celebrate Success).

What happened in the second scenario? Clearly, this was not a formal coaching experience. It was more casual, fluid, and flexible. You and Gail are colleagues and the entire coaching conversation happened while walking to a meeting. We might call this "coaching in the moment." Yet, as you can see, the same seven coaching steps shown in Table 1-1 were utilized just as in the formal coaching session. Furthermore, you were able to support Gail and offer options without telling her what to do. You created a safe environment for Gail that enabled her to delineate her goal, discover what had to be done, and gave her the confidence to move beyond her fears.

These two examples encapsulate what this book is about: using dialogue and coaching tools in either a structured or informal way to change conversations and support action.

Coaching Environments and Conversations

When we say we want everyone within organizations to conduct coaching conversations, we are not advocating the dilution of professional coaching. Rather, we are supporting the notion of taking the best of what professional coaching has to offer—the dialogue, tools, and mindset—and leveraging it to enhance organizational performance through meaningful conversations.

This is not an easy task. We all have developed different perspectives and styles of talking. We have learned there are certain rewards and punishments for saying or not saying certain things. Whether it is because it might not be politically correct or because we feel unsure how to express ourselves, we keep many of our thoughts to ourselves—even the good ones. Consequently, we often don't learn how to share feelings and thoughts productively. We come to organizations speaking “nondialogue,” or as one of the fathers of dialogue, Chris Argyris (1977), explains it, “We revert to defensive routines.”

In other words, rather than talk productively, we talk as to not cause any discomfort. This is fascinating because we live in language. What gets done or not done, expressed or not expressed, understood or not understood, is all because of language. As you will see, coaching conversations require dialogue, and learning dialogue is like learning a new language.

This is further explored in chapter 2. For now, it is useful to acknowledge that our differences in language span geography, syntax, personality, social norms, education, community, gender, upbringing, and DNA passed down over centuries. Fortunately, despite these differences, organizations can make choices about the kind of environments they wish to foster. And a major element of focusing environmental culture is how people talk to one another. People can talk at one another (discussion), or they can ask about and share the reasoning behind their words (true dialogue). Dialogue creates a shared pool of meaning that leads to greater understanding, problem solving, and decision making. As Daniel Goleman (1998) so eloquently says in his book on emotional intelligence, real conversations are the internal conversations in our heads. They reflect what we actually think and feel.

With basic conversation, real thoughts and feelings stay hidden. Consider the following exchange:

Paul: John, what's going on with the Johnson contract? We have a lot on the line with that one.

John: It's driving me crazy. He keeps changing his mind from meeting to meeting.

Paul: Oh, come on. You have dealt with clients like that before. Work it out and make sure you stay within budget.

John: Yep. That's what I'm trying to do.

How do you think John feels after this exchange? To what extent was Paul helpful? How much more prepared is John to handle this client? Chances are, John does not feel very supported and now has the added pressure of "staying within budget." The lack of information sharing and problem solving here is two-sided. How much did Paul learn about what is going on with the client? To what extent does he know what John has tried and what the issues are other than that the client keeps changing his mind? How would you rate Paul's support of John in this exchange? Paul's only support of John seems to be limited to a reference to, "You have dealt with clients like that before." If John and Paul were using true dialogue, they would be sharing their thoughts and feelings. They would be setting the stage for collaborating and learning. Consider this exchange:

Paul: John, you look frustrated or annoyed, I can't tell which. Are you having problems with the project team?

John: Is it that noticeable? I guess it is written all over my face. I'm both frustrated and annoyed! Yes, the project team is having difficulties and the real problem is the client.

Paul: How is the client being difficult and how is that affecting the contract? What's going on?

John: Johnson keeps changing his mind. I have had clients change their minds and I know how to manage such situations and keep the client happy. What's making this difficult is Johnson keeps blaming me and

the team. I've tried using change reports and showing him that everything we are doing is in line with what he shared in the last meeting. Unfortunately, he comes up with all these "far out" ideas in between the meetings, and I'm having trouble managing that behavior.

Paul: Interesting. You say he doesn't respond positively to change reports or being reminded of what he said before? Can you think of a way to move him forward, not making a big deal about him changing his mind, while keeping everything within the scope of the project?

John: That's my point. That's what I keep trying to do. I'm stuck.

Paul: Remember about two years ago—I know it was a while back—you were assisting me with Jane Morgan. She was a real pain, remember?

John: I sure do. I can't believe how you kept your cool from meeting to meeting. Let me see. I remember you stayed positive. You always complimented her on her great ideas. Oh, wow, I remember now; you kept saying, "Oh, I see you have done some additional thinking from the last time we talked."

Paul: That's right. I never demonstrated any frustration. In fact, remember that one time when she did a complete 180 and I said, "Wow, what creative thinking!" I saw you trying to hold in your laughter.

John: Yep. And, I get your point. She loved the compliments.

Paul: And, quite frankly, her additional ideas and thinking had merit from time to time. So, it was important for me to listen and figure out how her newest idea could either be easily done or whether it required an additional adjustment to the contract.

John: Yes, I see what you mean.

Paul: A question I like to ask myself is, "How can I build a bridge between what the client now wants and what we had previously agreed to?" That tends to put me in a problem-solving frame of mind and I can take the client along the path with me.

John: Yep. That is probably something that will work with Johnson.

Paul: I think it will. What I have found, John—see what you think about this—is that most people just want to be heard. Some clients can get all their thoughts out in one swoop and one neat contract. Others need you to stop and help them catch up at every meeting. How might you incorporate this in your next meeting with Johnson?

John: As you said, sometimes it just means making a minor adjustment, and other times I might need to say, “I really like that idea and I believe it will make the product stronger. It will mean two more weeks of production that I will need to add to the contract. Is this OK with you, or would you like to rethink how we might go about this?”

Paul: Exactly. That’s how I would handle it. Is this helpful? How might you take this and apply it to reduce your frustration and get closer to the result you are seeking?

John: I’m meeting with Johnson on Friday. I’m definitely going to try it. It should work until the next frustration comes along! Thanks, Paul.

Paul: Sounds good. I’ll come by on Monday to find out how it went. Given that I haven’t worked with Johnson before, maybe you can share some additional tips with me!

In what ways is this conversation more powerful than the preceding conversation? Notice the use of questions and active listening that is apparent between John and Paul. Consider the ways in which they convey respect and support. In talking through this challenge, Paul makes it clear that he is interested in helping John. John shares his concerns and frustrations. Paul helps him move beyond those concerns and frustrations to finding a way forward. What would it be like if everyone worked in an organization in which the conversations were like this? Engagement and performance would be high, business conversations would be marked by a solution focus and mutual support, and goals and objectives would be more readily met.

That isn’t to imply we believe that all social institutions and companies should follow this organizational environment. We are not passing judgment in terms of right or wrong. Rather, we are supporting what the research has proven to be the kind of culture that leads to engagement, award-winning workplaces, increased profits, bottom-line goal achievement, longevity and sustainability, respected leadership, and supported followership. We are

talking about learning organizations in which human interactions and structures are created to help people and the organization realize hidden potential.

Obviously, this doesn't just happen. In fact, it never ends. It is a continuous journey of learning. As Peter Senge describes, it is in these types of organizations "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (1990, 3). Dialogue and the right conversations serve this purpose.

This theme of dialogue and the right conversations being able to create high-performing organizations can be noted in the writings of dozens of experts over the years; further, it is steeped in theory and practice, tested over time.

The Importance of Mindful Dialogue

In the early 1990s, Daniel Goleman began to write about the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in the workplace. He cited that organizations in which leaders displayed EI were rated higher as positive places to work than those without it. He stressed that EI leaders express appropriate feelings and direction through mindful dialogue.

Ten years later, when Goleman shared research that demonstrated that EI workplaces were not only rated as the best places to work but also the most profitable, the adoption of EI exploded. In essence, the "soft stuff" was the answer for achieving the "hard stuff" (Goleman 2000). The vehicle for attaining these results are coaching conversations and behaviors, such as asking questions, testing assumptions, and listening intently. In particular, Goleman (1998) talks about giving frequent feedback, encouraging practice, arranging support, providing models, reinforcing positive behaviors, and evaluating success. Sound familiar? The Seven Cs Coaching Map comes to mind.

Some think that EI means sharing your emotions as part of an ongoing sensitivity training. Not so. Rather, leaders and people in organizations learn to use and manage their emotions to create better organizations, because everything in human interaction involves emotions, whether they are spoken or not. If they are spoken openly, nonthreateningly, they lead to problem solving and collaboration. When they are hidden, they sneak out through sabotage, politics, backstabbing, and hostility.

Real conversations are the inner ones; once surfaced constructively, team-work and productive action emerge. This is not easy to achieve. It means using a language that cuts through hidden agendas, control, fear, resentments, and other barriers that prevent people from sharing the reasoning behind their words and actions. Using real dialogue results in trust and support. But old habits are hard to break. And when an entire company has learned to talk in “defensive routines,” it takes the commitment of leaders who want to create coaching environments to establish more productive forms of communication.

In her book *The Last Word on Power*, Tracy Goss traces the importance of language back to the philosopher Heidegger (1996, 19):

Language is the only leverage for changing the context of the world around you. This is because people apprehend and construct reality through the way they speak and listen. Or, as Martin Heidegger put it: “Language is the house of being.” On a day to day basis you can alter the way you are *being* by altering the conversations in which you are engaged.

Like Heidegger, Goss emphasizes the word *being* to indicate not only a purpose and frame of mind, but a way of life. She points out that by uncovering aspects of your conversations and learning to engage in different types of conversations, you can alter the way you are being, which in turn, alters what’s possible. This new “space of living” (sometimes referred to as “presence”) alters the way you approach language and interactions. Instead of talking with the intent of disagreeing, proving, or judging, you listen with the intent of openness, knowledge, curiosity, and learning. In approaching a conversation with the intent of discovery as opposed to judging, how might results be improved? Revisit the scenario between Paul and John for an example.

Continuing our language journey, Robert Goodman (2002) writes about “constructive developmentalism” and “developmental coaching dialogue” and uses the early work of Jean Piaget and Robert Kegan to explain the mind’s ability to use language to develop increased complexity in thought and action. He cites coaching examples with executives and demonstrates how coaching language can change thinking and behavior. When you helped Gail assess her own situation, reflect on the results she wanted, and formulate her own actions and results, she reached a higher level of thinking for future

decisions. You created a space in which Gail could step back from her own reality, reframe that reality into one with action, and re-engage with a different perspective and result. You became a bridge to higher performance. In a coaching organization, everyone becomes a bridge for one another.

Alan Sieler (2016), founder of the Newfield Institute, describes organizations as a “network of conversations.” He uses the often-quoted words of Truett Anderson to sum up the powerful connection between language and organizations: “Organisations are linguistic structures built out of words and maintained by conversations. Even problems that aren’t strictly communicational—failures of mechanical systems for example—can be explored in terms of things said and not said, questions asked and not asked, conversations never begun or left uncompleted, alternative explanations not discussed.”

The What and Why of Coaching Conversations

Let’s step back and pull a few pieces together. To create coaching conversations and cultures, we hone our language using a conversational approach that encourages the reasoning behind our words to be made evident; namely, dialogue. Then we add the Seven Cs Coaching Map—with accompanying coaching tools and approaches. What we end up with are “coaching conversations,” the major ingredient for building coaching cultures.

Using a coaching approach in everyday conversations can support colleagues, surface hidden agendas, create centers of collaboration, and foster higher levels of success and achievement. There are three primary reasons for the recent popularity of coaching in organizations:

1. Coaching provides greater potential for learning and practicing new behaviors than other forms of learning.
2. Coaching is personal—a person receives tailored attention and dialogue for his needs and goals. This provides a centered, focused approach that makes the individual feel empowered.
3. Coaching can happen face-to-face or virtually. It can keep up with the pace of today’s working populations.

Many global coaching studies and surveys (which will be covered in detail in part 3) have found that coaching:

- can measure and lead to meaningful return on investment and organizational effectiveness
- assignments most frequently deal with change (organizational and personal)

- develops high potentials, facilitates transitions, and successfully addresses derailing behavior
- leads to positive social results.

With research proving the positive effects of coaching in organizations, company leaders should consider multiple coaching avenues to enhance not only key individuals but entire teams, departments, and institutions. Classic one-on-one professional coaching must continue as a vehicle for change. Leaders, directors, and managers can be coached toward behaviors and skill sets needed for the future of the enterprise and their personal growth. They then become role models for the rest of the organization and begin to inspire meetings with more purposeful conversations. In addition, using a coaching approach in everyday conversations can support colleagues, surface hidden insights, create collaboration centers, and reach higher levels of success.

Coaching Definitions

We've mentioned a few examples of coaching dialogue, both formal and informal. Now let's review some classic coaching definitions:

- "Conversations to help and support people to take responsibility for managing their own learning and change" (Parsloe and Leedham 2016).
- "Coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance" (Whitmore 2011).
- "An interactive process to help individuals and organizations develop more rapidly and produce more satisfying results" (ICF 2016).
- "Challenging and supporting people in achieving higher levels of performance while allowing them to bring out the best in themselves and those around them" (Hargrove 1995).
- "A Socratic based future focused dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (coachee or client) where the facilitator uses open questions, active listening, summaries and reflections which are aimed at stimulating self-awareness and personal responsibility of the participant" (Passmore and Fillery-Travis 2011).

Commonalities in these definitions are such concepts as learning, potential, performance, self-awareness, and results. These are words of strength and possibility.

Anyone who decides to create a coaching culture needs to have a vision and a plan. Consider what coaching is not and ensure coordination with other systems within an organization. Table 1-2 shows the similarities and differences between coaching and other learning practices. Note that coaching is future focused, individualized, and tailored. It uses powerful questions, data to deepen the learning, and personal accountability. At times, there may be overlap—for example, a mentor may also be trained as a coach—but other strategies tend to come from a “fix it” or “expert” mentality (consulting or therapy) or address more generic learning. With coaching, it is the diligent use of straight talk, inquiry, and listening—and the surfacing of hidden reasoning and potential—that drives the process of discovery and action.

Table 1-2. Coaching and Other Behavioral Strategies

Coaching	Supports individuals or teams in realizing their full potential. Emphasizes self-awareness and growth.
Consulting	Addresses problems by diagnosing situations and prescribing solutions; assumes the consultant is the expert.
Training	Focuses on specific skills and content; usually involves a shorter timeframe than coaching. Content may be delivered in person or virtually, to a group or one-on-one.
Mentoring	Occurs often between senior and junior employees for career development; emphasizes organizational goals and advice.
Therapy	Focuses on problems, pathologies, and healing. Emphasis on understanding the past and origins of feelings.
Facilitating	Emphasizes immediate problem solving or long-term effectiveness; supports group reflection on what they're doing and why.

Bianco-Mathis, Nabors, and Roman (2002)

This process can happen in structured coaching sessions with a certified coach, or in more unstructured situations, such as a manager speaking with an employee. Table 1-3 demonstrates this continuum and provides examples.

Table 1-3: Coaching Continuum

Examples	External Coach Practitioner	Internal Coach Practitioner	HR or Organization Development Professional Using Coaching Skills or Language	Manager or Leader Using Coaching Skills or Language	Colleague Using Coaching Skills or Language
Structured Coaching Examples	<p>Tony, the chief financial officer, selects a credentialed coach (Walt) from his organization's coaching pool. They create and sign a coaching agreement that details roles and responsibilities, logistics, and parameters of confidentiality. The coaching agenda is informed by Tony's recent 360-degree feedback and his intention to strengthen his leadership skills.</p>	<p>Susan and Brian, managers who have received coaching training, are assigned to provide coaching support to the members of the emerging leaders cohort in their association. The support is for a set period. They use a short, written agreement to describe the coaching partnership so that their coachees understand how this work is different from training or mentoring.</p> <p>Elisa, an organization development manager, is working with Paul to help him strengthen his skills in providing timely, accurate feedback to his employees. When they began their work, Elisa explained the coaching process to Paul and they talked through what he wanted to achieve. They both signed a coaching agreement and Paul drafted an action plan that they review periodically.</p>	<p>Kathy, a certified coach, supports a newly formed team as they plan and implement new technology. She is a part of their biweekly meetings and as agreed, shares her observations of behavior in the meetings to support team learning.</p> <p>Jill, the learning and development manager, in a small association, provides onboarding coaching support to Vern, a new accounting manager, for 120 days. This includes scheduled meetings and a planned agenda that Vern can adjust as questions or issues come up.</p>	<p>Diane meets with her staff for scheduled monthly check-ins. She makes it clear that she is wearing her "coaching hat" when she supports them with results-focused conversations that leverage and acknowledge their progress toward agreed-upon objectives, and she helps them consider options for moving forward if they get stuck. She "asks" more than she "tells." She clarifies what action her team members will take before the next meeting.</p>	<p>Meaghan, a long-tenured employee who has completed a coaching program, agrees to help Nigel, a newly promoted employee, for four months. Nigel has proposed an agenda where he can talk through ideas and test interpretations of the unwritten rules in the organization.</p>

Unstructured Coaching Examples	Jenn, a senior marketing executive, calls her former coach, Teri. She asks if Teri has a minute to listen to a situation. Jenn shares a current opportunity she is considering and walks Teri through her thought process demonstrating some of the skills she acquired during their coaching work. Teri acknowledges her thorough approach.	Chong, an operations manager, accepts her colleague Alan's invitation to attend his staff meeting and provide feedback on his facilitating. Afterward, while walking to their next meeting, Chong shares her observations and asks a few questions that help Alan identify the impact of his behavior on his team.	David, a training manager, is having lunch with Marla, a budget analyst. She shares that she is struggling to plan and deliver performance feedback for one of her staff. David asks questions that help Marla focus on what she wants to accomplish and what approach is most likely to yield her desired results. He reminds her of her commitment to develop her staff, which he has heard her say many times. He asks her how delivering the feedback supports that commitment.	When team members drop by his office looking for answers in areas where they have experience, Sam uses powerful questions to help them expand their thinking and consider different approaches.	Jamal observes Linda in their weekly meeting and notices that she is uncharacteristically quiet. As they leave the meeting, he asks, "What's going on?" Linda shares her concern with an upcoming conversation with her boss. She says she just can't organize her thoughts. Jamal asks, "How helpful would it be if I coach you?" With Linda's permission, Jamal asks a number of questions that help her identify what she wants to accomplish in the upcoming conversation.
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Whether it is a formal coaching situation over several months or a quick coaching conversation in the company cafeteria, the Seven Cs Coaching Map can be utilized to fully move thoughts and feelings to action. While part 2 provides many examples for each step, Table 1-1 provides a broad overview to guide your reading. The following case scenario (Bianco-Mathis and Nabors 2015) can be used to demonstrate the concepts in Table 1-1.

Gail was a sales manager in charge of eight sales representatives across the Mid-Atlantic region. She was becoming frustrated because she would visit clients with each of her sales reps on a regular basis and then give advice and feedback. Unfortunately, when she returned on her next trip, she would note that the sales reps still made some of the same mistakes that she had pointed out previously. Having hired the group herself, she knows they are bright and have the right sales skills. She also knows they are overworked and find it difficult to organize their daily visits and paperwork—in addition to incorporating all her advice. Having attended an informative workshop on how to implement coaching into her management style, she decides to develop a more mindful approach. She studied her coaching materials and created worksheets, action plans, customer feedback sheets, and tracking sheets as aids she could use in meeting with each rep.

Capture Context

Gail met with each of her representatives and explained that she wanted to start using a coaching approach to help reps reach their potential. She also described the method as being “less telling” and using more questioning, role playing, suggesting, offering of ideas, committing to actions, journaling, updating action plans, and reflecting on results. Gail also encouraged each rep to be fully present for each meeting and that she was going to be more focused in analyzing actions and results. Gail described her role as that of a guide and partner as she and her reps sought to improve the performance of the division.

At this initial meeting, Gail asked each rep to personally commit to the process and to follow some ground rules; for example, “Either party will give 24-hour notice if a meeting needs to be canceled” and, “Both parties will come to each meeting fully prepped.” Gail also asked reps to reflect on their performance over the last six months and to discuss strengths and areas where they would like to improve. She also shared her thoughts and tested

those against each rep's perception. To accomplish this, she used powerful questions such as:

- What do you believe you do well as a rep?
- Walk me through a couple of scenarios of interacting with your clients and how you exhibit your strengths.
- What strategies do you use to do that well?
- Now let's imagine it is six months from now. What would you like to do even better? Play that out for me.

By using such behavioral dialogue, Gail was able to develop general areas to explore for coaching.

Clarify Purpose and Collect and Feed Back Data

Based on the information in her initial discussions, Gail gave each rep a worksheet to further define areas of coaching exploration and to analyze available data to home in on more specific objectives. As it turned out, each rep had just been given a 360-degree inventory on key job competencies and had also just received performance appraisals. Thus, the worksheet provided instructions on how to review these documents and extract and prioritize strengths and areas to improve. At the next session with each rep, Gail reviewed the worksheets and, through dialogue, highlighted two items—key areas to work on, and existing strengths—that could be leveraged in working on the areas to explore.

Create Options

In the same meeting—or for some reps, in a couple of meetings—Gail used dialogue to further explore each area:

- How can you improve the way you negotiate with the store managers?
- What would you have to do to fit this into your schedule?
- What resources could help you?
- What's your goal? Share with me a picture of you being a great negotiator.
- How long do you think it would take to reach such a goal? Consider the fact that you can't just jump from OK negotiator to fantastic negotiator. What are some benchmarks you can incorporate?

- What are you apprehensive about regarding negotiation?
How might you overcome those apprehensions?
- What would happen if you never improved your negotiation skills?

Gail noted that the conversation tended to be different with each rep: Some jumped into the exploration with both feet, while some needed more encouragement and pacing in terms of developing the future picture. Some of the reps needed a more iterative, back-and-forth approach, while others needed to be held back from taking on too much. With each conversation, Gail found it easier to ask questions and create dialogue. What was hard for her was moving from “telling” to “supporting and offering.”

Construct a Plan and Commit to Action

As Gail continued to meet with her reps, she guided each to develop a clear plan of action, including each area to explore, specific objectives within that area, desired results, steps to achieve those results, a benchmarked timeline, measures and criteria to ascertain achievement, supporting resources to assist the process, and actual “field practice” that would be done in between each follow-up meeting. Here is a typical example of this process:

Gail: I agree, working on negotiation skills would up your game in the way you have described. We have mapped out a three-month process for that to happen and discussed several activities that you can undertake and try. What can you try between now and our next meeting in two weeks?

Joe: Well, given that we homed in on the particular aspect of negotiation I want to master—specifically “brainstorming win-win strategies”—it would behoove me to concentrate on that.

Gail: Very good point. What resources do you have at your disposal to improve your skills?

Joe: Steven is excellent at this. I’d like to spend a day with him and just watch him.

Gail: I like the idea of you spending time with Steven. What could you do to make that as productive as possible?

Joe: I'd like to review the negotiating module from the training we had a year ago and pinpoint four or five behaviors that support my area of need. Then maybe I can share those with Steven and let him know I'll be looking for those. I think I'd also like to develop a list of win-win alternatives by conducting a focus group with various sales teams throughout the company. It might also be possible for me to attend a more focused course on negotiation. The one we attended was broad in nature.

Gail: Those are all excellent ideas. What else could you do?

(Gail and Joe continue to work this through.)

Gail: Great. Summarize for me what you are committing to make happen before our next meeting.

Joe: All right, let's see. I'm going to review the negotiation module and have a phone call with Tanya, who is excellent at negotiating deals. From the data, I am going to create a checklist of activities and behaviors I want to share with Steven, note what Steven does during the time I shadow him, and then spend an hour with him at the end of the day, reflecting on my notes. From there, I am going to develop a job aid that I will then use for my next three sales visits and note the results in my journal for implementing those new techniques. We will discuss that at our next meeting and then decide on next steps I can take to further my learning, practice, and results. Wow! That is what I am committing to!

Gail: Yes. Exactly. How do you feel about this plan?

As it turned out, Joe struggled a bit with mastering negotiation skills. With further conversations, it became evident that Joe was working from the belief that meeting the customer's need was the most important element of the sale; thus, he found it difficult to move from an either/or to a both/and mindset. Once he addressed this, he began to improve his negotiation skills. Gail realized that Joe's improvement could never have happened if she had used her old method of "Hey Joe, you have to get better at negotiation."

Celebrate Success

After three months, Gail noted that all her reps were demonstrating real achievement, not mere surface results. As her team improved, she was able

to reduce the number of coaching sessions to one every two months and to implement an innovative once-a-month team coaching session. The following dialogue between Gail and Joe demonstrates the celebrating success approach:

Gail: So how has it been going the past two weeks? What went well?

Joe: It's been going well. All three of my customer interactions resulted in a win-win result. It's the first time I felt totally confident and wasn't hesitating or second-guessing myself.

Gail: That's terrific. So, on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), how confident do you feel about your negotiation skills?

Joe: Definitely an 8.

Gail: Do you remember how you rated yourself three months ago?

Joe: Ha. I think I thought I was about a 3.

Gail: Yep. That's exactly what you said. Let's review the action steps you have taken since then. Look at this summary column in your action plan. What goes through your mind as you review your progress?

Joe: Seeing it all laid out like this, I'm impressed with the progress I've made. It was hard work. I look at this notation—I really botched that interaction, remember? I'm so much stronger now.

Gail: What lessons have you learned about yourself from having gone through this process?

Making this coaching transition won't come easy to everyone. Even though you might conceptually see how this model works, you might be wondering how to manage an individual coaching meeting. How do I begin? What do I say? How do I know when to move on to actions or commitment? We've been asked this question many times, and we developed the C-O-A-CH meeting model as a result (Table 1-4). Within one typical traditional coaching meeting—or within one “coaching on the fly” conversation as we saw with Gail at the beginning of this chapter—using the C-O-A-CH model will ensure that you cover the major steps to help people move to action.

Table 1-4. C-O-A-CH Model

Steps	Example
Step 1: C urrent situation—Describe and explore data, feedback, and client's perceptions. The emphasis is on gaining mutual understanding of the current reality as it is perceived by the client and others. Getting mutual clarity on the current situation is necessary to establish clear, realistic objectives for development.	Question: What strengths do you see in your 360-degree feedback? Statement: Provide an example in which you have used your strengths to your advantage.
Step 2: O bjectives—Define coaching goals, desired results, and measurable objectives (for a particular meeting and for the overall coaching process). Objectives may take into account individual, team, and organizational needs.	Question: What would you like to achieve in today's coaching meeting? Statement: Tell me what you believe a successful or valuable result of today's meeting would be.
Step 3: A lternatives—Explore alternative approaches and ideas for how to reach the designated objectives. Brainstorming and exploration of feelings and reasoning are part of the coaching conversation.	Question: What are three ways you might approach this opportunity? Statement: That is one solution. Help me understand how it meets your overall objective.
Step 4: C hoices—Support the client as he makes choices for action, including next steps, milestones, and other elements of a coaching action plan.	Question: How would you like to move forward? Statement: Walk me through your plan for next steps.

As you can see, this model collapses the overall coaching map into four distinct steps that are easy to remember as you move through the flow of a meaningful conversation. In applying the model to the Gail and Joe role play just covered, you can see how Gail moved through all four steps in only a short dialogue:

C: Gail wanted to help Joe get better at negotiation.

O: Gail and Joe set an objective of mastering the negotiation component of brainstorming alternatives.

A: Gail and Joe brainstormed ideas to reach his objective, such as reviewing course materials, talking to Tanya, shadowing Steven, making a list of observation points, conducting a focus group, and attending a more specific course.

CH: Gail supported Joe in making choices to move forward.

When you are coaching in the moment or over time, you may find it helpful to keep this shorter model in mind. If you ever find yourself getting stuck, you just say, “OK, where am I? Yes, I should now move to ‘alternatives.’” C-O-A-CH helps you track and punctuate the key components of the coaching conversation so the coachee begins to internalize the same thinking frame for continuous self-improvement.

Incorporating Coaching in an Organization

As chapter 8 will show, an organizational leader needs to choose to build a coaching organization. This then becomes part of the organization’s vision, values, and ways of behaving. This drives organizational processes such as team behavior, appraisal systems, strategic planning, leadership and managerial development, and decision making. Through both formal and informal mechanisms, coaching becomes the expected way of communicating and getting things done. The manifestation of this might be implemented through many different channels:

- frequent learning sessions led by managers and staff alike
- storytelling of the best and worst client experiences over the last month
- partner feedback sessions on getting a project out
- quarterly upward feedback
- software programs encouraging easy and daily feedback between managers and teams
- weekly analysis of agreed-upon metrics for continuous improvement
- pool of certified internal and external coaches
- innovative rewards for breakthrough thinking.

The creative avenues are limited only by the amount of dialogue encouraged.

To end this chapter, let’s return to the powerful use of dialogue and the cognitive theories behind mindful conversations. Language is hardwired in our brains as a part of our neurolinguistic programming. Neuroscience and ontology have added many tools and exercises that support coaches in their work. These tools are effective in helping clients create new pathways in their brains, sidestepping less useful behaviors, and instead pursuing more effective behaviors.

David Rock (2009) explains that trying to change someone's behavior is like trying to change the path of the river at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. That path has been established over centuries, just as our neurological pathways have been forged through generations. So what do we do? Rock suggests that we help people build bridges over the engrained pathways and encourage individuals to practice how to stop, recognize the new pathway, and then choose that new pathway to more readily use a new behavior. Like adopting any new behavior—such as mastering a tennis swing or writing an essay—it takes repetition, feedback, reinforcement, and time. It takes an action plan, support of a coach, continuous practice, and adjustments until the new behavior becomes just as natural as the flow of a very old river.

To better understand what goes on in a person's brain through coaching, see Table 1-5. As soon as a coach starts using dialogue—indicating curiosity and openness as opposed to judgment and blame—an atmosphere of openness is established. The listener responds honestly and doesn't become defensive. Both parties are then free to share their reasoning, test assumptions, and explore possibilities, creating a pool of knowledge, perspective, and insights. Blinders are removed, and there is access to previously unseen alternatives. As dialogue continues, opportunities, alternative behaviors, new windows, and innovative actions emerge. Soon, the coach asks for a choice and declaration of action. The coachee trusts the situation, commits to a series of actions, continues to practice, takes accountability, and gets closer to the desired future picture. (See the appendix for an example of deconstructing dialogue with the role play between Paul and John.)

Table 1-5. Deconstructing Dialogue

When You:	You Demonstrate:	Resulting In:
Establish a coaching context	Interest, positive intent, and a learning focus	A safe space for open conversation and reflection
Help identify desired results	A future focus and interest in coaching outcomes	A vision of the future and workable action plan with tangible measures
Listen and ask powerful questions	Care, curiosity, and support	Questioning assumptions and considering new perspectives and behaviors
Consider alternative perspectives	Flexibility and outward thinking	More choices, greater skill in perspective taking, and increased buy-in

Table 1-5. Deconstructing Dialogue (cont.)

When You:	You Demonstrate:	Resulting In:
Request a declaration of action	Confidence and a focus on moving forward	Movement with purpose and a spotlight on what can be done
Talk through and capture lessons learned	Openness and interest in continuous learning	Shared information, commitment to higher levels of performance, and increased skill sets

Making It Real

This chapter discussed language, dialogue, and the science and art of “changing the conversation.” If you follow the Seven Cs Coaching Map and the C-O-A-CH model, your conversations can enable insights, openness, solutions, and trust to emerge. Please reflect on this chapter and develop ideas for how to incorporate what you learned into your work.

Imagine a difficult conversation that didn’t go as well as desired.

1. Describe the conversation in terms of the flow, tone, approach, and outcomes; also indicate some of the language that was used.
 - Difficult conversation scenario:
 - Difficult conversation language:
2. Based on what you read in this chapter, develop a goal for how the conversation could have been better handled, and an example of language that could have been applied using the C-O-A-CH model.
 - Goal:
 - Alternative language:
 - ♦ C:
 - ♦ O:
 - ♦ A:
 - ♦ CH:

