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# *Organizational* --- **DYNAMICS**

## Coaching and the Art of Management

ROGER D. EVERED  
JAMES C. SELMAN



*Current management culture — based on the intention to control others—is contrasted with a new management culture based on the intention to empower others. Coaching is presented as that conversation which creates the new management culture, not as a technique within the old culture. It occurs within a particular kind of relationship between the manager and the managed.*

# Coaching and the Art of Management

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The “manager” is viewed variously as a team captain, parent, steward, battle commander, fountain of wisdom, poker player, group spokesperson, gatekeeper, minister, drill instructor, facilitator, initiator, mediator, navigator, candystore-keeper, **linchpin**, umbrella-holder, and everything else between nurse and Attila-the-Hun. We ask you to view the manager as a coach, and as a creator of a culture for coaching. Our proposition: good coaching is the essential feature of really effective management which, in turn, generates the context for good coaching.

The view of the manager *as coach* and *creator of a culture for coaching* is a new paradigm for management. By paradigm we mean the set of assumptions, everyday truths, and conventional wisdom about people and how they work in organizations. The prevailing management paradigm focuses heavily on control, order, and compliance, with the consequence that people become objectified, mea-

sured, and expended. Coaching, on the other hand, focuses on discovering actions that enable and empower people to contribute more fully, productively, and with less alienation than the control model entails.

The article addresses the issue of shifting from coaching as a possible tool or technique within the prevailing paradigm of management, to a new paradigm in which the process of creating an organizational culture for coaching becomes the core managerial activity. We are convinced from our work that a management paradigm based on building an organizational context for “coaching” can readily outperform the existing management paradigm based on “control.” The key is to let go of the “managing equals controlling” **mindset**, and take on a “managing equals creating a context for coaching” orientation.

We view coaching not as a subset of the field of management, but rather as the heart of management. We contend that when

managers are truly effective, coaching is necessarily occurring. We suspect that skillful coaching may be the essential difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary manager. If that is so, then it is worth taking a closer look at the essential managerial task of creating an organizational environment in which coaching and being coached can occur continuously. First let's clarify what we mean by "effective management."

The essence of truly effective management remains as elusive as the essence of art. We recognize and appreciate it. We can even explain it *after* the fact. But we don't seem able to generate it intentionally. Certainly we can paint "by-the-numbers," but great paintings can never be created that way. Does anyone seriously believe they can generate high performance when they manage "by the numbers"?

Yet conventional wisdom holds that managers become more effective when they learn the prescribed techniques, rules, and principles. Mere knowledge has only limited impact on managerial performance. The presumptions that we can know, prescriptively, what produces performance and that we can control all these factors and variables are the principal barriers to increased performance. Effective managers know that performance comes from enabling and improving what is there rather than controlling it.

Effective management remains essentially an art- the art of "getting things done through people." Thinking of management as an art (rather than a set of techniques) is potentially more fruitful because it recognizes management as more than a set of explicit techniques. Management as art implies inventiveness rather than mere conformity, practice rather than mere prescription, wisdom rather than mere knowledge.

When we focus on what actually goes on

when a manager is being effective, five points become clear:

1. Observing a truly effective manager in action is much like watching an artist at work.

2. Managers who attend to what is actually going on outperform those who try to apply remembered techniques, canned prescriptions, and rational models.

3. Work results spring from the quality of the communication (speaking and listening) between managers and their people.

4. The effectiveness of management flows from the level of partnership that is created between managers and the people with whom, through whom, and by whom the job gets done and the results are generated.

5. Effective managers are skillful in generating and empowering organizational climate.

#### THE MANAGERIAL CONTEXT FOR COACHING, AND THE COACHING CONTEXT FOR MANAGING

Much of "the art of getting things done through people" is actually a sensitivity to, and skill with, the climate, environment, and context in which the work gets done. The popular management textbook, *Principles of Management*, begins with the following statement: "Managing is defined here as the design or creation and maintenance of an internal environment in an enterprise where individuals, working together in groups, can perform efficiently and effectively toward the attainment of group goals."

***Reduced to its barest essentials, management may be viewed as a people-based art that focuses on creating and maintaining a climate, environment, and context which enable/empower a group of people to generate desired results, achievements, and accomplishments. Coaching, as we use the term,***



Roger Evered is professor of management at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. He teaches strategic management, organizational change, leadership, and managerial communication. His area of research is on the nature of managerial action. He has written numerous articles and book chapters on action research, strategic management, organization transformation, and epistemological issues in management research.

Evered has 16 years of practical experience with large engineering companies, including McDonnell-Douglas (Missiles and Space Systems), Bristol Siddeley Aero Engines (England), Renault (France), Klein, Schanzlin & Becker (Germany), and General Motors (England). Before joining the Naval Postgraduate School in 1979, he held academic positions at the University of Michigan, U.C.L.A., Penn State University, and the University of Illinois.

He received his B.Sc. in mechanical engineering and D.I.C. in thermodynamics from the University of London, England, and an M.S. in management and a Ph.D. in organizational science from U.C.L.A. He is also past president of the Western Academy of Management.

*refers to the managerial activity of creating, by communication only, the climate, environment, and context that empowers individuals and teams to generate results.*

The context of managing influences, and is influenced by, the relationship between the manager and the managed. Each is largely determined by the beliefs and assumptions of the prevailing culture that we find ourselves in, and which none of us consciously designed. In American society the relationship between the manager and those managed occurs within a context that includes concepts such as authority, hierarchy, order, specialization, division of labor, job security, ownership rights, compliance, control, and several other “blueprints” for how we “should” relate to each other at work. The aggregate of these operating concepts comprises a paradigm that might be called “control-order-prescription” (“c.o.p.”), which makes up the underlying design for much of the present-day managerial thinking and relating. In this context, managers act out core managerial beliefs, such as being in charge, controlling others, implementing the owner’s orders, prescribing behaviors and events, maintaining order, gaining and exercising command and control, and discarding the noncompliant.

Contrast this with an alternative paradigm in which the underlying conceptual foundation and commitment of management is to empower and create, a paradigm that might be called “acknowledge-create-empower” (“a.c.e.”). In this paradigm, the core managerial beliefs have to do with rethinking our thoughts, aligned purpose, commitment to accomplishment, collaboration, involvement, mutual support, individual growth -in short, **enabling the people in a group or team to generate results and to be empowered by the results they generate.**

The distinction between these two paradigms has been described as “domination”

versus “cooperation,” “control-oriented” versus “compliance driven,” “involvement-inducing” versus “vision-led,” or “command” versus “commitment.” Whatever the transformation from one mode to the other is called, the idea of shifting from a control-order-prescription paradigm that increasingly does not work to an acknowledge-create-empower paradigm that works (when the manager allows himself or herself to let go of the control paradigm) is clearly “in the wind.”

While discussion of the contrast between these two paradigms is not new, the implementation of an organizational culture that calls for “a.c.e.” has eluded many, perhaps all, who have attempted the shift. Coaching provides an action path for generating the shift from “c.o.p.” to “a.c.e.”

Coaching is *the name we give to management of and within an acknowledge-create-empower paradigm*. It requires a major shift in the thinking of both managers and the managed. This definition of “coaching” is not identical with the ordinary use of the term.

## WHAT IS A COACH?

### The Everyday Meaning of Coaching

A dictionary definition of “coach” is “one who instructs, trains, or guides players or performers (or teams thereof) in some particular activity or endeavor.” This is okay, although it does not capture how the term is **currently** used in organizational literature or what we mean in this article. In general terms, however, coaching is a widely accepted way to produce performance improvement. Coaches are used by **individual** players to improve personal performance (as in tennis, golf, fencing, ice skating, skiing, and car-racing) or by **teams** to improve team performance (as in football, basketball, and rowing). Public



*James C. Selman* has specialized for the past 18 years in organization design, productivity improvement, and human resources development. Until 1977 he worked as a management consulting partner for **Touche** Ross & Company. In that capacity he was responsible for designing and managing major engagements in the public and private sectors, including projects for multinational corporations, the U.S. Congress, and the White House. He has also worked as an independent consultant in formulating and executing organizational and institutional strategies relating to water pollution, drug abuse, and energy.

In 1984 he co-founded Transformational Technologies, Inc., a franchise system of more than 70 independent consulting firms. He resigned as CEO in mid-1988 to form Selman and Associates so he could work more closely with client organizations and further his research into the fundamental principles and abstractions that govern organizational performance. He is a recognized leader and authority in this field.

Mr. Selman graduated in social psychology and philosophy from the University of Oklahoma and did post-graduate work at the University of Florida. He is a certified member of the Institute of Management Consultants. He has published and spoken widely on the subjects of organizational transformation and management productivity.

speakers and performing artists also work with coaches.

### **The Familiar Management Meaning of coaching**

The advantages of coaching have not gone unnoticed by corporate managers who realize that: (1) individuals and teams generally perform better with a coach, (2) superior individual and team performance in business readily translates into productivity and profits, and (3) the quality of coaching makes a big difference in the results produced.

Coaching first appeared in management literature during the **1950s**. It was viewed as part of the superior's responsibility to develop subordinates through a sort of master-apprentice relationship. The coaching often took the form of a boss "coaching" an employee, most notably at the time of the annual review, thus within the context of a hierarchical relationship and implied job threat. The articles on coaching at this time stressed the value of training supervisors in coaching skills to improve an employee's work skills. Coaching became synonymous with job skills development, in contrast with counseling, which dealt with an employee's personal problems that interfered with job performance. The **mid-1970s** saw the appearance of articles attempting to translate sports coaching into managerial situations. Since **1980** coaching appears in the literature as a training technique in the context of management development.

Recent management coaching literature contains several new elements. Articles now connect coaching with mentoring, career development, management development over a long time period, and generating team (versus individual) performance. The most recent discussions center on the creation of a climate for coaching and use of a consultant as managerial coach.

Much of business's focus on coaching has been in translating sports coaching into techniques for business management, especially techniques to motivate people, train them in job skills, or improve management development. In nearly all cases, the orientation is that the "superior" is acting as a coach who "directs" the players (or teams) to higher levels of performance. In other words, most attempts to translate coaching into managerial applications take place within the **control-order-prescription** paradigm.

Translating the techniques of sports coaching directly into the world of business management seems to us insufficient. Of far more value is a study of the context of **committed partnership** in which sports coaches operate. There has been little examination of coaching as a new management paradigm. If the coaching relationship could be viewed in other than superior-subordinate, **employee-improvement** terms, it might provide a breakthrough.

As an illustration of the limits imposed by the superior-subordinate, control-and-order type of thinking, imagine the breakdown in day-to-day performance if one attempted to coach a little league championship game by "controlling" the actions of the players from the sidelines. Imagine a coach prescribing action without regard to what can be predicted rather than on what was actually happening in the game. At best one would get conformity and compliance, and at worst a mutiny. It is inconceivable that the team could win the game; if it did, the suppressed mood of the team would in all likelihood leave the participants wondering whether it was worth it.

### **The New Management Meaning of Coaching**

Coaching is the name we give to management of and within a paradigm of **acknowl-**

edge-create-empower. Coaching implies actively attending to a context that allows the communicative process between player/performer and coach to be effective. *In this context, a coach is someone who has an ongoing, committed partnership with a player/performer and who empowers that person, or team, to exceed prior levels of play/performance.*

#### THE COMMITMENT TO COACHING AND TO BEING COACHED

Let's take a comprehensive look at coaching as a new distinction for management. This requires a major shift in thinking on the part of both managers and the managed.

Most people have experienced working with a coach. Many consider their relationship **with** a valued coach as being among the most important and empowering in their lives. Why then is coaching so missing in management? If one compares the way one relates to a coach with the way one relates to a manager the reasons become clear.

Those who go to a coach generally are open to improvement, eager to learn from mistakes, and willing to try a new approach. People do not normally try to "look good" for a coach, or to convince him/her of how much they know, or what fine performers they already are. Contrast this with the way people commonly relate to a manager. Most often they hide or justify mistakes, attempt to "look good," and listen defensively rather than openly.

When people work with a coach, they commit to producing a result, such as improving the level of performance. They **demand** whatever the coach can provide. **One of the basic principles of effective coaching is that no one can be coached in the absence of a demand for it. And in the world of control-oriented management, there is very little de-**

**mand either for being coached, or for that matter being managed.** The demand for coaching shows up naturally and automatically in an environment of committed **partnership-oriented** management.

In almost every field of human endeavor where performance is crucial, coaching is an integral part. The more outstanding the players, the more likely they are to have an ongoing and committed relationship with a coach. (Coaches rarely are able to outperform those they coach.) Coaches share a commitment to improving the players' performance, but from a different perspective. They have a different view of the action and a different role to play in the game. Their role is fundamental because no person can observe himself or herself in action.

If there is a demand for coaching in almost every arena where high performance is valued, what is within our management culture that precludes coaching as a normal, empowering part of organizational work life? Why don't managers have an ongoing relationship with a coach? Why don't they spend more time coaching the teams they manage? What can be done to have coaching be an integral part of organizational lives?

There are three aspects of the culture of management within which most of us work that may account for the absence of a demand for coaching:

1. **Managers believe they already know how to manage.** Contemporary management culture is presumed to be **knowledge-based**, and managing is regarded primarily as **knowledge driven**. People succeed in most organizations as a function of what they know, or more precisely, what they and others believe they know. In contrast, coaching is almost exclusively **action-results driven**. Although coaches may be knowledgeable, their knowledge is always in the background of their relationship with the players and of

whatever is apparent in the moment of play or performance. In the foreground the players' actions generate the results.

2. **Managers may be more committed to control, authority, order, prediction, and power than they are to producing results.** Contemporary management culture seems to reward control-order-prescription management and to produce compliant, political, or "looking good" behavior, as distinct from behavior and actions that produce results. Although managers say they are committed to results, it's quite possible that they rationalize their commitment to control by presuming that more control/authority/order/power will produce more or better results. Clearly, no effective coaching can occur if the "player" is focused on scoring points with the coach instead of producing results on the field.

3. **Managers actually may not feel responsible for the poor results produced by their group.** Contemporary management culture is ambivalent regarding the responsibility of individual managers for their team's results. Being "not responsible" is excused in two ways. First, circumstances can often explain away undesired results and hence deflect a manager's responsibility. Second, a manager's job is commonly conceived of as holding others responsible, implying (erroneously) that "therefore, I'm not responsible."

Possibly the greatest differences between traditional management and coaching are in responsibility and commitment. In traditional management, for example, it is the manager's job to motivate. In coaching, motivation is the players' responsibility. In man-

agement, managers work constantly to get employees "to buy into" management's initiatives. In coaching, the players bring their commitment to the task to the coach rather than derive commitment from the coach. In management, responsibility is usually a matter for negotiation. In coaching, responsibility is a privilege.

In a management culture that rewards individual managers for seeing themselves as already knowledgeable, oriented toward control-order-prescription and able to readily blame circumstances (including other people) for the poor group performance, there can be little demand for either coaching or being coached. In a management culture based on partnership for achieving results and on commitment to collaborating in accomplishing new possibilities, a demand for coaching and being coached is always urgently present.

To get significantly more performance from a system, there needs to be an organizationwide demand for coaching. And that requires us to learn how to transform our thinking from "attempting to control others" to "empowering others." In short, if we are interested in **large** increases in system performance, we shall have to commit ourselves to shifting the prevailing management paradigm from "controlling" to "empowering."

#### THE ESSENTIAL COACHING RELATIONSHIP

The critical difference between managements within the two alternative paradigms

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***“[N]o effective coaching can occur if the ‘player’ focuses on scoring points with the coach instead of producing results on t-e field.”***

(control versus empowering) is in the fundamentally different contexts of relating in which coaches and-managers work.

In a **c.o.p.** environment, the bottom line relationship is that management decides and the managed implement. This is true even if the decisions are wrapped in warm and fuzzy management systems such as “participatory management” or “employee involvement.” People are “resources” to be used. The “resources” perform all sorts of impersonal functions or roles. People are referred to as labor, the **workforce, hands, employees**, or merely as **manhours**. In other words, people are related to as objects, or machine parts that need to be maintained (motivated), fixed (developed), and eventually upgraded (retrained), or replaced (outplaced). Although there is nothing intrinsically limiting in the use of labels, these reflect the nature of the core **at-work** relationship: impersonal, functional, mechanical, and disposable.

In contrast, coaching occurs in an **action-oriented, results-oriented, and person-oriented** relationship between coach and player/performer. The terms commonly associated with coaching are notably person-oriented: player, actor, performer, singer, artist, team leader, captain. These terms describe people rather than objects, doers rather than objects to be acted upon. The language of coaching reflects a relationship which is essentially action-oriented, enabling, and growth-inducing.

Coaches in the **a.c.e.** paradigm simply have a different relationship, and hence a different job in the relationship, from that of the traditional **c.o.p.** paradigm manager. The coach’s job is to spot the player/performer’s ‘blind spots’, with the sole objective of providing whatever is needed for the player/performer to excel beyond prior limits. The presumption of the relationship is that people have limits (barriers) which may be surpassed

through mutual commitment (partnership) of **both** the coach and the player/performer.

Coaching enables the player/performer to see something about his playing/performing which he does not see and would not otherwise be able to see. What the coach enables the player to see and improve upon makes a difference in the results produced. Without coaching, the player/performer is limited merely to honing the prevailing level of play/performance. Small incremental improvements are feasible, but the level of results remain constrained by the way the player/performer habitually interprets things. Coaching makes possible a reinterpretation of actions so that a quantum shift in results can quite naturally occur. A good coach continuously produces these shifts in results-shifts that the player/performer could not have achieved on his or her own.

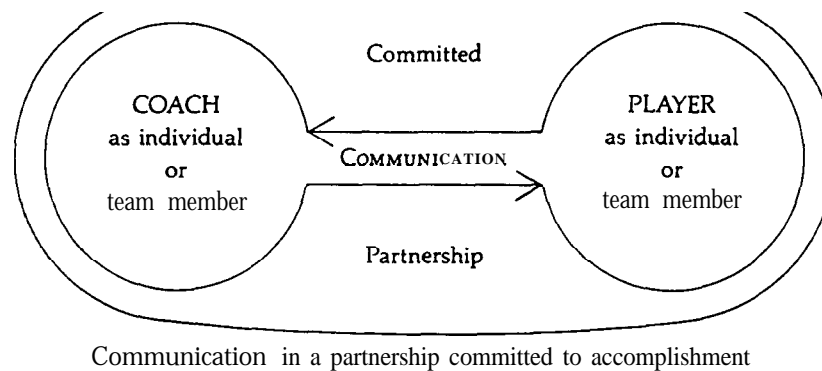
#### “COACHING” AS A NEW DISTINCTION

It’s time to pull together what we currently know about coaching and its pertinence for management. What follows is based primarily upon our direct experience of coaching and being coached, especially in the setting of consulting with a variety of organizations and managers. Additionally it’s based on our observations of great coaches, and to a lesser extent on the published literature.

What are the essential elements or characteristics that define “coaching” as distinct from anything else? The phrases below are not meant to be mutually exclusive components. Each expresses a different way of grasping the core of coaching.

1. Partnership, mutuality, relationship
2. Commitment to producing a result and enacting a vision
3. Compassion, generosity, **nonjudgmental** acceptance, love

*Exhibit 1*  
**THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP IN GENERIC TERMS**



4. Speaking and listening for action
5. Responsiveness of the player to the coach's interpretation
6. Honoring the uniqueness of each player, relationship, and situation
7. Practice and preparation
8. Willingness to coach and to be coached
9. Sensitivity to "team" as well as to individuals
10. Willingness to go beyond what's already been achieved.

At the heart of a.c.e. coaching is the *relationship* between coach and player.

In generic terms, the coaching relationship may be as represented in Exhibit 1.

The beneficial effects of coaching on a player's performance derive almost solely from the nature of the coach-player relationship and the communication (speaking and listening) that occur within that relationship. (Research into coaching is likely to be most fruitful in exploring the qualities of this speaking-and-listening between coach and player.) A manager may be either the coach (to an organizational player or players) or an

organizational player (with his or her own coach or coaches).

The coach's job is *not* primarily to give information, although some information-giving is involved. As a rule, a coach is *not* an expert player. (Arnold Palmer, Steffi Graf, and Brian Boitano perform much better than their coaches ever will). Technical expertise frequently is less relevant than the ability to enable or empower the player to go beyond the current level of performance. An insight into the player, in all his or her uniqueness, far outweighs the mere delivery of information. Coaching is not especially concerned with resolving personal or psychological problems, except perhaps peripherally. And a coach is not simply another term for an advisor or good buddy, although a mentor relationship probably resembles most closely the kind of coaching relationship described here. A mentor, in an organizational setting, usually refers to a trusted friend or **counsellor** who gradually teaches the novice the organizational ropes. A coach, in contrast to the above, is centrally concerned with the way the player is seeing and interpreting the play.

*Exhibit 2*  
**KINDS OF ADVICE AND THEIR SOURCES**

<i>Level and Type of Advice</i>	<i>Type of Relationship Involved</i>
1. Unsolicited suggestions and advice	Neighbor, acquaintance, stranger
2. Solicited suggestions and advice	Friend, colleague
3. Course of instruction	Instructor, trainer, tutor
4. Responses from an ongoing committed-listener	Trusted friend, mentor, <b>counsellor</b>
5. Committed partnership	Sports coach (team or individual)
to empower the player/performer	Performing arts coach
to exceed previous levels of accomplishment	Management coach

We need to explicitly note that we are not concerned in this article with “good relationship” in the sense of being friendly, liked, or comfortable with. A “good relationship” between manager and worker, in this human relations sense, is not essential to producing excellent results- the acid test of management effectiveness. Thus being “nice” is not a relevant component of coaching. One can readily think of effective sports coaches who were anything but nice.

Many kinds of advisory relationships are commonly called coaching. Exhibit 2 contrasts coaching with other advisory relationships. Only level **5** constitutes coaching as we conceive it.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT COACH**

The thesis of this article was first presented publicly in October 1987 at a management seminar that featured five star coaches:

- George **Allen** has had more than 30 years of coaching professional football teams. His record of 116-47-S ranks as the second best in the history of the NFL among coaches who coached for more than a decade. He turned the perennial losers, Los Angeles Rams and Washington Redskins, into champions al-

most overnight. He never had a losing season, was the NFL Coach-of-the-Year four times, and twelve of his assistant coaches went on to become NFL head coaches.

- **Red Auerbach**, a legendary figure in the field of professional basketball, became coach of the Boston Celtics at the age of 24. He subsequently was their general manager and president. When Red retired, he had accumulated the extraordinary record of 1,037 wins for the Celtics, and he won the NBA Championship in nine out of his last ten coaching seasons. He is credited with building both the Celtics team and their remarkable organization. He has the unique distinction of being named Coach-of-the-Year and **Executive-of-the-Year** in the same season.

- **Tim Gallwey** was a national amateur tennis champion and a successful tennis coach. He’s also the author of *The Inner Game of Tennis*, which became the best-selling sports book in history. The book and his coaching are based on his personal discoveries of what produces “peak performances,” which he termed “the inner game process.” Known as a “coach’s coach” in individual sports, his primary laboratory is the tennis court, where the practicality of his theory has been clearly and dramatically demonstrated. Tim has just completed *The Inner Game of*

Work; he consults with major corporations around the world.

• John **Wooden's** career as a college basketball coach is unparalleled. His record with the UCLA Bruins is unequalled, having achieved ten NCAA Championships (seven of which were consecutive). His Bruin teams also won 88 consecutive games, a still unbroken record for any collegiate sport. He continuously turned raw freshman talent into championship teams. His entire college record over 29 years is a staggering 81% (677-161). John was college Coach-of-the-Year six times, and is the only person inducted into the National Basketball Hall of Fame as both a player and a coach.

• **Werner Erhard**, the sometimes controversial founder of "est," focused much of his work in the past decade on coaching, both as a coach and as one being coached. His research and studies into coaching have included thousands of hours of being formally coached in a variety of disciplines, culminating in a comprehensive theory and technology for implementing principles of coaching in the workplace.

The group shared several qualities. Each was noticeably soft-spoken, articulate, humble, charming, witty, respectful of others, direct in speaking, and dedicated to his profession and players. Noticeably missing was any tendency to take credit for successes or to blame others for mistakes. They seemed to be non-punitive. They showed almost no interest in records and statistics and seemed focused on what it takes to win the next game. They also were tough-minded and intolerant of anything less than the best from themselves and their players. Not one of the coaches was punitive of errors by their players. What spoke loudest was their quality of authenticity.

It became clear from the discussions, however, that these qualities alone do not ac-

count for the coaches' superior performance. They did reveal common practices they followed when coaching with those they coached that might shed more light on the factors behind their success. Although no list of do's and don'ts can accurately pinpoint what actually underlies great coaching, here are some commonalities:

1. Be **clear it's a game, and that the point is to win**. Each of the coaches regarded the game as a canvas on which to express his talents and abilities. To produce the best work, he dealt with the full spectrum of human concerns, issues, and possibilities.

2. **Be ethical within the rules of the game, but don't let the rules limit your thinking**. Each coach developed new features of playing where others saw no such possibility. For example, George Allen conceived the "special team" in football, and Red Auerbach created the "sixth man" concept in basketball. Allen's concept of the special team, used in situations like kickoffs, punting, and field goals, was revolutionary because it was the first time a coach began using certain players exclusively in these situations. The sixth-man concept was unique because it meant withholding the use of a key player as a starter and using that player in substitute situations.

3. **Be committed to the players, and generate a personal stake in the success and well-being of each individual**. Amazingly, these great coaches continued to keep in touch with almost everyone they had ever coached.

4. **Be focused on the development of each player**. One coach underscored this point by saying he never asked a player for more than his best and never allowed players on a team to compete with each other.

5. **Be uncompromising in one's discipline to preparation and practice**. Each coach genuinely enjoyed the process of preparing for a game and practicing, functions that constitute a coach's primary workplace.

6. **Be committed to the possibility that there are no absolute limits to the performance of either an individual or an organization.** These coaches believe that improvement is always possible.

7. **Be in continuous communication with the players, the owners, the public, and the competition.** Coaching occurs within the context of interaction amongst all those who have a stake in the game. Success is never an individual accomplishment.

8. **Be personally responsible for the outcome, but not in a way that robs the players of their being fully responsible.** Validate the players' efforts when they lose, and point to what was missing when they win. Never blame the players for poor results, and be generous with acknowledgment.

9. **Be honest, talk straight, and model the qualities that you demand from the players.** If you want respect, trust, dedication, commitment, and responsibility from the players, then you must model these qualities.

10. **Be aware of the overall team picture and what is occurring in all aspects of the game that impacts the team. No individual performer can outperform a team.** John Wooden noted that only once since 1950 has basketball's championship team also had the league's highest individual scorer. "You win as a team, and you lose as a team."

11. **Be uncompromising** in attention to **details.** Breakthroughs in performance come from having perfected the little things. Handle everything up front, put nothing under the rug, and complete all pieces of the work.

12. **Be a teacher.** Each saw his job as teaching. John Wooden still considers himself a teacher first; only secondarily is he a coach.

13. Be a learner **and listen acutely.** One common trait of all the coaches was their regard for their own coaches and their commitment to continuously expanding their own coaching abilities.

14. **Be your word.** Do what you say you will do, and don't dwell on past failures.

15. **Be oriented to what is happening right now and focus on winning the next game. When** that game is over, focus on the next opportunity.

16. Be **in love** with the **game and the privilege of** being a coach. The panelists agree that without love of the game and love of their players, a successful outcome is not possible.

#### SO WHAT IS COACHING?

Earlier in this article we stated that we see coaching as much more than a handy sports analog for managers, or as a technique for doing more of what is already possible within our contemporary culture of management. Following is a summary of some of the things we've learned about "coaching" and what can be seen from the perspective of generating a new context for managing.

1. Coaching is a comprehensive and distinctive way of being related to others in an enterprise. The source of accomplishment in coaching derives from the particular kind of relationship that constitutes coaching.

2. Coaching provides a player/performer or team with the possibility of dealing with what is not seen, or even seeable, from the prevailing paradigm. Great coaches communicate in a **way that** allows a player of a team to "see" the game differently than from the perspective of action. In doing so, it provides a possibility for action not available in the absence of coaching.

3. Coaching as a way of being and relating at work can provide managers with a way of developing themselves and others in what has customarily been explained away as the "art" of management.

4. Coaching is "missing" as a way of be-

ing and relating in most organizations. Consequently little or no attention is given to developing the skills and qualities of effective coaching in various management development programs.

5. Coaching is “missing” by virtue of our cultural blindspots or paradigm that we have termed our control-and-order structure of thinking.

6. Coaching is a two-way process, which suggests that being a great coach also includes being a great **coachee**.

7. Coaching produces results solely through a medium of communication. The actions of coaches are found in what they say (either orally or non-orally) and in the quality of their listening (or noticing). Coaches impact action “in the game” by how they listen and what they say.

8. Coaching is driven by commitment, both the commitment of the coach and the commitment of the players. Coaching lives in the relationship between committed individuals who are working to accomplish something together.

9. Coaching is a dyad, like leader/follower or director/actor. Coaching cannot be separated from the actions of the partner in the relationship, yet it is distinct within a “whole” consisting of both the coach and the player/performer.

10. Unlike other types of supportive relationships (**counselor**, friend, instructor, trainer, mentor, etc.), coaching calls for a high degree of interpersonal risk and trust on the part of both the coach and the person who is coached. This risk always exists where there is a mutual commitment to the possibility of a breakthrough in performance.

11. Coaching generates new possibilities for action and allows for breakthroughs in performance.

12. Coaching calls for rethinking and

transforming our traditional models of management, organization, work, and society. As a field, management has evolved in a hierarchical model of organization. Coaching requires a more interrelated and dynamic vision of organization based more on relationship, commitment, purpose, and results than on role, hierarchical position, prescribed order, and authority.

## CREATING AN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF AND FOR COACHING

In addition to studying the model of great coaches, what can a manager do to become a wizard at coaching in a business context? The answer, of course, is paradigm-dependent. In the prevailing management paradigm of control, the answer is likely to be almost technical: What causal action produces what specific effect? But in the new management paradigm of coaching, the proper response is to *listen*, especially for *commitment and for the possibility of action out of that commitment*. Listening is the primary means for providing the necessary context for commitment, possibility and relevant action. Putting listening ahead of control, instead of control ahead of listening, is in itself the shift we have discussed in this article.

What can management do to bring about the paradigm shift? A variety of approaches are being used. The following steps constitute one scenario that has proven successful.

1. *Educate people in the parameters* of effective *coaching* by examining what factors currently limit action in the organization and exploring the possibility of creating a new organizational way of relating. This has been done effectively in workshops led by effective coaches who have experience in developing other effective coaches. The education phase

usually involves serious thinking about the nature of organization, communication, commitment, and what shapes managers' perceptions of situations they encounter.

2. **Commit to undertake a specific project** having a specific timetable and an unpredictable or "beyond business as usual" result. A computer software organization, for example, may decide on a project- to reduce errors by 50% while increasing productivity by **200%**. Commit to having this project be the "laboratory" in which the effective coaching skills will be developed and practiced.

3. Determine **the "players" in the project** as well as those who also will have a stake in the project's outcome, or who will be tangentially involved. These may include "bosses," vendors, regulators, unions, or community groups. Then **clarify the commitments of the players** to each "stakeholder" as well as specify the roles or support required from the stakeholders.

4. **Declare who will be the coach in each project relationship and what the person or persons being coached is committed to accomplishing.** As the project unfolds, coaching rapidly ceases to be confined to a fixed role and becomes a dimension of all interactions.

5. Be **prepared for "breakdowns" as the project progresses.** A natural consequence of commitment in a coaching relationship is that the coaching (if successful) always uncovers barriers to the next level of performance. The more one is coached, the more one develops tolerance for breakdowns which are recognized as the "raw material" from which evolve subsequent breakthroughs in performance.

6. **Allow the day-to-day actions of the project to emerge from openings (new possibilities) that occur naturally in conversations with a coach.** Continuously look for new actions that are in line with the players' commitment and intended results. An effective coach

listens for commitment, observes behavior, and interacts with the player to close the gap.

7. Validate **and acknowledge accomplishments and breakdowns as opportunities to regenerate the originating commitment to the project.** For example, one pitfall that may often emerge during the development of a strong coaching relationship is that when breakdowns do occur, what comes into question is the relationship, and hence communication, with the coach. Frequently this takes the form of the player blaming himself or herself ("I let the coach down") or blaming the coach ("I did what he said and it didn't work; he is a bad coach"). Both of these natural responses must be acknowledged and worked through, as they shift the relationship from one of possibility and empowerment to one of assessment and domination.

8. **Complete everything as you go along.** Push nothing under the rug, and no matter what the circumstances, look forward. At the conclusion of the project, or at interim phases, **tell the truth about whether you accomplished what you intended,** and choose to regenerate or revoke the commitment.

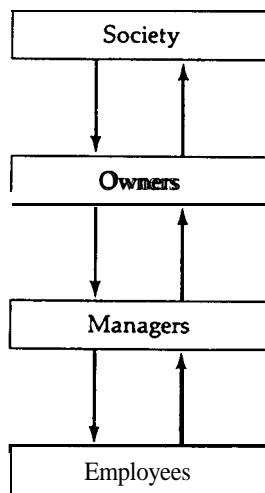
## SUMMARY REVISING OUR THINKING ABOUT MANAGEMENT

Until recently, coaching has been viewed as a tool, or technique, for improving the efficiency of a particular operation, developing specific management skills, or ameliorating a problem situation. Sports coaching seems to be the origin of much of the talk about coaching in business organizations. We do not view coaching in this light. We see coaching as a profound challenge to our customary ways of thinking about management. In our formulation, coaching is a way of relating and communicating that transcends all sports and

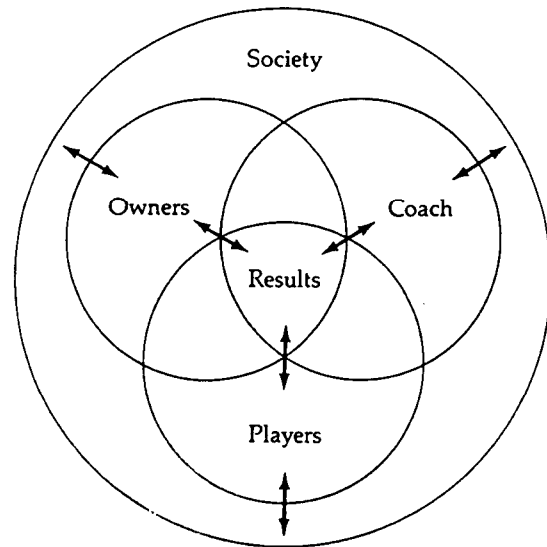
**Exhibit 3**  
**COMPARATIVE WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT MANAGEMENT**

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**Traditional, Authority-based  
Management Thinking**



**Action-oriented, Coaching-based  
Management Thinking**



(Arrows indicate benefits)

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performing arts, not merely something transported from one arena to another. It is independent of the particular game or field in which it is played. And, once more, it is *not* a technique!

Our current understanding of the power of the coaching relationship suggests that it represents a fundamental shift in our current thinking regarding managerial effectiveness and presents us with the possibility of extraordinary increases in managerial effectiveness, if we are willing to put at risk some of our habitual ways of thinking about management .

What's involved is a paradigm shift from traditional concerns with hierarchical authority, order and control, and motivation by job insecurity, to one that is based on partnership for achieving results, and commitment to col-

laborating in accomplishing new possibilities rather than maintaining old structures.

The paradigm shift foreshadowed by the coaching relationship is represented in Exhibit 3. In this article we have alluded to the team aspects of coaching. There are, of course, major organizational implications of coaching that we have not been able to develop here. Exhibit 3 reminds us that there are also profound societal ramifications of taking the coaching relationship seriously.

A skeptical reader may feel we are overstating the case for the alleged power of coaching and that we have not demonstrated how to put the idea into practice. We would remind such a reader that no paradigm has ever been generated that had a guaranteed workable formula for putting it into practice. The prevailing paradigm of American man-

agement, which is based on the premise that managerial effectiveness derives from attempting to control the behaviors of employees, has been notably poor at demonstrating the validity of that idea—despite at least eight decades and many millions of research dollars spent in trying to.

The paradigm that has conditioned us to think that increasing managerial effectiveness can be achieved by specifying behaviors is, from our experience, bankrupt. Why is corporate America so stuck with attempting to control and more precisely specify employee behavior to improve effectiveness, productivity and competitiveness when the evidence is so contrary? ***What’s missing is people committed to achieving excellent results and empowered by management; and that’s precisely the focus of coaching.***

Coaching is not a new concept in the history of human relationships. Coaching should not be seen as another “new” answer for managing, but rather as a reminder of what really counts in management, organization, and work. It ***does***, however, offer something radically new for present-day management —

a revision of our thinking about human organization and a fresh approach to breakthroughs in performance in areas that have become stagnant or unproductive.

Thoughtful managers have been looking for a way to pinpoint the skills that make the **elusive “art”** of management appear so natural in “great” managers. Coaching captures these essentials in a way that enables people to shift their thinking from a traditional paradigm of control/order/prescription to a paradigm designed for acknowledging and empowering people in action. It creates a new context for management, one that fosters a genuine partnership between managers and employees so that both can accomplish more than currently can be imagined from the perspective of our traditional management culture.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We deeply appreciate the many colleagues who read early drafts of this article, especially Bob Tannenbaum and Will **McWhinney**. Their constructive criticisms greatly contributed to the development of this article.



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The statement that “management is the art of getting things done through people” is attributed to Mary Parker **Follett** in the 1920s. And the statement that “Managing is defined here as . . . the creation and maintenance of an internal environment . . . is from Harold Koontz and Cyril O’Donnell’s ***Principles of Management***. 4th ed., 1968.

The definitions and functions of “coaching” and “management” have some important things in common. In fact sports coaches are often called “field managers” by owners and front office person-

nel. Both coaching and management are **people-based arts**, and both focus on getting something done through the actions of others by a communicative process. Good coaching and good management both depend on the quality of communication.

The word “coach” was first used in the modern sense of a sports coach in the 1880s (referring specifically to one who trained a team of athletes to win a boat race). Previously (beginning in the **1840s**), the word “coach” was used colloquially at

Oxford University to refer to a private (vs. university) tutor who prepared a student for an examination. But the very first use of the word “coach” in English occurred in the 1500s to refer to a particular kind of carriage. (It still does.) Hence the root meaning of the verb “to coach”: to convey a valued person from where he or she was to where he or she wanted to be.

The earliest efforts to explore coaching as a management function seem to come from the work of Myles Mace in the 1950s. He conceived of coaching as a worthy and acquirable management skill. His work is well worth reading. See “On-the-Job Coaching,” by M. L. Mace and W. R. Mahler, in *Developing Executive Skills* (Eds. H. F. Merrill and E. Marting, AMA, 1958); and M. L. Mace’s *The Growth and Development of Executives* (Harvard Business School, Division of Research, 1959).

There is little other literature on coaching that is really noteworthy until 1978, when Ferdinand Fomies’ book *Coaching for Improved Work Performance* (F. Fomies & Assoc., Inc.) was published, which stimulated renewed interest. See also Hawdon Hague’s *The Organic Organisation and How to Manage It* (John Wiley & Sons, 1978). Then see “Coaching-A Management Tool for More Effective Work Performance,” by G. E. Allenbaugh (*Management Review*, May 1983); “Coaching: Turning a Group into an Effective Team,” by G. K. Himes (*Supervision*, January 1984); “Developing Employees Through Coaching and Career Management,” by L. M. Shore and A. J. Bloom (*Personnel*, August 1986); “The Manager’s Role as Coach and Mentor,” by C. D. Orth et al. (*Organizational*

*Dynamics*, Spring 1987); and “Coaching for High Performance: the Manager as Coach,” by C. R. Bell (*SAM Advanced Management Journal*, August 1987). (Articles on coaching are now being published in the management literature at the rate of approximately twenty per year.)

Probably the best available statements yet on coaching are by Tom Peters in Chapter 18 of *A Passion for Excellence*—Tom Peters and Nancy Austin (Warner Books, 1985); and by Dennis Kinlaw in *Coaching for Commitment: Managerial Strategies for Obtaining Superior Performance* (University Associates, Inc., 1989).

Finally, it is interesting to note that Frederick Taylor might have written the last paragraph of the preceding article, except that in place of the word “coaching” he would have used “scientific management.” The critical difference lies in the degree to which people in organizations, both managers and employees, are empowered. “Coaching” is explicitly designed to empower, whereas “scientific management” has an 80-year track record of disempowering people at work. Hence Taylor’s vision of a genuine partnership in the workplace was never realized.



AMERICAN MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

**1601 Broadway  
New York, NY 10019  
Phone: 800-262-9699**