

*Coaching for Change*

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Routledge

2013

408 pp

\$52.50 (Amazon) Paperback

ISBN-13: 978-0415897815

Rating: Three Stars

If you are someone who engages in coaching as part of your job or if coaching is something you offer to others through a consulting practice, then you realize how difficult it is to find quality resources that can actually help facilitate the coaching process. From my perspective, a quality resource is one that is practical and also supported by research from experts in the field. *Coaching for Change* by Bennett and Bush is just such a resource. Moreover, it brings an extra dimension to the coaching conversation that takes the reader beyond the work of coaching individuals that accelerates change and growth. The authors address how coaching can be applied to organizational change and other areas that invite personal and organizational change and transition. Broadly speaking, this book addresses change and how a qualified and experienced individual can facilitate change within the individual and the organization.

Because of this combination of addressing individual and organizational coaching, *Coaching for Change* is very rich (some would say “dense”) with information and detail. The sheer volume of the information presented provides the reader with numerous windows into the topics. The authors do a superb and thorough job of providing detailed explanation, application, and theory for each of the areas addressed. The references provided at the end of each chapter (often the seminal works attached to the topics addressed) offer the reader numerous options for engaging in additional research.

*Coaching for Change* is divided into three sections. Part 1 speaks to the process of coaching. From my perspective, this part of the book contains the best content overall. The authors explain the background for, theory behind, and practical steps and processes involved in the coaching relationship. Part 2 addresses change in general as it relates to organizations, the theories and models that inform different approaches to organizational change, and the required skills for the coach or consultant who is supporting the change process. Part 3 explores some of the larger issues of change coaching, cross-cultural change, models of change coaching, and developing coaching mastery.

Part 1 is an exploration of the foundations of effective coaching. As noted above, this is the gem within the book. I have found that significant confusion abounds when it comes to differentiating between coaching and mentoring. These authors make the differences clear. In brief, mentoring is the relationship between a

mentor and protégé where wisdom, insight, experience, networking, and opportunities are brought to bear on behalf of the younger, more inexperienced protégé. Coaching includes skill building, competence development, performance improvement, personal development, and professional development.

But coaching for change is communicated in a much larger context in this book. Broadly speaking, this type of coaching involves three levels of change. First, coaching for change seeks to increase effectiveness and efficiency in people and organizational processes. This means taking the talent that already exists and making it sharper, leaner, and crisper. Second, coaching for change seeks to augment existing competencies by adding to the depth and breadth through the addition of new tools and expertise. Finally, coaching for change aims to bring transformation where that is needed. This would be expressed in the individual who is seeking a career change or an organization that is seeking to launch a new product line. In their attempt to answer the question, “What is coaching?” the authors provide substantial research that explains and supports the vast array of resources available to anyone who is seeking to engage in coaching people, processes, or organizations.

Chapters 3 and 4 in Part 1 provide the theoretical framework that allows the reader to understand the discipline(s) from which coaching emerges. Of particular interest is the author’s exploration of the disciplines that inform the work of coaching itself found in Chapter 3. This section is fabulous because it explores the liberal arts and social and behavior sciences explanation of coaching in very clear and concise language (pp. 40-52). For example, coaching is informed not only by psychology and sociology but also by spirituality, philosophy, human development, communication, and health and wellness fields of research. This creates a model that views coaching as addressing the different dimensions of the person within a variety of contexts and taking place within a number of relational situations.

Chapter 4 provides an excellent treatment of the coaching process or the question of “How do I begin and sustain an actual coaching relationship?” The author’s coaching model includes the building blocks of a formal (standard) coaching process (entry phase, contracting phase, assessment and data collection, development planning, embedded coaching phases, development of the change, and the concluding phase). For anyone looking for a structure or model they can follow to begin a coaching practice, look no further than this wonderful and clear explanation. The authors also provide a specific model for change coaching (pp. 68-75).

The centerpiece for this book as it relates to the skill sets needed for coaching is found in Chapter 5 which explores the competencies needed for effective coaching. The authors identify six primary skills needed for coaching (pp. 86-115). This includes effective listening that accelerates learning, asking the right type of questions at the right time, reframing issues, providing important feedback that is helpful and actionable, offering insight, and building support. As one who has had

the opportunity to coach over a number of years, the information provided by Bennett and Bush on these essential coaching skills is consistent with my experience.

Part 2 begins a transition where the authors move away from focusing on the individual to focusing on change as it relates to organizations. I found this section to be helpful if not a bit redundant. With the abundance of information already available on organizational change and how best to manage that change, the authors do not provide any new information on the subject. They do, however, provide a rich and concise compilation (or a mini meta analysis) of issues, questions, and challenges around the work of organizational change. Chapter 6 is the cornerstone of this conversation.

The authors use Chapter 7 to begin unpacking change theories and models. Again, this information is not new but yet helpful in the way it is tightly organized and presented to the reader. Coaches to organizations, the authors argue, must be familiar with how to understand and approach organizational change. While theory can be intimidating to some, Bennett and Bush do a good job of offering the reader a panorama of theories that can be helpful to any change process where a measure of coaching is involved. Lewin's "Planned Change" approach, Cooperrider's "Appreciative Inquiry" approach, and Kotter's "eight-step change leadership model" approach are just a few of the change theories and approaches that are briefly explored in this section. The authors conclude this chapter with a very helpful and clear description of mainline process improvement approaches such as Six Sigma, DMAIC, and ADKAR (awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement).

Part 3 is a helpful section on an integrated approach to coaching. The authors reach back in earlier chapters in the book and begin to build models and address specific issues around coaching. In Chapter 9, a model on the change coaching process (for organizations) is presented that is practical and clear. The 9-stage approach is designed to be used as a template for a coach (consultant) to enter into an organizational system, impact the system (both people and processes), ensure sustainable change, and to then exit the system. The majority of Chapter 9 dives into some measure of depth on each stage of this 9-stage model.

The final five chapters in Part 3 speak to more specific areas of coaching and change such as dealing with cross-cultural issues, ethical considerations, measuring impact, and building coaching mastery. The book concludes with appendices, a glossary of terms, and an index.

In summary, I recommend this book as a type of "soup-to-nuts" compilation of rich conversation that deals with the role of a coach and the process of coaching individuals and organizations seeking empowering and necessary change. Though loaded with theory and supported by good research, this book provides valuable information for the person seeking to learn the fundamentals of coaching, to

develop coaching proficiency and prowess, or to learn how to effectively understand, address, and influence, in short, change, organizational systems.