

Measurably Improving Leadership
AROUND THE WORLD

THE COACH'S PLAY BOOK

Frank Wagner • Chris Coffey • Marshall Goldsmith



Stakeholder Centered Coaching®
by Marshall Goldsmith



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2021

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Preface

This Playbook is based upon years of experience working with successful leaders who were willing to do what it takes to becoming better leaders in their future. Marshall Goldsmith developed the underlying concepts, philosophy and methods found in this guide while working with exceptional leaders who had risen to the most senior levels in major corporations. Anyone who follows this process will improve as a leader and be able to sustain that improvement. Having stated that, the process does not work 100% of the time. Ask yourself if any of the following conditions exist for the person you are coaching:

- **Lack of Commitment** – This leader is not willing to make a sincere effort to change. What is described here will work only if the person is willing to implement the disciplined process described in this guide.
- **Wrong Background** – If the person lacks the intelligence, experience, or functional skills to do their current job, don't expect the material in this guide to help. The focus here is on improving leadership behavior.
- **Written-off** – The leader has been written-off by the company. If that is the case, don't bother going through this process in an attempt to save this person's job. It may, however, help a great deal for this person's next job.
- **Wrong Mission** – What is described on these pages is a "how to get there" process, not a "where to go" process. If this leader has the wrong focus and is heading in the wrong direction, this guide is not what will help gain the knowledge or cognitive skills required.
- **Ethics Problem** – If this person has an ethical or integrity issues, what we will teach here will not help. This guide is only about improving behavior, not ethics or beliefs.

If none of these conditions exist, what is found in this guide will be of real value. It is written in simple, short sections. Each section deals with what to do. Equally important, each section deals with what "not" to do.

As we are talking about when Stakeholder Centered Coaching® will not work, it is also important to consider if you will be considered qualified to be the coach to a leader. Whether you are an external, or internal, coach, the criteria we consider important are:

- Do you have the needed credibility?
- Can you keep the necessary confidentiality?
- Do you have the needed time for the coaching?

In considering your credibility, besides any relevant experience you have as a coach, we do believe that being certified in Stakeholder Centered Coaching® will enhance your credibility. As this methodology is based on the principles and processes developed and used by Marshall Goldsmith, who has been recognized by the Thinkers50 as the top leadership coach for 10 years in a row, and has been inducted into their Hall of Fame, the process itself adds to your credibility. With your certification you can appropriately say that you use the same methodology that has helped a large number of Fortune 100 CEO's achieve a positive, long-term change in their leadership as recognized and acknowledged by others.

When it comes to confidentiality, this is relevant whether you are an external, or an internal, coach. In both cases, when confidentiality is compromised, your reputation as a coach is severely damaged. As an external coach, it is important to get the “rules stated and agreed upon” regarding what is to remain confidential before any coaching takes place. As an internal coach the challenges are more complicated, yet equally important. It is vital to get agreement right at the start with leaders inside the organization what stays between you as a coach and the leaders, and what will not be confidential.

The final key issue is time. Do you have the necessary time, as perceived by the leader you are coaching, to effectively play your role as the coach? For external coaches, this is a matter of avoiding the overbooking of your professional time. For internal coaches, all of your other responsibilities have to be balanced with the coaching engagements you accept.

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INTRODUCTION

In its simplest form, this is a Playbook about “Do’s and Don’ts.” It is based upon an understanding that we are all successful largely because of our own actions; and, we are successful in spite of certain aspects of how we behave. A recurring theme is that **we are successful because of certain beliefs and despite those same beliefs**. Equipped with this understanding, we will explore a 7 Step process that offers dramatic results for leaders who want to improve their leadership behavior.

What you find in reading this Playbook is very similar to the practice of any of the martial arts. To succeed you will have to follow a disciplined practice. This practice promises to be simple to understand and difficult to perform. Success here is defined as achieving a positive, long-term change in behavior as recognized and acknowledged by others. This is accomplished through repeated, purposeful, focused attention. This turns into repeated, purposeful, focused action on the part of the Leader.

The disciplined practice described in this Playbook will be of special value to leaders who have already achieved a high level of success and are currently finding that their future success is not coming as easily as it has in the past. What is provided in this guide is a clear methodology to proactively move forward to a new level of ability, skill and confidence.

The Playbook is organized in a building block fashion. First, we will lay out for you a set of beliefs that are commonly held by successful people. It is not too difficult to recognize that our thought patterns and core beliefs have a major impact on our success. What we add to this is the realization that these same beliefs can have a strong influence on keeping us from becoming more successful. In simple terms, those same core beliefs that help us can also limit us in the future.

Our approach is tailored to take advantage of the positive aspects of successful people’s beliefs (the upside) and, just as important, to

overcome the negative aspects (the downside) that can interfere with further development.

Once we have examined these beliefs, we will be ready (in building block fashion), to add a set of principles that allows us to build on the positive nature of these beliefs and avoid the inhibiting side that keep successful people from moving forward. With an understanding of successful peoples' beliefs, we have developed a set of principles that serve as guideposts to the underlying methodology of Stakeholder Centered Coaching®.

The principles may seem a bit counter-intuitive at first. A few of them break with many of the traditional viewpoint of how coaches help people change. Later these principles will seem to you as self-evident, and nothing more than “organized common sense.” Arriving at such a perspective will only come after you have experienced the magic of applying a 7-Step process in a skillful and disciplined manner.

Prepared with an understanding of the impact of the beliefs of successful people and armed with powerful set of principles, you will be ready to learn the proven 7-Step discipline for achieving lasting positive change. Consistent with the theme of this Playbook, we will again provide a balanced view that recognizes there are better and worse ways to behave while using the 7 Step process.

Our efforts are designed to illustrate where to weaken those tendencies that are holding leaders back from future success, as well as strengthen those actions that will ensure future success. The approach presented here is largely based upon helping leaders avoid a set of habitual “Do Not’s” and incorporating a set of helpful “Do’s” in one’s interaction with Stakeholders.

Stakeholder Centered Coaching® is an established process that increases the likelihood of success for all leaders, regardless of position or situation, in improving any behavioral aspect of their leadership.

What makes Stakeholder Centered Coaching® Unique: A Five-Step Process

STEP 1. Choose a Leadership Goal, Then Stakeholders

Stakeholder Centered Coaching® is not completely different from many coaching methodologies. And, it is unique in a number of key ways. Like most coaching it is based on a leader working to improve on a chosen developmental goal. Our focus is on leadership behavior. Similar to many coaching frameworks, it all starts with the leader selecting a leadership goal to improve. Our methodology recognizes that one of the beliefs of successful leaders is the need to be the one choosing what to work on to improve. What we do is help leaders think through their decision with a cost/benefit analysis that helps leaders determine “Is it worth it” to invest the time and effort. We also insist that the leader’s manager is involved and agrees with the decision.

Where our process differs from most (and is unique from this point on) is an emphasis on stakeholders. Once a leader chooses a goal, the other decision that is intimately tied to the chosen goal is to determine - “*Who are the relevant stakeholders?*” Every goal has a set of stakeholders that is relevant to the leader’s behavior. These are individuals who are both affected by the leader’s behavior (are clear beneficiaries of the leader improving in the behavior) and interact with enough frequency with the leader. Before starting to work on the leadership goal, and similar to the decision on what to work on to improve, the list of stakeholders is validated by the leader’s manager.

STEP 2: Enroll Stakeholders as Key to the Process

Unlike most coaching methodologies, the center of attention is placed on stakeholders. The stakeholders are made the center of attention and are recruited as valued members of the change process. Either by the coach, or the leader, each stakeholder is asked to actively participate in the leader’s improvement on an ongoing basis. They are asked to provide both ongoing feedback and feedforward to the leader; and, be willing to complete an anonymous and confidential mini-survey on the leaders improvement.

STEP 3: Plan using Stakeholder Input

Once stakeholders understand their role, the process starts with all the stakeholders being asked to provide suggestions to the leader to achieve the leader's developmental goal. In other words, the Action Plan is not developed based upon your expertise as a coach. The Action Plan is built by the leader and the coach from the initial request for suggestions from the stakeholders.

As the coach, you work together with the leader to construct the initial stakeholder-based Action Plan based, as best as possible, on the input provided by the stakeholders. Relevant parts of the Action Plan are also put into a daily checklist for the leader to consciously keep in his/her awareness while at work. Once developed the plan is distributed to the stakeholders, so they are aware of what to look for in providing feedback and further suggestions to the leader.

STEP 4: Follow-up with Stakeholders

The leader uses the 7-Step involving stakeholder “Do’s and Don’ts” to follow-up with each stakeholder once a month. During this brief 5-minute conversation the leader asks for feedback on the prior 30 days; and, any suggestions moving forward for the next 30 days. The leader captures the thoughts of the stakeholders and shares the results with the coach.

Together the leader and coach collaborate on what to add, change, or modify for the coming month based upon stakeholder input. If any new action items are created for the Action Plan, this is communicated to all the stakeholders. Our Action Planning is a continual process of refinement and improvement over the course of the coaching engagement.

STEP 5: Measure Results through Stakeholder Perception of Improvement

Typically, halfway and at the end of the coaching assignment, a formal mini-survey is conducted with the stakeholders to assess the progress made on the leadership goal. This is an online anonymous, and

confidential, survey conducted in order to validate the improvement made by the leader. It also serves to gauge whether or not the stakeholders are recognizing and acknowledging the change.

With the results of the mini-survey, the leader then writes up an after-action assessment to document: 1) what has happened; 2) why it happened; 3) what insights & learning has taken place; and, 4) what will be taken forward into the future. In a disciplined manner, the leader captures learning from the process. This After-Action Review becomes the leader's story of their development and is usually shared with the leader's manager.

Stakeholder Centered Coaching® Requirements

As a coach, to work with a leader using the Stakeholder Centered Coaching® process, there are only a few requirements. These are:

The Leader:

1. Has a clear leadership goal & agreed upon stakeholders
2. Goes public with the goal with the stakeholders
3. Builds an Action Plan based on stakeholder input
4. Follows up with stakeholders with enough frequency
5. Formally measures results with mini-surveys

Everything else in this Playbook, and what coaches brings from their existing tool kit, is optional and can help the leader achieving a long-term positive change in behavior.

What is described in this Playbook comes from Marshall Goldsmith's, Chris Coffey's and Frank Wagner's ongoing experience working with highly successful people. So, let's start at the beginning by looking at three interrelated and reinforcing beliefs around success that will affect everything that follows in this Playbook.

The three beliefs that are critical, in our experience, that affect our work as coaches are: “I am successful;” “I choose to succeed;” and, “I will succeed.” Together these beliefs are worthy of our attention as we begin working with a leader.

BELIEFS OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE



All three of these beliefs: “*I am...*” “*I choose...*” and “*I will be...*” **successful** all deal with the relationship between the person and an internal and not necessarily conscious perspective correlated with winning, achievement, and triumph.

Belief # 1 - I AM SUCCESSFUL

The good news for successful people is their copious quantity of self-confidence. The “*I Am Successful*” belief is positively correlated with a willingness to take needed risks and to do “*what you think is right.*” If one carefully considers what most leaders are tasked with doing, it becomes readily apparent that courage is a necessary ingredient. The self-confidence to act as a leader is bolstered by this essential personal belief. There are a number of what we like to refer to as *pluses*, or *positives*, connected with the “*I Am Successful*” belief. (A few of these are captured in the table that follows.)

The challenge a leader faces when strongly agreeing with *their own press clippings* and the resulting feeling that they have the universal

keys to success is also captured in the table below. The CEO of one Fortune 100 Company (who has had many ups and downs on the admiration scale) noted, “*Success can lead to arrogance. When we become arrogant, we quit listening. When we quit listening, we stop changing. In today’s rapidly moving world, if we quit changing, we will ultimately fail.*” You have to be willing to avoid succumbing to the negative side of believing you are successful.

Plus (+)	Minus (-)
▪ Have an overall positive self-image; “winners” in the game of life ▪ Have the courage to apply their ability and strengths ▪ Possess “contagious confidence”	▪ Consistently over-rate their performance ▪ Have difficulty accepting validity of feedback inconsistent with self- image ▪ May discount opinions of people who do not match their level of success

One of the most important lessons found in this Playbook is the willingness of successful people to honestly seek and learn from the input of others. When the minuses associated with the “*I Am Successful*” belief take dominance over the pluses, a leader severely limits the possibility for the needed learning to take place. They only listen to others who validate their inflated self-assessment and are considered a professional peer who has achieved the same “extra ordinary level of success” they have achieved. And, this is a very small number of people.

In the extreme case, the person will only listen to himself, or herself. In other words, they become terminally arrogant. No one else is allowed to help. No one else is considered worthy of providing helpful feedback or suggestions. Since most of the useful information about us comes from others who act as a mirror, the sense of superiority gives credence to the phrase: “successful *in spite of*, instead of *because of*...” our unwillingness to listen to others.

The good news about this belief is the inherent sense of self-assurance that is a requirement to do the tough things needed to truly improve as a leader. The bad news is the accompanying arrogance restricts the

number of people whose feedback they take seriously. Their unwillingness to seek out, or hear, input on their leadership cuts them off from those who may be their best source of constructive data.

Belief # 2 - I CHOOSE TO SUCCEED

Along with the belief that the leader you are coaching is a successful person, there is another key belief that relates to that sense of mastering one's own fate or controlling one's own destiny. We refer to this belief as "*I Choose to Succeed.*" With this belief the leader has a strong need to be in charge of what to work on to improve. No one else is going to make the choice for them. No one else is going to "re-wire" who they are.

Most people resist being told what to do. Especially when the subject matter deals with who they are as a person and what they will become. What we have found is the amplitude of this belief seems cranked way up the more the person sees herself, or himself, as a highly successful person.

The good news is that if the leader you are coaching *chooses* to work on something, the leader will also bring a very strong personal commitment, determination, and ownership to the goal that is set. You will not have to spend a lot of time convincing the leader why this goal was the right choice, as it was a personal choice.

They rely on their own opinions, viewpoints, and observations often to a fault. Successful people live by a code of personal responsibility and self-determination. This belief, just like the others has some incredibly positive aspects, and some challenging negatives.

Plus (+)	Minus (-)
▪ High need for self-determination ▪ Do what they do because of personal commitment ▪ Possess a strong sense of ownership	▪ Disregard input from others ▪ Can be too superstitious about what to choose ▪ In their head and heart may not feel the "real me" can, or needs to, change

The challenge you will undoubtedly face with the dark side of this belief is a nagging fear by the leader who has to make the choice to improve. The fear that many successful leaders may possess is that if they change any behavior this will break the “string of success” that has gotten them to where they are today (the superstition). For example, take a real leader we coached who saw himself as “hard working, dedicated, smart, ethical; and a poor coach.” For a long time he had, in various forms, received feedback that he should improve in his coaching skills. He didn’t deny this assessment. And, everyone else agreed with it too.

You would think it would be easy for him to choose to improve as a coach to his direct reports. It is hard to argue against the benefits of good coaching. Yet, this executive had been playing a game with himself. A game steeped in the depths of superstition. It begins with a simple truth. He was a highly successful businessman and he had never been a good coach, nor had a good coach. There just might be a correlation? If pushed to change by others to improve in his coaching, the fear can escalate to pure self-delusion.

The belief now takes on the potency of causation. This otherwise smart and logical executive finds himself believing that he is successful because of his past behavior; which includes being a lousy or non-existent coach. For all his confidence in most things, here he possessed little, to no, courage to face this shortcoming. His ultimate conclusion was: *“I am successful because I’m a bad coach. If I start working on this I might become too soft or unfocused on what I should be doing.”*

So, we begin to see the dilemma. The strong sense of being in control and taking ownership may lead to a reluctance to take on what is truly important to improve as a leader.

There is good news with this real-life example of an executive who had not been a good coach. After eventually choosing to work on this leadership skill, his thought processes and behaviors changed over time. After becoming a good coach, he admitted to fooling himself for a very long time. He could even laugh at himself for his cleverness at

hiding this fact from himself and all his misspent energy he had wasted deluding himself.

Remember, just as our beliefs are among our strongest gifts, they can also be our Achilles heel. We need to be mindful that we are powerful enough to play a good game of self-delusion with ourselves. We don't want to admit that we might fail, or even worse, are not capable of doing something well. Here is where we need to come back to the "positive" side of choosing to succeed. Coupled with the positive elements of their beliefs, we bet that successful people will get better at whatever they choose to improve.

Belief # 3 - I WILL SUCCEED

Along with the "*I Am Successful*" and "*I Choose to be Successful*," the third belief is possibly the most important one of all. The first belief deals with the past. The second one deals with the present. The third one deals with the future. The best news for possessing this belief is that the believer will continue to do what it takes to succeed in the future. Obviously, the overriding positive attribute associated with this belief is optimism.

Successful people tend to see a bright future. They are not content on retiring based upon what they have achieved. They are convinced the future holds a promise of even higher levels of success. And, the major reason for this optimism is their self-assurance they will control their own destiny and future, as they have always done so well.

As true believers in themselves, they are not the type to "give up," even in the face of extremely difficult odds. They are not likely to view outside circumstances as a reason to quit. In its pure sense, this belief leads to a "no excuses" approach toward reaching their goal. The virtue of persistence is legendary. The ability to never quit on what they choose to do is one of the major reasons for gaining a reputation for being a successful person. So, what can be the downside of such a belief?

Plus (+)	Minus (-)
▪ Do not believe that external forces control their destiny	▪ Face the danger of over-commitment
▪ Unflappable sense of optimism	▪ Having to win at all cost; winning too much
▪ Persistent even in the face of difficult odds	▪ Can have a hard time “letting go” of failure

One challenge the leader you are coaching faces with this belief is a real danger of over-committing and drowning in a sea of opportunity. At some point, the leader’s optimism can become a genuine liability. There is an overload point, and a burnout point, for everybody. Even if one thinks differently there are no supermen and superwomen. Knowing when to say “no,” when not to make a commitment, is hard when you have a strong belief that you will succeed with whatever one takes on as a challenge.

There is a line we all cross when persistence takes on the air of foolishness. In life there are times when the right choice is to stop putting out the effort and cut one’s losses. Letting go is painful for everyone. For successful people it can be downright excruciating. Successful people can have an incredibly difficult time admitting they are going down the wrong path. When faced with impending failure, successful people may have a tendency to become even more committed, working even harder instead of re-channeling their energies into more profitable pursuits.

One of the darkest clouds connected with this belief, is a need to win at all costs. This is the saving grace for a successful person when winning is critical and important. The exact opposite occurs when winning really leads to losing. An example would probably be helpful here to understand this point.

A common example we use would be getting into a disagreement with one’s spouse (or significant other) over what to do and winding up going along with their suggestion. After doing what your spouse (or significant other) wanted to do, re-engaging in the decision to show them why they were wrong (Are you “winning too much?”). You may win the argument and lose something more precious.

Letting someone else win is the right approach in some situations. Unfortunately, a person with an unhealthy addiction to winning and success interprets any situation where they are not the winner as “I am the loser.”

In summary, the “*I Am Successful*,” “*I Choose to Succeed*,” and “*I Will Succeed*” beliefs are wonderful gifts possessed by the leader you are coaching. These are attributes worth exploiting during the coaching. And, these same beliefs can equally challenge your efforts as a coach and clearly get in the way of the leader’s future improvements, as Marshall made famous in his first best seller “What Got You Here, Won’t Get You There.”

Your role as a coach will be to capitalize on the pluses (+) and to orchestrate around the minuses (-) of these beliefs. This *Guide* is intended to help you navigate around these beliefs. Building off of the upside of these beliefs and managing the downside of these same beliefs is at the heart of the work you have in store for yourself as a coach.

The Stakeholder Centered Coaching® approach is grounded in an understanding of these beliefs and the power of a reinforcing cycle of involving others a encouraging self-development. It is also guided by three fundamental principles. These principles come from years of executive coaching experience working with successful people who have been working on personal behavioral change.

STAKEHOLDER CENTERED COACHING® PRINCIPLES



First Principle: *Place the attention and focus on stakeholders*

The true leverage points in behavioral change are the people who are interdependent, and work, with, the leader every day. Our approach is to turn these stakeholders into the true coaches of the leader.

Our experience has validated that those around the leader, those who interact with the person you are coaching on a frequent basis, are the best “experts” in how the leader’s behavior can improve with them. This approach employs a systems perspective by including a number of stakeholders actively in the process as a vehicle to increase the likelihood that improvement in the leader’s behavior becomes a habit.

Our coaching approach is different from most other types of coaching in its emphasis on making the stakeholders the key providers of feedback and suggestions for the leader undergoing development. Our role as formal coaches moves more into the background as an orchestrator, cheerleader, and integrator.

Second Principle: *Emphasize FeedForward*

Most coaching and leadership development have focused on a process of feedback as the key to improving. There can be great value derived from receiving constructive and well-timed feedback. **The Stakeholder Centered Coaching® approach breaks with this long tradition by placing significantly more focus on FeedForward over feedback.** FeedForward is a technical term for a very simple process; namely, suggestions for the future.

We have found it is much more effective to be focused on the future versus the past. We cannot do anything about the past. The future is dynamic and unrestrained. FeedForward is a process of asking for suggestions for upcoming action. Remember it is the leader's internal belief set that largely affects action. Successful people have a strong need for influence and control. We all can do something about our future. This takes advantage of the positive components of the three key beliefs held by the leader you are coaching.

Additionally, most of us tend to resist when we are being judged. Do not misunderstand our emphasis on FeedForward as an indictment of feedback. Feedback is an important part of the process described in this guide. It is still needed. The amount of feedback needed, remembering our example of the windshield of a car, is proportionate to the size of the rearview mirror to the windshield. We believe in focused feedback on specific actions over recent events as necessary for our coaching.

As you learn and use the 7-Step process for involving Stakeholders on a monthly basis, feedback will be limited to the immediate prior month's actions the leader has taken. And the focus will be on what the Leader can do to be more successful in the coming month. Remember, the future holds unlimited possibility. The past behind us and cannot be changed. **The principle here is to focus on the future. Focus on what can be done.**

Third Principle: *Change behavior and perception in parallel*

It is useful for the leader to work in parallel on changing a behavior and the perception of that behavior by the stakeholders. It is very interesting to note, that those around the leader also need to change. Their perception of the leader's behavior needs to change for success to be achieved. All of us suffer from having perceptions that are incredibly resilient. People do not readily give up their prior assumptions, opinions, and beliefs. Thus, a key aspect of a leader changing and improving is the resulting change the perception of stakeholders regarding that behavior.

The research we have conducted shows a commonsense pattern. That pattern is perception change lags behind the actual behavior change. It takes a number of months of repeat behavior by a leader making the positive change for the stakeholders to acknowledge the change is actually taking place. The simple truth is it takes time for people to change their perception of the leader.

These three principles serve as the underpinning for the 7 Step Involving Stakeholder Process that is described next in this Playbook. As previously stated, our experience suggests that the steps in the process must be rigorously practiced for at least a year before there is certainty that the change will be rooted in enough experience to become permanent. A year is our normal standard. Success in modifying some behaviors can be shorter or take even longer.

Success in this process does not have to take up a lot of time for the leader, for the stakeholders, or for the coach. In fact, using the methodology in this Playbook is very time efficient. Until you have enough experience with this methodology as you help a leader put in practice the 7 Step process, you can focus on whatever specific section of this Guide that is relevant at that time.

7 Steps for Involving Stakeholder

The practical, and sometimes counter-intuitive nature of the Involving Stakeholder Process is based on an understanding of the three principles that underlie this process and the three beliefs (+) and (-) of successful people. Each step is specifically organized to build off of the positive nature of these beliefs and reduce the negative aspects likely to hold a leader back. The Steps to explain to a leader are:

STEP 1. ASK – The best way to get the gift of others’ perceptions is to ask for it. If you are committed to becoming more successful, you will be willing to ask for both suggestions and feedback. Asking is communicated in the spirit of self-improvement and in a way that the opinion of the person asked is valued.

STEP 2. LISTEN – This is far from easy. In listening you will need to accept others’ opinions as their perception of reality. In other words, you will avoid judging whether the input you are hearing is “right” or “wrong.” Back in 2004, Marshall Goldsmith wrote an article in FastCompany titled: The Skill that Separates. His main point was that listening separates the great leaders from the “near” great.

STEP 3. THANK – As this process will be an ongoing one, successful people understand the value in reinforcing the process as others provide their feedback and suggestions. Just as it takes courage to ask, it often takes equal courage for others to give us their feedback and ideas for improvement. Genuine commitment to improve is shown by expressing your appreciation for the help others are providing.

STEP 4. THINK – It is the mark of a wise person to consider what others say before reacting. For one thing, it helps avoid a tendency many people have for over-reacting. This reaction may be too negative or too positive. You do not want to build a reputation or over committing and setting yourself up to under deliver on your promises. Being thoughtful is a valuable way to be seen when it comes to hearing what others have to say.

STEP 5. RESPOND – A successful person who committed to improvement will always respond to everyone who provide feedback or suggestions. When others have taken both the risk and the time to provide you with input, they deserve to know what you plan to do about it. In communicating about your own behavioral change, it is wise to keep it simple and positive.

STEP 6. CHANGE – The purpose of the first six steps is to prepare to *do something*. Behavioral improvement necessitates doing more of something, less of something, or something entirely new. The mark of a successful person is keeping the change process alive and moving forward. You will monitor yourself relative to what you are doing to improve.

STEP 7. FOLLOW-UP – This step is really a reminder to use the previous six steps on a regular basis. This means checking in with others in a regimented, disciplined manner. **This follow-up step is, by far, the most important step in the process.** It is the best way to demonstrate to others that you are serious about change.

Our experience suggests that the steps in the process must be genuinely practiced for at least one year before there is certainty that the change will be rooted in enough experience to become permanent and for others to change their perception and give you the credit you deserve for changing. A year is a realistic standard.

The more powerful benefit for the leader is when the process itself becomes habitual. Truly successful people are committed to getting better every year. The greatest gift you give as a coach is when this 7 Step process becomes an ongoing discipline that becomes one of the leader's observable habits.

From our extensive experience coaching leaders, we have found that the actions they take, and the actions they avoid, when checking in with Stakeholders has a lot to do with their eventual success in improving AND getting credit from their Stakeholders that they have made a genuine change.

The Do's and Don'ts we have observed include:

Do's & Don'ts of Involving Stakeholders

DO NOT	DO
• Stick with your fan club • Expect instant help • Take up too much of their time	• Include as many as you can • Keep the process upbeat • Vary involvement as needed

STEPS FOR ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT

DO NOT	DO
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Step 1. ASK

• Wait for a “better time” to ask • Act skeptical or doubtful • Put yourself down	• Be concise • Be specific • Be positive
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Step 2. LISTEN

• Use “No,” “But,” or “However” • Make excuses • Exhibit impatience or anger	• Pay undivided attention • Capture what is said • Clarify/Confirm what you heard
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Step 3. THANK

• Use a dejected tone • Act artificial • Be insincere	• Say “Thank You” quickly • Use first name (if appropriate) • Be genuine
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Step 4. THINK

• Engage in “delusional” thinking • Prove the input is wrong • Validate “this is the way I am”	• Assess benefits of changing • Assess cost of changing • Decide if it is worth it
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Step 5. RESPOND

• Critique feedback/FeedForward • Respond to too many things • Over-commit	• Be brief • Be positive • Be future focused
--	--

Step 6. CHANGE

• Procrastinate • Give into “feeling like a phony” • Expect instant success	• Apply suggestions in parallel • Maintain momentum • Make change visible
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Step 7. FOLLOW-UP

• Dwell on the past • Become complacent • Brag, gloat, or show off	• Politely push for specifics • Reinforce the process • Check your ego at the door
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Overall, you have been successful in involving others when they feel...

- They have contributed to your success
- They have been acknowledged for helping
- They want to continue helping you improve as a leader

You have been successful...

... in ASKING when others see you as: ▪ Choosing the behavior you will improve ▪ Wanting to change this behavior ▪ Working on something important to you
...in LISTENING when others see you as: ▪ Wanting their input ▪ Paying undivided attention ▪ Genuinely hearing their message
...in THANKING when others see you as: ▪ Appreciative of the feedback/feedforward ▪ Taking their input seriously ▪ Willing to respond, once having an opportunity to reflect
...in THINKING when you see yourself: ▪ Not giving in to superstition or “negative” self-talk ▪ Doing a levelheaded cost-benefit analysis ▪ Committed with your decision of what to develop
...in RESPONDING when others see you as: ▪ Appreciative of help from all stakeholders ▪ Committed to improve ▪ Confident you will improve
....in CHANGING when others see you: ▪ Actively working on what you committed to improve ▪ Demonstrating success ▪ Not likely to return to your old habits
....in FOLLOWING-UP when others see you: ▪ Eager to gain stakeholders insight ▪ Actually learning from the experience ▪ Producing measurable results

What a Leader Needs to Succeed

While Marshall Goldsmith worked with Alan Mulally, the now retired CEO of The Ford Motor Company, Alan told Marshall his biggest challenge was “client selection.” He first learned the Stakeholder Centered Coaching® process when Marshall coached him when he ran Boeing Commercial.

His Working Together Principles, coupled with his weekly Business Plan Review process he used with his leadership team in the epic turnaround of the Ford Motor Company, incorporated a very similar framework that underlies Stakeholder Centered Coaching®. Every leader acted as a Stakeholder to the other leaders in overcoming challenges in their key goals to turn Ford around.

The process of involving Stakeholders, and using the 7-Step process with them, requires a person to possess a certain amount of three key qualities. These three qualities are:

- Courage
- Humility
- Discipline

When you consider what we are asking leaders to do when they involve their stakeholders; (namely, to Ask, Listen, Thank, Think, Respond, Change, and Follow-up) discipline is required for all seven steps. Courage and Humility are also needed, and one is likely more important than the other given differences in individual leader’s challenges.

From a conceptual standpoint, all of what we are asking a leader to do is easy to understand. And it is not easy for most leaders. The good news is, when these actions become habits, they become so much easier to do.

We have created a little survey that helps you determine the readiness to embark on the Stakeholder Centered Coaching® journey. You can share this with a leader or simply do your own assessment of the fit between what our process requires of a leader and the leader’s ability and willingness to practice the skills required effectively.

The Coachable Leader

In the task of improving yourself as a leader, how willing are you to...

COURAGE

- Honestly look at what behaviors you would benefit from stopping, starting, or changing?
- Communicate to others what you are working on to improve as a leader?
- Ask others for personal feedback/suggestions regarding your own behavior?
- Avoid procrastination or waiting for a better time to try out new behaviors?

HUMILITY

- Ask others to “help you” while working on your personal growth as a leader?
- Truly “listen” to feedback and suggestions about your leadership?
- Show genuine appreciation for feedback/suggestions on your leadership by saying “Thank You?”
- Keep your “ego” in check?

DISCIPLINE

- Stick to a monthly routine of following up with others you asked to support you as you develop new behavior?
- Manage any defensive reactions when others point out what have not done well or what you could do better (i.e., making excuses, getting angry, disagreeing)?
- Spend the needed time to change a behavior that is not comfortable for you?
- Spend a few minutes every day reviewing a checklist of actions you are implementing from your plan to improve?

Scale: Very Willing (5), Willing (4) Somewhat Willing (3), Not Sure (2), Not Willing (1)

7 Step INVOLVING STAKEHOLDER PROCESS



In summary, the Stakeholder Centered Coaching[®] approach is a disciplined practice that underlies how successful people get even better over time. This discipline is found in a reinforcing cycle of seven steps the leader uses with his or her stakeholders. By repeating these steps with individuals who are impacted by the leader's behavior, the leader will achieve the long-term, positive change and will receive recognition for this from the stakeholders.

What we have found is the most successful people recruit others to help them change. This is more of an interpersonal process than a solo activity. Changing both behavior and perception becomes significantly more likely with stakeholder involvement. When it comes to behavioral improvement, the greatest source of insight and support are those who are impacted by someone's actions. Effective people rely on others as the best measure of their ongoing success.

THE BEHAVIORAL COACHING SKILLS

Finally, as a coach there are several specific skills that will serve your role of being a catalyst to speeding up the process of helping leaders improve in their behavior. Most of the seven skills described below will be used numerous times throughout the flow of coaching a leader.

1. Behavioral Goal Setting

The ability to help leaders assess *what* to develop in their leadership behavior using 360° assessments, interviews, and/or observational skills.

Select the Right Behavior/Stakeholders	
FIT TO LEADER'S NEEDS	CONNECT TO LEADER'S WIDER WORLD
• Keep diagnosis balanced (pluses and minuses) • Support AND challenge leader's "self-diagnosis" • Iteratively clarify the benefits of change	• Familiarize yourself with the leader's strategic context • Link goal to future challenges / opportunities • Help select relevant stakeholders to recruit

Your first step as a coach is to facilitate the behavioral goal setting process to help the leader choose a goal and a set of stakeholders that she, or he, considers important and meaningful. Successful people are much more comfortable with the feedback and FeedForward they will receive if they feel it is coming from the right people on a behavior they want to improve. Remember the leader's need to be the one choosing what to improve and who will play the role of stakeholder.

The second step as a coach is to ensure the leader's manager also agrees that the "right" behavior and the "right" stakeholders are involved. At the end of the assignment and after the leader has improved, you do not want the manager of the leader you are coaching to say: "*The leader picked the wrong behavior;*" or, "*What the leader worked on was not that important.*" To the contrary, you want the leader and manager to feel the positive change in behavior was observed and recognized by the right people, and that the change was important.

2. Behavioral Rehearsal

The ability to prepare to interact/communicate with a stakeholder through demonstration, leader practice, review, and re-rehearsal of the interaction (if needed).

Practice Until "Good Enough"	
PREPARE	SHOW AND PRACTICE
• Organize the conversation the leader will follow • Check against Do's/Don'ts (Encouraging Development) • Know the lines cold by practicing yourself	• Demonstrate/model the skill • Check for understanding (retention) • Have Leader practice until "good enough"

In every profession, the very best performers practice what is important to do before executing. Time is invested up front to ensure the performance is flawless. You want the conversations that leaders have with stakeholders, around their own improvement, to come off effortlessly and gracefully.

Most people are far more comfortable talking about what they are going to say than actually rehearsing. When leaders say they are going to communicate something to a stakeholder, have them practice it with you playing the stakeholder (if you feel this is needed). Even what may

appear to be a straightforward conversation can be fumbled through quite ineffectively.

If ineffective communication is going to occur, you want it to happen with you in private where it doesn't count. You want success to occur with Stakeholders where it does count. In very profession, the very best practice prior to execution. Time invested upfront ensures performance is flawless. You want the conversations your leaders have with colleagues around what the leader is working on to improve to comes off effortlessly and gracefully.

3. Action Planning

The ability to help leaders come up with a course of action to achieve their leadership goal by translating stakeholders' suggestions into clear, concrete observable actions.

Plan for Action	
INCREASE THE FOCUS	ACCELERATE THE EXECUTION
• Distinguish objectives/ends from the actions/means • Define success (Identify success measures) • Help construct specific, actionable suggestions	• Help identify and tap hidden resources/assets • Push the schedule • Keep emphasis on the desired effects

In today's working climate, leaders are excessively busy. Helping build an executable plan is all about what the Leader will "do" to achieve the goal. A good plan will bolster confidence that the Leader will pull off the desired improvement in behavior.

To change behavior requires doing something different or new. The old adage attributed to Einstein of: *"insanity being a state of doing the same things over and over again and expecting different results,"* is the logic behind preparing for new actions. Keep the plan simple by only

including actions that will have an impact on the leader's goal and the leader is willing to implement. Whatever is in the plan, make sure it gets started soon. Never let actions that can be taken this week slip into the next week.

4. Behavioral Reinforcement

The ability to help leaders by spotting improvement and providing appropriate levels of recognition for progress in a timely, specific, and genuine manner.

Provide Positive Support	
ACTIVELY SEEK DATA ON RESULTS	ACT AS AN “ANGEL” ADVOCATE (vs. a devil's)
• Look for approximations of success • Focus on the matches (not mismatches) to desired effects • Seek out positive news from stakeholders/others	• Regular doses of reinforcement work best • Always tie to some specific action taken/result achieved • Encourage others to provide positive feedback

Another byproduct of our busy lives is how readily we miss the positive things going on around us. You cannot slow things down enough so that everyone (the leader and his or her stakeholders) sees the good that is happening. What you can do is pay special attention and capture positive examples that the leader is improving on his or her behavioral goal.

Many years ago, Ken Blanchard, when he wrote The One Minute Manager, reminded us of the power of reinforcement for achieving improvement. If you could only remind individuals when they were off course or could only remind them when they were on course, positive reinforcement when “on course” leads more quickly to improvement. That is why Ken coined the phrase: *“catch people doing something almost right.”*

5. After-Action Assessments

The ability to help leaders debrief and gain insight into their actions through questioning skills, enforcing openness and candor, and keeping the conversation on track.

Learn After Doing	
BE THE ACTION PLAN CONSCIENCE	KEY ON THE FUTURE
• Ensure assessments take place in a timely fashion • Make process easy and comfortable as possible • Provide reminders of key learning	• Keep the conversation future focused • Do not allow guilt, shame, or blame into discussion • Use learning to re-plan the Action Plan

As the world becomes busier and more complex, we seem to rarely find the right time to learn. We tend to move on quickly after doing anything, tackling the next action item on our “to do” list. Such behavior robs us of the wealth of learning available from the actual events we experience.

After-Action Assessments take a structured approach to capturing, digesting, and capitalizing on our learning. This applies equally to successful experience as it does to failure. Analyzing and understanding at a deeper level what went right is necessary to ensure new behavior becomes a habit. Just as useful is analyzing and understanding, at a deeper level, what went wrong. This is necessary to learn and determine what to do differently next time. The main benefit of using After-Action Assessments is their power to speed up the learning curve.

6. Story Telling

The ability to help leaders in their development by having a teachable point of view and the skill to convey this knowledge through clear and compelling narrative or anecdote.

Make a Point	
MAKE MESSAGE OF THE STORY CLEAR	MAKE MESSAGE OF THE STORY COMPELLING
• Have a specific “point to the story” • Keep your stories simple and brief enough • Tell the story so the “moral” is unambiguous	• Use a grabber • Hard data > Soft data • Pull emotional strings

Never miss an opportunity to find another story to add to your repertoire. The history of the human race is the transference of wisdom through story telling. Even after the invention of the printing press, stories maintain their appeal and special place.

Stories are found in our own experiences. We also can learn the stories told by others (creative borrowing of stories is well practiced in the fields of coaching and leadership development). Stories are easy to find by reading newspapers, periodicals, and books (sometimes one book can give you a dozen unique stories). Entertainment is another treasure trove of material.

As a coach, one of the most powerful roles you play is storyteller. It is here you can help a leader understand something he or she needs to know in a short, yet memorable way. And this is the key point. Your job is to keep certain ideas, or thoughts, conscious enough to influence the behavior of the leader you are coaching. Stories are the apparatus you use to implant the necessary wisdom.

7. Modeling the 7-Step Process

The ability to personally use the 7 Step Involving Stakeholder Process yourself while avoiding the “Don’ts” in your own behavior.

Model the Process	
SET A GOOD EXAMPLE	IMPROVE AS YOU MOVE
• Use the 7 Steps yourself • If a “Don’t” is pointed out to you, say “Thank You” • If a “Do” is pointed out to you, say “Thank You”	• Follow-up on your coaching • Be willing to change how you are coaching • End a better coach than you started

Setting an example, by practicing the 7-Step process yourself with the leader you are coaching, may be the most useful skill of all. This provides the Leader with a personal experience of what it is like to be a Stakeholder (to you) and be on the receiving end as you demonstrate the 7-Step process in your own coaching. An underlying message you convey is: “If this is good for you to do, it is also good for me to do as a coach.”

As humans, we gather information through our senses. For the majority of leaders in Western culture the preferred sense for inputting information is the visual sense. What this means is *seeing something* is a more powerful medium for learning than hearing something. Showing is a more effective vehicle for learning than having a conversation. Yet, we often seem to rely on verbal exchanges to impart learning.

The more you use these skills, the more they will become second nature to you. Some probably already are. Others will have to be further developed while you are coaching. The goal for you as a Coach should be the same as the person you are coaching; namely, becoming a better coach this year than you were last year.

COACHING FLOW

The Coaching Flow, and the way this Playbook is organized, can be broken down into three main phases:



What is laid out in *The Coach's Playbook* is devoted to the normal flow of a yearlong coaching assignment. Our belief is that the forming of new behavioral habits takes time. It is far too easy to change and then, over time, slip back into old practices. Even though our belief is that it takes a year of disciplined practice and follow-up, everything described in this guide can be applied to a six-month assignment.

FINAL THOUGHT

Everything we lay out for you is based on a practical, real-world perspective of the task to help a leader achieve positive, long-term change in behavior. Our approach considers you as a coach, the people you coach, and a world of complexity and time constraints. Applying the methods in this Playbook will not take up a lot of precious time for anyone involved. Our purpose is to help you gain leverage through the monthly application of a well-defined process made up of a few simple actions that provide a huge payoff.

Atul Gawande wrote a powerful and practical book aimed at improving the efficacy of surgeons doing the important work of saving peoples' lives and avoiding complications during recovery. His book titled The Checklist Manifesto drew from the discovery and disciplined use of checklist by airline pilots who also have a mission of doing their work in a way that preserves human life.

This *Coach's Playbook* will be organized around a set of checklists to assist you in the process of helping leaders apply the principles and 7 Step process with key stakeholders in their normal day-to-day activities at work.

There are blank pages in your *Coach's Playbook* for you to keep notes on how you will personalize the process to your own experience and style. Treat this document as a notebook for your own use. The material found inside is far from complete. It serves as a guide to the proverbial 20% that will provide 80% of value when coaching for behavioral change. What you add will provide additional value to you becoming an invaluable resource as a coach and in your own personal life.

The better a leader practices the “DO” column, and avoids the “DO NOT” column, the more likely that leader will be to improve in whatever he or she chooses to work on. The key to helping a leader get even better is summarized on the next page.

Everything in the Coach’s Checklist supports the process of eliminating the actions on the “DO NOT” column and engraining the “DO” column as a habit.

What is laid out in this book is devoted to the normal flow of a yearlong coaching assignment. Our belief is that the forming of new behavioral habits takes time. It is far too easy to change and then, over time, slip back into old practices. Even though our belief is that it takes a year of disciplined practice and follow-up, everything described in this guide can be applied to a six-month assignment.

The benefits of Stakeholder Centered Coaching® go far beyond what the leader specifically chooses to develop. As you will learn: it deepens relationship between the leader and the stakeholders; it makes giving and receiving of feedback more natural and effective beyond what was worked on in the coaches engagement; it shortens the learning curve for the leader during the engagement for all future developmental opportunities if the leader continues to use the discipline; and, it builds the reputation of the leader on the important leadership qualities of courage, humility, and discipline.

The next page of this introduction is a short self-assessment on the use, or non-use, of this 7-Step Involving Stakeholder process. This assessment can be used as a guide to how well a leader is doing in applying the principles and methods described in this book.

The range of scores on this self-assessment is 9 to 45. The higher the score, the more a leader is acting consistent with the 7-Step Involving Stakeholder Process. Increasing one’s score on any question is a positive step toward practicing this methodology. A check on this self-assessment periodically helps to assess progress in making these leader skills a habit.

HOW SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE GET BETTER

Self-Assessment

1. How many times in the past month have you asked anyone for feedback on something you did?

1	2	3	4	5
Zero	1 – 2 times	3 - 5 times	6 - 10 times	Over 10 times

2. How many times in the past month have you asked anyone for suggestions on how to improve something?

1	2	3	4	5
Zero	1 – 2 times	3 - 5 times	6 - 10 times	Over 10 times

3. How often would others say you listen well?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Most of the Time	All the Time

4. How frequently do you say “thank you” when others give you feedback or suggestions?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Most of the Time	All the Time

5. How often do you think about the costs and benefits of your actions/behavior before implementing?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Most of the Time	All the Time

6. How often would others say you are defensive when you respond to their feedback or suggestions?

1	2	3	4	5
Most of the Time	Frequently	Sometimes	Every so Often	Never

7. How many people would say they are actively involved in helping you improve and have been recognized for it?

1	2	3	4	5
No One	1 – 2 people	3 – 5 people	6 – 10 people	Over 10 people

8. How effective have you been in changing your behavior as a leader?

1	2	3	4	5
Ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Highly Effective

9. To what extent would others describe you as following-up with them on your efforts to improve as a leader?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Most of the Time	All the Time

Stakeholder Centered Coaching® Definitions

360° Feedback: A process whereby a leader's manager, direct reports, peers, and himself/herself provides feedback on the leader's behavior. This can be done electronically with a survey or conducted by the coach through a set of interviews.

360° Feedback Participant: A person who is selected to help provide feedback that will be used to assist the leader in choosing the developmental goal worked on during the coaching engagement. These participants may, or may not, be picked as stakeholders for the process. The choice of stakeholders will be based upon the leadership goal selected.

After-Action Assessment: A process where a leader reviews actions just taken in order to learn what to continue and what to change in order to be an effective leader. Formally, this is used after each Mini-Survey Report that measures the amount of improvements perceived by stakeholders.

Beliefs of Successful People: All of the Stakeholder Centered Coaching® principles and methods are based upon understanding how successful people think about themselves. This coaching process capitalizes on the positive beliefs these leaders have; and, manages the negative downside of these beliefs.

Feed Forward: suggestion for what a leader can choose to do in the *future*.

Follow-Up: The process by which a leader formally (and informally) checks in with stakeholders. This process involves the discipline of using a list of "Do's & Don'ts" for how to interact with stakeholders.

Leader/Person Being Coached: A person who has accepted a coach to help improve his/her leadership behavior

Leader Skills for Involving Stakeholders: The set of 7 skills of: Asking; Listening; Thanking; Thinking; Responding; Changing; and

Following Up with Stakeholders. Leaders learn what to avoid in using these skills and what to do to be effective.

Measurement of Results: Stakeholder Centered Coaching® pioneered the use of measurement at the end of a coaching assignment to determine whether a leader actually improves, as determined solely by stakeholders, not by the leader or the coach.

Mini Survey: A very short anonymous survey completed by stakeholders to determine the degree to which a leader has improved in his/her leadership goal. The normal mini-survey process is conducted at the halfway mark and at the conclusion of a yearlong coaching assignment. This provides the measurement of results.

Stakeholder: Individuals chosen to assist a leader to improve on the leadership goal by providing: 1) ongoing feedback; 2) ongoing feedforward; and, 3) participating in the mini-survey process to measure results. A good stakeholder is both *interdependent* with the Leader and *interacts with* the leader (enough contact to be able to provide concrete input).

Stakeholder Centered Coaching® (SCC): A disciplined process where a leader chooses a leadership goal and relevant stakeholders, who are recruited and used to help the leader achieve a positive long-term change in leadership behavior.

Stakeholder Centered Coaching® 3 Principles: The philosophies developed over time by Marshall Goldsmith in working with top leaders form the basis of how a coaching assignment progresses toward the goal of achieving a positive, long-term change in behavior. These principles incorporate the belief set of successful people and serve as a foundation for the rigorous discipline used by the Leader.

Systems Approach: Stakeholder Centered Coaching® uses a more systemic process to help a leader achieve a positive long-term change in behavior than traditional coaching. This is accomplished by bringing the people who are affected by a leader's behavior into the process. It is the leader's manager, peers, and direct reports (along with the coach) who participate in and support the change

PERSONAL NOTES

Stakeholder Centered Coaching®: