

COACH***UP***

KEITH ROSEN

UP

The Author

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Chapter 1

Love, Lies, and the Uncomfortable Truth

It's inevitable, predictable, yet unavoidable. It's the human condition.

During any two-day program I facilitate, every sales salesperson, sales manager or anyone who's responsible for managing people, gets coached safely and effectively when transforming into a sales leader by becoming a world class executive sales coach.

Yet, for some leaders who went on this journey and are just about to cross the finish line to complete their leadership coach training and development, a reaction occurs. You can feel it.

Because it is at this time when each person needs to commit to what they will do, try or change when they get back to the office.

That's when it hits them.

"Wait, you mean, we're now actually going to be held accountable for coaching our team?"

They seemingly freeze in their tracks. And over these two days, these leaders have experienced many times, the power of successful coaching – as both the provider and receiver of coaching!

I Love My Boss!

Still, something happens once all of the conversations have taken place; their course objectives are identified, the coaching framework is introduced, their concerns, challenges and fears are addressed, the various modules and topics are discussed, the simulations and exercises are completed.

Like the bursting of a dam, more and more reasons and excuses for not being able to coach start to surface amongst the group.

Others play it safe and say they're committed but they just can't start, "Now."

And some managers are concerned about making the commitment to effectively and consistently coach each person on their team. ($\# \text{ people on my team} \times \text{average } \# \text{ coaching hours per person per day} + \text{number of hours already committed to in some way} - \# \text{ number of designated work hours per day} = \text{"How the heck am I going to fit all of this in my calendar?"}$)

And the one common denominator with each manager when discussing the reasons why coaching will not work: "My boss."

Don't Believe Your Lies

This is when I hear, *"Based on what I've learned, my boss is definitely not coaching me in a way that I find valuable, and I don't think he'd be very supportive around this."*

Besides, at the end of the day, I'm evaluated based on whether or not I'm hitting my sales targets, not if I'm a great coach.

If they're not taking the first step, then it's up to you to do so.

Don't get me wrong. This coaching thing is great and all, and works really well when we're out of the office, in a conference room where we have created a safe place amongst our peers and

boss; with no calls, no distractions, no laptops and our phones are off or on vibrate. But let's face it, when we go back into the real world, it's business as usual and we're paid to get results and answer to our boss."

I get this. Sure, it makes sense. And in some cases, it's actually true.

Even so, if we are being true to innovation, maintaining our competitive edge, sharpening our skills, embracing new challenges and honoring continued evolution and change, then we all need to be able to look in the mirror and feel as managers, leaders and as human beings, that we have done everything in our power to positively influence and impact our company, our team and our customers.

The Uncomfortable Truth

That's why, regardless of your position, tenure or seniority, as a direct report at any level on the organizational chart, it is still your responsibility to not only ask your boss, or at the very least, your peers for coaching and support but to also let them know how you would like to be coached, supported and managed.

Like it or not, if they're not taking the first step, then it's up to you to do so.

Unfortunately, many people believe that approaching their boss in a way that would make them open to change, feedback or an observa-

tion is a very difficult task. Some even feel that it's an impossible undertaking or at least one that would make them vulnerable or put them in harm's way.

After all, no one wants to feel like they will be punished for being honest, sharing a perceived weakness, providing an observation or making a request. So instead, you assume that your boss or your situation will never change and like it or not, if you want to keep your job with this company, it's something you're just going to have to tolerate.

Reinvent the Relationship with Your Boss

What if you can approach your boss and have this type of conversation with them in a way that doesn't put you in jeopardy and still creates the opportunity to reset expectations with your manager around your job and responsibilities, as well as how you interact, communicate and collaborate?

Fine, maybe this question is slightly rhetorical.

Being an optimistic, yet grounded realist, I know that, while most of the power to change your environment starts with changing your attitude and how you interact with people, you still have to work with those other people who may not have fully embraced your highly evolved line of thinking yet, nor have experienced the impact that good coaching and leadership can have. And maybe there's even a large population of senior executives, division managers, VP's, country managers, even the entire C – Suite that, according to practically every front line manager, could also benefit tremendously by developing and refining their coaching skills.

So, rather than try to avoid them, what if you shifted your thinking to wanting to help them? That's right, your focus is on helping those people who are still trying to survive in the thick of the ego driven, sales focused,

“Bring me results now,

If they're not performing then just fire them,

You're only as good as the results you posted last month,

What do you mean you're not going to hit your numbers?

I know it's tough but that's just how it is so get out there and do what you need to get it done

Will I have a job next month?”

Minefield of a culture!

While there are some people who are fortunate enough to believe that this may be an over-exaggeration of the truth, there is one common lesson here. Whether it's your boss, peers, partners, stakeholders or even cross-functional teams, there is one common theme. ■

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Chapter 2

It's the Message That Matters

While delivering my management coach training program in Moscow, a manager, frustrated by the fact that she wasn't getting the recognition and support she needed, asked, "Is it acceptable to tell your boss what you really want from them? I mean, shouldn't they already know what I need and if they don't know, shouldn't they be the one to find out?"

While the quality of every relationship between a manager and direct report (as well as the success and failure of every individual on a team) ultimately rests on the manager, unfortunately, there are still some managers who have yet to "get the memo" on this. Some are still in the process of learning how to become a better coach, and other managers simply do not have a clue about the importance of this responsibility. They have no idea how much power they actually possess to measurably impact their

team's success and the career path of each one of their direct reports.

In order to foster a stronger environment of trust, loyalty, accountability, collaboration and openness amongst your team, the answer to the question posed by this manager is "Yes." It is up to the manager to sit each direct report down, one to one, in order to ensure they have a keen understanding around exactly what each individual needs so they can foster this type of desired environment. The manager must uncover how to coach to each person's individuality and support them based on the team member's unique needs, goals, skills, concerns and objectives.

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As you can see, given the location in which I delivered this particular training event, this is not an isolated issue but a global one that affects employees in every position, in practically every organization and in every country worldwide.

To further support this, after delivering my management coach training program hundreds of times in practically every corner of the world, I continue to hear the same question at some point during every training I deliver.

That is, “Will my manager be going through this same training as well?”

Regardless of where your manager is on his or her own path of development, if your manager has not yet come to you to establish these boundaries and expectations around your relationship, especially as it relates to coaching, then it is only in your best interest to be the one to take the initiative. Step up and initiate this conversation.

The good news is, you can coach up! In other words, rather than leaving it up to chance, or waiting around until your manager gets a clue that he or she is the person who needs to begin this discussion, you can enroll your manager on establishing these new bound-

***Sometimes,
you have to
tell your
boss what
you really
need.***

aries and expectations. You can be the one to bring up how you like to be coached, managed, communicated to and supported. How effective you are in conveying this message to your manager rests in your ability to craft

your message in a way that creates a new possibility rather than a confrontation. That is, how can you approach your manager in a way that would open them up to the point that they would want to listen to you?

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It's Time to Coach Up!

You can coach up! In other words, rather than leaving it up to chance or waiting around until your manager gets a clue that he or she is the person who needs to initiate these types of conversations, you can be the proactive one and enroll your manager on establishing these new boundaries and expectations. Otherwise, if you are waiting for your manager to change or take the initiative, you may be waiting a very long time; possibly your entire career.

Sure, you can coach your direct reports. Now, expand your peripheral view of who else you can coach and positively impact. You can also coach your peers, as well as your stakeholders. What about your partners and customers? And, you can also effectively coach and enroll your boss.

That is, you can deliver your message in a more effective way regarding how you like to be coached, managed, held accountable, communicated to and supported. You can also discuss certain tasks, projects, problems,

people or commitments in a way that won't put your boss on the defensive and instead, create a healthy platform for collaboration and discussion.

So, how can you approach your manager in a way that would open them up to listen to you so that you can create new possibilities rather than another confrontation? It all starts by changing the conversation. ■

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Chapter 3

How to Break Through the Reluctance to Coaching Your Boss

Unfortunately, many people believe that approaching their manager in a way that would make them receptive to what they have to say is a very difficult task. Some even feel it's an impossible one. What compounds this challenge is the fact that there are still those managers who fall victim of a very prevalent coaching myth. That is, they think they are coaching their people but they are really not. Many times (well, most of the time) managers aren't even aware of this, or the things they are doing that compromise the relationship and trust they have with their direct reports (a blind spot for them). As an example, I received the following email from a manager looking for some advice on dealing with this very issue.

*Dear Mr. Rosen,
I am currently reading your book,
Coaching Salespeople Into Sales*

Champions cover to cover for the 2nd time in the past few months. I am a Regional Field Sales Manager for a National Company. A few months ago, our boss read your book and became very enthralled by it. Now, we have begun "Coaching" our Sales Reps. The biggest problem I am facing now is that my boss has decided that he will coach us, the management team, beginning with me. I am having issues that I need to overcome or work on my resume, which is not in my plan. Incidentally, all of the Nine Barriers to Effective Coaching that you list in your book are there, starting with:

#1 *He is a total "A Type" of Personality. Everything is his way and his ways are always correct.*

#2 *There is a lack of trust. He has shown before that what you say can and will be held against you.*

#3 *I am not comfortable sharing my personal life and goals with him because he is judgmental.*

#4 *His coaching training is no different from mine. That is, we haven't been formally trained on how to coach and have only been exposed to your book at this point.*

Your suggestions and/or comments will be greatly appreciated.

Maybe this situation sounds all too familiar? Here's where you have an opportunity to be proactive and do some coaching. First, you need to enroll your manager in being open to hearing some ideas regarding how you would like to be managed, along with any concerns you may have around being coached. This will ensure that the rules of the game are established up front.

Now, there may be some situations, like the one this manager

shared in her email that create even more reluctance around wanting to approach your boss in the first place. You may feel that your manager may not care enough to be open to this type of discussion. Maybe there's an existing trust issue, especially if your manager has already compromised your trust or confidentiality. Or

maybe you believe, and you may even have the evidence to support the fact, that your manager's degree of self awareness or his or her ability to look in the mirror and do

some personal assessment and diagnostic reflection is simply non-existent.

No matter what the current situation is with your boss, where does that leave you today? At a place of choice. Keep in mind my definition of coaching: The art of creating possibility.

No matter what the current situation is with your boss, this leaves you at a place of choice.

Sure, you can continue to be an evidence collector to support your position, but I don't think that's going to change your current relationship with your boss. Conversely, you can take a stand for yourself and for your boss and do something different that in turn, would create a new possibility.

So, what exactly would it sound like when coaching up around this very situation or other situations you find yourself in where you recognize an opportunity to coach up? In the following pages, I've provided several examples of what you can say to your boss in order to foster an open dialogue that would create the opportunity to reinvent your relationship, as well as establish clear expectations and boundaries around your coaching and how you like to be managed.

Of course, I would suggest slightly modifying this so that the manner in which you communicate this message fits best for you, without changing the essence of the message. I realize that some people may believe this to be a difficult conversation to have. However, keep this in mind: It's only difficult because we don't have the words

or an approach we have faith in that would create a better possibility. Or, we make the assumption that this would never, ever work on my manager. As a result, we shy away from what we perceive to be a difficult conversation or one that would create friction and confrontation and never attempt to create a better opportunity for ourselves.

The result? You continue to tolerate a toxic situation or find yourself looking for a new career opportunity elsewhere. All because you weren't willing to take a stand for yourself, what you know is best and right for you. Instead, you cross your fingers and hope it's better elsewhere, or you hope that miraculously, the situation will resolve itself on its own, over time.

Shifting from Confrontation to Conversation

Think about what confrontation truly is. Confrontation is what happens when you have both eyes focused solely on your own agenda rather than first embracing, respecting and understanding the other person's point of view to create a new possibility that you didn't see before.

This is why it is so critical to reinforce the importance of the language and message you use to approach and position a seemingly difficult situation that will result in creating a new and better outcome. It truly is the message that matters. ■

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Chapter 4

Eight Guiding Principles to Be Mindful of When Coaching Up

While there are a myriad of factors to be mindful of when coaching up, including your disposition, your communication strategy, and managing your mindset, I've detailed eight of the top guiding principles to consider in order to ensure your coaching efforts are both well received and effective.

1. Passive Coaching Isn't Coaching:

A passive approach to coaching up will not likely be very effective. Sending an email or leaving an article or a book on your boss' desk about how to coach, communicate or manage a team isn't my idea of coaching up. While this strategy could be marginally effective, how this is received depends upon the relationship you have with your boss. Your well-intended efforts could also blow up in your face if your intentions were not

clear and as such, misinterpreted by your boss.

2. Confirm They are Ready to Listen:

When approaching your boss about a conversation you want to have with him or her, confirm that he or she is not only willing but is also ready and in the right frame of mind to have that conversation. Trying to coach up while your manager is in the middle of handling a crisis, or right after they hear some bad news, or after a less than favorable forecast meeting is probably not the best time. Take his or her pulse on the timing before jumping into the conversation. It would probably be more effective to schedule a time on both of your calendars to have this conversation to ensure that the proper amount of time is allocated for this important discussion.

3. Share the Benefit They Will Realize:

To make a positive impact, your initial approach has to be focused on the value that your boss would realize. What is in it for him or her, why should he or she listen and entertain your request in the first place? While it's clear that you're having this conversation to create a better opportunity for yourself, how you position the conversation is critical. As such, approach this discussion not solely focused on you and what you want, but on the greater goal or meaningful result and the value that your boss, and even your company would experience. If you were looking at your agenda through your boss' eyes, what would be something he or she would find worthwhile to achieve?

4. Positive Positioning is Key:

Focus on the pleasure, the goal, or the end result rather than dwelling on the problem. Managers get tired of hearing about problems or what is wrong and they hear these things throughout their entire day from multiple sources; their customers, employees, vendors, even their bosses. In fact, most of the time, when approached by their direct

reports, managers are already expecting to hear about some issue or challenge that needs resolution. So, first and foremost, be positive so that you can focus on the positive result. In turn, this will help shift your manager's listening, making him or her more open, receptive and willing to have the conversation with you in the first place.

5. Honor the Two Conflicting Truths:

Remember, you're coaching to a certain degree, which means embracing the most challenging part of coaching. That is, balancing out your objective in the conversation while surrendering your agenda and having no attachment to the outcome at the same time. Yes, two conflicting truths that co-exist simultaneously. Besides, while you're approaching the conversation to generate an expected outcome, there may be a better solution co-created within the conversation that you never even considered before. Sure, you have an agenda; however, it is during the actual conversation that you want to keep your mind open to creating new possibilities and to remaining detached from your own myopic, preconceived solution or anticipated result.

6. Balance Being Obsequious with Being Pleasantly Assertive:

Strategically positioning a positive conversation as it relates to the message you deliver is one thing. How you show up to the conversation is something entirely different. While you want to stay away from sounding like someone who is overly submissive, subservient, or the proverbial brown noser, the pendulum can also swing to the extreme in the opposite direction. So, be mindful of your disposition going into the conversation. In other words, find the balance between coming across confident and assertive, while being respectful and humble. In addition, being an optimistic, encouraging person goes a long way in facilitating a deeper, more meaningful interaction with someone. Besides, what boss really enjoys being around a wallflower or a pessimist?

7. Keep The Past or the “Already Thinking” At Bay:

If you’re already going into the conversation with a less than desirable expectation, such as anticipating an unreceptive reaction

from your boss or a negative outcome, there’s a good chance that’s exactly what you’re going to get. There's a symbiotic relationship between the way we think, listen and the questions we ask. For example, if you're already thinking from a negative place, then by default, it’s going to affect how you listen. Now you’re listening from that certain place or through a filter. Consequently, chances are you are not going to ask certain questions that can create new opportunities. After all, if you keep listening from the past and reacting based on a past experience or a future expectation, you will continue to create the same results as before. Expect the unexpected and be more of a ‘possibility creator.’

8. Ensure Forward Momentum:

Make certain that the outcome of your conversation includes actionable next steps assigned to each person involved, along with a measurable timeline on each to ensure continued momentum that will result in the changes you’re looking for. ■

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Chapter 5

Crafting the Right Message When Coaching Up

When reading through the following examples, feel free to modify these templates so that the dialogue fits best for you and your style of communicating, without changing the core intention and focus of the message.

Notice that in each one of the examples, while you're positioning the conversation and your agenda in a collaborative way, you are also creating the opportunity to hold up the mirror so that your boss can recognize certain areas he or she can improve upon and come to that realization on his or her own, without running the risk of making him or her wrong, telling him or her what they're doing or not doing well, or putting him or her on the defensive. By using this methodology, you are, in fact, honoring one of the core principles of coaching.

Change the Conversation - Change the Outcome

Let's say you feel that your manager isn't providing you with the support or acknowledgment you need to fuel your motivation and keep you performing. (Shocking, I know, this sort of thing never happens in the 'real world.')

Or, what if you wanted to approach your manager and set new expectations around how you work together and how you like to be managed, without sounding like your whining and complaining?

What follows are six different examples and scripted dialogues when coaching up.

Finally, when approaching this conversation with your boss, timing and location do matter.

1. Establishing the Expectations of Coaching:

When looking to set the expectations around coaching, here is an example of coaching up that has proven to work for many people in similar situations, including the one described by the manager I referenced earlier.

“(Boss), I really value your opinion and support and not only appreciate your willingness to coach me but I am genuinely excited about the possibility. In order for both of us to experience worthwhile results around this coaching, it’s important that I have a better understanding of your definition of coaching and your coaching approach, so that I can make sure I’m leveraging every coaching opportunity I have with you. In order to do so, would you be open to discussing and establishing the parameters around our coaching to ensure that we’re both clear about what we can expect from each other?”

2. Establishing How You Like To Be Managed and Motivated:

If you find that your manager isn’t providing you with the support or

acknowledgment you need to fuel your momentum and keep you producing, here is an example of an approach you can take to position a conversation that would enable you to inform your boss how you like to be managed and motivated.

“Throughout my career, I’ve noticed certain things that some of my prior managers have done, including some of the things that you do, which have had a positive and measurable impact on my performance, my attitude and the quality of work I produce. Since we both have a vested interest in my success here, and since each person you manage is motivated by something slightly different, I thought it would be beneficial to share with you what I’ve seen you do that has really motivated me to perform at my best.”

“The fact is, I really appreciate when you do these things and thought this was a way to first, thank you and second, to let you know that it’s really working for me.

I know how busy you are and that you have so many things coming at you. And I know that a lot of the time, you're hearing about the problems and what's not working, rather than hearing some acknowledgment of what is working."

"Since I do value your opinion and support, I thought that by sharing this with you and putting this in front of your line of vision, it will reinforce what you may already know that's working and save you some time down the road by helping me avoid some pitfalls I may encounter while keeping me at the top of my game. Would you be open to me sharing this with you now or would scheduling another time for us to have this conversation work better for you?"

3. Addressing the Concerns, Parameters and Boundaries Around Coaching:

If you find that you need to address some sensitive concerns (especially if there's a trust issue), while establishing the parameters around your manager's coaching efforts, you can use the following approach when speaking to your boss.

"I have a few questions about moving forward in a coaching relationship with you that we have not addressed to date and I don't want anything to become a barrier to the great work we can accomplish together. So, I felt it important enough to bring this up to you, because I do value our relationship and your support. As we both (read in the article, the book, heard in the training, etc.) coaching is a two way commitment to the process and requires ongoing, open communication and trust on both ends, as well as both parties being open to feedback. Especially when it's an employer/employee coaching relationship, it's important that we are very clear on what we will discuss in coaching, what we will not discuss, what information will be kept confidential and never compromised or used beyond our coaching, and what information will be acceptable to use during a performance review."

"Would you be open to discussing these things that, once addressed, would help strengthen our relationship and make the coaching even more effective and valuable?"

4. Creating Alignment around Your Role and What's Expected of You

Are you being responsible for what's on your job description when you were hired for your current role? Have you even looked at your job description recently? Do you even have one? Are you and your boss aligned with what's expected of you as it relates your sales target, as well as the other components of the business you are responsible for?

Is that measured? Do you have any guidance around that or a process to do so? If not, here's a critical conversation worth having with your boss that would put some measurable guidelines you can use to track your performance expectations.

You can approach your boss with the intention of creating alignment and clarity around what's expected of you by seeking to better understand how you can become a valued resource for them and what you can do to make their job easier.

Take notice not only of the change in the message and language but in the mindset and the approach needed for it to be authentic and effective. This template not only focuses on setting new expectations around your relationship but also what you can do to make your boss's job easier.

"Wait, you're suggesting that I approach my boss and ask them what I can do to make their job easier?"

That's right! Besides, when was the last time you did, if ever? And if you did, imagine how powerful this can be and how it stimulates that law of reciprocity. That is, if I'm willing to help you, then you would be more willing to help me.

"I know how limited our time together is and realize you have different responsibilities and pressures placed upon you. I really want to support you the way that would be valuable for you."

In order for both of us to experience worthwhile results and hit our business objectives, it would be helpful for me to have a better understanding of your expectations

of me aside from my sales targets, so that I can make sure I'm doing everything in my power to make our district successful, focus on the right priorities and also make your job a little easier.

Would you be open to discussing what else I can do to ensure I'm meeting your expectations and that we're collaborating as effectively as we can to achieve our shared goals?"

5. Coaching a Senior Executive around Correcting a Poorly Executed Rollout of a New Initiative

Get this. Mary, one of my dear, wonderful clients, had to experience this disaster lead by senior leadership. Within one month, the company:

1. Changed the territory that each salesperson had managed for the last several years.
2. Adjusted the compensation plan (and not to the sales team's favor).
3. Pulled away 80% of each salesperson's customer base so that they only focus on selling deeper into top accounts.
4. Had to transfer accounts

amongst salespeople, since the majority of accounts changed ownership when territories changed.

5. Created a swarm of emails and calls into customer support from angry customers who weren't even informed of these changes.

6. Fired and replaced a new world-wide director of sales.

7. Rolled out a new CRM!

When Mary approached her boss about what the plan was to manage all of this change, she quickly realized that no one had a plan to manage this transition. Their plan was, "Dump and Go Do!"

Hey, I couldn't make this stuff up if I tried! But due to the thinking, messaging and consistent communication strategy Mary put in place, she came out smelling like roses, kept her team intact and was able to create an overall solution that managed all the change in a way that people could successfully embrace it.

So, can you coach up when faced with all of this change, uncertainty, fear and no strategy in place to manage it all? I certainly hope you will!

Besides, who's ultimately going to suffer the fallout of someone else's mistake? You.

Granted, you're approaching your boss, a person who's part of the senior leadership team and can decide the fate of your career, to tell her *"Idiot! You really screwed up this one. Due to the lack of planning and unsophisticated level of communication to the field, you've successfully created mass chaos! So, before there's even more collateral damage, you better fix it now and stop the hemorrhaging!"*

As much as we'd like to, (and sometimes in some instances, when there's that level of trust, you can) we can't say it this way.

But we need to deliver this underlying message in a way they would be open to hearing it and making some needed change fast, especially when those in senior leadership fail to see the connection and imminent fallout that's about to occur! Here's how.

"I know we have several key initiatives happening right now and know how important they are to the company. I certainly want to do

everything I can to ensure a successful rollout. Having gotten feedback from the field, there's a risk of losing a percentage of the sales team due to all the change, especially the change in compensation. If I was to switch roles with them for a moment, I can see how they can react this way because right now, there's been no clear communication from us as to why we're doing this and what the benefit is for them. So, of course, they are going to default right to fear.

At this point, I haven't heard a consistent message to the field from all the regional managers and thought it was important enough to bring to your attention so we do have one in order to mitigate panic and fall-out.

Right now, there's a small window of opportunity we have to ensure this rollout not only lands well but is then embedded in the daily rhythm of business of our team.

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I'm already hearing concerns and getting questions from my team and thought it would be a good idea to share them with you, so that I am responding to them in a way that supports your objectives best and prevents time consuming problems.

Would you be open to putting a few minutes aside to discuss how I can best support you and these initiatives so that we achieve the results you want?"

6. Sharing What Could Be Considered a "Tough" Observation with a Peer or Superior

This could be an act of random kindness, and selfless will. Or, maybe you have to work closely with this person and they impact you in some way.

Maybe you have no authority over this person because they're your peer, or boss or an executive in another division or location. Or, maybe you're dealing with someone who's not very self-aware. It could also be that they have a 'big' ego and as such, are resistant to

any feedback you may want to share.

Regardless, if your motivation is pure of heart, your message helpful for them to hear and yet, you still have something to gain by them listening to you, that's okay! As long as you're authentic about it and your actions keep you in your own integrity.

You have some choices here:

1. Do nothing and tolerate it.
2. Do what you've tried before and get the same result.
3. Try an approach designed by a skilled wordsmith that will facilitate a different conversation and create a new possibility.

If you've chosen option three, here's your prize; a scripted dialogue for you to use as a template to craft your own message.

"After having an opportunity to (work with you on the last few engagements, be managed by you for X months/years now, get to know you better through these quarterly events, etc.)

I noticed that there are some really great things you do when engaging with (me, your peers, direct reports, boss, customers, etc.) that, quite frankly, I would like to learn how to do better myself.

Personally, I'd love to hear what your observations are of me, as I'm always looking for opportunities to improve or strengthen my skills and perspective. So, I would really appreciate any feedback you're willing to share.

There are also some things that I've observed in your behavior and interaction with your team and customers that I believe if you don't address, will affect your personal brand as well as any promotions you expect.

I do sincerely want the best for you. So, for me to be in my own integrity, I feel it's my responsibility to share these observations with you. Then, you can then make the choice to leverage them the way you see fit.

My only request is to hear these things with an open mind, knowing the goal here is for you to maintain your positive reputation within the

organization so that you can get to the position you want. And if you don't want to hear them, that's fine as well and I certainly respect your decision either way.

Do you have a few minutes to discuss this now, or would another time work better for you?

Awareness Checkpoint

Pause for a moment. Granted, this is probably a totally different approach, one that you would never even consider. But isn't that the point? Unless, of course, your current way is working brilliantly. If so, I can save you some time, as there's no need for you to read the rest of this book.

I know, in many cases, it's similar to tying your dominant hand behind your back and then writing with your other hand. Making positive changes in how we come across and interact with others takes time and practice. But imagine what would be possible if this type of approach opened up your boss's listening in a new way? Would it be worth it to take this out for a test drive, somewhere safe?

If you happen to be one of those myopic managers who looks for what's broken as opposed to what's working, then keep in mind, this is only a template. This is one way to approach a topic in a new and empowering way. As always, treat it as a buffet and take what you like; leave what you don't.

Shatter Your Ceiling of Potential

Gut check. When was the last time you can honestly say you delivered this message to your boss? And please stay away from believing, "Well, I've tried something like that already and it didn't work."

"Something like that?" C'mon. Let's be honest here. You might as well say, "I tried to play a good round of golf with a baseball bat."

You see, it's all about having the right tools. When it comes to creating a new outcome in a conversation with your boss, your most powerful tool is your message.

Reality Is Created In Your Message

Consider this. *Reality is created in language.* That is, the experiences

we have, the relationships we create, are all based on how effectively we communicate with other people in every situation. More specifically, the words you choose to express yourself, your intentions, opinion, feedback and the tone in which you deliver it will create or sabotage the outcome you want.

Therefore, if reality is created in language, and the language or message we deliver ultimately determines the outcome, then we need to choose the words we use with greater precision and become more of a strategic communicator.

All across the world, practically every manager I meet tells me they want to make some sort of positive impact; on the world, on others, in their life, their family and in their career. If you want to align your values, integrity and passion with what you do every day, then it's time to change the conversations you're having with people, especially with your boss!

This is the level of thinking needed to truly make a positive impact, deliver value in every conversation and become the world class leader you can be.

Managers are People Too, Really!

Before you start to complicate and over-engineer the coach up concept or run back through all of the reasons as to why it won't work, let's bring this conversation back down to its simplicity.

First, let's be certain we're clear about what we are focusing on changing; that which is 100% in your control. That is, your actions, reactions and beliefs.

So, if you're focusing on trying to control anything else, such as how you perceive your boss is going to react when you start a certain conversation with them, then you have already sabotaged your efforts.

If you assume that your boss will react in a less than favorable way, then you will not take the steps to change your situation.

There is a very common undertone of resistance that organizations are faced with when managers are asked to coach their teams. Most companies are very adept at turning a blind eye to this epidemic.

You see, if the manager has not been effectively coached or had a positive coaching experience, *then it's hard to give what you haven't gotten yourself.* Are you in this situation as well?

Consider for a moment that your boss wants to be a great leader. That they truly want the best for you and to help you succeed. That they want to support, inspire and motivate you so that you not only have a successful career but are able to achieve your personal goals as well.

But what if they've never been trained on how to do this?

Managers need help too and contrary to popular opinion, they don't have all the answers nor are always able to identify what each person on their team needs. That's why coaching up is such an essential skill to ensure that you create the career you want most. That all starts with focusing on what you can do to support your manager and become more valuable to them – and the message you use to open up this conversation. ■

Epilogue

The Beginning

Keep in mind, initiating these types of conversations is probably something that most people have not tried, and the issues addressed may not have ever been discussed with a boss in the past. Compound this with the concern that people have around how receptive they envision their boss would be when approaching them in this manner. Yet if these issues go left unexplored, they are bound to perpetuate indefinitely.

Conversely, imagine what would be possible if you can create the type of experience and outcome you really want, beginning with just one conversation. Consider the time it would take to have this one conversation that can solve your current dilemma, compared to the efforts that you would need to put forth around your other options, such as finding and acclimating to a new job or having to continually tolerate what's dragging you down, causing stress and affecting your performance.

Think about where you are now and where you want to be. Maybe it's not that bad. However, I know for certain that there are people reading this who simply cannot afford another sleepless, stressful night. Some may already have their resume ready to be sent out the door to a new prospective employer. If that's the case, you're always going to be the victim or one step away from the win if you never take the shot - whether it's in your current situation or your next employment opportunity.

And if you approach your boss only to discover that it doesn't work out, ***at least you are now able to make a decision around the facts rather than your own assumptions, or drawing your own conclusions without the evidence to support them.***

Everyone, for the most part, has a boss or someone to answer to.

You have more power than you realize – the power to create a new possibility through the language of coaching and enrollment.

Yes, coaching is a learned and developed skill; it is a way of communicating and engaging with people in a deeper, more meaningful way. It is the art of creating a new possibility, the possibility that you may not even be aware of nor even believe in at the present moment. When you can transcend your current level of thinking, the real value is that you and your boss can both win.

Your Sales Culture Is You!

I trust that if you've read, embraced and tried out what we've covered throughout this guide, you've experienced the impact you can make.

Now, stop for one moment and look at where you stand today. Is your sales culture killing your or enhancing and nourishing you?

Sure, it's easy to blame things on the company or on your boss and justify why coaching up is going to be 'difficult.' Hey, no one is denying the very real pressures of your position.

The best of class managers know this but also know that they can truly create an entirely new possibility and breakthrough results; just by changing their approach in a conversation. Why?

Because, when you change the conversation, you change the outcome. What conversation can you change today? ■

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