

The Executive Coaching Handbook

Principles and Guidelines for a
Successful Coaching Partnership

Developed by
The Executive Coaching Forum of Boston

First Edition, May 2000

The Executive Coaching Handbook

Table of Contents

The Need for a Handbook	1
Why a Handbook?	1
Who Is the Boston Coaching Forum?.....	2
About This Handbook.....	3
Who Will Benefit from This Handbook?	3
Future Development of Executive Coaching Standards and Guidelines	4
Executive Coaching as a Partnership	5
What Is Executive Coaching?.....	5
What Is a Coaching Partnership?.....	5
Overarching Principles for Executive Coaching	7
1. Systems Perspective.....	7
2. Results Orientation	10
3. Business Focus.....	12
4. Partnership.....	14
5. Competence	16
6. Integrity	18
7. Judgment.....	21
Guidelines for Practice	24
1. Managing Confidentiality.....	24
2. Pre-coaching Activities.....	27
3. Contracting	29
4. Assessment.....	31
5. Goal Setting.....	33
6. Coaching.....	35
7. Transitioning to Long-Term Development	37

Copyright © 2000 by The Executive Coaching Forum of Boston

All Rights Reserved

This Handbook may be reproduced only for the benefit of people involved with executive coaching (executives, coaches, HR professionals supporting a coaching project, managers and other colleagues of an executive being coached) and only where no fee will be charged nor profit made as a result of the reproduction or distribution of the Handbook.

Required Notice for Changes to this Handbook:

If any changes are made to this Handbook (additions, subtractions, revisions, edits, etc.) please e-mail your revised copy to ECFB c/o Dr. Lew Stern, stern1@gte.net to help with the continuous improvement of the Handbook.

The following notice must be printed in place of the above copyright when any changes are made to the Handbook:

“The original version of this Handbook was developed and copyrighted by The Executive Coaching Forum of Boston (ECFB). It has been revised significantly from its original form by (name of person(s)/entity) in the following ways: (describe revisions). The ECFB endorses the original version of the Handbook only. The revisions are supported by, and are the responsibility of, those people/entities who have made them.

The Need for a Handbook

Why a Handbook?

Executive coaching, as a practice for leadership development in organizations, has flourished over the past few years. Increasing numbers of consultants are practicing as coaches, and more and more companies are demanding their services. Coaches are sought out for a variety of issues, ranging from remedial situations where a serious performance deficit could cost an executive his* job, to purely developmental situations where a high-potential individual is being groomed for a significant increase in responsibility.

As coaching and leadership development professionals, the Executive Coaching Forum of Boston applauds the investment companies are making in their people, and particularly in the development of high-potential employees. However, the completely unregulated use and practice of executive coaching is of great concern to us. There are currently no accredited institutions offering training and credentialing for coaches. In addition, there is little agreement on the type of training and experience required for legitimate practice, or even on a standard definition of coaching. Indeed there are individuals selling themselves as coaches in areas as diverse as personal fitness training, life planning, and executive development.

Our purpose in this Handbook is to establish definitions, guidelines, and standards for the practice of executive coaching, a practice area tightly defined by the population it serves and the nature of the three-party contract between executive, coach, and sponsoring company. This Handbook provides a context

* To avoid cumbersome his/her constructions, this handbook alternates genders from section to section when referring to the executive.

within which this practice can continue to thrive, adding value to companies by developing leaders who support their organization's business agenda.

Who Is the Boston Coaching Forum?

We are a group of executive coaches, executive development, and human resource professionals in the greater Boston area who started meeting in the spring of 1999 to discuss how to build and maintain the highest standards for the practice of executive coaching. Our discussions led us to create principles and guidelines for use in our own practices and organizations. Our goal is to share these proposed standards with the greater community in order to stimulate a dialog and process that enhances the professionalism of executive coaching.

The drafters of this Handbook are listed below in alphabetical order:

- Susan Ennis of Leadership Communications, formerly of BankBoston and Digital
- Judy Otto of Foundations for Change, and adjunct faculty at the Center for Creative Leadership
- Lew Stern of Stern Consulting, formerly with Manchester Consulting
- Michele Vitti-Lawton of Camden Consulting
- Nancy Yahanda of Yahanda Consulting

Other Human Resource and Management Consulting professionals from leading business organizations in the Greater Boston business community have provided input to these standards. These people include: Betty Bailey, Wendy Capland, William Hodgetts, Mary Jane Knudson, Kitti Lawrence, Lynne Richer, Lawrence Rossini, Casey Strumpf, and Ellen Wingard.

Larissa Hordynsky and Lew Stern edited this Handbook.

Please e-mail your feedback and suggestions on this Handbook to:

Dr. Lew Stern, Stern Consulting, stern1@gte.net

About This Handbook

Section 1 of this Handbook defines *Executive Coaching*. We believe executive coaching is most effective as a three-way partnership among coach, executive, and the executive's organization. Each partner has an obligation and responsibility to contribute to the success of the coaching process. Although the primary work is between executive and coach, coaching is always an organizational intervention and, as such, should be conducted within the context of the organization's goals and objectives.

Section 2 of the Handbook describes a set of *Overarching Principles*—the values or aspirational goals that guide the coaching process. These principles provide a compass that the coach, the executive, and other members of the executive's organization will use to set, maintain, and correct their course of action.

Section 3 contains *Guidelines for Practice*. These guidelines provide procedural help for all partners in the coaching process. They define the components of the process and outline the commitments that each partner makes.

Who Will Benefit from This Handbook?

The lack of shared definitions, guidelines, and standards for executive coaching has often resulted in an inconsistent approach to coaching in organizations. This Handbook will provide a framework for any coaching situation by specifying necessary components, guiding principles, and mutual commitments.

By identifying the obligations and responsibilities of all parties to a coaching engagement, the standards presented here will help avoid the misunderstandings and disappointments that inevitably result from unclear roles and expectations. Executive coaches should use this document to steer coaching toward a successful outcome. The Handbook will give executives the

information they need to become educated consumers of this service, provide a framework for successful coach selection, and help them benchmark their level of commitment to their development. Other members of the organization can use these standards to strengthen their investment in developing leaders who can initiate strategic plans and accomplish organizational objectives.

Like most human-to-human endeavors, executive coaching is necessarily a gamble with no guarantees. We firmly believe, however, that adhering to the principles and guidelines suggested here will help produce a successful coaching outcome.

Future Development of Executive Coaching Standards and Guidelines

We recognize that we are practicing in a newly defined arena and look forward to the future, when we can increasingly make use of valid and reliable outcome studies, stories, and examples from all practitioners in this area. Future standards for executive coaching should continue to draw on related fields, including organization development and consulting psychology. Subsequent revisions of this Handbook may define separate practice areas, such as career, team, or strategy coaching.

In the many conversations that have led to the drafting of this document, we surfaced myriad issues still to be addressed. These include training and credentials, licensing, overlap of other consulting specialties, and professional association. Our hope is that this document will stimulate an ongoing process that will enhance executive coaching and address the issues arising out of this developing professional field for the mutual benefit of leaders, organizations, and the people they serve.

Executive Coaching as a Partnership

What Is Executive Coaching?

A collaborative partnership between a middle- to upper-level executive, her organization, and an executive coach. The purpose of this partnership is twofold:

- to facilitate both the executive's and the organization's learning
- to achieve identified business results.

What Is a Coaching Partnership?

1. A successful coaching partnership is composed primarily of one-on-one interactions between a professional coach and an executive and is supported, as needed, by others.
2. It is based on agreed-upon ground rules, time frames, and specific goals and measures of success.
3. The coaching partnership uses tailored goals and approaches, including (Robert Witherspoon and Randall P. White, *Four Essential Ways that Coaching Can Help Executives*. (Center for Creative Leadership, 1997):
 - skill building
 - performance improvement
 - development for future assignments
 - exploration, definition, and implementation of the executive's leadership and the organization's business objectives.
4. It follows a process that includes:
 - pre-coaching needs analysis and planning
 - contracting
 - data gathering
 - goal setting
 - coaching
 - measuring and reporting results
 - transitioning to long-term development.

5. It applies several of the following practices, among others:
 - problem solving and planning
 - rehearsal and on-the-job practice
 - feedback
 - dialogue
 - clarification of roles, assumptions, and priorities
 - teaching and applying a variety of management and leadership tools
 - referral to other developmental resources.
6. It focuses on leveraging the executive's strengths and building the key competencies needed to achieve strategic objectives.
7. The partnership involves key stakeholders in the coaching process (called "other partners" in this document), including:
 - the executive's manager
 - Human Resources
 - Executive Development
 - peers
 - direct reports
 - other key people in the executive's life.
8. Executive coaching is paid for by the organization that employs the executive.
9. A successful coaching partnership is guided by clear personal values and experiences that establish the credibility of the coaching process and maintain the welfare of the executive and her coworkers.

Overarching Principles for Executive Coaching

Overarching principles are the values or aspirational goals that guide the coaching process. These principles provide a compass that the coach, the executive, and other members of the executive's organization will use to set, maintain, and correct their course of action.

1. Systems Perspective

Approaching executive coaching from a systems perspective requires the coach to recognize and appreciate the complex organizational dynamics in which the executive operates. The coach ensures a systemic approach through continual awareness of the impact of the coaching process on everyone in the system. Accordingly, the coach encourages a shift in the executive's viewpoint, from seeing himself as separate to recognizing his interdependence with other people and processes in the organization. This approach encourages respect for the complexity of organizational life and an ability to penetrate beyond this complexity to the underlying structures. In effect, the coach helps the executive to see both "the forest and the trees."

Coaching from a systems perspective helps both the coach and the executive assess development needs. By thinking in terms of the big picture and core issues, both partners will understand long- and short-term strategies and how all the pieces of the organization fit together into a whole. Systems thinking also encourages both partners in the coaching process to appreciate the impact of the executive's behavioral change on other facets of the organization.

Executive's Commitments

- Explore changes in vision, values, and behaviors.
- Examine how your own behaviors and actions affect the systems in which you operate.
- Work in open exploration with your coach; help your coach to understand the forces of the organizational system.
- During the coaching process, take responsibility for your actions and remain aware of the impact of your behavioral changes on others and the organization as a whole.

Coach's Commitments

- See the executive, his position, and the organization through multiple lenses and perspectives.
- Maintain an objective and impartial perspective by resisting collusion with the executive or the organization.
- Recognize and appreciate the complexity of the organizational structure in which the executive functions.
- Encourage the executive to explore both long- and short-term views.
- Recognize the interaction of all parts in the whole—especially how change in one of the executive's behaviors may affect other behaviors and other people.
- Help the executive distinguish between high- and low-leverage changes. Encourage commitment to the highest-leverage actions to achieve results.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Identify and share organizational information that may help the coach and the executive recognize and understand the context, organizational forces, business-related issues, and financial constraints they must factor into the coaching.
- Guide the coach regarding organizational changes that may influence the coaching.

- ❑ Be willing to examine and possibly change aspects of the organizational system in order to improve both the executive's and the organization's performance.

2. Results Orientation

Executive coaching is planned and executed with a focus on specific, desired results. The executive, her coach, and the organization begin by deciding the ultimate goals of the coaching. Then they agree on specific results for each goal. Key members of the coaching partnership sign off on a written coaching plan that specifies expected deadlines for accomplishing each goal.

Appropriate measurements are applied to each goal, including follow-up and feedback reports. Actual activities, during the coaching sessions and in between, focus specifically on achieving the agreed-upon goals for the executive and her organization.

Executive's Commitments

- Take responsibility for focusing the coaching on the results you care about most.
- Commit adequate time between coaching sessions to work on the results.
- Prepare well for each coaching session.
- Monitor your own results and communicate with coaching stakeholders about your accomplishments and the gaps that still exist.
- Enlist support to attain results.

Coach's Commitments

- Push the executive and her organization to be specific about desired accomplishments and results measurement.
- Structure each coaching session with a results-driven agenda, following up on previous meetings and the action taken between sessions.
- Facilitate communication between the executive and the organization about what the executive is working on, her progress, and her support needs.

- ❑ Plan follow-up meetings to track progress toward coaching goals. Drive these meetings even in the face of the organization's work demands.
- ❑ Continually check in with the executive to update coaching goals based on changes in her role, the business environment, and priorities.
- ❑ Focus coaching sessions on specific issues, executive development, and action items that contribute to the coaching goals.

Other Partners' Commitments

- ❑ Communicate directly about what you most want and need the executive to do.
- ❑ Hold the executive and the coach accountable to the agreed-upon goals.
- ❑ Give constant feedback, both positive and negative, to help both executive and coach stay on track.
- ❑ Demonstrate your trust in the executive.
- ❑ Follow through with the commitments you make as part of the coaching to provide support, attend meetings, communicate with others, and remove barriers.

3. Business Focus*

Executive coaching is primarily concerned with the development of the executive in the context of organizational needs. The objective of the executive and his coach is to maximize the executive's effectiveness and contribution to the organization. The coach develops an understanding of the broader business context in which the executive operates, with particular emphasis on key business initiatives directly relevant to the executive. Executive and coach then agree upon specific results that best reflect the business objectives of the organization. Successful executive coaching links a business focus with human processes by closely aligning the executive's development with critical business needs.

Executive's Commitments

- As soon as coaching begins, inform your coach of any relevant information about your company, its business strategy, your key initiatives, and how your role fits into the overall strategy.
- Regularly update your coach on any changes in business direction or outlook that might influence business strategy, your role, or your measures of success. Adapt your development needs as appropriate.
- Take ultimate responsibility for aligning your coaching with the organization's business focus.

Coach's Commitments

- Strive to maximize the contribution of the executive to the organization's needs.

* The term "business" is used here to refer to the mission of the organization rather than the achievement of specific financial objectives. Especially in "non-business" organizations, the coaching emphasis must remain focused on the organization's mission rather than on other purposes, such as personal gain on the part of the executive.

- ❑ Maintain an ongoing awareness of the executive's business and leadership development objectives, market outlook, competition, products and services, and clients or customers.
- ❑ Understand the indicators of success and key business metrics that determine how the organization evaluates the executive's performance and results.
- ❑ Be flexible in adapting the executive's development needs to changing business priorities.

Other Partners' Commitments

- ❑ Provide the coach with enough information to understand the context for the coaching. Such information may include an overview of the organization, strategic and business planning documents, organizational charts, and key business initiatives.
- ❑ Whenever possible, inform the coach of changes in the organization that may affect the executive, including mergers and acquisitions, restructuring or downsizing, changes in leadership, key roles and relationships, and relevant business initiatives.

4. Partnership

While executive coaching focuses primarily on individual work with an executive, it is ultimately an organizational intervention. The executive and her coach are obviously at the center of the process, but other stakeholders are also involved. They may include the executive's manager, her direct reports, the Human Resources business partner or generalist, the individual responsible for executive development, training, or organizational development, and other executives. The time commitment and level of involvement will vary for each stakeholder. However, for the coaching outcome to be of the greatest benefit for the organization as a whole, all stakeholders must see themselves as partners in the coaching process.

Executive's Commitments

- Assume ownership of your learning. Use your coach as a consultant to help you maximize your unique learning style.
- Be forthright about what is and isn't working in coaching sessions.
- Engage wholeheartedly in the agreed-upon coaching assignments.
- Take required actions for learning and reflect on those actions.

Coach's Commitments

- Maintain the highest level of professionalism in serving both the executive and the organization as your clients.
- Communicate openly about the progress of the coaching with the executive and other stakeholders (within the limits of agreed-upon confidentiality).
- Invest in the professional and personal success of the executive and in the success of her organization.

Other Partners' Commitments

- View the coach as a partner with the organization, working to increase both organizational and executive learning.
- Provide feedback, within the confines of confidentiality agreements, to both the coach and the executive on the initial data-gathering phase and throughout the coaching.
- Invest in a successful outcome by becoming familiar with and consistently applying the overarching principles and guidelines set out in this Handbook.

5. Competence

Executive coaching requires the use of highly skilled and experienced professional coaches. These coaches maintain high standards of competence and exercise careful judgment in determining how best to serve their clients' needs, choosing the most appropriate methods from their range of expertise.

Executive coaches recognize the limitations of their expertise and provide only those services for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They constantly strive to increase their competence through client interactions, staying up to date with best practices in coaching, and continuing education.

Executive's Commitments

- Determine your own criteria for a coach, including training and specific areas of competence, expertise, and experience. Apply these criteria in your selection of the best coach for *you*.
- Take an active role in your own development by providing feedback to the coach on how the coaching is progressing and what gaps still exist.
- Communicate with stakeholders of your coaching about progress and results.
- Provide your organization and your coach with feedback, both positive and negative, about the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process.

Coach's Commitments

- Consistently operate at the highest level of competence.
- Accurately represent to clients your training, experience, and areas of expertise.
- Understand the requirements of each coaching engagement. Be objective and flexible in choosing methods to meet these requirements.

- Be aware of your limitations; decline assignments that are beyond your experience, knowledge, capability, or interest.
- Maintain a network of contacts with other qualified professionals and refer clients when you are not the best possible resource.
- Update your knowledge of the client organization's core business as well as best practices in coaching.
- Extend your knowledge and skills through continuing education and other professional development activities.
- Properly apply psychological and organizational assessment techniques, tests, or instruments. Use only those for which you are qualified or certified.

Other Partners' Commitments:

- Maintain high standards in screening and recommending executive coaches for assignments.
- If you are responsible for providing coaching referrals or information to your organization, keep current on the reputation of coaches and best coaching practices.
- Select coaches based on their competence and fit with the executive's and the client organization's needs.
- Monitor the effectiveness of coaching in the organization and provide feedback to both the coach and the executive.
- Evaluate the competency of coaches and their results to determine their future use in your organization.

6. Integrity

Upon entering into a executive coaching , the executive is placing significant trust in the coach and the organization. He is allowing himself to be vulnerable and open. To ensure that the executive remains receptive to feedback, new ideas, and learning, the organization, coach, and other stakeholders must establish and maintain a psychologically safe and respectful environment.

The relationship between the executive and his coach is sensitive and often private. To maintain this relationship, all stakeholders must be clear in their presentation of issues, organizational information, coaching goals, coaching activities, and ground rules for confidentiality. All partners must adhere to clearly articulated guidelines and rules of engagement. Breaches of trust or actions that run counter to agreements and guidelines are extremely serious, especially if the executive suffers negative consequences such as a loss of reputation, income, or relationship. All parties must therefore function at the highest levels of integrity and candor when engaging in or supporting executive coaching activities.

Executive's Commitments

- Trust your coach and the coaching process once you have received appropriate safeguards. Remain open, willing to learn, and appropriately vulnerable.
- Take an active role in establishing appropriate guidelines for your coaching.
- Adhere to agreements of confidentiality, anonymity, and information sharing not only about you, but also about everyone involved.
- Work within the coaching contract and its learning goals, unless these are revised by all parties. (For example, do not treat a developmental coaching contract as a job-search opportunity.)

- Be honest and candid with your coach about you and your situation.
- Follow up on your commitments.
- Provide your coach and the organization with forthright and constructive performance-improvement feedback.

Coach's Commitments

- Develop and adhere to a set of professional guidelines, especially in the areas of confidentiality, conflict of interest, and expertise.
- Abide by the organization's existing values, ethical practices, confidentiality and proprietary agreements, business practices, and Human Resource policies.
- Honor the relationship you have established with both the executive and the organization, seeking resolution when conflicts arise.
- Follow and embellish an organization's learning contract. Strictly apply the standards for dealing with personal data, or provide such standards if the organization does not have any.
- Discuss with the executive organizational requests for information about him and his coaching, including status updates, feedback data, and input for reviews.
- Act in the executive's best interests and well being.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Provide coaching guidelines, standards, and business practices that meet the needs of all parties.
- Present your perspective on the coaching need, the executive's situation, the organizational context, performance concerns, and organizational goals for coaching in a realistic and forthright manner.
- Inform all parties if the goals or information you have provided change significantly during the course of the coaching.
- Establish and adhere to standards for the learning contract, including purpose and objectives, timelines, scope and types of assessment, measures of success, identification and roles of stakeholders,

confidentiality agreements, use of personal and coaching information, and distribution of information.

- ❑ Establish a problem-resolution process for coaching issues, especially ethical practices.
- ❑ Provide both executive and coach with ongoing feedback and support.
- ❑ Function within the learning and business agreements. Avoid putting the coach or executive in difficult positions by requesting feedback or personal data, input for performance reviews, or promotion discussions.

7. Judgment

Executive coaching is a balance of science, art, and expert improvisation. No matter how many guidelines are developed and followed, successful coaching takes continual stepping back, evaluating the situation, weighing the options, and applying good judgment for well-balanced decisions. An executive's influence is determined not only by her attributes and skills, but also by how others perceive her, plus her match to the needs, circumstances, and culture of the organization. All coaching partners offer different perspectives, which, combined with good judgment, provide the executive with a dynamic learning experience.

There is no recipe for the perfect coaching experience. Along the way, unpredictable challenges, conflicts, and opportunities arise. Whether these situations help or hinder the executive's development depends upon the judgment stakeholders' exercise in an ever-changing work environment.

Executive's Commitments

- Maintain an open mind and be willing to change it.
- Focus on the greater good.
- Weigh all perspectives.
- Ask for help.
- Be flexible.
- Try new approaches.
- Accept the credit and blame when they are yours. Admit your strengths and weaknesses to be able to deal with them effectively.
- Make decisions by balancing hard data with intuition.
- Be honest and direct.

- Take reasonable risks.

Coach's Commitments

- Always maintain a high level of professionalism.
- Do not mix personal and professional relationships that could bias your judgment in a coaching situation.
- Avoid any activities, which could result in a conflict of interest.
- Build and maintain a communication network with all coaching partners.
- Listen attentively, with an open mind.
- Be honest and direct about your intentions and points of view.
- Prevent misunderstandings by explaining your activities beforehand whenever they could be misunderstood.
- Do nothing that could be misinterpreted as an impropriety within the standards of the executive's organization.
- Tailor your approach to the priorities and preferences of the executive and the coaching partnership.
- Bring the members of the partnership together to facilitate decision making.
- Hear all relevant perspectives and mediate conflicts.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Focus on the development and success of the organization and the executive.
- Be honest and direct about your goals and perspectives on the organization and the executive.
- Consider all available information before making a judgment.
- Be open-minded.
- Be flexible.

- ❑ Support the executive and coach in following through with the judgments they make about the coaching.
- ❑ Be balanced in your judgments regarding the coaching: short vs. long term, work vs. personal life, data vs. intuition, and individual vs. organizational good.

Guidelines for Practice

These guidelines provide procedural help for all partners in the coaching process. They define the components of the process and outline the commitments that each partner makes.

1. Managing Confidentiality

The executive and other members of the organization must be able to open up and share information with the coach and one another without fear that that information will be shared inappropriately or without their approval.

Because each coaching situation is unique, it is important for all partners to develop a formal, written confidentiality agreement before the coaching begins. This agreement specifies what information will and will not be shared, in which circumstances, with whom, and how. The agreement helps all coaching partners remain sensitive to confidentiality issues from each other's points of view. Whenever one of the coaching partners thinks someone may want certain confidential information, they should communicate with other members of the partnership before openly sharing the information in question.

Coach's Commitments

- ❑ **Guidelines:** Work within the proprietary and confidentiality guidelines noted in the organization's financial, legal, and business contracts and documents.
- ❑ **Organizational information:** In general, within the boundaries of the law, keep all organizational information confidential unless it is otherwise available to the public.

Exception to this guideline: You are required to reveal to the appropriate representatives of the organization, and possibly to legal authorities, any

information regarding illegal or unethical improprieties or circumstances that pose a physical or emotional threat to any individual, group, or organization.

- ❑ **Information about the executive:** Do not share with anyone except the executive himself any details regarding that executive unless members of the coaching partnership have agreed otherwise.

Exception to this guideline: You are usually obligated to provide the organization with a summary of your conclusions on the executive's current and potential ability to serve in his role. Share this summary with the executive and get his input as appropriate. Obtain a detailed agreement from all partners on what this summary will and will not include before the coaching begins.

- ❑ **Feedback from others about the executive:** You may often get feedback, usually anonymous, from members of the organization or other people familiar with the executive. Present this feedback to the executive in verbatim or summary form, identified by category of person or by specific name. Members of the coaching partnership agree on the confidentiality of this information before it is collected. You are obliged to the people from whom you obtain this feedback to be clear up front about the terms of this confidentiality and to work strictly within these terms.

Commitments of the Executive and Other Partners

- ❑ Members of the organization who, as a result of coaching, learn confidential information about the executive, keep that information confidential unless otherwise agreed before coaching begins.
- ❑ The executive responds to feedback from others in non-defensive ways, without second-guessing who might have said what or retaliating for feedback that is difficult to hear. This non-defensive response maximizes the trust the executive will share with others in the future.
- ❑ All members of the coaching partnership ensure that no confidential information coming out of the coaching process is shared electronically unless they can control access to that information.
- ❑ Before coaching begins, all partners consider how the confidentiality of each of the following types of information will be managed. They agree on what will or will not be shared, with whom, by whom, when, in what form, and under what circumstances:
 - assessment results

- coaching goals
 - job hunting and career aspirations
 - 360-degree feedback
 - performance appraisals
 - interpersonal conflicts
 - details of coaching discussions
 - proprietary or organizationally sensitive information
- The organization identifies an internal resource who can advise coaches and stakeholders on questions of confidentiality and other sensitive topics, and who can help resolve these issues.

2. Pre-coaching Activities

Before initiating executive coaching, certain activities can determine if coaching is appropriate in the first place, help select the most appropriate coach, and prepare both coach and executive for the process. This important set of behind-the-scenes activities, usually conducted by Human Resources, includes sourcing, selecting and orienting coaches, consulting with executives on their needs, matching coach to executive, and establishing standards for practice. The intent of these pre-coaching activities is to ensure the best possible experience and outcomes for the executive and the organization.

Executive's Commitments

- Consult with appropriate stakeholders to determine if executive coaching is a viable option for you. Consider your organization's overall development focus, your specific learning needs, and the skills and experience of available coaches.
- Conduct exploratory interviews with several coaches before selecting the one who is best for you.
- Handle all business and financial contract requirements yourself, or make sure they are handled by appropriate people in your organization.
- Provide your coach with the necessary background information about your organization, specific business documents, and personal information.
- Begin the coaching process with a willingness to learn.

Coach's Commitments

- Participate in the organization's process for selecting, matching, and orienting executive coaches.
- Provide the organization and the executive with requested background information about you and your practice, your rates, business practices, and references.

- Partner with the Human Resources staff and other stakeholders as needed.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Establish business practices and standards for executive coaching.
- Develop a coach selection and orientation process.
- Apply criteria for analyzing coaching needs and matching the executive with the most appropriate coach.
- Provide feedback to the coaches you do not select.
- Consult with the executive to provide guidance and support in determining coaching needs, requirements, and desired outcomes.
- Partner with coaches to ensure their best fit with the organization and the executive.

3. Contracting

The purpose of contracting in executive coaching is to ensure productive outcomes, clarify roles, prevent misunderstandings, establish learning goals, and define business practices. There are two major components of contracting: the Learning Contract and the Business/Legal/Financial Contracts.

Learning Contract includes:

- Purpose and objectives
- Timelines
- Scope and types of assessment
- Milestones
- Measures of success
- Identification and roles of stakeholders
- Confidentiality agreements
- Guidelines for the use of personal and coaching information
- Guidelines for the communication and distribution of information

Business/Legal/Financial Contracts include:

- Purpose and objectives
- Executive coaching standards and guidelines
- Organizationally sponsored proprietary and confidentiality statements
- Guidelines for relevant business practices
- Total costs of service
- Who is paying for coaching services
- Fee and payment schedules
- Guidelines for billing procedures
- Agreements on expense reimbursements

Executive's Commitments

- Actively participate in establishing the learning contract.
- As your organization deems appropriate, participate in establishing, monitoring, and administering the business/legal/financial contract with the coach.
- Adhere to the learning contract and uses it to gauge progress and success.

Coach's Commitments

- Share your own standards and guidelines for contracting with the executive and organization while respecting and agreeing to use the organization's standards.
- Actively use the learning contract to plan and deliver coaching and to assess progress and results.
- Negotiate the terms of the contract in good faith or have the appropriate representative from your practice do so. Comply with the terms of the contract in full, or reestablish them as mutually agreeable between your practice and the executive's organization.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Establish and disseminate standards for learning contracts in your organization.
- Actively participate in establishing and supporting the executive's learning contract.
- Ensure that the coach has and uses business/legal/financial contractual information.
- Facilitate the contracting and payment process in your organization in support of the executive and the coach.

4. Assessment

The assessment phase of executive coaching provides both the coach and the executive with important information upon which to base a developmental action plan. The assessment is customized, taking into account the needs of the executive and the norms and culture of the organization. The coach can select among a wide variety of assessment instruments, usually including personality, learning, interest, and leadership style indicators. Observing the executive in action in her usual work setting provides assessment data, as does interviewing the executive, her peers, direct reports, manager, and other stakeholders. In some cases the coach administers a formal 360-degree assessment.

Since executive coaching takes place in an organizational context, the coach must have a thorough understanding of the organization. The coach can gather valuable information by observing the day-to-day life of the organization for a period of time.

Executive's Commitments

- Maintain an open attitude toward feedback and other assessment results, considering all information as hypotheses to be proved or disproved.
- Invest the required time to expedite the assessment phase.
- Partner with the coach to identify situations, such as meetings and events, which might provide insight into you and your organization.
- Ask questions and digest feedback to make the best use of assessment information.

Coach's Commitments

- Be knowledgeable in a broad range of assessment methodologies.
- Administer only those instruments for which you have been fully trained.

- Maintain the confidentiality of the executive by protecting the assessment data.
- Provide a safe, supportive environment in which to deliver assessment feedback. Deliver feedback in ways that encourage the executive to act upon her assessment.
- Offer a clear context for the strengths and limitations of the testing process.
- Help the executive use her assessment data to create a development action plan.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Respect the agreed-upon level of confidentiality for executive coaching data.
- Provide information about the executive and the organization.
- Partner with the coach and executive to identify ways for the coach to directly observe the executive and the organization.

5. Goal Setting

Executive coaching is driven by specific goals agreed upon by all members of the coaching partnership. These goals focus on achievements and changes the executive can target, both for himself and for his organization. Initial goals are established when coaching begins and revised or refined as coaching progresses. Based on whether they should be achieved within weeks, months, or over a longer time period, goals can be divided into short-, mid-, and long-term targets.

Goals are based on valid and reliable data that exemplify how the executive should learn new skills, change his behavior, work on organizational priorities, or achieve specific business results. After a specified time period, progress against goals is measured and they are updated to adapt to the executive's changing capabilities and the organization's evolving priorities. Goal achievement is measured both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Executive's Commitments

- Collaborate with and listen to the stakeholders to become aware of how others perceive your needs for change and development.
- Be honest about your own priorities for coaching.
- Clarify specifically what you will need to do so that others perceive you as achieving your goals.
- Invest the time in the coaching and on the job based on the established goals.

Coach's Commitments

- Facilitate collaboration between the executive and his stakeholders to identify and agree upon coaching goals.
- Accept responsibility only for coaching activities that are based on specific, measurable goals.

- Help members of the coaching partnership gather valid and reliable data as a basis for establishing goals.
- Document the coaching goals and communicate them to all partners.
- Assess coaching progress and adjust goals based on interim results and changing priorities.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Be honest and direct about your goals for the coaching.
- Collaborate with the executive and other partners to agree on specific, measurable, achievable, challenging, time-bound, and practical goals.
- Base the goals on valid and reliable data on the executive's performance and organizational priorities.
- Provide ongoing feedback to both executive and coach on the executive's progress toward his goals.
- Support the executive's efforts to achieve his goals.
- Allow the executive to take the agreed-upon time to achieve his goals before changing his responsibilities or the resources he needs.

6. Coaching

The quality of the coaching relationship is a key element of success. The coach creates a safe environment in which the executive can be comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn and develop. Drawing from a broad knowledge base and a solid repertoire of learning tools, the coach offers guidance and activities that help the executive meet her learning goals. Conversations explore the executive's current work situation to find practical, business-focused "learning lab" opportunities.

The practical activity of coaching is based on principles of adult learning: awareness, action, and reflection. Using data gathered from the assessment phase of the process, the coach engages the executive in discussion and activities designed to:

- enhance self-awareness of the implications of typical behaviors
- learn skills, build competencies, change behaviors, and achieve results
- reflect on ways to improve and refine skills and behaviors.

Learning tools and activities may include, but are not limited to, purposeful conversation, rehearsal and role-plays, videotaping, supportive confrontation and inquiry, relevant reading, work analysis and planning, and strategic planning.

Executive's Commitments

- Maintain an open attitude toward experimenting with new perspectives and behaviors.
- Willingly be vulnerable and take risks.
- Focus on your own growth within the context of your current and future organizational role.
- Transfer learning gained through coaching to your day-to-day work.

- Exchange feedback with your coach about the helpfulness of the coaching.
- Seek feedback from others in the organization about the results of your coaching.

Coach's Commitments

- Adhere to the standards and guidelines for practice outlined in this Handbook.
- Maintain the coaching focus on the executive's learning goals.
- Prepare relevant action items for all coaching meetings.
- Role-model effective leadership practices.
- Apply adult learning principles during coaching.
- Participate actively in all meetings with the executive and with other stakeholders.
- Offer truthful and relevant feedback.
- Create an environment that supports exploration and change.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Maintain a supportive and patient attitude toward the change process.
- Provide feedback to both the executive and the coach on progress and concerns.
- Offer to mentor, coach, role-model, and support the executive from your own perspective within the organization.

7. Transitioning to Long-Term Development

Upon completing the coaching sessions, the executive and his coach take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the executive will be able to continue his development. Considering the results of the coaching within the context of the executive's long-term development is an important part of this process. It usually includes the joint preparation of a long-term development plan identifying future areas of focus and action steps. The coach may also recommend a range of internal and external resources relevant to the executive's long-term development needs.

In most cases transitioning includes handing off the development plan to the executive's manager or another stakeholder who agrees to take responsibility for monitoring future progress in partnership with the executive. The coach, executive, and other stakeholder incorporate into the long-term plan a regular review of progress toward objectives or goal reassessment. A successful executive coaching process can therefore serve as a catalyst for the executive's long-term development.

Executive's Commitments

- When the coaching process is complete, discuss its results with your coach, including how successfully you feel your development needs have been addressed.
- Identify any areas where gaps might exist or further progress could be made.
- Identify any areas that may become more critical to address in your anticipated future roles.
- Participate in formulating a long-term development plan identifying specific areas of focus and action steps.
- Identify a manager or other organizational stakeholder who will take responsibility for monitoring your future development.

- Hold yourself accountable for adhering to your action plans, including a regular review of progress with your manager or other stakeholder.
- Provide feedback to your coach on performance, strengths and development needs.
- Provide your organization with a forthright assessment of the coach's capabilities and organizational fit.

Coach's Commitments

- Use your knowledge and expertise to guide the executive and other stakeholders in developing a long-range plan that targets areas of focus and action steps.
- Recommend internal and external means of development that best fit the needs of the executive and the organization.
- Communicate with the executive's manager or other stakeholders to ensure commitment to the executive's future development, including regular progress reviews.
- After the coaching ends, make yourself available for questions and clarification.
- Check in with the executive occasionally, as appropriate, to maintain the relationship.

Other Partners' Commitments

- Support the executive's future development, including a long-term development plan.
- Facilitate internal and external means of development for the executive including, but not limited to, rotational assignments, stretch assignments, mentoring opportunities, task force leadership or participation, and internal or external seminars or courses.
- Share constructive feedback about the executive's progress toward development objectives.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process for future use in the organization.

- Provide feedback to the coach on performance, strengths, and development needs.