

much more. The box above outlines five key reasons to coach other leaders and be coached yourself. Let's look at each of those reasons more closely.

1. Experience More Transformation

Transformation is deep, lasting, significant change. Paul Jeong, the head of Natural Church Development in Korea, trains thousands of Christian leaders each year. He embraced coach training for himself and the key leaders in his organization, because he wanted to see more genuine and consistent transformation in the lives of those he works with. In the process, he's become a vigorous advocate of the coaching movement in Southeast Asia. Here's his comment on how coaching transforms lives:

"Honey, what's happened to you? You've really changed!"

To a husband who'd just begun coach training

"...I believe coaching produces more transformation than teaching and consulting. Here's my reality. I've taught more than 40,000 pastors and leaders in the last five years. I believe that less than 10% of them experienced change. One year later, maybe 1 to 3% had experienced ongoing transformation. But through TLC coaching, more than 90% of those I work with are transformed.

"Before [I learned about coaching], I personally hated one-to-one stuff, but I loved a big SHOW (big conferences and seminars). Now I am becoming much wiser after many pains, life lessons and teachable moments... My wife now also spends more time in coaching than any other hobby, job, or responsibility, because she has experienced its power to transform her clients. It is very hard for me to stop her now—and myself too!

"...The TLC coaching process has totally revolutionized our ministry."

Coaching transforms people because it zeros in at the place God is at work in the individual's life: the transformational

experience. It is in these teachable moments, when circumstances put us under pressure, that we are most receptive to radical change. And when you combine a teachable moment with a transparent, growth-oriented coaching relationship, the potential for transformation is enormous. The parable of the sower gives a good picture of this transformational process:

“Hear then the parable of the sower. When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Matthew 13:18-23

We tend to think of the different kinds of soil as different kinds of people, but they can also represent *different moments in our lives*. In certain circumstances and with certain people, we are much more receptive to God’s voice than we are elsewhere. Have you ever learned a hard lesson your parents had warned you about earlier in life, but as a teenager you didn’t listen? Have you ever blown off a negative comment from someone you didn’t know, and then been willing to listen to the same critique from a friend?

“Sometimes I wonder if I’m making progress; but then I look back to where I was at five months ago and think, man! I’ve grown more in the last five months than in the previous five years.”

Christian
Businessman

In the story at the beginning of this chapter, Randy's demanding life circumstances combined with a close relationship with his coach and the right question at the right moment made him open to a change he'd resisted for years. Coaching is extremely effective at transforming people, because you are always working at the point where your clients are most teachable: the place where *they* want to change.

When I was a kid, I remember my dad going out to seed our lawn with a hand-cranked seeder that hung from his neck. It threw seed around, all right—on the lawn, on the sidewalk, in the flower beds, in your shoes. There was no way to keep it all on the yard. But grass seed was cheap, so you could afford to waste some.

Advice-giving is like that old seeder. When you are telling people what to do, you are broadcasting your seed in all directions—who knows whether the individual is really ready to receive it? Your advice may fall on the path, where the person doesn't understand where you are coming from, or on the rocky soil, where they say, "Yes!" at first but don't have the ownership in your solution to press through when things get tough. Or your advice could fall in the weeds, when what you're focusing on isn't what the client wants to change, and so other priorities choke it out.

But when you are coaching, your seed is always falling on fertile ground, because your clients lead you to the exact point where they want to change and where God is at work in their lives.

2. Grow Faster/Get More Done

A second key reason to coach and be coached is that coaching is an outstanding way to accelerate growth and accomplish more, both at home and at work. Here's a note I got the other day from Rebecca, a client of Sharon Graham, who specializes in nutritional coaching:

"The three months of coaching I've had with Sharon have been life changing. What I expected was to clean up some messes in my life, get rid of piles of paper, clean out my trunk, organize cluttered drawers, make a budget and a savings plan, etc, etc. All of that has happened, and is still happening, and as a result I have new disciplines that keep my life orderly. I feel peaceful when I come home. I don't feel guilty about spending time doing something fun;

because I spent the time I needed keeping my life orderly.

“But I also gained some things I didn’t expect. To tackle some of the messes I had made required facing fears and learning some new skills...mostly just experiencing that I can solve problems and make decisions in areas where my self-assurance was low. My confidence has rebounded and it’s spilling over into areas that I couldn’t have imagined.

“For example, I’ve toyed with the idea of taking the first in a series of certification exams at work for a couple of years now, but I always had a feeling that this technology stuff was just too hard for me. Now I am seeing myself differently. I call what I’ve found a “can do” attitude. I started studying for the exam two days ago, have finished eight of ten chapters and passed most of the practice tests after only one read of the book. I’m confident that in a few more weeks I’m going to pass this first exam of four toward a certification.

“With my life so pleasantly organized, I don’t have nagging fears like wondering if I’m spending too much money, or if I have paid all my bills (because one might be hiding in a pile of paper somewhere). Instead of closing my eyes to problems and procrastinating, I just dig in and make decisions and they are dealt with.

“I appreciate my coach so much for being an instrument of transformation in my life. I believe God has used her to coach me into a more disciplined and organized life, and to clear the way for new responsibilities God wants to give me, like writing a grant proposal for a new women’s ministry. Doing that work is a delight now because the clutter is not taking over my life. I can run without chains on my legs.”

“Accelerated growth describes this exactly ...I didn’t think there would be this much going on in my head and applying to my life this fast.”

Professional
Counselor

It’s the support system that coaching provides that makes the difference for someone like Rebecca. The confidence and energy she gained through working with a coach (her “can do” attitude) is infusing every area of life, and she’s tackling things she never

thought she could. Having someone to encourage and support her supplied the extra energy to overcome internal obstacles that had always stopped her in the past. We learn and grow much faster with relational support than we do alone.

Research in the business world bears this out. One large study found that out of the billions of dollars spent on corporate training programs (seminars, e-learning, classes, etc.), only about 10% of those who attend show *any* measurable, lasting change in their actual work behavior. Trainees

were taught new skills or ideas, but usually given no support or follow-up to help them implement what they learned. Consequently, 90% of them promptly went back to their old way of doing things.

By contrast, two studies (Oliver et. al. 1997, and Strayer and Rossett, 1994) found that following up training events with a coaching relationship had dramatic results. The first showed that training for executives followed by coaching increased performance four and a half times as much as training alone. The second study, at a well-known realty organization, looked at the difference coaching made for new realtors fresh from their training. The coaching program cut the time new associates needed to get their first listing to one third of the industry average, and their first month's commissions were nearly 300% greater than those who went through the same training but had no coaching follow-up.

We need support, encouragement and accountability (S.E.A.) to function at our full capacity. That's why leaders with a coach get more done.

"I have grown more in the last year and a half, than in my previous 14 years combined."

Para-church
Leader

3. Unleash People

One feeling I think every beginning coach struggles with is that coaching is inefficient. "I know what the answer is," the coach urges impatiently. "Wouldn't it be easier to just tell them?" In the short term, advice-giving saves you time by keeping your conversations short. It always takes longer to help someone discover an answer than it does to dispense solutions.

The downside is that advice-giving inevitably creates *more* work

in the long run. If you give people answers, what happens the next time they have a problem? They aren't any more equipped to solve it on their own than they were the last time, so they come back to you again...and again and again and **again!**

Paul faced this problem with the churches he oversaw. In Hebrews he discussed how he expected the believers to face it:

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God’s word. You need milk, not solid food; for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.”

Hebrews 5:12-13

The group he was addressing had been taught the basic principles of the Christian faith. Paul’s expectation was that they would not continue to remain dependent on being taught, but would mature and become teachers themselves. Those who are children in the faith are dependent on others to show them how to live the Christian life. Maturity is achieved by applying basic biblical principles to your own decisions, and learning by practice to distinguish right from wrong. An infant is someone who primarily receives. A mature believer is someone who gives.

“The greatest thing I’m learning from [coach training] is how to work at change while keeping others responsible... After 22 years of pastoral experience giving people advice and providing answers, this is a whole different way of working with people... I’ve gotten a taste now of what it can do.”

Apostolic Leader

Paul was all about unleashing people and making them into fully developed leaders. He didn’t want to create churches filled with bottle-fed baby Christians, stunted by over-dependence on leaders who keep telling them what to do long after they should be making decisions on their own. Paul’s objective was to raise up robust,

mature believers who knew how to chew the meat of responsibility. Coaching mirrors that approach: it is more interested in building capable, responsible adults than in feeding people solutions to immediate problems. Coaching is about teaching people to fish instead of just giving them a meal.

For instance, when someone comes to me for coaching on a major decision, we almost always end up talking about how that person makes decisions. Do you have confidence in your ability to hear God? Do you know who you are and how this opportunity fits with your life purpose?

I'm much more interested in helping people become great decision-makers than in helping them make a right decision. If they make a good choice, I've influenced that one situation. But if I help them grow in their ability to make great choices, *I've affected every decision they make for the rest of their life.* If you are a leader, taking this approach produces a healthy long-term payoff for you. The more you help those you lead take responsibility for their own lives, the less work it is for you! Coaching cuts the cord of dependence and unleashes people.

Janice is a good illustration of this principle. She and her husband are bringing the gospel to a remote area of South America, using a boat to bring medical care and ministry to needy children. An experience Janice had while being coached was instrumental to pursuing her call to missions.

One of the issues Janice chose to work on with her coach was "speaking the truth in love." After several appointments her coach began to sense that things were not going well in one of Janice's peer mentoring relationships, so she asked about it.

"When Sharon asked me how it was going with my peer, I didn't really want to say anything, because I grew up protecting people who were judged by my mother and grandmother. I never allowed myself to say anything negative about anyone, because I grew up protecting my dad—I never held him accountable for anything." Janice's father was an alcoholic who died when she was 13, and his problems were never discussed openly in the family. "I choose to shut off my desires and emotions to take care of my family and their needs. I had developed a pattern of watching my words and protecting others by not saying things that were difficult."

As her coach probed, the real state of her peer relationship

began to trickle out. “Because she was my coach, I felt like that was OK,” Janice declared. “But, even so, I was very careful about what I shared.” Eventually, it became clear that her peer was taking advantage of her in a number of ways. “Most of the time we met at my house, and because we were getting ready to move, she would say things like, ‘I want that.’ I didn’t know what to say, so I’d reply, ‘Let me ask my husband,’ because I didn’t have the freedom to say, ‘Why are you trying to claim all my stuff?’”

With a chuckle, her coach recalls the pivotal moment in the conversation. “I asked her, ‘What are you going to do about it?’ And her mouth dropped open—I think it suddenly hit her that I wasn’t going to fix things for her and she needed to address the situation herself.”

“That opened a door about what I needed to do,” Janice remembers. “I had to tell my friend the truth in love, and tell her the things that concerned me in this relationship. I e-mailed her, apologized for not telling the truth, and then shared my concerns about our relationship.”

It was a breakthrough moment for Janice to stand up for herself and confront someone. It was also a moment that changed her life. “I am able to tell the whole truth now and not just the good parts,” Janice affirms. “I had wanted to be in full-time missions for 20 years. God closed the doors years ago due to my deep need for healing... This was a major, final piece of my healing that allows me to go. In order to work with the people we are joining, I’m going to have to be able to do this [challenge people] or it won’t work.”

“Now...my husband and I will be able to do what we’ve always dreamed of.”

When Janice’s coach asked her to solve her own problem instead of doing it for her, not only did it unleash her to confront—it

“When I started this coaching, I thought of it as routine, just another thing to do for my job... but now that I’ve seen the power of it...if I had a coach like you when I was 20 or 30, my life would be so different! I want to be a coach and do this for other people.”

Korean Pastor

freed her to pursue her dreams and make a much larger impact in the world. The coaching approach is an extremely efficient use of a leader's time in the long run. It takes more time up front, but the long-term payoff is enormous!

4. Develop Leaders and Multiply Yourself

Setting goals, taking action, taking responsibility, making choices, problem solving—these are all important parts of being a leader. Because coaching exercises people's abilities in these areas, it naturally increases their ability and capacity as leaders. Here's a story that shows how coaching can improve performance while developing the leader at the same time.

Sparked by a presentation on leadership coaching given by Wyatt Fisher, Anthony asked about the possibility of being coached on further developing his leadership skills. As a manager at his computer services firm, Anthony supervised over 40 staff involved in product development. His company provided funds for professional development that he was able to tap into to launch the coaching relationship.

"He responded to the presentation and was pretty motivated to be coached," Wyatt recalls. "He wasn't sure what to focus on first, so we decided to set growth goals based on the outcome of a 360 feedback process." Anthony was a hard-charging, detail-oriented individual with a high capacity for work. However, the feedback he received from his co-workers in the 360 process indicated he tended to micromanage and needed to delegate more.

At the time, Anthony was shouldering a very heavy workload, and was experiencing stress-related health problems. The growth objective that emerged from the feedback process was to work on delegation. Wyatt and Anthony spent several sessions hammering out a plan for what could be delegated and how. Even so, it was difficult at first for Anthony to let go.

"I think a breakthrough moment came when we started working with the IDEAL model." (IDEAL stands for: Identify a problem, Define the problem, Examine Alternatives, Act on one of the options, and Look to see how it worked.) "He would give his team a problem, have them work through the IDEAL model to develop a plan, and bring it back to him...It was liberating for him that he could

gradually let go.”

After only eight weekly coaching sessions, Anthony was successfully farming out 20 hours per week of tasks, that he had been doing himself, to his team. In a wrap-up evaluation, staff members noticed (without being told what he was working on) that Anthony was more relaxed, was going home earlier at night, and had made good progress in delegating more work to others. Anthony himself estimated that learning to delegate more effectively (so he could concentrate on more important issues) would save the company \$30,000 a year.

Anthony is a more effective leader because of his coaching relationship. A boss could have mandated these kinds of changes from above, and that may have gotten short-term results. But because Anthony’s coach pushed him to take responsibility for his situation, he was able to see that trying to do it all by himself wasn’t working. He owned the problem, and he owned the solution.

Here’s why that’s crucial. If someone else uses power or

“The hour I spend with this guy [I’m coaching] is the best hour of my week—this is the best investment I’m making.”

Senior Pastor

position to get us to change, we’ll change—for as long as we are forced to do so. We’ll grumble about what the boss is making us do, and then as soon as the pressure is off we’ll revert back to the old way of running things. Our outward behavior changes, but that’s all.

On the other hand, if I am the one who identifies and solves a problem, I have to believe in the solution I came up with in order to act on it. I’m freely choosing it, so I really embrace it. The change starts on the inside, then percolates out to alter my behavior. In other words, *who I am changes, not just what I do*. My choices alter my fundamental understanding of myself, of the situation and maybe even my values and beliefs. Because I am much more invested in this solution, embracing it changes me more deeply and more permanently. Coaching keeps responsibility with the client, because taking responsibility for your own situation is one of the surest ways to foster lasting behavioral change and increased leadership ability.

This idea is clearly reflected in Jesus' leadership development practices. He preached the Kingdom message to thousands far and wide, but He walked with His disciples instead of only talking to them. He sent them out to preach and to heal, gave them responsibilities (like finding a place for the Passover meal or keeping the purse), asked them to speak for themselves ("But who do you say that I am?") and pushed them to make hard choices. After Jesus' ascension, which group supplied the leaders for His movement?

The first leaders of the early church came from the group of those who bore responsibility with Him, not the crowds who heard Him speak from a distance. You can develop leaders in the same way Jesus did: give them responsibility and then walk with them as they carry it out. Coaching provides the tools and the structure you need to do a great job of raising up leaders.

5. Improve Interpersonal Skills

Below are three interesting questions about relational skills. See if you can put a number to each one:

- What percentage of your ministry, work or leadership time is spent in conversations? _____ %
- On a scale of one to ten, to what degree does your success as a leader depend on maintaining healthy relationships with the people around you? _____
- What percentage of the time you've spent in higher education was focused on practicing conversational or relational skills? _____ %

What really matters in organizational leadership is not what you know but whether you can relate. Research by the Center for Creative Leadership found that two of the top three primary causes of derailment in executives are "not being able to work in a team" and "poor interpersonal relations." Most ministry leaders would agree that relational skills are constantly used and very important to their success.

However, there is a disconnect between the training leaders receive and the skills they actually need in real life. A large seminary

recently did a survey of divinity graduates, asking them what they felt they had most missed in a seminary education. Four of the top five answers involved relational skills (they were: conflict resolution, developing leaders, team building and interpersonal communication.) Rounding out the top five, the number one answer was “being mentored/coached by an experienced leader.” Obviously, these leaders felt that relational skills were much needed but not well addressed in their formal education.

Coach training is all about upgrading your conversational and relational skills. Will Meier talks about the impact of formal coach training on his own leadership:

“My experience of becoming a coach and being coached has radically changed the way I relate to people. As a manager in a Fortune 50 company, the primary leadership style in our corporate culture is the “command and pace setting” style. This method was reinforced by my personality type and corporate culture. I found that this technique worked fine for me in time of crisis, but when used consistently over time, it only created relational tension and breakdowns. I was not effective as a leader and could not sustain positive relationships over the long term. People were only loyal to me as it related to my position and the power I possessed.

“Over time I observed that my leadership style was ineffective, but I didn’t have the ability or energy to change my ways. But after going through coach training and coaching others for 125 hours, I’m a changed person! I am now confident that I can manage people effectively over the long term. My capabilities as a manager have been enhanced significantly.

“Part of that transformation resulted from developing a personal listening growth plan. I measured my listening events and behaviors, and through that process I became aware of the ways I was not listening to people effectively. I began eliminating my poor listening behaviors. Today, people really feel heard when they speak

“Have you noticed that people around here in the office are different? They really listen to you now!”

After coach training for staff

to me. I never dreamed that I could develop such a powerful ability.

“My coaching experience has provided another significant breakthrough: allowing people to come up with their own solutions. I am a person who loves to speak, and I have always prided myself on the counsel, discernment, and insights I have given people. Over the years, though, I found that many of my words were ineffective because people didn’t own them. Coaching has given me a tool to help others take a greater ownership of the solution, guaranteeing a greater impact. I am still free to ‘tell,’ but I have found that I am more influential and effective by listening.”

Because coaching uses relational influence instead of command and control to get things done, it is uniquely suited to our times. As a leader, your ability to compel others to follow you simply because you are the leader isn’t what it used to be. People expect to be listened to. They want to have a say, to understand the vision and have the chance to buy into it—much more than they did a generation or two ago. As Will discovered, positional authority works in times of crisis, but when used as a matter of course it erodes your ability to lead over the long haul. In this generation, *if you can’t lead by influence, you can’t lead.*

I think this is a good thing. The great move of God inside the church in our times has been the explosive, worldwide unleashing of the laity to do ministry. What is happening in the business world with empowerment parallels and complements what God is doing in the church—God is active in the business world as well. I believe coaching is a primary strategy God is raising up to meet the leadership needs of this generation.

If what God is doing in these days is empowering and unleashing people, we need leaders with potent new tools to raise others up and the radical belief in them to unleash them to pursue their destinies. That’s the power of coaching.