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The Context of Coaching

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The Context of Coaching

FREDERIC HUDSON

It is becoming more and more difficult to connect the chapters of our lives to one another—from childhood, through the adult years, to elderhood. Likewise, it is more difficult than it used to be to navigate through careers and marriages and community connections. Our adult lives used to be programmed by more or less stable, linear convoys—careers, families, neighborhoods, churches, community organizations—that connected us as individuals to our entire life cycle. Our careers used to be linear progressions from apprentices to experts. Our organizations and communities used to feel “permanent”. Today our lives have increasing amounts of instability, tentativeness, discontinuity, transitions, and cynicism about the future. The 1998 movie “Pleasantville” depicted a town that evolved from a one-dimensional, Donna Reed environment of innocence and rules to a sophisticated, multi-dimensional city of diversity and complex choices. Today, as Frederic Hudson notes in this article, everyone on earth is being drawn into increasing amounts of diversity and complexity. This sets the stage for new and challenging professional coaching strategies.

WE LIVE BETWEEN ERAS

For most of the twentieth century, the world we lived in seemed fairly dependable, uniform, and evolving—and so our lives took on those dimensions. The professions or work fields we entered were organized around the assumptions of a stable culture: perpetual progress, centrality of authority and control, following the rules. Today we are vividly aware—through interminable media coverage of every crisis on earth—that the world we live in is turbulent, unpredictable, and fragile—and our lives and communities are now internalizing those qualities. Compared with life in the mid-twentieth century America, our lives today are more complicated and tentative, and we are less optimistic and expectant. How could it be otherwise? The central force that shapes our consciousness today is change, change, change—coming at us from every direction, and in every aspect of our lives.

Slowly but surely, our perception of the world has shifted from a stable, orderly, steady-state model to an unstable, disorderly, change-driven one. Yet most of us live “as if” the steady-state model were fully operative, and we rage or whine when we find it isn’t so. Most of us want and expect “life plans,” “careers,” and “work organizations” that will lead us with assurance toward definite “security, happiness, and financial prosperity.” We expect to arrive at these three realities, as if they were destinations that had lasting power. Instead of learning how to fulfill our lives within the change process that now dominates our lives, we tend to view

our lives as “declining” from the promises the generations before us lodged deeply in our minds. It’s time to change the paradigm.

THE FOUR OLD RULES

The Linear Rule

This rule (See Figure 1) promised progress for those who are honest and work hard. According to this rule, our lives, careers, economy, and culture are supposed to get better and better, year by year, generation by generation—if we do our best and followed the cultural rules.

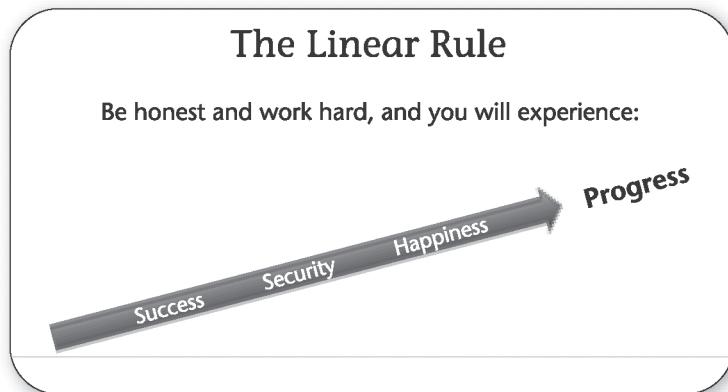


Figure 1. The Linear Rule

In the world before television and wide-spread travel, most everyone believed in this prescription: stay put, follow the dictates of your leaders and elders, and remain committed in whatever you are doing (career, marriage, family, community roles).

The Steady-State Rule

This rule (see Figure 2) promised that if we work hard we will each arrive at a steady-state or plateau of security and happiness for the rest of our lives. That was the deal, like a cultural reward for falling into line. When I was a boy, I saw the adult years as a steady-state period of stability, achievement, and devotion. Everyone I knew thought that there was an automatic and

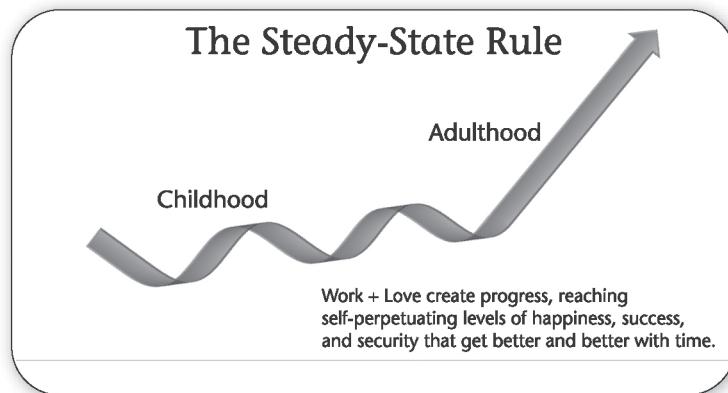


Figure 2. The Steady-State Rule

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permanent shift when the searching childhood stages of development ended and the steady-state, adult years began. “Progress” was the only cultural direction that was thinkable. Everyone I knew had one marriage, one career, and, for the most part, one geographic location.

The Outside-In Rule

This rule (see Figure 3) said our personal lives are defined and determined by the directives of the society around us. From this point of view, the boxes of life around us shape and determine our personal choices. Nobody talked about “life planning” or “coaching” because people thought their lives were already planned and secured by the larger society. According to this rule, to succeed as a human being, you need to follow the cues of your marriage, schools, religious organizations, jobs and careers, and laws of the land. The containers of your life will keep you, as a person, happy, successful, and secure—according to the outside-in rule. The forces that surround you are more stable, permanent, and reliant than you are. Follow the dictates of the fathers and mothers of your local community. To be a winner you are supposed to live up to the *expectations of the roles of your life*, and your inner self will then find its own fulfillment.

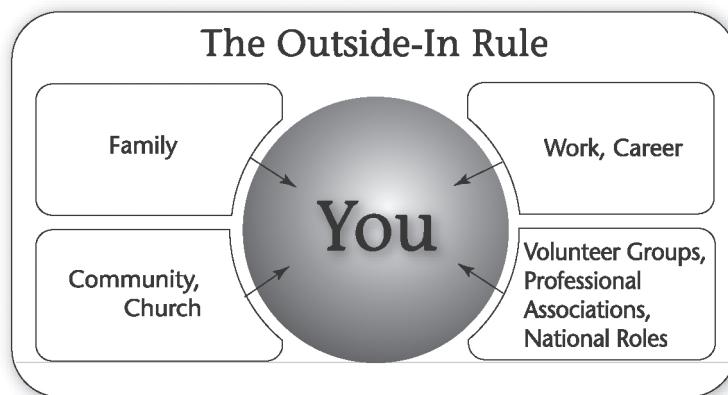


Figure 3. The Outside-In Rule

The Learning Rule

Learning is the central business of children and young people, to *launch* them into adult careers, family life, and leadership roles. Once launched into the adult years, adults shifted from “learning” to “work” as their main activity. Throughout the rest of their years, training outside of work roles played a minor role. There was no basis for thinking there were skills and human competencies to be learned and developed throughout the lifecycle. Learning was a central function of young people, not adults—to prepare the way for success and progress. Each of us would get molded during our younger years and then hopefully function like personal dynamos the rest of our lives.

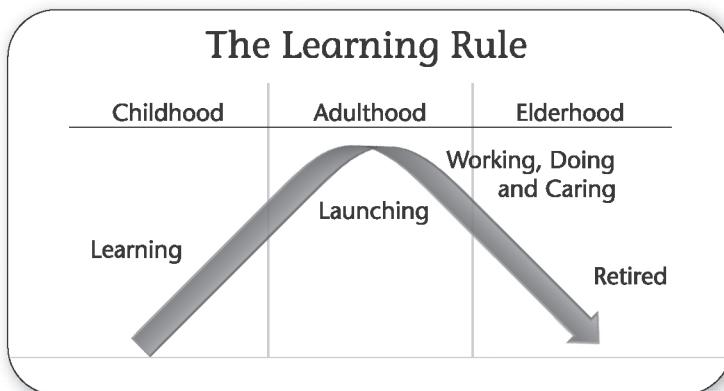


Figure 4. The Learning Rule

When people or a society hold on to beliefs and rules that are dysfunctional in their daily experience, they become angry, scared, and disempowered.

OUR CULTURAL CRISIS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Ever so gradually but definitely throughout the past forty years or so, these old rules—which thrived and worked well since the founding days of the United States—led us to a sense of decline and discouragement. The old rules require a culture high in continuity, control, and agreed-upon authority. As those features eroded during the past few decades, we began to feel that something was wrong with us. The more we strived to live by the old rules, the more we felt frustrated and helpless. In and of themselves, these rules are not wrong; they functioned well in a world of predominant order. But they don't provide functional and useful guidelines for our lives in a world of permanent whitewater.

When people or a society hold on to beliefs and rules that are dysfunctional in their daily experience, they become angry, scared, and disempowered. Their optimism, hope, and expectations for the world around them shrink until they are replaced by a pervasive pessimism. The world around them—including their own governments and corporate powers—seems less friendly and less promising. This is basically what Americans have experienced during the past twenty to thirty years. Although we are, without question, the only superpower in the world, with many industrial, technical, and cultural superlatives, we are more tentative than ever about our manifest destiny, and less sure than ever before of ourselves and families.

The way ahead is to change our expectations, our perceptions, our vision of how life works—and to come up with rules that empower our lives and institutions in the context of the rapid change that defines our time. Most of all we need to believe in ourselves again—both as individuals and as a people or culture. If we replace the four old rules with new rules that are both fair and empowering for our lives in our kind of world, we can restore confidence, quality living, productivity, and leadership.

The field of coaching, which was born during this transition from old to new rules, is dedicated to “restore confidence, social vision, and leadership” through mentoring relationships that grow self-directed, responsible persons in a change-dominated world.

Our cultural crisis is about the inadequacy of the “mental maps” we used to follow, one and all—the prevailing beliefs of cultural evolution and progress, the expectation of “more” and “better;” the illusion of “control,” the belief that hard work and honesty automatically lead to happiness and success. Increasingly, Americans are realizing that for nearly half a century we’ve been applying outdated notions of human effectiveness to a world undergoing continuous change.

Overall our society today is healthier than it is sick, and the quality of our lives is among the highest in the world, but we the people are no longer clear about how to find or sustain personal and social fulfillment within the world as we find it. There are new rules to learn for empowering our lives, latent in the very words we fear are our undoing: global chaos, discontinuity, and transitions. Our biggest challenge is to construct our lives and social institutions around the advantages and opportunities of the change process itself, starting with the microsystems of our lives: our lifestyles, work styles, family life, and community relationships.

THE FOUR NEW RULES THAT WILL EMPOWER PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The Cyclical Rule

Our lives today are measured by cycles and chapters, not by linear accomplishments. Think of your life as a story, with many chapters. Each chapter itself has a beginning and an end, and a transition to the next chapter. That is the basic model for understanding life in today’s world. We measure our lives in small units of “script” that dramatically describe who we are and what we are doing, for a period (a life chapter) of our lives. When that script becomes too rusty or wobbly to function well, we ride the

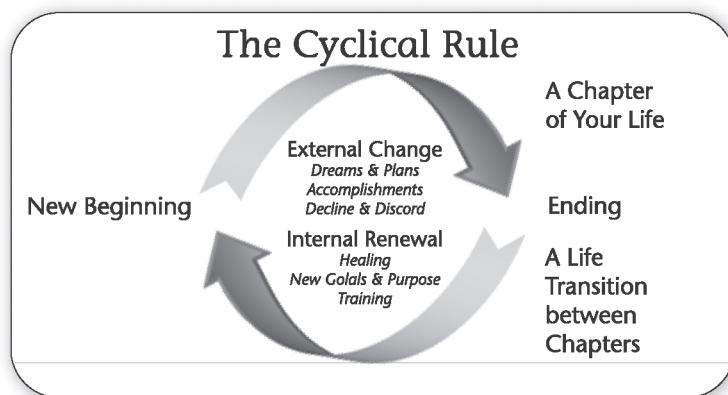


Figure 5. The Cyclical Rule

waves of change—called a “transition,” and either modify our story or come up with a new one. In technical language, a life chapter represents many dimensions of “attachment” that we weave together, and a life transition represents many dimensions of “loss” that we let go of, and begin the process over.

Maintaining our lives throughout cycles requires high levels of personal confidence, self-responsible behavior, and trust in forces beyond our control. To learn the art of self-renewal, we need skills to:

- Design the chapters of our lives;
- Entrepreneur and manage each chapter of our lives;
- Embrace necessary transitions between the chapters of our lives where we can invent the main themes and dimensions of our next chapters;
- Make self-renewal and learning the central features of our lifestyle and work style as we renew ourselves, over and over, throughout the years.

The renewal cycle has beginnings and endings. It typically begins with a strong inclination to make something important happen and ends when that effort no longer works or seems important. Beginnings are romantic times, fostering passionate commitments. Endings require us to let go of some dream or effort that has gone stale or awry, and either to fix it or find a different one. That’s the cycle of renewal. Here’s the learning:

- Learn how to cooperate with change in the here-and-now, and to use change as an opportunity for growth and discovery in every chapter of our lives.
- Learn how to begin each chapter of our lives with feisty romantic determination to make it succeed.
- When our chapters are limp and exhausted, and the end is just a matter of time, learn how to design new directions into the future.
- Learn how to end each chapter with style and poise. Learn to “let go” of what we can’t “hold on” to, in all the parts of our lives.
- Learn how our relationships, careers, work organizations, communities, and social institutions go through this same cycle of change, at varying paces.

The Continuous Change Rule

In the twenty-first century, there will be no steady-state resting places, only continuous change throughout all the years of our lives. The renewal process never ends. People who perceive their lives as a renewal cycle know that there is no arrival at a steady-state, no lasting plateau of crystallized happiness. Process, not progress, becomes the familiar reality. Conducting the journey is more important than certain destinations, since all arrivals are temporary. As you get older you keep revising and renewing the same issues, the same urges, and the same concerns that you

Beginnings are romantic times, fostering passionate commitments. Endings require us to let go of some dream or effort that has gone stale or awry, and either to fix it or find a different one. That’s the cycle of renewal.

have always had—only in ever changing settings and circumstances. The renewal cycle is active and ongoing, not passive and steady-state. Self-renewing people do not clutch onto the past; they transform future expectations into today's life efforts. *Coaches teach their clients how to practice the art of self-renewal. Chart your way, guide your life, anticipate tomorrow, experience some victories, evaluate as you proceed, experience losses, change course as necessary, and assume responsibility for your journey.*

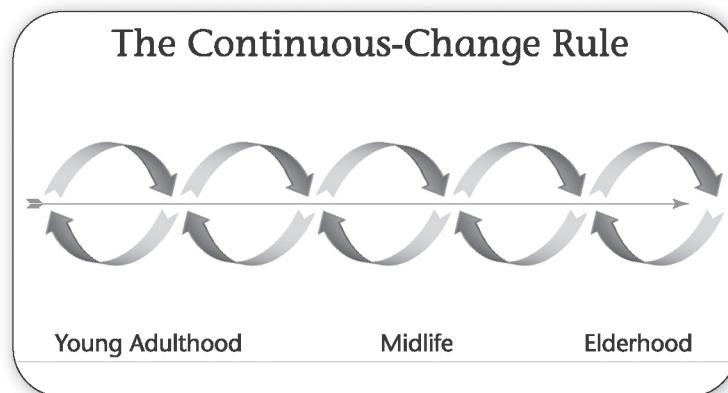


Figure 6. The Continuous-Change Rule

In our kind of world, competent persons need to know how to renew themselves, over and over—to knit life together whenever possible, and to unravel it when necessary. If we do that we will perceive change as a challenge—an opportunity to learn, discover, and grow. *Teaching this is a cornerstone to the coaching profession.*

The Inside-Out Rule

To stay “on course,” we need to be value-driven and purposeful. Otherwise, the winds of change will blow us in a different direction with each breeze. To succeed as human beings in the twenty-first century, we need to be on-purpose persons, shaping our actions in the world with our inner beliefs. Our many roles as an adult—at work, home, play, community and the rest—are meant to be extensions of our inner selves—our core values. If we stay anchored to our abiding beliefs and pursue goals we believe in, we stay “on course” with our lives. We evolve, develop, mature.

In the twenty-first century, successful people will arrange their lives from the “inside-out,” from their values and beliefs to their broader commitments and roles. They will find outer resources to support their fiery purpose. They will stay responsible for their own destinies, and link up boldly to others in ventures they truly believe in. This kind of personal-social congruence is an important goal for coaches. Figure 7 illustrates The Inside-Out Rule.

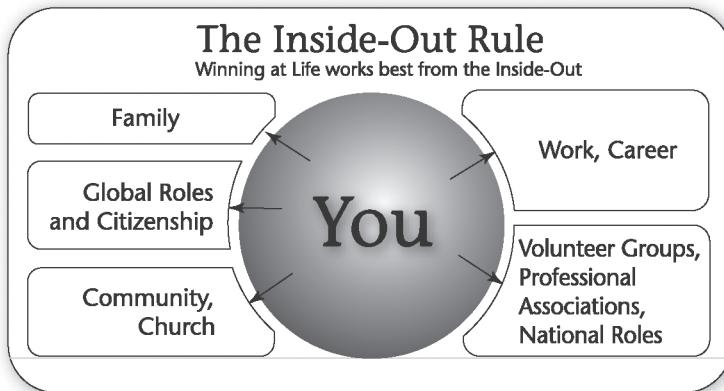


Figure 7. The Inside-Out Rule

The Learning is for Everyone Rule

Learning is our primary activity, no matter how young or old we may be. Twenty-first century adults will require continuous learning and training. Learning is positive change; it is the creation of a change-force within yourself to produce increased awakeness and self-motivation. Learning is the essence of self-renewal or resilience, and therefore is a basic feature of coaching.

The adult learning agenda in our time has at least four different tasks:

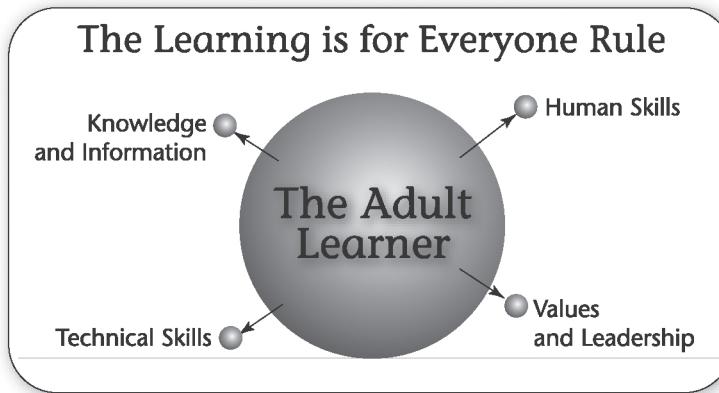


Figure 8. The Learning is for Everyone Rule

Knowledge and information areas. This requires staying abreast of the knowledge explosion, and particularly the information relating to effective living and working in our global village. Our knowledge from our younger years is outmoded and replaced several times throughout our lifetimes. To be awake and effective we need to keep learning in all areas of our lives.

Human skills. These are abilities and tools for being effective in the settings and roles you are in: speaking, writing, listening, persuading, caring, and managing conflict. These are basic human skills for being effective as a person in all our roles.

Professional skills. Each of us has a responsibility to sustain expertise within some specialty area, usually related to our career tasks and commitments. We live in a technological age which is changing at a rapid pace. Only those disciplined to build ongoing learning into their schedules will sustain their expertise and effective leadership.

Values and leadership. Adults typically become more vocal about values as they mature. Adults perform most of the leadership roles in our society, and they are the bearers of culture from one era to another. Particularly in the post-parental years, adults emerge as the critical leaders throughout society, from executive roles to voluntary causes to mentoring relationships.

Today's world is universally described as "continuous change," "permanent white water." The goal of adult learning is to stay awake, alert, and alive—ready for the living of our days. The goal is to become as conscious as possible about what is taking place in our human experience. The goal is to sustain a livable balance among the four dimensions of the adult learning agenda: new knowledge and information, human skill development, professional skills, and values and leadership.

COACHING WAS BORN IN OUR CHANGE-DOMINATED WORLD

Very few professions have been born in a change-dominated world. Most professionals (teachers, physicians, lawyers, psychologists, and others) function with a set of core skills and concepts that they keep repeating throughout their linear careers. The coaching field emerged as a field to facilitate change and development as its central functions.

During the past twenty years, I have watched efforts at short-term interventions in organizations prove themselves of little worth as entrenched corporate cultures struggled with unyielding forces of global change. American work organizations have felt forced to retrench, flatten, and measure their success by short-term plans around bottom-line issues. That trend away from the long-term, human dimensions of work toward immediate financial issues has altered most work organizations in America. A great many people are working harder than ever, and enjoying it less.

In the wake of this, I have become increasingly interested in mentoring/coaching as a longitudinal resource readily available in most work organizations and communities for promoting deep renewal and learning throughout organizational systems. The most profound way to learn skills, culture, and values is directly from other human beings who already possess those qualities.

A "mentor/coach" is a trusted role model, advisor, wise person, friend, *mensch*, steward, or guide. A coach works with emerging human and organizational forces to tap new energy and purpose,

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to shape new visions and plans, and to generate desired results. A mentor/coach is someone trained and devoted to guiding others into increased competence, commitment, and confidence. Coaches play many roles to achieve future-oriented results—career pathing, personal and professional renewal, training high performance teams, and providing informal leadership for transition management.

Mentoring/coaching is devoted to evoking and sustaining resilient persons and human systems. Anchored in the human reservoirs of mature people, mentoring strengths are deep, natural qualities within the mentor/coach. Mentors function not merely with “skills,” but with personal “mastery” stemming from their own self-esteem, integrity and experience. Coaches model ways to thrive in whatever environment they are in. They connect present realities to future opportunities. More specifically, a mentor:

- Models mastery in professional areas that others want to obtain;
- Guides others to high performance in emerging scenarios;
- Advocates, criticizes, and extends corporate culture and wisdom;
- Endorses and sponsors others without having power or control over them;
- Facilitates professional development and organizational system development.

For the past ten to fifteen years there has been considerable interest in “mentors” or “coaches”—among human resource directors, organization development consultants, and throughout corporate America. I believe that most coaching efforts that have been tried have lacked a conceptual framework for designing and guiding mentor/mentee training systems. Mentor/coaching programs are often reactions to organizational problems rather than proactive designs informed by knowledge of the art of mentoring and coaching. *Coaching is conceptually derived from the knowledge of developmental psychology, adult learning theories, and human systems theories, applied to the practical issues facing persons within organizations throughout our culture.*

SEVEN REASONS WE NEED PROFESSIONAL COACHES

There are at least seven reasons why coaching is so important at this time, not only in corporate America but throughout the society.

To help adults manage change effectively

We all know that change has become the most dependable reality in our lives, and that people and organizations throughout the globe live with continuous uncertainty, tentativeness, and worry. Most live without long-term expectations and plans; they live intense daily and weekly schedules.

The most probable scenario for the future is that the intensity of change will increase steadily in both pace and in the dimensions of our lives. Although we are not the first human beings to face the dilemmas and opportunities of constant change, the technical and universal aspects of our global situation are unique, altering human consciousness and priorities everywhere. Change diminishes our sense that we can depend upon the world. Whenever change predominates over stability throughout a culture, many become angry that they have been abandoned by their society or by their work organizations. Others drop out because they see no future with a promise for them. Still others are paralyzed by fear or cynicism. Complex change often affects workers abilities to sustain motivation and to commit to long-term projects.

In the new environment of perpetual change, workers who cannot manage the discontinuities of their own lives and work will not produce great results, no matter how great their technical skills or leadership abilities. But mentor/coaches—people who are anchored within themselves to do and accomplish what they love—search for the advantages of change, not only in work settings, but wherever they can be found. Coaches are positive change agents. They motivate people around them with new hope, purpose, and concrete steps for sustaining a cautious optimism. That is a fundamental task of mentor/coaches.

The more the world around us is in flux, the more we as individuals must be certain about what matters in our lives: how we spend our time, who we are connected to, and where we are going. When the macrosystems of our lives are in considerable flux, as they are today, the microsystems rise in importance to anchor our lives. A mentor/coach is someone who can evoke passion and purpose in others, within the dissolving and reconstituting environments of our time.

The highest calling of coach/mentors today is to become guides to a transient culture—including a transient corporate culture: to grow strong persons, committed work teams, dynamic work systems, and sustainable communities that function from the grass roots up. Effective mentors model the future because they are willing to invent it, design it, and insist on it. As for change, they see change as an asset for getting the job done, not a cramp in the tummy.

To model mastery

Much is being written about the fragmentation of our culture today, with many self-interest groups and culture-wide anger, violence, and cynicism. Mentor/coaches are not a social solution to this, but they represent one mature resource that can make a difference. Coaches work in small but deep ways to anchor people and human systems in a public philosophy of trust, vision,

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strategic thinking, conflict management, and collaboration. Effective coaches inspire coachees with a sense of self-reliance and deep-seated determination much needed in these uncommon times.

People need to learn how to grow themselves in our kind of world—turbulent, fast-moving, unpredictable—and that requires personal maturation and mastery. Coaches facilitate the development of radar and gyroscopes in people and in human systems, so coachees can master their own lives, careers, and the flow beyond.

- Radar is the ability to decipher your best choices within the rapidly changing environment you move through, day by day, month by month. Coaches facilitate pathways for journeying ahead even when destinations are not clear.
- A gyroscope is a perpetual balancing mechanism moving through environments of constant change and unanticipated interaction; gyroscopic ability is a central capacity coaches develop in their clients—redefining identity, ego strength, and personal commitment. Mentor/coaches enable clients—individual and organizational—to anchor themselves to their own values, confidence, compelling visions, and emerging plans.

If individual adults can develop dependable *radar* systems for guiding themselves in and out of the never-ending maze of daily life, they can sustain confidence, self-esteem, and hope. If individual adults can develop dependable *gyroscopes* for guiding themselves through the indefiniteness of their social experience, creating sufficient inner stability and outer constancy for living their beliefs, they will have surplus energy and courage for designing work and communities in our kind of world.

To elicit core values and commitments

There is a great tendency today to think that technical prowess is the pioneering edge of our post-modern society. Truth is, as important as technological knowledge and skills are, they pale when compared to our need to be value-driven, bonded to others, and clear about the ultimate purposes of our lives. Technology fosters communication tools and mediums. But the medium is not the message. The message most people search for is about “meaning,” the ultimate concerns of our lives—in short: “values” and “beliefs.”

Technological advancements are the province of young people whose mathematical and specialized skills are often superior to those of older folk. Values and purpose, on the other hand, are the province of mature people who have been around long enough to transcend their intellectual skills and immediate personal needs and acquired trust in the flow of things. Such persons are effective generalists reaching out to a younger society

of specialists. Adults in midlife and beyond are the most likely bearers of values for a culture. For that reason, many coaches—but by no means all—are persons in the second half of life.

To renew human systems

In the past twenty years, corporate America has sought to transform its management styles, and one of the groups targeted for removal has been “middle managers.” Typically, a middle manager is a well-paid, long-term, loyal worker responsible for getting work done in some part of a business. The new management style is to train workers to manage themselves, through teams, leadership training, and new rewards. This transformation has brought some astonishing improvements in the development of quality goods and services in an increasingly competitive world.

However, the middle managers were often the invisible “mentors” of these organizations, and without them there is in many organizations a hollow absence of older role models to foster advanced skills, management abilities, new career directions, and long-term loyalty with younger workers.

Coach/mentors can be found and trained in most every workforce. Since they are already being paid, it is primarily a matter of time allocation to establish them as available coaches to promising, less experienced workers seeking to grow within a work system.

To sponsor future generations

There is a link in the generational chain that is weak and unsure. It is the post-boomer groups of Americans, who at ages ranging from thirty-five to sixteen come by a great variety of names: Busters, Millenials, and GenXers. This cohort is known for its skepticism, minimalism, individualism, and social silence.

This generation challenges the assumptions of the importance of work and success. They doubt that they will have much of a future no matter what they choose to do. Of course, not everyone in this age group thinks this way, but a large number do, and it challenges the rest of us to learn how to communicate and cooperate with those who are cynical and not easily motivated by money, advancement, or recognition.

Adult coaches may be more effective than corporate/government leaders for facilitating the paths of this generation within adult roles. Coaches look for inner values as the primary source of motivation. In quiet ways, coach/mentors seek to provide cultural continuity as their fundamental legacy to the future. Coaches are committed to reaching out, bridging gaps, and finding new ways to build upon what has come before. They stand and deliver. They advocate inclusion of all persons, cohorts, and identities.

To model collaboration and consensus building

Another way many of us experience fragmentation today is in terms of the endless list of network niche groups, each of which has some legitimate way in which to define its identity. Many form around a single moral concern; others around gender issues, illnesses, product lines, religious issues, racial or ethnic identification, or sports activities. While these groups perform many positive functions through their special interests, they tend to pull their members away from forum discussions of the corporate and cultural issues that affect us all.

Where do people learn and practice “democracy” in a society of cul de sacs? The grand American rhythm of conflict and consensus has devolved into a greater amount of conflict and less and less consensus. Whose responsibility is it to teach collaboration and consensus-building? It used to get learned in schools, churches, town meetings, voluntary associations, even corporations. Broad debates about human concerns are certainly thriving in these settings, but in our technocratic-media world, these institutions have much less impact on public concerns and opinions. Grass roots forums have been upstaged by TV and radio talk shows that focus more on alarming news and celebrity events.

Coaches can’t solve this problem, but they will exert an influence toward the human connections, alliances, and open systems. They plant the seeds of democratic process:

- Themes that coach/mentors return to, time after time with their clients are “priorities,” “connectedness,” “balance,” “fairness,” “passion,” “purpose,” “vision,” and “planning.” They set an example that living with “we” is a necessary part of living with “me.” They promote a future for the “whole” as well as the parts.
- Coaches train clients to honor their core values, to articulate preferences, to negotiate differences, to compromise, and to manage conflict when necessary. These basic human abilities promote self-responsible behavior within interdependent contexts.
- Mentors encourage debate about the wise decisions for challenging scenarios. Coaches are concerned about making future a developmental continuum with the past, and they promote those qualities in the persons and systems they touch.
- Mentor/coaches “coach” the organizations and environments they are in as well as key individuals. They advocate a process of decision-making in which everyone affected by a decision has some way to influence the shaping of that decision. Coaches emphasize both personal empowerment and social consensus, fostering an essential mind-set for personal, career, and organizational leadership.

To tap the genius of older workers

We live at a time of wasted human assets. Americans have been deluded by the myth of youthism—that we decline in all respects as we get older, particularly after the age of forty or so. Developmentally this myth is simply not true, but operationally the myth contributes greatly to the waste of corporate human resources. Corporations typically begin to divest themselves from the human potential of their older workers long before they retire. The graying of America will reach its zenith in the years immediately ahead of us, and with it will come a redefinition of “old” that will emphasize a diversity of contributions from older workers. The smart work system will begin, in the early years of the twenty-first century, to redefine its policies and attitudes toward its older workers.

Another American myth is that of retirement. Retirement evolved as a concept in the twentieth century to force older people out of full-time work. It was the doing of corporate and labor leaders, in collusion with the federal government. It has nothing to do with optimal human development or the best use of elders as a social resource. As generation after generation of adults extend life-expectancy to higher ranges—into the eighties, nineties, and even beyond—some kind of positive engagement and recognition of elders is called for.

Many, if not most, older workers want to leave a legacy, make a difference, and exert influence on the priorities of the environment around them. In future generations, older workers will launch new careers, assume temporary leadership assignments, engage in volunteer service, and serve as consultants and mentors.

Mentor/coaches can foster new employment challenges for older workers, within corporate environments and outside of them. Mentor/coaches can promote new challenges for older workers to find new meaning and purpose in their work. Many of these coaches will come from the elder ranks themselves: Their voices will come from deep reservoirs; their actions will spring from gratitude; their joy will rise from spirit. Older workers, if prized by their companies, can help immensely to provide stability and pride in the work culture.

Coaching will not cure the perennial ills of corporate life or the American culture. Mentors simply enrich their environments with sharing, caring, and daring. Like yeast they leaven the corporate and community loaves. Coaches roll up their sleeves to make things happen. They have that old American spirit that if we work hard and work together, we'll all benefit. If you have abilities others covet and the heart to share, make yourself available and see what happens! Coach/mentors are an enormous resource whose time has come.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frederic Hudson, Ph.D.

Frederic Hudson, a Rockefeller and Danforth Fellow, earned his doctorate at Columbia University in New York, and taught at Colby College, Stephens College, and the University of San Francisco. He is respected as a recognized expert in adult change. As the founding president in 1973 of The Fielding Institute – the most innovative doctoral studies graduate school in America – he is widely respected for his contributions to adult training in management, organizational developmental and education.

Hudson left Fielding in 1986 to establish The Hudson Institute of Santa Barbara, a learning organization focused on the intersection of change and development in the lives of leaders today. “The existing graduate schools of today are simply unable to devote themselves to what is most needed as the world deregulates itself in the swirl of endless change: persons capable of entrepreneurship the future at every level of change –personal, career, work organizations, communities and beyond.”

THE CALL OF COACHING

At some point between 1950 and 2000, our culture and the entire world moved from a stable-state, linear consciousness to change-oriented, cyclical ways of thinking. The overwhelming need of all cultures at this time in history is to train people to understand change, to manage change, and to guide their lives and human systems, not so much by rules of the past as by purpose, visioning, and planning that will link us to viable futures. For the most part, existing professions and their guilds are embedded in the earlier paradigm of stability and linear thinking.

Clinical psychologists were dominated by diagnosing, treating, and repairing. Moreover, their professional organizations and funding and reimbursement resources keep their performance boundaries narrowly focused upon treatment, problem-solving, and rehabilitation. By the late 1980s, many forward-looking people were asking: “To whom do people turn to for assistance when they are disoriented but not sick, empty but not depressed, bewildered but not helpless?” One response that came in the 1990s was “personal and professional coaches.”

The function of career professionals in 1960, when that field was emerging, focused upon matching personalities of young adults with linear career paths for lifetime employment. Today there are few linear careers and lifetime employment is extinct. The typical college graduate is now expected to have six to eight “career” identities during his lifetime? How do people learn to move in and out of work settings with some degree of confidence and inner leadership? One answer is from career coaches. Career professionals are increasingly using coaching strategies to train clients to connect their inner skills to outer work.

In the 60s and 70s, government and large organization planning was conducted from the top-down. That doesn’t work in environment of constant change. In today’s environment planning is done with everyone involved, using “open-space,” “future vision,” or other approaches that require employees as well as structural systems to change. Coaches are often employed with consultants to facilitate these processes.

During the 70s and 80s when corporate structures were evolving away from hierarchical control of employees and toward trust and collaboration with workers, widespread training was needed to help every worker think and behave like a leader.

- The emphasis was on business performance, as in TQM and ISO and JIT, steps in the right direction.
- Then came seminars on teamwork and empowerment, which made the focus more personal, but still contained by immediate corporate issues.
- Consultants also added to the flow toward coaching, through their work with key corporate figures and system interventions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR (CONT)

Hudson wrote *The Adult Years—Mastering the Art of Self-Renewal* (1992, revised 1999) Jossey Bass Publishers. In 1995, he co-authored *The Joy of Old—A Guide to Successful Elderhood*; and in 1996 he and his partner and colleague, Pamela McLean, Ph.D., wrote *LifeLaunch—A Passionate Guide to the Rest of Your Life*, a book used as a text in college and university courses of adult life/career planning. His foundational book, *The Handbook of Coaching* (1999) Jossey Bass Publishers, identifies the critical knowledge areas, skills, and techniques required in professional coaching, and summarizes the major coaching theories from experts in the field.



But these approaches to change had one common flaw: they came and went like waves hitting the beach. They didn't last. Then it occurred to a great many that if organizations are going to make lasting changes, the individuals working in them must change first. Stephen Covey was a major figure in the shift from corporate talk to training highly effective persons. In the late 80s, corporate coaching came on to the scene, to work over time with both individuals and systems. They function like leaven in bread, to get the job done in a lasting way.

Some of the new emphases that coaches have added are visionary leadership training, executive coaching, renewal coaching, and transition management. Indeed, the field of leadership, and particularly entrepreneurial leadership, has influenced and shaped the new profession of coaching as much as any other influence. With the demise of middle managers in the 70s and 80s, a need for a self-motivated, challenging, and imaginative workforce emerged, giving birth to widespread coaching training within organizational settings. This trend was accelerating by the need for human caring and daring during the corporate convulsions of downsizing, mergers, acquisitions, and outplacement.

Sometime in the late 1980s, the professional field of coaching was born, promoting continuous resilience and performance in persons and organizations. A major need was to help facilitate future scenarios of individuals as well as corporate entities, given the complexities and speed of change in today's world. The requests of coaches were often about personal evolving, succession planning, career shifting, work performance, high performance teams, outplacement, burnout, scenario building, leadership training, work/home balance, and individual/organizational renewal.

For the past ten years there has been considerable interest in "mentors" or "coaches" throughout North America. As corporate structures evolved from top-down, control functions to bottom-up stakeholder-empowerment models, widespread training was needed to help every worker become a leader. Out of that festering, the field of professional coaching—serving persons and organizations—was born.

In the broader culture, a similar shift was taking place, from business as usual to a sense of crisis. Predictability and stability were giving way to technological change, political upheavals, community crises, monetary earthquakes, medical care, and global conflicts. The world that used to feel linear now felt more like a roller coaster.

People scrambled to find a professional resource to help them recover passion and purpose. One resource that appeared was "personal and organizational coaches," working directly with

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individuals and organizations to find inner anchors for outer challenges.

- Coaches look for shifting advantages within the change process itself.
- Coaches are catalysts for facilitating self-responsible behaviors in their clients.
- Coaches improve imagining, performance, teamwork, and risk-taking.
- Most importantly, coaches work through transition experiences, which evoke resilience, elan, staying power, renewal, and hope.

Resource Center for Professional Coaching in Organizations

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