
An Integrated Model of Developmental Coaching

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This article outlines a coaching paradigm derived from constructive-developmental psychology, family therapy supervision, and theories of organizational cognition. The paradigm is one of transformative, developmental coaching and thus it differs from both cognitive-behavioral and psychodynamic approaches. The paradigm is exemplified by a model of the mental space (topology) in which executive coaching is thought to take place. The paradigm and the model are developmental in a twofold sense, that of “ontic” development occurring in cognitive organisms maturing over their lifetime (“nature”) and of “agentic” development brought about by humans (“nurture”). An introduction to the model is presented, followed by the topology of the mental space of coaching, a summary, and suggested topics for future research.

Most “practice theories of coaching executives” (Witherspoon & White, 1996) conceive of the client in a cognitive-behavioral manner, as a habituated mechanism whose organizational functioning can be improved. At times (Martin, 1996), this conception is extended to include psychodynamic assumptions, with a concomitant increase of attention to defensive mechanisms (Kaplan, Drath, & Kofodomis, 1991). What is presently lacking is a life span developmental perspective that would aid in making the notion of meeting the client “where the client is developmentally” more precise. Such a perspective requires a widening of the time window within which coaching is conceived and practiced, as a means of locating the coaching experience at some point along the trajectory of the client’s life span development. It is this deepening of the developmental perspective for the purpose of “developmental coaching” that is at issue in this article.

When seeing coaching in the context of the life span development of executives, two notions of development spring to mind. One is based on the metaphor of making development happen and, as a result, on human agency; thus, I refer to it as agentic. The other notion is based on the metaphor of a human organism experiencing developmental changes over its lifetime as a matter of course, and thus I label this notion ontic. In my view, much of the complexity of coaching assignments involves the constant and deep interaction between these two modes of human development, on the side of both the coach and the executive. Therefore, the question of “where the client is” ontic-developmentally is of crucial import for conceptualizing coaching strategy as well as for determining the compatibility of coach and client.

In my practice as a developmental psychologist as well as researcher (Laske, 1999), I have found it

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helpful to conceptualize the topology of the mental space in which coaching takes place in terms of two “houses” called the Professional House and the Company House (Haber, 1996). As shown in Figure 1, coach and executive are thought to inhabit a Professional House whose “floors” embody their particular issues of self, work context, professional agenda, and personal culture. In addition, both coach and executive reside in a Company House in which issues of the workplace (rather than personal issues) are topical. Given the telos of coaching and the complexity of the workplace, I distinguish two related Company Houses and, consequently, two types of coaching. In first-order coaching (First Company House) the coach assumes a structural-political perspective on the executive’s organization, while in second-order coaching (Second Company House) the coach models the ability to take multiple perspectives on organizational matters, as required in a leadership position. In the integrated model of developmental coaching, such thinking is cast as the reframing of organizational matters in terms of four different perspectives, as outlined by Bolman and Deal (1991). Each of the three houses comprises four floors (or levels) representing the topics that

can emerge and be “worked on” in the coaching relationship. These three houses define the mental space in which coach and client mentally reside at any moment during their partnership. In fact, executives often report their experiences of coaching in terms of where in these three houses and their floors they have predominantly resided over the lifetime of a specific coaching relationship. In short, Figure 1 indicates the scope of coaching activity as well as the framework in which coaching is experienced by executives.

Before entering into greater detail regarding the houses and levels outlined, it is in order to draw attention to the fact that the “bottom floor” of the Professional House, of self, is construed differently in each of the three approaches I have mentioned. (Equally, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, and constructive-developmental theories differ in their conception of what constitutes an organization, a topic that is beyond the scope of this article.) The way in which the level of self is construed, both theoretically and practically, determines the telos adopted for the coaching and the kind of coaching that is actually done. For example, in a cognitive-behavioral conception of executive self, performance and skill issues tend to be paramount in the coaching. In a psychodynamic approach, self is seen as a system of defenses, or “character,” with the consequence that life history, especially attachment history, enters the coaching and is considered instrumental in how the executive functions organizationally. Finally, when the self is construed as “evolving” over the life span, emphasis is placed on the fact that at any point during their existence, individuals make meaning of their experiences in a more or less complex fashion; accordingly, they can be said to be at a particular “stage” of development that can be empirically assessed (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg & Armon, 1984; Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1983; Loevinger, 1976; Piaget, 1970). While nonstage approaches to development are equally relevant (Basseches, 1984), and are particularly important for distinguishing psychological and epistemological aspects of human development (Basseches, 1989; Laske, 1999), for simplicity’s sake I am restricting myself to dealing with stage theories of life span development and their impact on the practice of coaching. The reader should keep in mind that executive development is, after all, adult development in the workplace.

Constructive-developmental theories, of whatever ilk, introduce two fundamental ideas: (a) that not every change represents development and (b) that what is learned and experienced by an individual depends on the ontic-developmental position, or stage, of that individual. In other words, along the life span, qualitative changes in what is experienced as reality are thought to occur. The shortest way to render the first idea was well formulated by Loevinger (1976, p. 38):

If development consists of structural changes, any new structure constitutes a break from the old one. It cannot be obtained by adding or subtracting [i.e., in a mechanistic way], but only by establishing a new principle governing the relations among the parts.

The “structure” referred to here defines the particular worldview of a person at a particular time point along his or her life span trajectory. This structure is thought to determine, more teleologically than causally, how the person conceives of what, for him or her, is “self” and what is “other.” Consequently, the structure determines how the person’s psychological boundaries are drawn and where in the scheme of things that person finds himself or herself and takes action. The understanding of structure as a principle governing relations among parts refers to a principle of meaning making, sometimes conceptualized as a “stage” of cognitive-emotional development (Kegan, 1982). “Stage” refers to an equilibrium of the cognitive-emotional capabilities of a person. Equally, in a nonstage conception of “structure,” the overriding idea is that over the life span, qualitative changes take place in the way a person construes his or her world, each of which represents a particular developmental equilibrium associated with a particular worldview.

The second idea, that of qualitative changes in experiencing the world (including the world of work), is equally fundamental. Constructive-developmental theories redefine organizational cognition, that is, the way in which organization members make sense of what is going on in and around them (Kegan, 1994; Weick & Bougon, 1986). These theories support novel ways of conceptualizing “agentic” change efforts meant to promote executive development. (The question these theories ask regarding such efforts is a critical one, namely, “Is it really development?”) They also suggest the elaboration of new assessment methods for purposes of coaching and mentoring. Finally, constructive-developmental theories give rise to a novel conception of the nature of coaching, in that they shed light on the ontic-developmental preconditions and outcomes of coaching (in contrast to adaptive changes occurring in an executive’s organizational performance). These theories suggest that the effect of coaching depends on the ontic-developmental preconditions that determine where an executive is when entering a coaching relationship.

They further suggest that coaching potentially has ontic-developmental effects (i.e., lasting effects on the complexity of executives' personal as well as professional meaning making).

A Model of Developmental Coaching

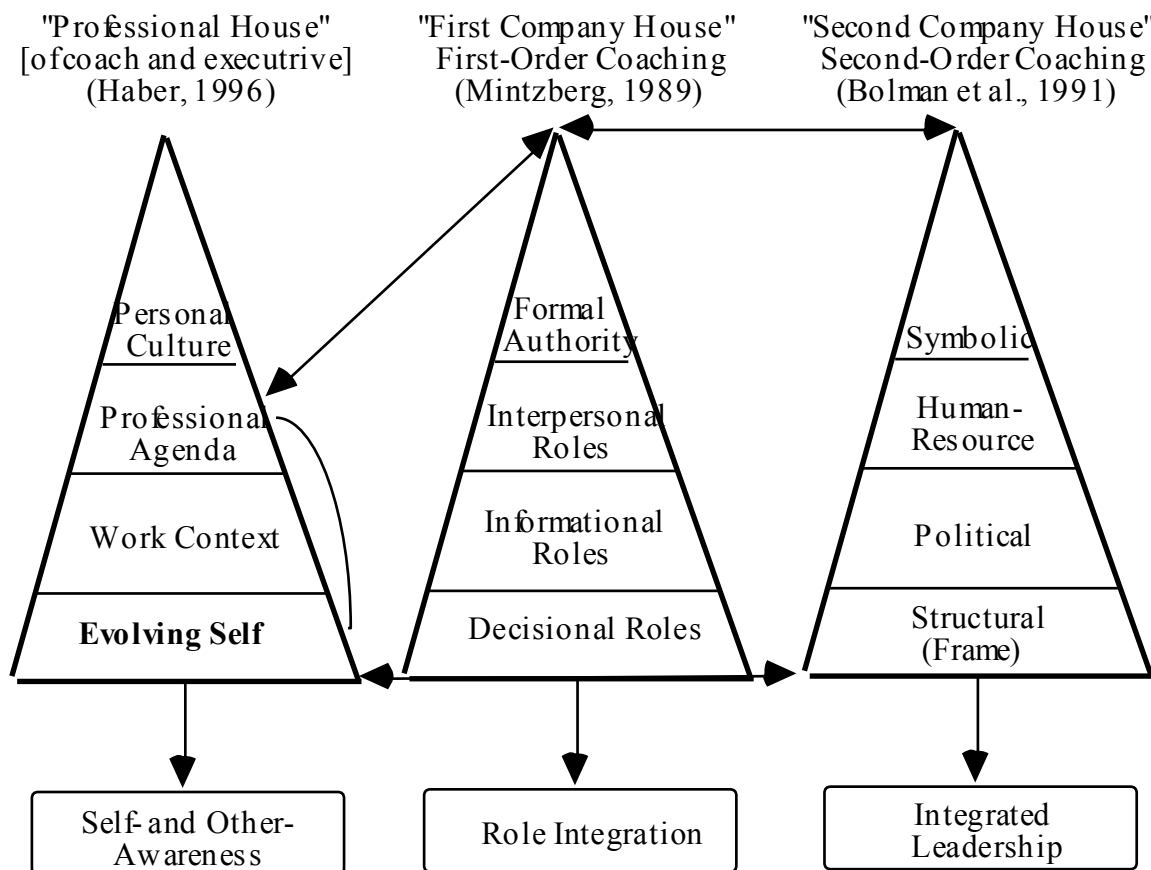


Figure 1. The mental space of coaching activity.

As shown in Figure 1, coach and executive can, at any time, dwell in one of the three houses that together define the topology of executive coaching. Each of the houses is focused on a different developmental telos: self-awareness and awareness of others in the Professional House, role-self-integration in the First Company House, and integrated leadership capability in the Second Company House. The hypothesis grounding the topology of coaching is that the potential and the limits of coaching are defined by the ontic-developmental stage or equilibrium of cognitive-emotional capabilities instantiated by coach and executive at any given time. As a consequence, the relationship between coach and executive—and thus issues of compatibility—is seen as having to do with the ontic-developmental maturity of the two parties. The hypothesis entails that issues pertaining to an executive's unique psychological organization (and therefore "clinical" issues of character and pathology) require a distinct mode of intervention. In short, ontic-developmental insight is indicative of; but not per se therapeutic for, clinical issues an executive might struggle with, nor can such issues be reduced to stage concepts (Laske, 1999). For example, a developmentally highly complex individual may present with severe clinical issues, since complexity of meaning making does not guarantee mental health. Rather, it only defines mental growth (Rogers & Kegan, 1990).

The integrated model of developmental coaching makes the assumption that coach and executive dwell in two different but related mental domains: first, their own sphere as professionals and, second, the organizational sphere. Given that the evolving self is seen as the basis of what happens in both houses, what is topical in developmental coaching is not the organization per se

but, rather, the way executive and coach make sense of or construe, the organization and their relationship to the organization. In short, the organization is seen as constructed by them. The specific way in which the organization is constructed by both parties is reflected in each party's interaction in the houses. It is, in particular, both parties' professional agenda (Professional House) that determines their relationship to work. This relationship, in turn, is thought to differ between individuals at different ontic-developmental levels, whether they are seen as stages or not.

Here I have adopted a metaphoric language for conceptualizing how a coaching relationship may promote executive development as adult development. To this end, I have introduced the metaphor of three houses as a means of observing where and how the executive intervenes in his or her organization and what are his or her whereabouts and limits in the houses. The perspective on coaching adopted in the present model is that of looking at the executive's actions within the organization in the way a clinical supervisor might look at how a supervisee therapist intervenes with a client system. In the present case, the client system is the executive's organization. After all, it is the mandate of the coach, as well as a supervisor; "to amplify, partner with, utilize, and redirect the executive's resources" and to prevent him or her from "becoming bogged down in stereotypical roles in the different rooms and floors" of both houses (Haber, 1996, p. 33). The coach can help the executive—just as the supervisor helps the counselor— "to work in the floors and rooms that are foreign, emotionally provocative, difficult, overwhelming, or simply uncomfortable" (Haber, 1996, p. 34), starting in the Professional House and expanding into the floors of the Company House.

Also, depending on the executive's level of personal development, the executive may tend to dwell more intensely in one or the other of the two houses, in which case a switch of focus may be in order. Being in that position, the executive may not dare to enter certain floors and rooms of either house and may need new skills and emotional and/or conceptual support to do so. Coaching is thus a multidirectional ability to observe executive-organization interactions in the houses, for the purpose of refining the executive's interventions with himself or herself and with the organization. Coaching provides time and space "to reflect on a broad picture of the... [executive's] professional relationships in the houses... without the immediate pressure to react" (Haber, 1996, p. 34). Being external to the organization, the coach is at leisure to assume a meta-perspective.

The mandate of coaching is to develop a cognitive-emotionally and behaviorally more flexible professional whose activity in the organization shows greater perspicacity and self-awareness, resulting in a more balanced approach to his or her job performance. The extent to which this mandate succeeds depends on the ontic-developmental maturity and compatibility of both executive and coach. Although he or she is "joining" (identifying with) the client system (in the Company House), the executive also needs to preserve his or her distinctness from the organization (in the Professional House). The reason is that an executive who "is" his or her professional agenda, rather than "having" an agenda, is incapable of taking a truly systemic view of the organization. The extent to which such a view can be created depends on the executive's ontic-developmental position, since that position informs his or her notion of authority and self-authoring (Hodgetts, 1994). Ideally, a combination of changes on the floors of the Professional House and professional growth in the Company House leads to greater differentiation and flexibility of moving about in both houses.

Professional House

The floors of the Professional House are mainly linked along "psychological" lines, whereas those of the Company Houses are linked along "organizational" lines. I start with the Professional House. In Table 1, I specify in more detail the coach's and executive's positions in the Professional House.

Table 1
The Executive's and Coach's Position in the Professional House

| | |
|--|--|
| Bottom floor (self) | |
| Personal characteristics (sex, ethnicity, physical ability, communicational style, etc.) | |
| Personal life cycle phase | |
| Structural-developmental position | |
| Family history and family allegiance | |
| Life ambitions and themes | |
| <hr/> | |
| Middle floor (work context) | |
| Parameters of work context (position, rules, roles, relationships) | |
| Support systems at work (executive team) | |

Perceived culture of the organization
Relationship with coach

Top floor (professional agenda)
Relationship to work
Personal mission (mandate)
Construence of job description (objectives)
Translation of theories, methodologies, professional ethics, and values into professional performance
Goal formulation
Approach to task

Attic (personal culture)
Value system
Moral standards
Priorities
Preferences

Note: From Haber (1996).

Self

As indicated in Table 1, the bottom floor of the Professional House of both coach and executive comprises all of the internal experience, personal history, and characterological idiosyncracies of the two individuals. In Haber's words (1996, p. 20): "The self lives within the confines of the professional role. Our uniqueness—personal history, personal style, strengths and weaknesses, gender and cultural perspective, emotional responses, physical and characterological capabilities and limitations—comprises our singular version of humanness."

In coaching, the relationship of the self to its professional role(s) is of particular salience. These two dimensions of a professional identity are typically distinct in their social manifestation (Haber, 1996, p. 21):

The role receives more credence than the self... The self is frequently left to manage on its own and consequently is more primitive, unconscious, unconventional, and mysterious than the professional role. The self uses the language of dreams, metaphors, feelings, symbols, intuition, and physiological responses to represent its reality.

Optimally, self and role coexist "in an acknowledged, functional, creative, and respectful union" (Haber, 1996, p. 21). However; such a union is an achievement of maturation over the life span. For this reason, a clinical notion of self needs to be amplified by a developmental one, to encompass life span development. One can then view the coaching experience within an expanded, adult-developmental time window that comprises not only the professional's past but his or her developmental status quo and future. Stage and nonstage theories of adult development are equally capable of conceptualizing professionals' developmental status quo and telos. Here I choose R. Kegan's (1982, 1994) stage theory of self to illustrate the ontic-developmental point of view.

According to Kegan's constructive-developmental theory, human beings are engaged, throughout their life span, in a ceaseless process of meaning making. This process leads them from being embedded in their own subjectivity (as is an infant) to an increasingly stronger and refined ability to take the world, including themselves, as an object. In the context of Kegan's theory, "taking as object" entails being able to transcend embeddedness in one's subjectivity, that is, being able to take responsibility for, and to be in relationship with, what is "other than me" (object), including parts of oneself, rather than being embedded in (subject to) one's subjectivity. Along the life span, different subject-object equilibriums emerge that determine where the boundaries between self (me) and other (not me) are being drawn. This subject-object dialectic manifests itself in the degree to which humans can balance the opposites of a yearning for inclusion and self-authored independence. It determines the way they construct, at any point, their world, both cognitively and affectively. As a consequence, at different ontic-developmental positions (stages), different rules of meaning making "govern," as it were, an individual's relationship to self, role, work, and the social world in general. In Kegan's words (1982, p. 77):

Subject-object relations emerge out of a lifelong process of development: a succession of qualitative differentiations of the self from the world, with a qualitatively more extensive object with which to be in relation created each time; a natural history of better guarantees to the world of its distinctness; successive triumphs of “relationship to” rather than “embeddedness in.”

Kegan’s theory does not emphasize stages per se as much as the transitions between pivotal stages. Because his theory is teleological, not causal or clinical, it makes transparent the meaning of developmental struggles and their telos. His theory provides 21 ontic-developmental positions at which individuals can find themselves along the trajectory of their journey. Of these positions, about 11 apply to professional life. Kegan’s theory is helpful for understanding differences in individuals’ professional functioning. It provides information on the self-role relationship an individual actualizes in an organization, as well as his or her relationship to work.

In light of Kegan’s theory, the self being addressed at the bottom floor of the Professional House is an evolving self engaged in a ceaseless reworking of its subject-object equilibrium. Therefore, the link between self-agenda and professional agenda cannot be severed (see the arrow linking them in Figure 1). Rather, the content and form of an executive’s professional agenda are determined by the developmental position of the self. (The developmental position is not, as in phasic theories [Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978], strictly aligned with age, although age functions as a limiting variable.) This means that an executive’s professional agenda is “mature” to the extent that he or she has sufficiently emerged from embeddedness in subjectivity to have an agenda (Kegan’s Stage 4) rather than being (i.e., being embedded in) the agenda (Kegan’s Stage 3). In a further step, an executive may transcend his or her own agenda and thus become capable of integrated leadership (Kegan’s Stage 5).

In terms of Figure 1, the evolving self of the Professional House teleologically determines the content and form of executives’ professional agenda. It is the task of constructive-developmentally informed coaching to observe executive-client interactions in the houses and decode their ontic-developmental “signature” (i.e., the subject-object equilibrium underlying such interactions) to assist change efforts. A coach who is expert in this practice is able to determine what organizational demands an executive can and cannot fulfill given her or his ontic-developmental status quo, and in what manner. The expertise to formulate constructive-developmental hypotheses adds another dimension to the ability of the coach: that of guiding the executive in making transitions to a subsequent developmental equilibrium.

For instance, a certain maturity is required if an executive is to emerge from embeddedness in his or her organization (which is essentially embeddedness in the subjectivity of his or her own role in the organization). An executive who cannot take this embeddedness as an object will find it difficult, for instance, to reframe organizational matters. He or she cannot make the transition from a single perspective on the organization to a more complex view. Similarly, the developmental position of the coach is ideally one that lies “beyond” that of the executive being coached. However, there ought to be enough compatibility between the developmental positions of coach and executive so that a dialog between them is provocative and challenging. The precise nature of this compatibility remains a topic of empirical research.

Work Context

The “work context” floor (see Figure 1) regards the parameters of the executive’s work situation, including his or her relationship with the coach, viewed from the perspective of the self. (In the First Company House, the work context is spelled out objectively, in terms of the roles the executive plays in the organization.) The work context is an articulation of how the executive construes his or her relationship to the organization in practical, action-oriented terms. It is equally determined by where in the organizational hierarchy an executive is stationed (in the sense of Mintzberg, 1989) and by the subject-object equilibrium an executive is instantiating in his or her interactions with the organization. Consequently, topical on this floor are the rules and conventions (as construed by the executive) that inform an executive’s professional agenda and the support systems that sustain or fail the executive in carrying it out.

The executive’s relationship with the coach is also topical on this floor. For instance, it makes a difference how the executive conceives of the coaching (i.e., whether he or she views it as affecting skills, performance, development, or agenda; Witherpoon & White, 1996). Clearly expressed expectations of the coaching relationship will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the partners in the coaching relationship. The coach must carefully consider the culture of the executive’s workplace. “It may be necessary for the... [coach] to challenge bureaucratic constraints that have an impact on... [the coaching] relationship. On this

floor, we are also dealing with the images of sponsor, boss, and colleagues” (Haber; 1996, p. 22). Thus, in taking organizational culture into account, the coach goes far beyond the triangle of sponsor-coach-executive, dealing with a cast of characters he or she may never see in person.

Professional Agenda

According to Haber’s clinical point of view (1996, pp. 22-24), the top floor of the Professional House represents the “ideology of the... [executive] in the context of the... [organization].” I would add to this issues having to do with how the executive construes his or her mission and job description and how, consequently, he or she sets goals, approaches assignments, and pursues tasks. In cognitive science terms, the professional agenda is a set of “theories in use” (Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1987), that is, a set of assumptions the executive makes about his or her work. The agenda is an implicit theory of where the executive stands with regard to the organization, along with his or her mission in the Company Houses, viewed from a specific ontic-developmental position. The relationship between professional agenda and the two Company Houses is entirely reciprocal. The professional agenda is determined by the executive’s formal authority and status as much as by his or her ontic-developmental status (see the two-directional arrows between the houses in Figure 1).

It is important to keep in mind that the coach, too, is at a particular ontic-developmental stage of self and situated in a particular work context. The coach has knowledge of the organization largely in terms of how the executive conceptualizes the organization in the Company Houses. The professional agenda of the coach has to do with how he or she approaches the coaching assignment (i.e., the theoretical perspective in terms of which the coaching task is conceived). Making use of research on the determining variables of successful outcome in psychotherapy (Luborsky, Crits-Christoph, Mintz, & Auerbach, 1988), one can speculate that the approach taken by the coach—whether cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, or constructive-developmental—is ultimately less important than the quality of the working alliance he or she establishes with the executive. This entails that a coach who is coaching from a strictly cognitive-behavioral perspective may unwittingly achieve ontic-developmental results, although he or she will probably be amiss in regard to interpreting them correctly.

Equally, a coach working from a psychodynamic perspective may misconceive development as deriving from the executive’s attachment history and be tempted to reduce developmental issues to early childhood problems instead of seeing them in terms of the wider time window of a life span trajectory. However, the coach’s ontic-developmental position may be more influential in defining the quality of the coaching alliance and its outcomes than any of the specific techniques he or she may be using. Since the coach is in a “meta-position” relative to the executive, it is the coach’s responsibility to become aware of the executive’s ideological position, as well as the values he or she stands for. This means that the coach must be able to take himself or herself and his or her own coaching philosophy as object, which normally entails a more advanced developmental position than that held by the executive. As Haber (1996, p. 23) stated in regard to the case of supervisors:

As a supervisor in a meta” position, I have a good vantage point to make process interventions that are relevant and collaborative even if I do not define the process in the same terms [as the supervisee]. However, if I cannot use the language from my supervisee’s model, I would ask him or her to define it. [In this way I] would explore the triangle between my supervisee, his or her ideology [professional agenda], and my approach in order to explore ways to work together as a team.

Personal Culture

The topic of culture appears twice in the houses, as personal culture in the Professional House and as organizational culture in the symbolic perspective of the Second Company House. On this floor, I would include the ethics and the value system adhered to by both the executive and the coach and the way in which their personal idiosyncracies express themselves in their style. One might also include the “cognitive fingerprint” of both coach and executive and their particular style of learning. Since, as a leader; the executive is the bearer of organizational culture (Schein, 1992), the intangible link that binds his or her personal culture to the organizational culture is a topic of great relevance in coaching. One might also include on this floor what is sometimes called “charisma,” although the developmental substrate of this ascription remains unclear.

First Company House

In making the transition from the Professional House to the Company Houses, the emphasis in coaching shifts from the personal to the organizational and from the ontic-developmental to the systemic aspect of the executive's functioning. In focus now are the executive-organization interactions associated with the executive's day-to-day functioning (First Company House), on one hand, and the leadership capabilities of the executive (Second Company House), on the other. Accordingly, it makes sense to distinguish two types of coaching, first- and second-order coaching, associated with the First and Second Company Houses, respectively. Second-order coaching is not so much a "higher" form of coaching as it is a different kind of coaching that emphasizes leadership issues. By contrast, first-order coaching regards the executive's role functioning and role integration. In the present model, the First Company House is shaped after Mintzberg (1989), and the Second Company House is patterned after Bolman and Deal (1991). Both Company Houses together comprehensively render the executive's systemic interactions with the organization, the first from a more technical point of view and the second from an ideological point of view.

In contrast to the executive who is expert in the Company House, the coach develops knowledge of the organization in an indirect way, by interacting with the executive. This holds especially in stand-alone coaching not tied to more wide-scoped consulting work. In both situations, the coach operates on a meta-level relative to the executive, who tends to be embedded in her or his subjectivity as a manager. The executive therefore tends to "act out" her or his ontic-developmental position in a fashion that can be scrutinized by a schooled observer. In what follows, I discuss the First Company House in some detail.

First-order coaching deals with the executive's situation in his or her organization and with the thoughts, feelings, defenses, metaphors, and ideas evoked by the executive's formal authority and status. The executive's status gives rise to a set of interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles (Mintzberg, 1989). First-order coaching is primarily concerned with how the executive assumes the roles that status and formal authority bestow on him or her. These roles take on different forms depending on the way in which the executive's organization is structurally configured. As Mintzberg (1981, 1989) has shown, companies differ in how the universal building blocks of strategic apex, midline management, technostructure, support staff, and operating core are put together, as it were, and how historical change modulates this composition over time (1981, p. 103):

Effective organizations achieve a coherence among their component parts... they do not change one element without considering the consequences to all of the others. Spans of control, degrees of job enlargement, forms of decentralization, planning systems, and matrix structure should not be picked and chosen at random. Rather, they should be selected according to internally consistent groupings.

Executives who are invested in the specific configurational status quo of their organization cannot be leaders of change in, and culture bearers of, that organization. They are not attuned to the shifts occurring in organizational development. To begin with, functioning as an executive in a "simple structure" organization is something quite different from serving as an executive in an "adhocracy," for example. In a simple structure, the manager is part of a small group consisting of one or two individuals directly supervising the work of the operating core. Conversely, in an adhocracy, she or he may be the leader of a project group "that fuses experts drawn from different specialties into a smoothly functioning creative team," a fluid structure in which "power is constantly shifting and coordination and control are by mutual adjustment through the information, communication, and interaction of competent experts" (Mintzberg, 1981, p. 111). As a consequence, the executive is part of a configuration in which the functionality of middle management is highly reduced. That functionality becomes distributed among project teams that make up the operating core of the company, which is supported by an enlarged administrative support staff. In such a structure, the experts are no longer concentrated in the operating core, but "they tend to be dispersed throughout the structure according to the decisions they make—in the operating core, middle line (management), technostructure, strategic apex, and especially support staff" (Mintzberg, 1981, p. 112). These configurational determinants of the executive's work context form the framework within which his or her roles are actualized.

As empirical studies conducted by Mintzberg (1989) and others have shown, one can usefully distinguish four aspects of executive role performance in an organization: (a) formal authority and status, (b) interpersonal roles, (c) informational roles, and (d) decisional roles (Mintzberg, 1989). This is detailed in Figure 2.

All [managers] are vested with formal authority over an organizational unit. From formal authority comes status, which leads to various interpersonal relationships, and from these comes access to information. Information, in turn, enables the manager to make decisions and strategies for his or her unit. (Mintzberg, 1989, pp. 15-16)

These four categories of role performance have a twofold relevance for coaching. First, they determine the executive's goals, tasks, and performance. Second, as much as they are determined by the executive's professional agenda, they in turn exert a strong influence on that agenda. On the "work context" floor of the Professional House, the coach is primarily concerned with how the executive's environment is represented by his or her mental maps (Weick & Bougon, 1986), while in first-order coaching the coach focuses on the executive's specific role performance and repercussions in the larger organizational environment. As Mintzberg (1989) has emphasized, executives must "have insight into their own work," since "their performance depends on how well they understand and respond to the pressures and dilemmas of the job" (p. 22). From an ontic-developmental perspective, the executive must be able to take organizational structure, as well as the roles it provides, as object, rather than being embedded in either. This ability presupposes an emergence from his or her own professional subjectivity. Assessing an executive's ontic-developmental status quo involves looking for what the executive can and cannot take a perspective on (i.e., what he or she is subject to and thus cannot have a relationship with). If the coach is also "subject" in the same way, "it becomes problematic to make a developmental assessment, because there is little ability to take a perspective on the development" of the executive (Pratt, 1993, p. 58). In question here is the developmental compatibility of coach and executive, a topic still lacking a research base.

I have assumed (see Figure 1) that the floors of the First Company House are coincident with the executive's roles (as seen by Mintzberg, 1989, pp. 15-24) and that these roles differ according to the compositional structure to which a particular organization adheres (Mintzberg, 1989, pp. 95-115). Accordingly, first-order coaching pays primary attention to the actual functioning of the executive within a specific organizational structure. As shown in Figure 2, executive roles are predominantly interpersonal, informational, or decisional in nature.

Among the interpersonal roles, the executive functions as (a) figurehead, (b) leader, and (c) liaison. On the top floor of the First Company House, executives are concerned with (a) their position as head of an organizational unit, (b) their role as a leader responsible for the work of individuals in their unit, and (c) making "contacts outside [their] vertical chain of command" (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 17). These contacts may range along a broad spectrum: "subordinates; clients; business associates, and suppliers; managers of similar organizations, government and trade organization officials, fellow directors on outside boards, and so on" (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 17). Liaison contacts go far beyond the compositional structure of the organization. They presuppose that the executive can take her or his particular organization as object and has the ability to reframe organizational matters.

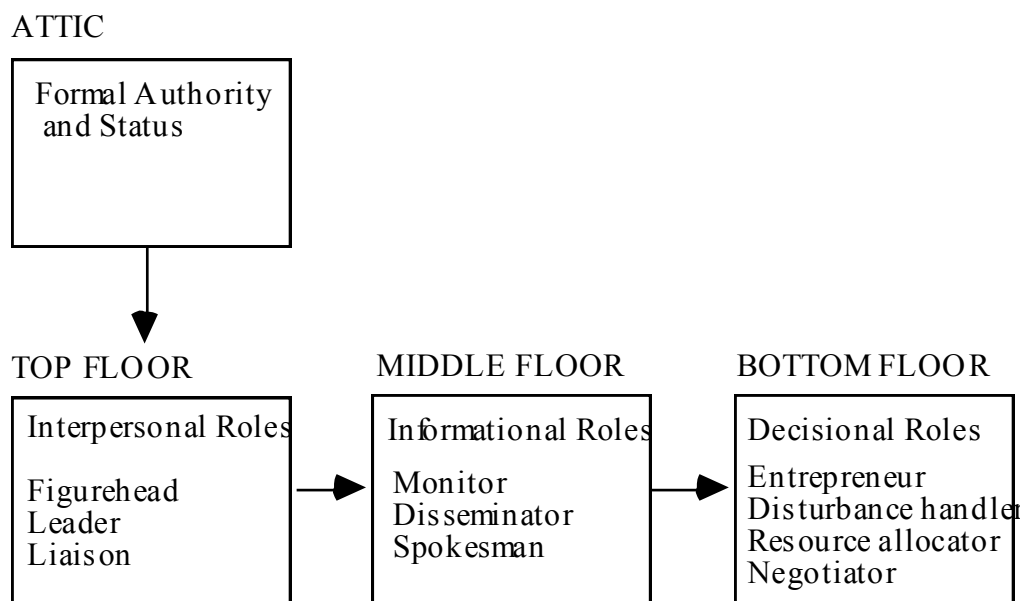


Figure 2. Executives' roles as floors of the First Company House (Mintzberg, 1989)

The executive's position on the middle floor of the First Company House is that of "the nerve center of his or her organizational unit" (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 17). To a large extent, roles performed on this floor have a political flavor; while cognitively they involve predominantly information-processing tasks. On this floor; the executive functions as (a) monitor, (b) disseminator of information, and (c) spokesperson for his or her organizational unit (see Figure 2). In specifying these informational roles, Mintzberg (1989) placed primary emphasis on cognitive rather than political aspects:

As monitor, the manager... scans his or her environment for information, interrogates liaison contacts and subordinates, and receives unsolicited information, much of it as a result of the network of personal contacts he or she has developed... Managers must share and distribute much of this information. In their disseminator role, managers pass some of their privileged information directly to their subordinates, who otherwise would have no access to it... In their spokesman role, managers send some of their information to people outside their units... every manager must inform and satisfy influential people who control his or her organizational unit. (pp. 18-19)

In short, in their position on the middle floor of the First Company House, executives monitor; disseminate, and "broadcast," as it were, information vital for the functioning of their unit and the organization at large.

On the bottom floor of the First Company House, the executive is in the role of decision maker. The capacity to make decisions is a natural characteristic, as it were, of a person who has formal authority, lives in the center of a complex web of interpersonal contacts, and takes in as well as disseminates vital information. As Mintzberg (1989, p. 19) put it: "As its formal authority, only the manager can commit the unit to important new courses of action; as its nerve center, only the manager has full and current information to make the set of decisions that determines the unit's strategy."

As a decision maker, the executive functions as (a) entrepreneur, (b) disturbance handler; (c) resource allocator, and (d) negotiator for his or her unit (see Figure 2). The executive's functioning on this floor requires more of his or her capacity for cognitive flexibility than is the case on the other floors of the First Company House. As an entrepreneur, the executive seeks to adapt her or his unit to the changing conditions in the environment (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 19). This often takes the form of promoting and maintaining a large number of development projects, not by way of single decisions or "unified clusters of decisions but as a series of small decisions and actions sequenced over time" (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 19). Accordingly, the executive "juggles" a large number of such projects. The executive is also the person who deals with unforeseen contingencies (disturbance handler), attempting to produce a seamless performance by containing the unforeseeable. This contributes to a more political than structural liability, to the executive being the person who determines "who will get what in the organizational unit" (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 20). As resource allocator; too, the executive entertains various action frames that have political consequences beyond his or her unit. Finally, on this floor, the executive is engaged as a negotiator (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 21): "Only the manager has the authority to commit organizational resources in 'real time,' and only he or she has the nerve center information that important decisions require."

In summary, first-order coaching scrutinizes the executive's ability to take a perspective on where in the First Company House he or she preferentially resides: in the interpersonal role, the informational role, or the decisional role. How does the executive juggle the 10 roles outlined in Figure 2? Is the executive overinvested in interpersonal roles to the detriment of decisional roles? Does the executive perform decisional roles with insufficient input from the informational roles? How is the executive integrating self (Professional House) and role (First Company House)? Is the executive's professional agenda expertly matched to the floors of the First Company House, and does it contain resources for integrating different roles in a seamless performance?

While the executive is the expert with regard to interacting with the organization, the coach has the obligation to monitor the executive's performance in the First Company House. Clearly, she or he can do so only to the extent that she or he understands the executive's organization structurally and politically, as seen by the executive. To be capable of such understanding, the coach must draw on prior organizational experience and on her or his knowledge from within the executive's Professional House. The issues the coach may come up against in this endeavor are summarized in Table 2.

It is clearly impossible for a coach to have proficiency and expertise on all floors and rooms of the First Company House and with regard to all issues engendered by the structural composition of a particular organization. However, ideally the coach has experience with variously configured organizations. Depending on his or her organizational experience as a schooled observer and change agent ("psychologist"), the coach may prefer to dwell on certain roles of the executive more than others (e.g., interpersonal roles). Therefore, the coach himself or herself may benefit from (peer) supervision. As holds true for a clinical supervisor, the coach needs to develop "a proficient methodology, theory, and personal ability to work in a variety of environments inhabited by culturally and configurationally diverse people" (Haber; 1996, p. 34). In the era of multinational corporations, bilingual or trilingual expertise and multicultural expertise are in especially high demand.

Second Company House

There is more to an executive manager's career than being a performer of roles. The executive is also a thinker-in-action. More precisely (Gioia & Sims, 1986, p. 384): "Organizational reality is a socially constructed one, forged out of a consensus of vision and action that exists largely or completely in the minds of the organization's members."

The way in which executives conceive of their organization and their capability of shifting perspective from one vantage point to another are crucial preconditions of integrated leadership. As pointed out by Bolman and Deal (1991), managers who cannot "reframe" organizational matters are failing in their task of developing a vision. Bolman and Deal exemplified one way in which to make the cognitive dimensions of executive functioning transparent. These authors distinguished four qualitatively different perspectives, or "frames," from which to conceptualize organizational events: (a) structural, (b) political, (c) human resource, and (d) symbolic. Since these frames underlie executive action, they are not only thought forms, but they define alternative action scenarios. Each organizational event has a structural, political, human-resource, and symbolic (i.e., cultural) implication. It is up to the executive to determine which of these implications is paramount in a given situation and the aspect or aspects to which he or she should pay primary attention.

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When conceptualizing the organization in terms of a structural perspective, executive and coach adopt the viewpoint of rational systems theorists who emphasize organizational goals, roles, hierarchy of control, and division of labor in an organization. In and of itself, this perspective is highly limiting. It neglects the fact that the organization is a storehouse of human resources and that these resources raise issues of “the fit between people’s needs, skills and values, on the one hand, and their formal roles and relationships, on the other” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 9). Adding to this complexity is the fact that organizations often are divided into coalitions focused around issues of power and scarce resources. In this political perspective, “organizations are like jungles in which cooperation is achieved by managers who understand the uses of power, coalitions, bargaining, and conflict” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 9). Finally, as Schein (1992) has demonstrated, the way in which an organization learns to solve its problems—that is, the organization’s value system and rituals (“the way we do things around here”)—is a powerful determinant of the executive’s inner and outer task environment. In this fourth perspective, executive and coach are dealing with organizational culture. In terms of this mostly implicit symbolic sphere of organization, an executive must rely on images, drama, magic, and ritual to be effective (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 10).

As a leader, an executive cannot remain ensconced in any single one of these four perspectives. Rather, he or she must be able to deal with structure (structural frame), need (human-resource frame), conflict (political frame), and present loss or future success (symbolic frame) simultaneously (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 420). Each of the four frames gives rise to different scenarios, schemes of action, and interpretations of where the organization stands with regard to its employees and the outside world. Especially in “turbulent” market environments (Hall & Associates, 1996), the capability of reframing is in high demand as a leadership quality. First-order coaching, especially when carried out exclusively from a cognitive-behavioral perspective, is insufficient to safeguard an executive’s creativity, since it does not account for his or her ability to use different, often mutually exclusive, cognitive maps. One might say that while first-order coaching deals with where the organization presently is from the executive’s point of view; second-order coaching has more to do with where the executive needs to take the organization in the near or remote future. The coach extends not only the number of dimensions to deal with but the time window through which organizational matters are viewed. As a consequence, the executive’s ability to generate integrated leadership (see Figure 1) is the major focus of coaching in the Second Company House.

A developmental difference between first- and second-order coaching also exists. Considering that the executive’s ontic-developmental position informs his or her professional agenda, which in turn informs his or her interactions with the organization in the Company Houses, the executive may be more or less developmentally prepared to realize integrated leadership. Whether conceptualized in stage or nonstage terms, executives’ developmental equilibrium must qualify them for transcending their own self-system (Kegan’s Stage 5). Even if they are exquisite performers in the First Company House (roughly Kegan’s Stages 3 and 4), they may fail as leaders. In fact, the First Company House and the Second Company House are somewhat antithetical, in that they tap different developmental resources. While one can fine-tune a leader as a performer, one cannot always turn a performer into a leader. For this reason, what decisively matters in executive coaching, especially when undertaken for the purpose of succession management, is to be able to assess a performer’s capability in terms of the Second Company House, where integrated leadership is topical. (At present, a constructive-developmental theory of leadership does not exist.)

An optimal way in which to characterize second-order coaching is to see it as bringing about what Lewin called “reeducation” (Benne, 1976, p. 274). What is required in reframing is not only learning something new, but unlearning something overlearned (Benne, 1976, p. 274):

Lewin’s analysis assumed that effective re-education must affect the person being re-educated in three ways. The person’s cognitive structure must be altered. And for Lewin, this structure included the person’s modes of perception, his ways of seeing his physical and social worlds, as well as the facts, concepts, expectations, and beliefs with which a person thinks about the possibilities of action and the consequences of action in the phenomenal world. But re-education must involve modifying his valences and values as well as his cognitive structures. Valences and values include not alone his principles of what he should and should not do or consider doing—which along with his cognitive views of himself and his world are presented by his beliefs. They include also his attractions and aversions to his and other groups and their standards, his feelings in regard to status differences and authority, and his reactions to various sources of approval and disapproval. Re-

education finally must affect a person's motoric actions, his repertoire of behavioral skills, and the degree of a person's conscious control of his body and social movements.

This encompassing view of reeducation seems to me most germane to what is required in second-order coaching. As Lewin implicitly made clear, second-order coaching aims at changes that originate in the self and move to all floors of the Professional House. Reeducation calls for cognitive, axiological, and behavioral changes simultaneously. However, neither Lewin nor Bolman and Deal took a developmental perspective on the abilities required for reeducation. They were unaware of the ontic-developmental constraints that restrict an executive's ability to be reeducated or the coach's ability to reeducate at a particular juncture along the life span trajectory.

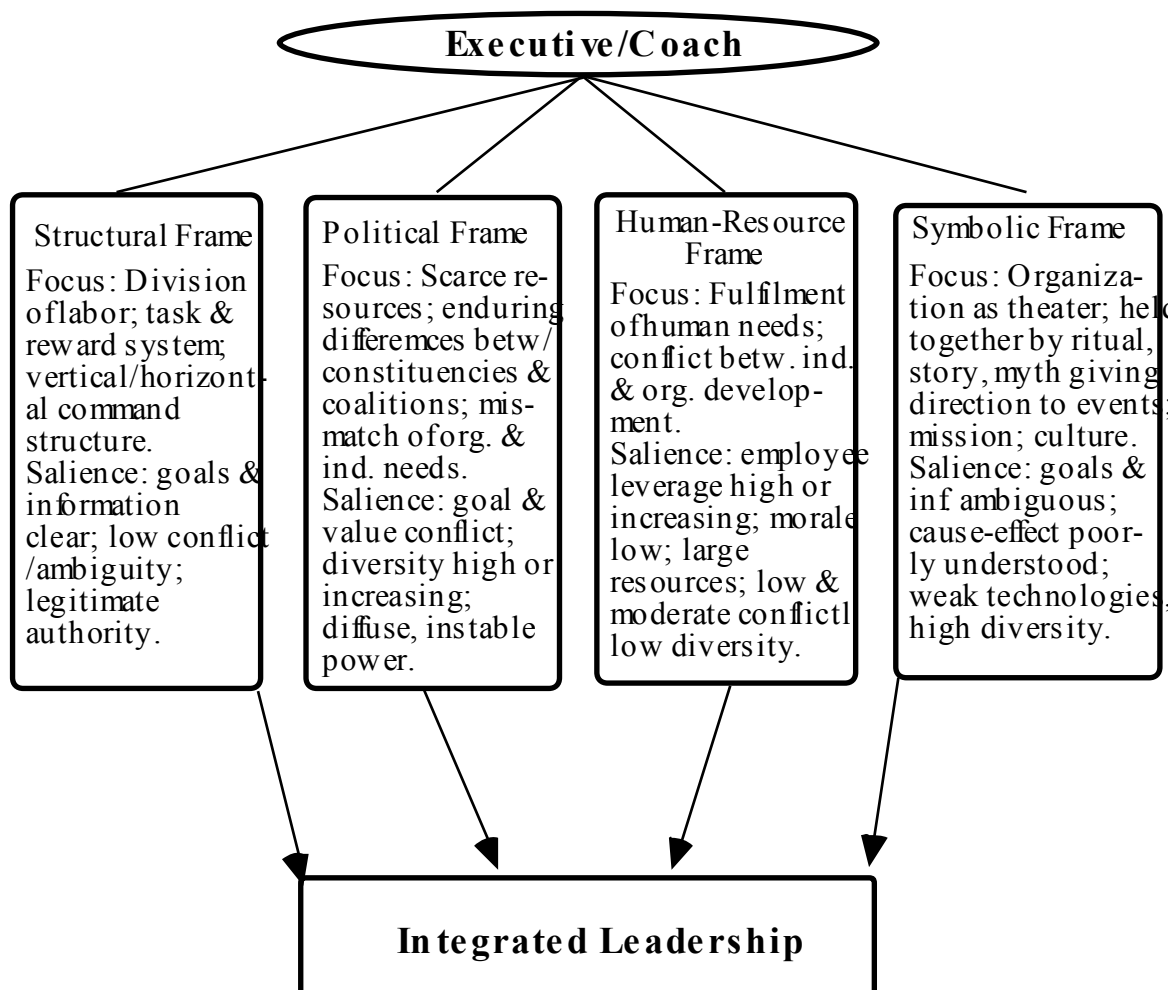


Figure 3. Incomplete maps as floors of the Second Company House (Bolman & Deal, 1991)

The issues emerging in second-order coaching all regard the executive's readiness for transcending his or her own self-system and for taking new and multiple perspectives. Since individual frames are incomplete mental maps that, when used in isolation, distort reality, such cognitive flexibility is a requirement of leadership. As shown in Figure 3, different frames are

based on different realities in an organization; they emphasize different aspects of its functioning. They also have varying degrees of salience in different situations. The structural perspective's emphasis on the organization's vertical and horizontal command structure is most salient in situations in which goals and information flow throughout the organization are clear, conflict and ambiguity are low, and there is legitimate authority. However, in times of conflict or turbulence, when scarce resources are at stake, and enduring differences between different coalitions in the organization emerge, the political frame is more apt for viewing the organization. In that situation, the executive is dealing with goal and value conflicts and possibly diffuse and unstable power. Other situations (e.g., downsizing) put in focus the fulfillment of human needs in the organization. The company is experiencing conflict between individual and organizational development, and employee morale is low. In such a situation, the most salient perspective for an executive to take may be the human-resource frame. This is again different from a situation marked by high diversity and lack of transparency of cause and effect, when goals and information are ambiguous and diversity is high. In that case, the executive as a culture bearer might benefit from taking a symbolic perspective and from using mission, symbol, ritual, or story to give direction to events in the organization.

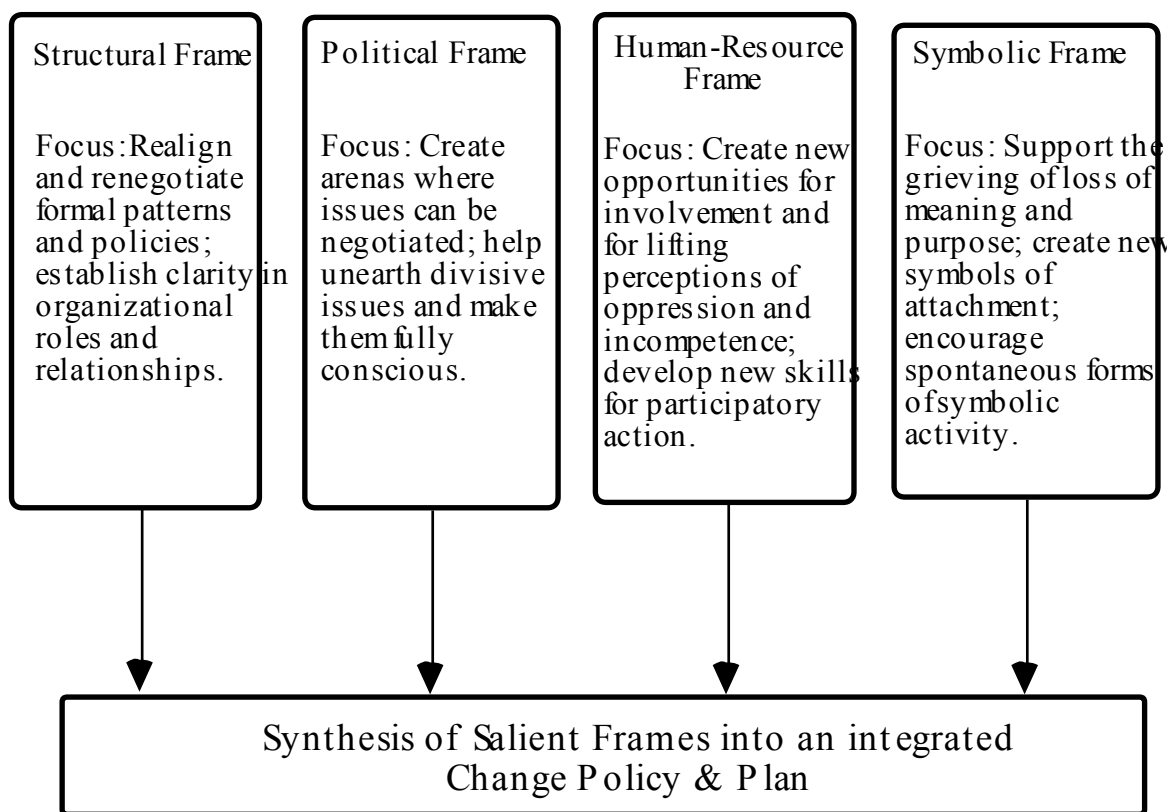


Figure 4. Initiatives for reframing organizations in the Second Company House (Bolman & Deal, 1991)

Cognitive flexibility is also required for defining policy. As shown in Figure 4, it is the task of executive management to synthesize salient frames into an integrated change policy. Each frame, once adopted, suggests a different approach to solving organizational problems. In order to ascertain the salience of a frame, certain key variables need to be scrutinized (Bolman & Deal, 1991). According to Bolman and Deal, such variables might be (a) motivation and commitment to the company, (b) technical quality of the required decision, (c) uncertainty and ambiguity experienced in the company, and (d) conflict and diversity in determining organizational functioning. As Figure 4 indicates, executive actions flowing from the structural frame have to do with realigning and renegotiating formal patterns and policies in order to establish clarity in organizational roles and relationships (i.e., the floors of the First Company House). A political frame suggests that management should create arenas where issues can be negotiated and divisive issues unearthed and made fully conscious. By contrast, adopting a human-resource frame entails the creation of new opportunities for involvement and the development of new skills for participatory action. Finally, executive endorsement of a symbolic frame would suggest the creation of new symbols of attachment (as in a family), the introduction or reinforcement of ritual, and support for grieving loss of meaning and purpose (e.g., after downsizing).

This is the arena of second-order coaching. In Table 3, I enumerate some of the questions to be asked by the coach in order to assist the executive in learning to reframe his or her organization for the sake of realizing integrated leadership.

In sum, in second-order coaching, reeducation is the primary responsibility of the coach. As indicated by Lewin, the questions in Table 3 pertain not only to changes in cognitive structure but equally to changes in the axiological viewpoints and behavioral stance of the executive in both houses.

Conclusion

In this article, I have defined coaching as the multidirectional ability to observe executive-organization interactions in two related mental spaces called the Professional House and the Company House, for the purpose of bringing about not only adaptive but transformative change. My main question has involved not how to do coaching but what happens in coaching from a cognitive-science point of view. I have not posed as a coaching guru: Within the present model, any number of how-to approaches can be elaborated, depending on the knowledge and ontic-developmental position of coach and executive. I have conceived of coaching in analogy to clinical supervision, asking "How does the executive interact with his or her client system, the organization?" As a consequence, I have viewed coaching as "professional leadership that monitors, assists, redirects, and amplifies an... [executive's] work... and promotes the conceptual, intuitive, personal, and methodological skills necessary for professional development" in the workplace (Haber, 1996, p. 34). I have amplified the classical supervisory view of coaching by integrating it with the adult-developmental literature in conceptualizing the Professional House (especially Kegan, 1982, 1994) and the theory of organizational cognition in conceptualizing the Company Houses (especially Bolman & Deal, 1991; Mintzberg, 1989).

On the basis of this theoretical foundation, I have introduced a model of executive coaching as a set of cognitive maps for describing, analyzing, understanding, and tuning coaching activity. I have conceived of these maps as tools for observing executive-organization interactions in the cognitive-affective domains called the houses. Implicitly, I have criticized cognitive-behavioral and psychodynamic approaches to coaching for failing to recognize the life span developmental dimension of executive development. Two links have been the focus of my discussion: the link between self-agenda and professional agenda in the Professional House and the reciprocal relationship between the Professional House and the Company Houses (which is built on the first link). I have emphasized the fact that coach and executive inhabit their own Professional House and Company House and that it is the developmental compatibility of the two parties to the alliance that guarantees lasting, in contrast to merely adaptive, change.

Several caveats are in order. I am aware that I have neglected a host of issues pertaining to the organizational logistics of strategic executive development, especially succession management (McCall, 1998; Sloan, 1998). However, many of the requirements of coaching defined by the present model equally pertain to the issues neglected here. Furthermore, the model, while it attempts to transcend "practice theories of coaching executives" (Witherspoon & White, 1996) in the direction of cognitive science, is in need of empirical validation (to a small extent, this validation has been attempted in Laske, 1999, on grounds prepared in Laske, 1997).

Referring back to my distinction of “agentic” and “ontic” development in the workplace, it seems to me that the ontic-developmental model of coaching outlined earlier is valuable for two reasons. First, it deepens the theoretical discourse about coaching from a psychological as well as an organizational perspective. Second, it defines ontic-developmental constraints on agentic change efforts as well as on coaching effectiveness. From my point of view, most of the competency models used in present-day coaching, however “strategically” matched to board-certified business requirements, read like wish lists without any developmental foundation whatsoever. Equally, present uses of 360-degree feedback are developmentally blind, in that they neglect the fact that an executive’s acceptance and processing of feedback depend on his or her ontic-developmental status quo (developmental grasp). For example, in cases in which an executive’s self-identity is made up of internalized valuations of others, as in Kegan’s Stage 3, use of a 360-degree feedback instrument (reinforcing that developmental position) could easily promote developmental arrest. From my constructive-developmental vantage point, I also question the utility of the notion of “executive talent” that is substantiated by nothing other than previous performance results couched in the adevelopmental language of personality traits and that neglects the executive’s developmental status and potential.

Lack of developmental know-how, which may be tolerable in coaching for performance (First Company House), is inadmissible in coaching for succession management (Second Company House), in which integrated leadership is central. For second-order coaching, then, neither a cognitive-behavioral (strictly performance-oriented) nor a psychodynamic (“personality”-oriented) strategy suffices per se. Rather a constructive-developmental approach to coaching is a prerequisite for any wide-scoped coaching strategy aiming at both Company Houses and cognizant of the level of evolving self in the Professional House. My critique does not entail, however, that cognitive-behavioral and/or psychodynamic approaches to coaching are inferior to a constructive-developmental approach. Not only are there situations in which one or the other approach is pragmatically optimal. More important, scientifically validated coaching practices will emerge only once coaches versed in all of the three approaches have reached a level of clinical-developmental expertise sufficient to indicate to them when and with whom to use what approach (Havens, 1987). At such time, professional standards for coaching will also emerge.

The uniqueness of the present model lies in the fact that it deals with what happens in coaching (not with how to do coaching) and is thus foundational (practice independent). The model is also not bound to stage theories of adult development (e.g., Kegan 1994) but equally allows for nonstage approaches (e.g., Basseches, 1984). The model assumes an intrinsic link between self-agenda and professional agenda; it sees all three coaching houses as being ontic-developmentally determined. Coaching is conceived as a personal and professional relationship that is not simply informative (promoting learning) but potentially transformative (promoting adult development).

At present, a constructive-developmental theory of coaching as applied adult development does not exist. Without such a theory, developmental coaching will remain at its present stage of infancy. Table 4 lists some of the topics in need of empirical research. In addressing some of these topics, the “agentic” and “ontic” streams of executive development could cease to be polarized, and a developmental science of human resources could be established. Clearly, the lack of ontic-developmental thinking in coaching, and in executive development generally, says something about how practitioners conceptualize adulthood, including their own. The barrier to making coaching a developmentally transformative enterprise may therefore lie in the limited view practitioners hold of their own development as adults.

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