WHITE PAPER - **The Essential Steps of Transformational Coaching for Corporate Executives**

By Brian Gast, President of Quadrant Corp

It doesn't matter what lens we look through — the lens of those that go from good to great, the lens of zero to great in exciting new industries, or the lens of those that prevail in adversity and last 100 years — one lesson stands out: Whether you prevail or fail, endure or die, whether you make it onto the Fortune 500, and whether you stay there, depends more on what you do to yourself than on what the world does to you.

Jim Collins from a May 2008 *Fortune Magazine* article.

Executive Summary

Businesses today spend millions of dollars coaching their executives. Some of these executives are high-potential employees, some are in need of remedial development, and some are in transition to new roles or environments.

Executive coaching is clearly generating results. What is not working is how these investments are being tracked and sustained — are companies getting a return on their coaching dollar? Is this coaching just surface-level or is it providing long-lasting, substantial, and sustainable change?

What follows is a summary of how Quadrant Corp. produces transformational change, for obtaining a real return on executive development investment that provides deep-level, sustainable change.

The step-by-step explanation shows how each phase is integral to the development of mature, conscious leaders. The process follows these seven steps:

1) ESTABLISHING TRUST. An essential, primary step in the process.
2) DATA COLLECTION. The different instruments used to obtain and provide quantifiable indicators
3) GOAL SETTING. A key part of the structured process.
4) ESTABLISHING THE COACHING TEAM. Getting members from their working environment involved
5) THE COACHING TECHNIQUES. An extensive and multi-disciplinary list.
6) COACHING FIELDWORK. The executive's required "homework".
7) EXECUTIVE FEEDBACK ON THEIR COACH. How clients can give feedback on their Quadrant coach.

Quadrant's Integrated Coaching Process

We are in a new era where fragile financial, economic, social, and environmental systems are showing signs of weakness. Leaders will increasingly be faced with a broader set of external challenges that require mastery of themselves, especially in the critical area of human dynamics. More than ever, corporate leaders must equip themselves with the tools and awareness they need to do their jobs well.

High quality executive coaching today must focus on techniques that do more than bring about surface-level change. They must facilitate fundamental shifts in leaders that are transformational. The current focus in leadership development on skill development and behavioral changes represent horizontal changes. Changes in belief systems, changes in the way a person makes meaning from events, and changes in self-concept are vertical, transformational changes.

The following explains step-by-step the Quadrant approach to integrated, transformational coaching. It shows the typical scope for coaching an executive at the equivalent of a Director-level or above in a Fortune 1000 company. We may make some modifications to the scope to accommodate the needs and circumstances of a particular client, but we stay as close as possible to this structure to ensure we go to the necessary depths to achieve real change.

Step 1: Establishing Trust

The Quadrant process focuses on transformational coaching, processes that change the way a person perceives themselves and others. Bringing about change at this level means accessing parts of a person that are vulnerable and often heavily guarded by a person's psyche.

That's why building a level of trust with a client that allows the client to access and expose his or her inner life is absolutely critical to a successful coaching engagement. Indeed, it is the first step in any engagement.

EXAMPLE: "DAVID" WAS AN EXECUTIVE OF A FORTUNE 1000 FIRM. AMONG HIS MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS HE HAD FINISHED FIFTH IN HIS CLASS AT A WELL-KNOWN LAW SCHOOL AND HAD 20+ YEARS EXPERIENCE WITH LARGE CORPORATIONS. HOWEVER, HIS PAST WORK WITH A COACH HAD FAILED TO TEMPER HIS INTENSITY OR HELP HIM BUILD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS. WHY? WE DISCOVERED THAT HIS PRIOR COACH HAD UNINTENTIONALLY COMMUNICATED WITH HIS BOSS WITHOUT CLEARING IT WITH HIM FIRST, BREAKING THE SANCTITY AND THEREFORE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COACH/CLIENT RELATIONSHIP. IN SHORT, HE HAD LOST TRUST.

CONTAINER BUILDING

Trust gets built with intention and process. It is the key ingredient to a process we call "container building". A tight container can handle the sometimes difficult, often vulnerable truths that, when expressed, lead to the root of issues.

At Quadrant, we build trust on two levels.

LEVEL 1 - DEFINE

The clear definition of the relationship the coach has with the client and the client's boss is integral to establishing trust. Many consultants come into coaching engagements mistrusted from the outset because they have aligned themselves too closely with the boss.

We structure our engagements so that the coach does not feed any content from a coaching session to a superior. Communications with the boss focus solely on our opinions of the executive's growth and progress toward declared goals. From the outset, it is clear that we focus on the individual executive being coached first and that we will not act as informants to superiors.

LEVEL 2 - EARN

In addition to their resume, credentials, and experience working in corporate environments, the coach's own training and personal development play an important role in eliciting the client's trust. Clients can trust a Quadrant coach because the coach can navigate for the client most inner or outer territory the client needs to cover. A Quadrant coach's ability to do this comes from the amount of personal discovery and transformation work she has personally experienced. This work enables the coach to both tell the client the truth about them and support them to go to a deeper place.

Step 2: Data Collection and Ecosystem Engagement

Not having direct feedback from those who work around an executive (those in his ecosystem) limits the effectiveness of coaching. Without it, the data collection process is influenced by the filters of the client and the coach.

For this reason, it's essential to engage the executive's stakeholders in the coaching process as early as possible.

360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

The first data collection process is a 360 Degree Feedback Instrument. This instrument identifies specific skills and how effective the executive thinks she is at using them and how effective those around her think she is at using them. The respondents typically include ten to 12 people: one or two bosses, two or three peers, four to six direct reports, and a few in the "other" category (major customers, suppliers, etc.).

The instrument we use also compares these scores to a mean from a large population of other leaders in comparable positions. Such an instrument masks the identity of the respondents, includes self-perception scoring, and is very specific and quantitative. This often is highly credible for clients and lets respondents be truthful.

If a client's in-house 360 instrument has these attributes and is not more than 90 days old we sometimes use the responses from the in-house tool.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Concurrent with our 360 instrument, we interview a subset of the respondents. These interviews are in person or by phone and last about 45 minutes. We customize the questions we ask all interviewees. The questions are designed to get a sense of the impact the client is having on other people, the nature of the relationships he has, his strong skills and his areas of skill and/or awareness development. Feedback is compiled in a way that highlights themes and captures examples with out attributing comments to individuals — we go to great lengths to ensure anonymity for all responders.

Interviews also put key members of the client's ecosystem on notice that the client is on a path of change. These processes invite candid input from people affected by the client.

The interview process also allows the coach to develop a direct relationship with those he is interviewing. We often check in with interviewees at various times during the coaching engagement to see how the client is showing up and collect more "live" data related to his performance.

Step 3: Goal Setting

Coaching only works if the client is clear with herself, the people in her ecosystem, and her coach on the results she wants. We recommend setting one or two clear and focused goals for every six-month period of coaching.

The goals flow directly from the results of the 360 Degree Feedback Instrument and the stakeholder interviews.

Some sample goals

I EFFECTIVELY SURFACE AND MANAGE CONFLICT – I ADDRESS TENSION, MISALIGNMENT, OR DISCONNECTION WITH OTHERS ON A TIMELY BASIS AND TURN CONFLICT INTO DEEPER CONNECTIONS WHERE POSSIBLE. I USE TOOLS FOR SELF-UNDERSTANDING TO BE EMPATHETIC AND ENFORCE BOUNDARIES. I HOLD MYSELF AND OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS AND COMMITMENTS.

I AM A TRUSTED LEADER AND TEAMMATE – I MAKE AND KEEP CLEAR AGREEMENTS, MY MOTIVES ARE TRANSPARENT, I APPROPRIATELY YET FULLY DISCLOSE DATA THAT IS INFLUENCING MY CHOICES, AS APPROPRIATE. I LET OTHERS SEE MY VULNERABILITY IN ORDER TO BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS. PEOPLE KNOW I AM COMMITTED TO WHAT I SAY AND MY WORDS AND ENERGY ARE CONGRUENT.

Notice goals are written as affirmative statements as though the behavior has already occurred. This puts attention on positive action, allows everyone to track this desired behavior, and helps reduce the temptation to hold onto past negative or ineffective behavior.

The coach's job is to distill the results of the feedback and combine this with his observations of the client from initial meetings. This distillation process allows the coach to guide the client as she takes in the feedback, processes it to understand how the perceptions of others relate to her behavior, and determines what is most important to work on. A coach helps interpret comments and feedback survey data.

We look at these goals during our first coaching session and do an exercise called "Interviewing the Risk Manager". This process looks at prospective change and our natural, yet unconscious, resistance to it. It is important for a client to see how negative patterns of behavior may be serving them at some level before beginning to eliminate the patterns.

Step 4: Developing the Coaching Team and Checkpoints

Just as it is important to set clear goals, we want to make sure that key bosses, board members, human resource, or talent managers are included in the coaching process. This team is a subset of the ecosystem. Their buy-in to the goals and the coaching process is important — they learn how they can support change in the client and encourage others in the ecosystem to support the client as he works on changing the way he gets things done.

We suggest three checkpoint meetings of this team during a six-month engagement.

START: TEAM MEETING I

This meeting is used to confirm that the goals the client has set are clear and are the most important areas of focus for his development as a leader This meeting is often a good time for everyone to disclose what they are working on or perhaps share stories of what work they have done in the past in order to build empathy and mutual support in a process of continuous learning and improvement.

MONTH 3: TEAM MEETING II

The team talks about the client's progress and the feedback they are getting from others regarding the client. Goals for the next three months are refined. This is a wonderful opportunity to anchor in any positive changes that have been made and leave old issues, conflicts, and behaviors behind.

MONTH 6: TEAM MEETING III

The team talks about the client's progress, a development plan post-coaching, perhaps further coaching work, and related goals.

Each of these meetings is led by the client. The client offers his own assessment of where things should go and progress made toward goals. The client asks for specific feedback — positive and developmental — from other participants. The coach offers his assessment of progress and suggestions on how the client's teammates can support further change or integration of new behaviors.

Step 5: The Coaching Sessions

The Quadrant coaching processes can be sorted into three categories: 1) reframe, 2) self-mastery, and 3) skillful means.

REFRAME

A critical part of effective coaching is changing perspective or shifting the paradigm in order to see new options. New perspectives or a "reframe" leads to new ways of looking at old problems. It allows us to solve problems at different levels than the ones at which they were created.

To facilitate a reframe we use a process called "Shadow Work" developed by personal growth pioneer Cliff Barry[1] . This process allows a person metaphorically to step out of their inner or outer life, observe their life situation, and use processes to make changes. With Shadow Work we facilitate a reframe by helping the client see "shadows" that drive behavior and responses to increases in vulnerability. When viewed through the shadow side of ourselves the world looks very different — often clearer. We are then able to address the points of resistance inside ourselves and make better choices.

The term shadow is similar to the Jungian concept of the "personal shadow" — on a simplified level this is akin to a blind spot. Our shadow contains the parts of ourselves that we don't like and even deny. These unconscious drivers are powerful influences in our lives, yet we don't even know they are at work.

This part of our coaching process is one of the sources of "ah ha's" and transformation. Here a client holds old beliefs (some of which she didn't know she had) up to the light and examines them. How are these beliefs serving me? Do I want to risk challenging them in order to get something I really want? This insight also allows them to see the impact they are having on others.

SELF-MASTERY

Leadership maturity begins with self-understanding, which then leads to self-mastery. By self-mastery we mean a person's ability to be more present to themselves and the world around them in order to make more aware, informed, and effective choices.

In this part of the coaching process, we help our clients understand their inner landscape and their "personal lens": The collection of beliefs that influence the way they perceive the world around them and make meaning from external events (i.e., their values and ways of interpreting). We are guides to helping clients understand their inner landscape, the way they process information so they leave the coaching process with a "User's Guide" to themselves.

We introduce them to key conscious and unconscious parts or aspects of themselves. Mastery over these will move them closer to their coaching goals. We often use a model and process called "Voice Dialogue" developed by therapists Hal and Sidra Stone[2] over 35 years ago to help improve relationships. Mastery comes through conscious relationships with various parts or voices that make up the self.

[1] Barry, Cliff. "What Is Shadow Work?" Shadow Work. 28 May 2008. Shadow Work Seminars Inc. 8 July 2008. <http://www.shadowwork.com/about.html - what>

[2] Stone, Hal and Sidra. "The Basic Elements of Voice Dialogue, Relationship, and the Psychology of Selves. " Voice Dialogue International. Voice Dialogue International. 8 July 2008. < http://www.delos-inc.com/Reading_Room/Articles/1/index.htm>

SKILLFUL MEANS

High-performing executives are typically continuous learners. They like to learn new approaches and models. We believe that integrated coaching involves engaging the intellect as well as the emotional and unconscious aspects of a person. Models provide maps for sorting and retaining information for clients who may be new to personal development work or simply like visual structures when learning new concepts.

One model we use to teach empathy and conflict management is Marshall Rosenberg's "Non-Violent Communication" (NVC)[3]. NVC uses a four-step process for relating to others through establishing an emotional connection and offering empathy. It also focuses attention on the core unmet personal needs of the client and the people with which the client is in dialogue. NVC brings awareness to how sharing judgments can put others on the defensive. It also asks us to communicate how we are feeling and what needs are unmet in us when others act in certain ways. Finally, the model encourages us to make clear requests.

To work live dilemmas and gain new perspective we use the Four Gateways Model developed by Tom Daly[4]. This model is based on the four archetypes that Carl Jung identified and was later used to develop the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The model is a simple way to surface and characterize key internal parts of a client to increase self-understanding. Like most of the tools we use to guide transformational change, they are taught to the client so she can use the tool for self-coaching in the future.

Step 6: Fieldwork

Coaching is more effective than a personal growth training or week-long leadership development program because coach and client have the opportunity to apply new insights and tools to real-life situations. Fieldwork allows the client to do an "eco-check" to see how new behaviors, ways of being, or ways of seeing play out in his environment and to integrate internal shifts. Future coaching sessions can be used to address any backsliding that occurs and to break old, entrenched patterns.

Every coaching session ends with an assignment to observe or act on something that will help integrate new understanding. Every session begins with assessing how the client did with his fieldwork. We ask about what they learned and anchor in finer distinctions and new learning by helping the client clarify what happened when he tried something out.

Fieldwork is an opportunity to practice new tools, clean up collateral damage in relationships, or simply increase self-awareness. Examples of fieldwork include reading an article that relates to a coaching session or the client's goals or committing to following through on a conversation with a direct report or other colleague.

[3] Rosenberg, Marshall. "Conflict Resolution." Nonviolent Communication. Puddle Dancer Press. 8 July 2008. < http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/conflict_resolution.htm>

[4] Daly, Tom. "The 4 Gateways." 4 Gateways Coaching. 2004. 4 Gateways Coaching. 8 July 2008. <http://www.4gatewayscoaching.com/gateways.htm>

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

The benefits of fieldwork can only be realized if the client does it. We ask all our clients to engage an Accountability Partner to support and challenge him and provide an opportunity for the client to process learnings from the fieldwork outside his coaching sessions. We provide clients with criteria for selecting an Accountability Partner and a protocol to be used in their weekly "check-ins" with his partner.

The combination of fieldwork and an Accountability Partner provide live situations and real world feedback for the client, excellent fodder for coaching sessions, and continuity from one session to the next. The client's ecosystem is highly engaged in the process of growth and change. This is not an insular, secret or intellectual exercise.

Step 7: Coach Evaluations

We focus on our own accountability and act as models for our clients. We make sure we start and end our coaching sessions on time, send follow-up material in a timely fashion, offer direct feedback when asked, and are prepared for our work with clients.

Clients have at least two formal opportunities to give feedback on our coaches:

1) After 30 days (typically just after the 360 debrief/goal setting meeting)
2) After six months of coaching. In many engagements we collect feedback after the first three months of coaching.

This feedback is brief, simple and offers the client an opportunity to set and maintain high standards and expectations of our coaches and the coaching process. We ask for feedback on the standards we hold for ourselves but also on how the process is working so we can make any necessary course corrections.

Step 8: The Final 360

The final measure of success involves returning to the beginning of the process and comparing leadership effectiveness before and after the coaching process. We typically do this after 12 months of coaching. Enough time has passed to solidify new patterns and perceptions of members of the ecosystem.

Given the Coaching Team meetings and occasional coach check-ins with 360 respondents along the way, there should be few surprises in the results of the 360 degree feedback. The chief benefit is the participation of members from the broad ecosystem and to obtain an objective measurement of progress. This discipline and accountability caps off a coaching engagement with a final degree of professionalism and measurability.

Timeframe and location

COACHING PROGRAMS WORK BEST WITHIN A SPECIFIC TIME PERIOD THAT FOCUSES ON CURRENT ISSUES. THIS ALLOWS THE EXECUTIVE TO INTEGRATE NEW BEHAVIOR IN A REAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

MOST COACHING PROGRAMS ARE FROM SIX TO 12 MONTHS. ALTHOUGH NOT ALWAYS THE CASE, THE MORE SENIOR THE EXECUTIVE, THE LONGER THE ENGAGEMENT TENDS TO BE. THIS IS BECAUSE ISSUES TEND TO GET MORE COMPLEX AT HIGHER LEVELS.

SHORT COACHING PROGRAMS OFTEN YIELD A LOW RETURN ON INVESTMENT, AS COACHING THAT LASTS LESS THAN SIX MONTHS DOES NOT ALLOW ENOUGH TIME FOR REAL CHANGE.

QUADRANT COACHING PROGRAMS FOLLOW AN EVERY-OTHER-WEEK MEETING SCHEDULE. MEETINGS TAKE PLACE IN PERSON IF LOCATION PERMITS. IF CLIENT SCHEDULES ALLOW, WE ENCOURAGE OUR CLIENTS TO COME TO OUR OFFICES. IT PROVIDES A NEUTRAL LOCATION AWAY FROM THE OFFICE WHERE THE EXECUTIVE CAN RELAX AND FEEL MORE OPEN.

IN THE CASE OF OUT-OF-TOWN CLIENTS OR SCHEDULING CONFLICTS, COACHING SESSIONS TAKE PLACE OVER THE PHONE. FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS STILL TAKE PLACE EVERY SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS. THESE IN-PERSON MEETINGS LAST BETWEEN THREE AND FOUR HOURS WITH REGULAR MEETINGS LASTING 90 MINUTES.

IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO ALLOW MORE THAN TWO WEEKS BETWEEN COACHING SESSIONS, AS THIS WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

Brian Gast

Brian Gast launched Quadrant Corp in 2001 after meeting other corporate leaders like him who were looking for something more than the typical weekend or weeklong training workshops. Quadrant provides individual coaching and team facilitation to clients who range from those on the Fortune 1000 - such as Roche Pharmaceuticals, Cisco Systems, and The Walt Disney Company - to mid-sized, regional companies.

Through its relationship with YPO-WPO (previously Young Presidents' Organization), an organization for people who find themselves in the CEO chair before the age of 40, Quadrant works with high-achieving, mid-life executives navigating personal and professional transitions.

Before founding Quadrant, Brian helped co-found a publicly traded telecom services company. He was CEO of this company for more than seven years. After this success, he went on to co-found and lead two other companies. This personal experience has proven invaluable to the coaching techniques and approaches Quadrant's coaches provide today.

Brian now dedicates his life to bridging the gap between the world of personal growth and the highly demanding
professional demands on business leaders today. In total, he has worked over 20 years in executive positions in a number of companies and studied leadership for over 30 years.

Learn more...

To learn more about Quadrant's clients, Associate Coaches, and program offerings visit www.quadcoach.com. You may also want to call Brian Gast today to do a side-by-side comparison on your current coaching processes and Quadrant's approach.

If you would like to speak directly with Brian, call (303) 707-1340 or email him at bgast@quadcoach.com.