



# EXECUTIVE COACHING MODELS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

*Tools to unlock leadership potential and enable meaningful transformation.*

*- Ramesh Ranjan*



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## INTRODUCTION

### Coaching for a New Era of Leadership

In an era defined by complexity, disruption, and rapid transformation, organizations are increasingly turning to executive coaching to develop adaptive, self-aware, and high-impact leaders. Executive coaching has moved from being a remedial intervention to a strategic enabler of performance, transformation, and growth. This white paper explores the evolving landscape of executive coaching, its distinctions from mentoring, and dives deep into six of the most widely adopted coaching models that help leaders navigate change, align with purpose, and unlock their full potential.

According to the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the global coaching industry is valued at over \$20 billion and growing steadily. Their latest study reveals that 86% of companies report a positive return on investment from coaching engagements, and 70% of individuals report improved performance, relationships, and communication skills. Moreover, a 2022 report by Harvard Business Review highlighted that over 50% of Fortune 500 companies use executive coaching as a part of their leadership development strategy.

"The best leaders are great learners. They don't just work harder—they work smarter, with clarity, reflection, and purpose." — **Dr. Marshall Goldsmith**



## RESEARCH INSIGHTS & INDUSTRY VALIDATION

- A Harvard Business Review study found that 48% of organizations use coaching to develop high-potential talent.
- The International Coaching Federation (ICF) reports that 80% of people who receive coaching report increased self-confidence.
- According to Korn Ferry, companies that adopt executive coaching see a 5.7x return on investment.

McKinsey notes that coaching significantly improves leadership behaviors, which in turn correlates with higher team engagement and organizational performance.

## UNDERSTANDING COACHING AND MENTORING

- **Coaching** is a structured, goal-oriented partnership focused on unlocking an individual's potential to maximize their performance. It is future-focused, often involving deep questioning, listening, and feedback to support behavioral change and leadership development.
- **Mentoring**, by contrast, involves a more experienced person guiding someone less experienced, often sharing personal stories, domain expertise, and career advice. It's usually informal, longer-term, and more relational.

Aspect	Coaching	Mentoring
Focus	Performance, behavior change	Career development, knowledge transfer
Timeframe	Short-to-medium term	Long-term relationship
Orientation	Future-focused, outcome-driven	Past experience and wisdom-based
Role of Practitioner	Facilitator, not an adviser	Adviser, role model
Process	Structured, confidential sessions	Informal conversations



## WHY EXECUTIVE COACHING?

- Leadership Impact: Coaching enhances self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and decision-making.
- Accelerated Development: Leaders evolve faster with structured support.
- Behavioral Change: Sustainable transformation in attitudes and actions.
- Retention and Engagement: Coached leaders often foster healthier work cultures.
- Organizational Outcomes: According to ICF, 86% of companies recoup their coaching investment, and 70% report improved work performance and communication.

"Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them." — **Sir John Whitmore**



## WHEN AND HOW TO USE EXECUTIVE COACHING

### When to Use:

- Leadership transitions.
- Performance plateaus.
- High-potential leadership development.
- Cultural transformation.
- Strategic decision-making support.

### How to Implement:

- Define coaching objectives.
- Match leaders with certified executive coaches.
- Use stakeholder feedback for baseline insights.
- Structure periodic coaching sessions (typically 6–12 months).
- Measure progress through behavioral indicators and feedback.



## TOP 6 EXECUTIVE COACHING MODELS

### 1. GROW Model (Goal – Reality – Options – Will)

**Developer:** Sir John Whitmore

This foundational model is structured around four stages:

- **Goal:** Define the short-term and long-term objectives the coachee wants to achieve.
- **Reality:** Examine the current situation, obstacles, and challenges.
- **Options:** Explore possible courses of action, solutions, and resources.
- **Will:** Establish concrete commitments and next steps.

**Use case:** Best suited for improving performance, setting goals, and guiding structured problem-solving. It is widely used in corporate coaching because of its simplicity and action-oriented nature.

#### Case Study : GROW Model at a Tech Startup

A mid-level engineering leader at a rapidly scaling SaaS startup was struggling with time management and team productivity. A certified coach used the GROW model to help him:

- Set clear goals for personal productivity and team delegation.
- Examine his current bottlenecks (Reality).
- Explore solutions like time-blocking, process redesign, and team empowerment (Options).
- Commit to action and weekly check-ins (Will).

**Outcome:** Within three months, the leader reported a 30% improvement in team efficiency and successfully mentored two junior leads.



## 2. CLEAR Model (Contract – Listen – Explore – Action – Review)

Developer: **Peter Hawkins**

- **Contract:** Set clear expectations, goals, boundaries, and outcomes.
- **Listen:** Build rapport through active and empathetic listening.
- **Explore:** Delve into the emotional and psychological aspects, identifying patterns and blind spots.
- **Action:** Co-create steps for change that align with the leader's context.
- **Review:** Reflect on learning, outcomes, and what still needs work.

**Use case:** Especially effective for deep leadership transformation and enhancing self-awareness, relationship dynamics, and long-term behavior change.

### Case Study : CLEAR Model in a Leadership Transition

An FMCG company appointed a new business unit head with limited prior leadership experience. Using the CLEAR model, the coach established a contract for expectations, created space for self-reflection, and co-designed a transformation roadmap.

**Outcome:** Over six months, the leader improved team alignment, scored high on 360-degree feedback, and delivered a 12% increase in revenue.





### 3. OSCAR Model (Outcome – Situation – Choices – Actions – Review)

**Focus: Solution-focused coaching**

- **Outcome:** Define success with specific, measurable objectives.
- **Situation:** Understand the current reality with clarity and objectivity.
- **Choices:** Identify options that build on strengths and overcome constraints.
- **Actions:** Plan actionable steps to move forward.
- **Review:** Evaluate progress, celebrate wins, and recalibrate where necessary.

**Use case:** Effective for coaching in operational or team settings. Promotes a positive mindset by emphasizing progress and possibilities.

#### Case Study OSCAR Model for Frontline Manager Development

A manufacturing firm used the OSCAR model in their internal coaching program for plant supervisors. The focus was on workplace safety and team communication.

**Outcome:** Supervisors identified specific outcomes (reduction in safety incidents), made small changes in shift handovers, and reviewed results weekly. Incident rates dropped by 40% in five months.



## 4. FUEL Model (Frame – Understand – Explore – Layout)

### Application: Performance and business coaching

- Frame the conversation by clarifying goals and intentions.
- Understand the current reality by gathering facts, emotions, and perspectives.
- Explore alternative outcomes, new insights, and fresh thinking.
- Layout the success plan with specific actions and timelines.

**Use case:** Ideal for structured corporate environments, especially when coaching direct reports or navigating performance issues.

### Case Study : FUEL Model in Sales Leadership Coaching

A retail sales director was facing declining team morale and inconsistent performance. A coach used the FUEL model to frame the problem, understand systemic issues, explore possibilities like re-incentivizing top performers, and lay out a 90-day turnaround strategy.

**Outcome:** The director restructured team KPIs, implemented new engagement rituals, and saw a 22% uplift in sales conversions.



## 5. COACH Model (Connect – Outcome – Awareness – Course – Highlights)

Developer: Keith Webb

- **Connect:** Establish psychological safety and trust.
- **Outcome:** Agree on the coaching topic and desired results.
- **Awareness:** Use reflective questions to increase insight and learning.
- **Course:** Design practical, realistic action steps.
- **Highlights:** Capture key takeaways to reinforce growth.

**Use case:** Great for leadership and life coaching, especially in contexts where internal insight and learning are paramount.

### Case Study : COACH Model for Personal Leadership Growth

A young entrepreneur engaged a coach using the COACH model to improve work-life balance and decision-making clarity. Through awareness-building and reflective questioning, the coachee identified habits contributing to burnout.

**Outcome:** With customized course corrections and regular highlights to track learning, the entrepreneur implemented boundary-setting rituals and reported increased focus and wellbeing.





## 6. Stakeholder-Centered Coaching (Marshall Goldsmith)

**Developer:** Dr. Marshall Goldsmith

This method focuses on measurable behavioral change involving key stakeholders in the process. Key steps include:

- Involving stakeholders to identify development areas
- Choosing 1–2 high-impact behaviors for change
- Requesting "feedforward" instead of feedback (future suggestions instead of past critique)
- Monthly check-ins and stakeholder validation
- Measuring progress based on stakeholder perception improvement

"Leadership is not about what you say. It's about what others hear and how they grow from your presence." — **Dr. Marshall Goldsmith**

**Use case:** Ideal for senior executives and leadership teams. It is research-backed, quantifiable, and highly impactful for visible leadership change.

### **Case Study : Stakeholder-Centered Coaching with a C-Level Executive**

A CFO of a global pharma company received feedback about being too transactional and directive. Through Marshall Goldsmith's Stakeholder-Centered Coaching, the CFO:

- Engaged 8 stakeholders for feedforward
- Focused on "being more collaborative"
- Conducted monthly check-ins for input

**Outcome:** After nine months, 7 out of 8 stakeholders rated the CFO as having significantly improved. The approach also helped boost cross-functional alignment during quarterly planning.







## CONCLUSION: COACHING AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Executive coaching is no longer a luxury; it's a strategic necessity. In an uncertain world, leaders must continuously reflect, learn, and evolve. Whether it's through goal-driven structures like GROW or stakeholder-oriented frameworks like Goldsmith's model, executive coaching offers a customized pathway to leadership excellence.

Organizations that embed coaching into their leadership culture not only nurture individual growth but also cultivate collective transformation.

"The best leaders are not those with all the answers, but those who ask the right questions and empower others to find their answers." — **Anonymous**

By embracing coaching models thoughtfully and systematically, we equip today's leaders to be the change-makers of tomorrow.

## AUTHOR:

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Ramesh Ranjan is a distinguished leader with over 40 years of expertise in HR. As the Co-Founder & CEO of the award-winning Global HR Community (GHRC), recognized with the India 5000 MSME Award, they have made significant contributions to the field. Honored as one of Silicon India's Top 10 Leadership Coaches for 2023, [Your Name] mentors startups through IIT Bombay's Eureka! program and is among the MG 25 India Coaches selected by Dr. Marshall Goldsmith.

Their career spans leadership roles at renowned organizations like Schneider Electric, Chevron Texaco, and Praxair India. As the author of *\*Making People Count\**, with a foreword by Dave Ulrich, and a professor at institutions such as Prague University, [Your Name] is passionate about driving transformation and shaping future leaders.



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