

During my 25 years as a manager, leader and business owner, I have seen many different initiatives enter the corporate arena and almost as many of them fizzle and leave.

However, what has never dimmed is the call for effective leadership.

For me, it is really not surprising that my coaching work centers on leadership.

I operate from the hypothesis that 'Coaching is Leadership and Leadership is Coaching'.

In the early nineties, during a year long Executive Development Program, I was introduced to and intrigued by the work of Meg Wheatley and her book *Leadership and the New Science*.

What struck me most strongly was her assertion that 'leadership is always dependent on context'. As the year unfolded, I witnessed how true and powerful that assertion was.

However, my next questions were:

1. How could coaching really be brought to organisations as a viable initiative with direct bottom line return and not just a passing fad?
2. To what extent is coaching different than other initiatives we experienced in the 80s and 90s?

In effect, what is the business case for coaching and how do we create long term sustainability for the power of coaching and a coach approach in business?

It is clear that Total Quality Management, Re-engineering, Process Management and the concept of empowerment brought value.

They got to the heart of the 'what and how' or the 'content and process' of the work, task, job or role.

However, something was missing and more was needed. Previous research conducted pointed to the people. In James Champy's book *Re-engineering Management*, he clearly linked the failures of a missing focus to:

- The people and the context
- Leadership is dependent on context
- Coaching connects with the 'who' or 'context' of the individual.

So how do we pull it all these different ideas together?

Leadership development involves two prime areas - leadership of self and developing the capability for others.

To bring a practical focus to this we must look at how this is done and consider, what is leadership?

There are many different leadership models in existence built on varying definitions of leadership. I'm not convinced that one is right or wrong or better than the next. I have seen many applied with positive results. I'm convinced the most powerful are those that begin with the individual and expand to focus and support the development of leadership in others.

Corporations will continuously strive to improve their leadership competencies. Whether working one on one or with teams, groups and organisations, where there is leadership there is coaching.

*A synopsis of a keynote address to the ICF Australasian Conference in Sydney 2003
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