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Vision without action is a hallucination: Group coaching and strategy implementation

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Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world.
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A good plan implemented today is better than a perfect plan implemented tomorrow.
—George Patton

Even if you're on the right track you'll get run over if you just sit there.
—Will Rogers

INTRODUCTION

The challenge for many senior executives is to get everyone, from top to bottom, on board to make their organizations work—to implement whatever decisions have been made. How to go about it, however, is another matter. Without the presence of a team culture, it is very likely that executives will do things their own way, often resulting in uncoordinated, even conflicting decisions and actions. But if executives behave like ships passing in the night, they may act in ways that are not in the best interest of the organization or themselves. Implementation of strategy will suffer. The following case study illustrates how group coaching can be a methodology second to none, to have executives sing on the same page—and accelerate execution. It is an intervention methodology increasingly utilized by premier strategic consulting firms.

SHIPS PASSING IN THE NIGHT: A CASE STUDY

Pushed to action by rapid evolution in the petroleum industry, the executive team of a global energy company knew they had to transform their solid but complacent organization into a high-tech, sustainability-oriented firm. To facilitate this transition, the CEO (chief executive officer) hired Jim, a brilliant professor of engineering, as the new chief knowledge officer (CKO). Around the same time, another executive was asked to join the team as vice president for technology, products, and services. John was an experienced executive in the petroleum industry who was transferred in a secondment from one of the major shareholders to put into operation a large offshore drilling project. These two new additions worsened, however, what was already a rather ineffective decision making body. True to form, within several months of Jim and John's arrivals, war had broken out between these outsiders and the other members of the executive team.

Many of the other members of the executive team complained bitterly about Jim's disorganized, undisciplined, and even rude behavior. In particular, his way of dealing with e-mails and other forms of communication was seen as irresponsible. He seemed to respond when he felt like it, or not at all. There was a similar problem with executive team meetings; sometimes he just did not show up. Furthermore, what aggravated the relationships among the executive team members was the rivalry between John and the CEO—the former coming across as a know-it-all. At each meeting, there

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seemed to be a competition between the two of them to determine who was right about minor matters instead of focusing on the real, important issues.

Within a short period of time, the two newcomers were labeled with all that was wrong with the organization, the assigned scapegoats for the company's mediocre performance. What did not help was that the company was heavily committed to its offshore energy project, making it necessary to meet specific deadlines—and pressures were mounting. Although overruns would be extremely costly, there seemed to be a lack of urgency among the members of the executive team to move forward with the project. Instead, turf fights for resources were more important than alignment and working for the common good. Open, constructive communication was missing. Trust was completely absent. All of the executive team members were failing in the execution of its intended goals.

A Preliminary Team Audit

As matters were not getting any better, the CEO decided to bring everyone on the senior executive team together for what he called a high performance team intervention. The objective would be to reflect on their interpersonal relationships, work practices, leadership styles, and the organizational culture, guided by an experienced external group facilitator. The underlying agenda, however, was to create alignment and become more effective in implementing the corporate transformation process.

The chosen group coach had a solid business background, but also had training in the psychodynamic approach to executive coaching. This meant that not only was she interested in how individuals experienced the team's interactions, but she was also prepared to explore the less visible elements—the underlying behavior patterns and group dynamics that motivate behavior. Her main task would be, however, to help the executive team members to become more aligned and more effective in decision-making and implementation. To get a sense of what was percolating among the members of the executive team, the facilitator requested to interview each of the executive team members prior to the intervention.

Going through this interview process, it did not take the group coach very long to figure out that Jim and John had turned into lightning rods for all that were wrong with the executive team and the company. Although most of the people she interviewed admitted that Jim was brilliant and had come up with some truly innovative ideas, they also were unanimous in complaining that he was a difficult person to work with. The same comments were made of John, who was seen by all as a very experienced executive, but was also perceived as a company spy for the major shareholder.

Although the alienating behaviors of these two executives did not help towards group integration, many other factors were identified as responsible for the mediocre performance of the company and the stagnating transformation process. Several executive team members noted their frustration after a consulting firm specializing in strategy and corporate transformation had presented them with what seemed like a logical action plan. But when it came to strategy implementation, very little of that plan materialized. Each executive seemed to read from a different page, and this lack of alignment among the top team, as a consequence, had spread a blanket of confusion and disengagement over the rest of the organization. The absence of clear objectives and agreed processes resulted in unsuccessful execution of the organization's strategy.

While digging deeper during her interviews, the group coach identified many other problems with the executive team dynamics. To start with, most of them agreed that all too often their meetings were a waste of time, describing them as being calcified, unfocused, ritualistic, and ripe with unresolved overt and underground conflict. Participation was uneven, leading to false consensus. Collegiality and collaboration were completely missing. Instead, silo behavior was the norm, with each executive fighting for the scarce resources available in the company and protecting their own P&Ls (profit and loss figures). Responsibility, lines of reporting, and accountability for the execution of activities were not clear. Furthermore, knowledge sharing among the people in the key functions or divisions was non-existent. Clearly, the lack of coordination of their activities, divergent priorities, and an absence of specific guidelines to shape execution activities and decisions meant that each executive acted in his or her own way. Notably, most executives admitted that these problems were longstanding and had been going on for several years—long before Jim and John had arrived on the scene.

It was also pointed out that the existing corporate culture did not encourage their employees to really have voice. A recent survey had shown that the majority of the employees were very reluctant to speak their minds, or to constructively challenge management practices out of fear of retribution. Some executives even mentioned that the corporate culture had a Darwinian quality, in which each person was out for him- or herself. Subtly, some blame was even attributed to the CEO, who was described as being conflict-avoidant, unable to put his foot down to properly manage group conflicts. It became clear that he preferred dealing with his executives on a one-to-one basis, but was not able to create alignment and unify the team as a whole.

All in all, due to the executive team members' poor implementation capabilities, company morale was low, the transformation process was stalled, the offshore project was facing expensive delays, and they were on a fast track into the red. As the executive coach summed up in her own interview notes, the general consensus was that the executive committee was not really a team but a group of ships passing in the night, each with a different destination. They were unable to drive a consistent action plan deep down into the organization and to unify and fully engage their employees towards execution of its organizational objectives.

In her exchanges with the members of the executive team, the group coach had explained that she would ask each of them (as a way of providing her with more information) to complete two 360-degree questionnaires, one pertaining to the business environment, the other one being of a more private nature, to be completed by both family and friends. These feedback results were going to be shared and discussed at the team intervention, as a means of providing more information about each person's leadership style, working practices in the company, and contribution to the team. Most important, it was to bring them together for a real discussion on team alignment and strategy execution.

The Group Coaching Intervention

At the opening of the team intervention, the group coach gave a short lecture about high performance organizations and effective leadership. Subsequently (to break the ice and instill somewhat of a playful mood), she asked each member of the executive committee to draw a self-portrait, a picture of how they saw themselves as it related to what was in their head, heart, stomach, past, present, work, and leisure. After initial grumbling and skepticism towards such (seemingly useless) activity, all of the executives soon became quite immersed in this task. When all the self-portraits were completed and displayed on the wall, the group coach began the session by asking Jim if he would like to kick off the process by telling the group about his drawing. He readily agreed, as this was the type of creative exercise with which he was comfortable.

Using Narrative

Through the narrative of his self-portrait, the group of executives learned some surprising and adventurous facts about Jim. There were even a few laughs as Jim recounted some of the outrageous things he had done as a student. Next, the group coach focused on Jim's 360-degree survey feedback reports, which Jim, like the others in the group, had been given the night before. She asked Jim what puzzled him about his observers' feedback, and if there was anything in the report that was not new to him. Spontaneously, he responded that he had been quite shocked to discover how he came across to other members of the team. The group coach gave Jim time to express his doubts and confusion about the reports. She referred back to his self-portrait drawing, asking Jim if he could say more about himself. What got him to where he was now? Reflecting on his life, what were some of the highlights and lowlights? What might account for the group's perception that he was irresponsible, uninterested in others, and hostile?

Through further exploration of Jim's personal narrative, the members of the executive team learned from Jim that although his grandfather had been a brilliant academic, his father had followed a different drum—his life marked not by success but by failure and the disappointment of one job after another. Jim explained how he had spent a great deal of time with his beloved grandfather, who found in young Jim the enthusiasm and curiosity that his own son seemed to lack. Clearly, the grandfather had been Jim's role model, encouraging him to pursue an academic career. Jim told the members of the executive team that his identity as an academic had always been the most important thing to him—something not always easy to nurture within the pragmatic business environment he was now working in. Particularly in his present role, he felt that his creativity could be quickly stifled, so he did whatever he could to protect what he called the "spark."

A Psychodynamic Lens

Listening to him, it became quite clear that Jim's father represented some kind of "negative identity."Jim had an underlying fear that he would become like his old man—wasting away his talents. Also, from his presentation, the group could see that two systems—family and organizational—were in conflict within Jim. The memories of his grandfather supported and rewarded his persona of the free but absent-minded genius, whereas the organizational system he had just joined was trying to shackle that creativity. In order to protect his "spark," he reacted aggressively, albeit unconsciously, and kept his fellow executive team members at bay and resisted all feedback to change his behavior. Now, looking at the information from the 360-degree feedback reports, and listening to the challenging but supportive comments from the group, he came to realize that not only did other people see this behavior as obstructive, but it also aggravated existing problems with the team and the company. In protecting his independence, he made it even more difficult for the executive team to come together as a team. Furthermore, his behavior negatively affected the organization.

As for the other members of the team, over the course of this discussion they realized they never really understood Jim. As he talked about how he experienced the organization, the other participants gained a better understanding of how to make the most of the genius in their midst. It was true that he did not think the way they did, but it was obvious that he was as dedicated as they were to turning the company around. Now the challenge was how they could use his considerable talents to their advantage. How could they get the best out of him, drawing out his strengths and minimizing disruptive behavior?

Giving Feedback

One of the outcomes of the team intervention was that Jim realized that he was part of a larger system and that his behavior reinforced already prevalent silo behavior, prevented alignment, and hampered execution. Now, encouraged by the other members of the group, Jim listed several specific behavior changes he would focus on to facilitate communication and collaboration with the other team members. He confirmed that he was truly committed to effective execution of the company's intended strategy and to bring about the transformation process. In response, the others voiced their understanding and support of his need to protect the "spark." After all, it was Jim's ability to think differently that could become a powerful source of new ideas and competitive advantage.

Subsequently, each member of the executive team, including the CEO, went through the same process. Each one took the "hot seat" to tell his or her story and was given constructive feedback by the group. Each individual session was concluded with an action plan to identify ways in which he or she could personally contribute to the team's alignment and become better at execution.

John was given feedback about his perceived overly competitive behavior. He was also told that he could come across as patronizing to others, a behavior he himself was unaware of. For his part, he expressed that he often felt excluded from the other executives' meetings. This confession led to an open and constructive discussion wherein team members shared their fears that he may have been a "spy" for the major shareholder. This exchange gave John the opportunity to assure the team that his first priority (and according to him that was also true for the shareholder) was to make the offshore project a success. But what was most encouraging during this exchange was that the other team members were able to clarify John's motives, which turned out to be strongly aligned with theirs.

The CEO also received some direct but constructive feedback on what he could do to be more effective. In particular, he was asked to run his meetings with a shared agenda that would engage all parties involved and with specific action recommendations at the end to ensure clear process and accountability. Comments were also made that he could be less ''nice'' and more prepared to say no to people, when necessary. He came to realize that his tendency towards conflict avoidance created conflicts.

By going through the group coaching process, all of the executives gained considerable insights into their own and others' strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the session, all the executive team members had developed personal action plans for change—based on their individual feedback reports as well as the comments from the group. They promised to coach each other whenever one of them was straying from his or her specific action points. In addition, for the team-as-a-whole, they had their first real debate to obtain clarity as to where the company had to go in order to be successful, and committed to a number of actions to take to become better at execution.

Through the intervention, the executive team started to act, for the first time, like a real team. They were now also prepared to work together—to align themselves behind the intended action plan—realizing that implementation, and not protectionism, was the most difficult part of their job. They were now able to communicate consistently to their employees where they, as a team, were going. Their corporate transformation plan had now become a living document. They were singing from the same page.

Need for a Follow-up

At a follow-up meeting several months later, the group coach learned that Jim had made significant improvements to his behavior. He had become less of an ''anarchist.'' Also, a newly hired assistant was helping him stay organized. He also mentioned (inspired by the event) that he was working with an executive coach who kept him on track. Apart from addressing issues at work, the coach had also helped Jim to better understand the more personal spheres of his life. For example, one of the things they had explored together was not only the way he perceived his father, but also his relationships with authority figures in general. Upon further reflection, he came to realize that his father, despite his struggle with work, had positive aspects in other realms that Jim could be proud of. These new insights contributed to a more positive and balanced state of mind. Jim became much less irritable and was more at peace with himself. And as the others confirmed, being less stressed had also helped him develop better relationships with others. His constructive stance was now contributing to a new collaborative equilibrium in the organizational system.

The same comments were made about John. Because he was no longer viewed as a spy, the other executive committee members started to welcome him to their meetings. Through letting him in, they started to see how his expertise could benefit the execution of the offshore project. John had truly become integrated in the team.

Further prompting by the group coach confirmed that the members of the executive team now felt that as a group they had become more effective. There was a greater openness among them, marked by real dialogue and greater exchange of ideas. There was greater sense of accountability, more trust, and less management by fear. This in turn facilitated stronger alignment about the direction the company should be taking. Finally, decisions were now being implemented and the company was seeing progress and moving forward.

Looking back at the coaching event, the executives marveled at the extent to which they had bonded after such a short workshop. They commented on the fact that they were now able to speak their minds; to be vulnerable; and had developed a greater trust and respect for one another. Having this trust, they had also become better in constructive conflict resolution, leading to a greater sense of commitment and ownership, and, most important, obtaining better results. What's more, the experience of the group coaching intervention made them realize that well-intended action plans were meaningless without also addressing the people issues within the equation.

The executive team members also commented that the group coaching intervention was a great way to create a truly networked organization, as it minimized the paranoid thinking that had previously been the norm within their virtual, highly diverse teams. Clearly, the group intervention broke down the silo mentality and opened up the path towards becoming a boundary-less company engaged in real information exchange. No longer was secrecy the norm. Now, all of them were prepared to contribute to a more agile, learning organization. And last, but not least, the group coaching experience had helped them to be more effective in dealing with the Achilles heel that had plagued their organization for so long: execution! (Exhibit 1 provides an example of this kind of group intervention.)

HOW TO HELP INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS CHANGE?

Top executives need to realize that corporate transformation is not an abstract exercise. It involves people. And to have people work together is not given. To make corporate transformation successful, people need to be co-opted. To get them onboard, however, can be an uphill process full of resistances.

We should keep in mind that by the age of 30, our personality is usually quite stable. But although our personality has greater plasticity earlier in life, we are still able to change our behavior at later stages in life. Later life-stage behavior change, however, is not easy. Senior executives are a case in point. Many of them are at the summit of their career trajectory, and have got there as a result of habitual behavior patterns. It may be apparent to others that aspects of an executive's behavior are dysfunctional, but most often the individual in question sees no compelling reason to change, since these behaviors have served them well thus far. As a result, many of them seem to have locked themselves into what I have described as a mental prison. They cling to habitual behavior, hoping for a different outcome, and situating the blame on others. This reminds me of the old saying: ''If you find you are riding a dead horse, you should dismount.'' But even if these executives are willing to make an effort to change, they

The Group Coaching Intervention

To do a high performance group coaching intervention, I start by interviewing all the participants. It's a way of assessing the major issues—and also preparing them for the event (talking about the general outline of the sessions and the use of questionnaires). It's also my way to make an assessment whether the executives are able to handle what can be a very complex intervention. During these interviews, I look for traces of psychological mindfulness, the capacity to be open and responsive, and whether the potential participant has a serious interest in greater self-understanding. I also assess whether they are truly interested in making the organization a better place to work. These interviews are a great opportunity to tease out the people who have a genuine interest for the people they lead and their organization, compared to the people who are merely looking out for number one.

Depending on the number of executives in the group, the event will be spread out over three to four days. It's also important that one or two follow-up sessions are scheduled to make sure that everyone is following through with whatever commitments he or she has made. At the end of the event, a "contract" is made on what to work on (individually and as a team) during the time they are away between coaching sessions. "Homework" assignments are monitored by each other. Mutual coaching is an important part of the design of such an intervention.

It's to be recommended (in particular when working with a top executive team) to run such an intervention together with an additional facilitator. Doing it together allows for a fuller and more complete view of what happens in the group and serves to protect the group coaches from blind spots. In addition, having two people in the workshop at all times gives each of the facilitators the opportunity to move in and out of active and passive observational modes. The interchange between the two group coaches also provides a model for the executives of ways of relating to each other and handling conflict.

The basic material for the event consists of the preliminary interviews, the feedback given by the questionnaires, and the "life" case study. Often, I open the intervention with an interactive lecture concerning high performance organizations, organizational culture, and leadership styles (exemplary and dysfunctional). But at one point in time, each member of the executive team will volunteer to sit in the "hot seat." To go through this experience is extremely important. While in the "hot seat," some time is devoted to the processing of the feedback instruments. A key part of this activity is the *Global Executive Leadership Inventory*, a 360-degree feedback instrument that I developed, and that consists of twelve dimensions contributing to leadership effectiveness. In addition, another instrument I developed, *The Personality Audit* is included that also contains feedback gathered from family members and friends. However, the central focus remains the personal case history. As each executive narrates his or her life story, experiences and actions become organized. The presentation becomes a process of discovery of the self, and will also help others (through vicarious listening and comparing their own stories) explore and better understand issues executives face, be they in their public or private lives.

Eventually, the group of executives forms an intense learning community, whereby each participant in a constructive way gives the others feedback whenever they fall back into behavior patterns that they are trying to unlearn. The group has turned into a self-analyzing organization. Most often, the executives—now a real team—demonstrate a remarkable level of emotional intelligence, given the quality of their interventions. As I mentioned, one or two follow-up sessions are highly recommended to assess the degree to which certain behavior patterns have become truly internalized.

Exhibit 1 The Group Coaching Intervention.

do not really know how to do things differently. They do not see the other vibrant horses around that they could be riding. They have not yet realized that mental health is having a choice.

Busy executives who want to reinvent themselves in becoming better leaders will not seek change through lengthy therapeutic procedures. Because of their overwhelming responsibilities and time constraints, they often seek more expedient, quick fixes. Clearly, the challenge is to develop a method of intervention that is similar to more traditional therapeutic approaches—addressing, for example, out-of-awareness resistance to change—but in a way that is perceived as meaningful, effective, and manageable for executives.

GROUP COACHING

Group coaching has proven to be a highly intensive and effective intervention to prepare executives for individual and organizational change. In comparison (as I have learned from experience), one-on-one coaching is not as powerful for creating tipping points for change. Although individual interventions can be valuable, there is not the same intensity and focus in a single session compared with what we see happening in a group coaching session. It is not as effective in bringing a group of executives onto the same page. Group coaching ensures that, after the intervention, the group will assume a constructively challenging follow up role supporting one another. By contrast, in one-on-one coaching, follow-up is conducted by executive coaches who are often available irregularly, leaving individual executives very much on their own to get things done. In group coaching, individuals benefit from the peer group; they become mutually invested in encouraging the new behaviors that each one has identified and committed to working together to achieve their goals. This kind of "group contagion" is a powerful way to make change happen, and makes group-coaching intervention a highly effective method for aligning teams to the pursuit of shared objectives.

Creating Tipping Points

Having observed thousands of executives during various group coaching interventions, I have come to realize the following complex (conscious and unconscious) psychological processes at play for inducing tipping points for change:

1. To start, a group intervention provides a context for *cathartic experiences*. The group setting allows executives to get things off their chest; a forum, at least figuratively, for "emotional cleansing." The group becomes an enabler of bringing repressed feelings, fears, and covert conflicts to the surface. Putting out into the open the things that trouble them can be an extremely powerful emotional experience. Under the right circumstances, using the narrative technique provides an opportunity to re-experience and transform deeply troubling incidents, helping executives better understand why they do what they do.
2. Furthermore, while listening to the other executives' life stories and challenges, the members of the group come to realize that they are not alone in their confusion. They are not the only ones who, at times, feel like impostors working in the organization. Others, too, struggle with similar fears. This realization can bring a great sense of

relief. *Mutual identification* with specific problems brings the team together and offers opportunities to jointly discuss more effective ways of dealing with knotty issues at work.

3. I also like to add that bringing a *psychodynamic lens* into the discussion can set into motion a whole process of associations of why an executive has been doing things in a particular way—Jim and John being good cases in point. It contributes to reflections whether there are other, better ways to solve whatever problems with which they may be struggling. Is a particular behavioral repertoire that was extremely appropriate at one point in time, still effective in the present? Should other ways be explored to deal with specific issues? To help executives change, a major tool in the change toolbox will be transferential interpretations—the realization that we tend to act towards people in the present based on models of the past. Understanding these old patterns of interaction can help us unpack dysfunctional behavior. Through recognizing long-standing and maladaptive past patterns, the link between present relationships and distant past is made meaningful, thereby improving the chances for change.
4. In addition (very much encouraged by the other members of the executive team), such reflections can lead to a *willingness to experiment* in doing things differently—and by doing so, to create new scenarios for the future. Executives may come to realize that they can free themselves from their psychic prisons. In many instances, such self-understanding and insight move people a long way along the road to personal and organizational change.
5. What also should be kept in mind is that every presentation—not just only one's own—offers the opportunity for *vicarious learning*. Executives soon come to realize that learning does not only occur through direct participation in dialogue (being in the "hot seat"), but that much of the learning takes place vicariously through observing and listening to other people's stories. This kind of learning implies retaining and replicating effective behavior observed in others. Furthermore, as there are always executives in the group who are admired because of the way they deal with life's adversities, they may turn into role models, the kind of people the others would like to emulate. Imitative, mirroring behavior—or identification with the other—is an important part of the interpersonal learning process and a very powerful force for change.
6. During the group coaching process (if done well), the executives going through it become a *real community*, members of a "tribe" that have gone through the same emotional experience. Tribe people draw on a great deal of mutual support whenever one of them embarks on a new challenge. This feeling of social belonging also becomes a very powerful catalyst for change.
7. A group setting is also an opportunity for *collective learning*. Occasionally, didactic instruction by the group coach can be beneficial, although (in my experience) it should be given sparingly. Explanation, clarification, and even direct advice about how to do things better within the group can reduce anxiety and establish control when there is a troublesome issue. However, it should not only be the coach who offers suggestions; as executives themselves are vast troves of expertise. And here again, the process of vicarious experience can be extremely powerful. Executives can draw from their own rich experiences to share information about work issues and recommend different approaches and ways of doing things. And by giving advice to others, they are practicing the supportive and challenging behaviors that can help the team function better.
8. Finally, a further positive force for change can be the *altruistic motive*, or the desire to put the needs of others above our own. While helping for helping's sake—the genuine desire to make things better for others—may seem selfless; ironically it can have some selfish side-effects. The act of giving to others can have numerous personal benefits. Helping others—offering support, reassurance, suggestions, and insights—can have a therapeutic effect, contributing to each executive's level of positive emotion, sense of self-respect, and well-being.

CREATING ALIGNMENT FOR STRATEGY EXECUTION

These days, many senior executives struggle with the problem of getting things done. They know that they need to get everyone, from top to bottom on board to make their organizations work, but they do not know how to really go about it. They do not know how to achieve matrix-like alignment for strategy execution.

What they do not know is that without the presence of a team culture, executives do things their own way, often resulting in uncoordinated, even conflicting decisions and actions. If people behave like ships passing in the night, they may act in ways that are not in the best interest of the organization or themselves. The challenge for organizations will be to stop such dysfunctional behavior. The conundrum is to have people act aligned in reality, not just on paper. It is here where group coaching can make a difference by ensuring that everyone within the organization can see and internalize the direction for the business and know how his or her job fits in within the "Big Picture." Group coaching creates the kind of awareness that without true alignment, strategy execution suffers or fails because executives will not know what steps to take and when to take them. The creation of a clear roadmap through group coaching will positively affect a company's success in execution.

What's more, having gone through a group coaching process, the participating executives become aware that they are not at the mercy of life's vicissitudes—that they have choices. They come to realize that living a full life—discovering how to reinvent themselves, their teams, and their organizations—is not just the luck of having been dealt a good hand of cards. On the contrary, it often comes down to their ability to make the best of a poor hand. By seeing things in perspective—by realizing that there are other ways to deal with life's adversities—the group as a team can co-create a better future.

But while we may recognize the need for deep individual and organizational change, we often see it as something that others need to take responsibility for. We overestimate the

value of what we have—and underestimate what we may gain by giving something up. What is needed to arrive at the right equilibrium is a true exploration of what change means to ourselves, to our teams, and to the organization as a whole. We need to own the change, something that not always comes naturally. Any time we deal with change, we should keep in mind that we cannot change the direction of the wind, but that we can adjust our sails to reach our destination.

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Working in groups can be like navigating through a field of icebergs: much of the danger lies hidden below the surface. While one-on-one coaching can be complex enough, the challenges become much more pronounced in a group coaching setting. The coach has to digest and metabolize a myriad of dynamic, fluctuating, and multi-dimensional projections that represent group members' inter-subjective experiences at various developmental levels. To better understand group dynamics I found Irvin Yalom's book, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1985) extremely helpful. Also, in a very playful way, his novel *The Schopenhauer Cure* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006) provides insight into what happens in groups. In understanding what it means to create a space "to play"—in establishing a transitional space—I found the writings of Donald Winnicott, *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* (London: Tavistock, 1958) and *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971) very helpful. To get a better understanding of the group coaching intervention methodology itself, various descriptions can be found in Manfred Kets de Vries, *The Hedgehog Effect* (London: Wiley, 2011) and Kets de Vries and Associates, *Coach and Couch: The Psychology of Making Better Leaders* (Hampshire: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007) and *The Coaching Kaleidoscope: Insights from the Inside* (Hampshire: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2010). Although many types of 360-degree feedback instruments can be used when applying the group coaching methodology, the ones described in the article are: Manfred Kets de Vries, *The Global Executive Leadership Inventory: Facilitator's Guide*, (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2004), and Manfred Kets de Vries, *The Personality Audit: Facilitator's Guide*, (Fontainebleau, INSEAD Global Leadership Centre, 2005).

Concerning the use of narrative in group coaching, the writings of Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), Donald Spence, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth* (New York: Norton, 1982), Dan McAdams, *Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993) and Julia McLeod, *Narrative and Psychotherapy*. London: Sage, 1997) are very illuminating. In addition, I found the interviewing technique as described by William Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People to Change* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002) very informative. To better understand resistances to change that are inevitable when applying this methodology, I highly recommend the work of Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, *Immunity to Change*. (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009). The authors provide a very schematic way of dealing with some of these resistances. Furthermore, to obtain greater insight in how to use the clinical paradigm in group work, my latest book *Mindful Leadership Coaching: Journeys into the Interior* (New York: Palgrave/MacMillan, 2014) may be informative.

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