

Help them Grow or They Will Go


Realities of the New Workforce

The Case for
Coaching at Work

A White Paper from
Smart, Savvy + Associates Inc.

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The case for coaching	4
Learning leads to flourishing	5
Forging ahead in a V.U.C.A. world	10
Why coaching?	17
How to start	22
Are we learning yet?	25
Recommended resources	26



What would you accomplish if you could get the very best out of yourself and the people you work with?

The Case for Learning

The premise of this paper is simple: For businesses and organizations to succeed, their people must thrive, and for people to thrive, we must learn. And not just learn once — at the beginning — but learn continually: Learn for the entirety of our careers and lives.

This might be difficult to accept for leaders and managers who feel it's their primary mandate to Get Things Done. Isn't success more about hiring the right people, providing thorough training, and giving clear instructions for good, repeatable execution?

The objection is understandable. Continual learning sounds inefficient and ill-suited for demanding jobs. In the “working world,” it's easy to think of education as one point of a journey, which we leave behind in our push toward productivity and profit.

But this is a false dichotomy. And a potentially fatal misconception for a business.

Drawing from research in neuroscience, psychology, and business leadership, we instead suggest:

- It's not merely that work and learning can happen together. *Our best work can only emerge from a context of healthy development.* This is the reality of being human.
- *If an organization's people are not growing, the organization is falling behind.* This is the reality of our ever-changing world.
- The case for coaching is, ultimately, the case for harnessing these realities toward achieving your goals. Coaching helps individuals discover the best in themselves and gain responsibility for their flourishing, which in turn allows leaders to lead and organizations to thrive.

So, let's begin.

Learning leads to flourishing



What do you want to be when you grow up?

It's likely been a long while since you've asked yourself that question. Adults, after all, just are—there's no more growing left to do.

It turns out this couldn't be further from the truth! Recent research in neuroscience now show that development in people doesn't end with adolescence; it continues all the way through adulthood.

"Neuroplasticity is the term used to describe this capacity for creating new neural connections and growing new neurons in response to experience," writes Daniel Siegel, M.D., in his fascinating book *Mindsight*. "Neuroplasticity is not just available to us in youth: We now know that it can occur throughout the lifespan."

By itself this insight seems to lack force, or at least direction. Our brains continue to change — so what?

The significance for leaders and for the workplace emerges when we move beyond the brain to the mind — or, if you prefer, to the heart. Psychologists and experts in personal and organizational health have concluded that continual development in adults is not merely a matter of biochemistry. ***People are healthiest and happiest when given opportunities to grow.***

In their important book, *An Everyone Culture*, noted Harvard researchers and professors Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey explain that while happiness can superficially be understood as a sense of pleasure and the absence of pain, the research literature on happiness provides a second, more profound definition:

“[Happiness is] a process of human flourishing. This definition, whose roots go back to Aristotle and the Greeks’ concept of *eudaemonia*, includes an experience of meaning and engagement but in relation to the satisfactions of experiencing one’s own growth and unfolding, becoming more of the person one was meant to be, bringing more of oneself into the world.”

Learning leads to flourishing.

Yet, there's more. When opportunities for growth allow people to *take control of their own development*, they are in the best possible place to produce excellent work and be fully engaged.

“Absolutely the best thing I have taken from coaching is the realization that it all starts and ends with me. I wish I had discovered coaching earlier in my career – I would have wasted less time. I spent a lot of time feeling frustrated with the way things were, instead of realizing that I was the thing that could change in every meeting I was going to and every situation I was in. Once I took that ownership, and realized that I was the thing that needed to change, my whole career opened up.”

Kristin Linklater
Senior Leader, Simon Fraser University

Noted leadership coach and psychologist Dr. Henry Cloud, in his book *Boundaries for Leaders*, writes:

“Neuroscience has shown that the more experiences we have of being in control, the better our higher brain function. It is when we are affected by things outside of our control — and cannot regain a sense of being in control of anything that will make a difference — that we hit a real brain slowdown.

“When people’s brains are working at their best, they are more creative, better problem solvers, less reactive, more proactive and goal oriented. They have more energy, and they have a better sense of well-being. The lesson for leaders is this: give people more control and they will thrive. And then, help them focus that control on the things that drive results, and they win, and you will, too.”



Take a moment to reflect on your organization’s culture.

Are people encouraged and given the resources to push toward their potential?



Key points: Learning leads to flourishing

- People never stop growing (their bodies will, but their minds won’t!).
- Continual learning leads to health and happiness.
- People reach their full potential and are most engaged when they control their own development.

Forging ahead in a V.U.C.A. world

The preceding question pushes us from the inner-workings of the person to the world in which we inhabit.

Given the rapid emergence of new technologies and the disruption of traditional limits and conventions for communication (both within and across cultures), it's no wonder that business leaders have found use for a term that originated in the military: V.U.C.A. — Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous.

In other words, it's not just people that are changing, but also our environment, structures, and relationships, among a myriad other features that define the contemporary context for Getting Things Done.

Nearly two decades into the 21st century, and now fully immersed in the Internet Age, we are beginning to see what happens when the human drive to grow is given ever greater “freedom of movement” in the V.U.C.A. world.

The implications for how we run our organizations are enormous.

Here are two challenges (also, opportunities!), among many:

1 First, while the future is hard to predict, organizations can prepare for it by fostering in its people a readiness to adapt well – a persistent sense of learning!

“In the old world, where markets and economies were somewhat stable, you could win by having the best execution. Build a model based on a set of predictable factors and then execute to a plan. If you did that better than the competition, you won,” writes Dr. Henry Cloud, “But today there are too many things changing to win by good execution only. You have to learn and adapt to the changing environment all the time and then execute what you learned. So today, you take a step, execute well, and then learn from that step to know what the next one should be. The organization that is attentive, not distracted, and attuned to what is happening does that best.”

2 Second, organizations that don't provide opportunities for growth will lose their most important assets – their people.

“Millennials, who will make up more than 75 percent of the workforce by 2025, care about doing meaningful work—so much so that more than 50 percent say they would take a pay cut to find a job that matches their values.”

Gregg Thompson
The Master Coach



Professors Kegan and Lahey summarize this risk well:

“We live in unprecedented times. Alongside the seismic shifts of the VUCA world are equally significant shifts in what people are looking for when they go to work each day. Gone are the days when payoffs to Economic Man alone — to the material self, to greater agency in the external world — were enough. In those days, conventional incomes — such as paychecks, health benefits, and limits to the hours in a work week — sufficed.

“Now we’re seeing the pursuit of *new incomes*: personal satisfaction, meaningfulness, and happiness. These are payoffs to the Psychological Person, to the intangible self, to fulfillment in the interior world.... The rise of the new incomes may represent the biggest shift in the work-reward equation since the emergence of the labor movement in the nineteenth century.”

In other words:
If your people aren’t learning,
they’re leaving.

There's a positive corollary to this, of course. When people are learning, they're not only motivated to stay, they're more committed to giving their very best for the benefit of the group.

Want proof?

Look at engagement. In Gallup's assessment of employee engagement, their Q12 survey, they include two key assessments that recognize the importance of embracing a developmental culture to foster engagement: "There is someone at work who encourages my development" and "I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow."

Gallup's results show that when respondents answer in the affirmative and engagement is high, productivity goes up, instances of carelessness go down, and customers report higher satisfaction with the company's service.

What we're seeing is that the communal context of learning – the workplace – naturally channels the benefits of learning toward shared goals and the development of others. It's not just the individual that benefits, but the group as well.

Engagement by the numbers

A comparison between companies ranked in the top quartile for engagement vs. those in the bottom quartile:

21%

more profitable

20%

more productive

70%

less safety incidents

40%

less quality defects

10%

higher customer loyalty

Source: Gallup. *The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes 2016 Q12®*
Meta-Analysis: Ninth Edition



Spend some time

naming the big questions facing your industry or organization. What are you doing or not doing to prepare for the future?



Key points: Forging ahead in a V.U.C.A world

- The world is increasingly Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous.
- To prepare for the future, organizations need to learn how to learn.
- Organizations that don't provide room for growth will lose their people to organizations that do.
- Organizations that do provide development opportunities will see greater engagement, which results in higher productivity and more careful and caring approaches to work and people.

Why coaching?

Coaching is the use of intentional listening and purposeful questions to facilitate continual growth, toward articulating and accomplishing desired goals.

It's an approach to empowerment and progress that can take many forms: scheduled meetings with a certified coach, peer-to-peer coaching conversations, coaching-style leadership and management, and the adoption of a "coaching culture," in which any exchange presents an opportunity to guide someone toward a new insight.

Coaching takes as its starting point what has been affirmed above: that each person not only has the capacity to grow, but develops best when taking responsibility for the learning process. The context of self-driven development is where the best work gets done.

Coaching looks with clear eyes at a V.U.C.A. world and offers a way to not only prepare for the future but emerge as a leader: Locating and honing each person's innate ability to assess situations; to name challenges, opportunities and goals; to identify internal and external resources; and to move forward with courage and purpose.

"Coaching," writes Gregg Thompson, author of *The Master Coach*, "is an act of faith in others."

For leaders, this act of faith can and should be freeing.

Leaders can focus on the big pieces of the company's strategy, identity and story, rather than on micromanaging each individual challenge. Coaching harnesses the problem-solving ability of each team member.

Leaders can turn their attention toward their own key strengths, assured that employees, with coaching-type guidance, are taking responsibility for their own success and contributions. Coaching develops leaders, not followers.

And leaders can be courageous in setting big goals, supported by a team that is engaged, enthusiastic, and equipped. Coaching continually expands



What's the difference?

A quick (and general) guide to differentiating these distinct-but-sometimes-overlapping helping roles.

Consultant vs Coach

Where a consultant provides solutions, a coach guides you in generating and implementing your own best solution.

Mentor vs Coach


Where a mentor passes down expertise, working from a top-down approach, a coach can help in all directions of an organizational structure, bringing shape, sensitivity, and accountability to a process, rather than specific knowledge or authority.

Counselor vs Coach

Where a counselor or therapist provides insight into one's past, restoring health in the present, a coach guides your thinking about the future, helping to identify your purpose and move forward with intention.

Coaching, then, isn't just another program to implement, or worse, a management fad to give the impression of an organization-in-the-know.

It's an invitation to see people and the world as they really are, and in doing this, to create the conditions for realizing your vision — for yourself, for your organization, and for the world.



“Any person in the organization can sit with another person and challenge them to lift their game, encourage them to see new possibilities, confront them with their own potential, affirm their many talents and remind them of how great it feels to do extraordinary work. That’s coaching. ...When well-coached, people will solve their own problems, seize their own opportunities, and chart their own futures.”

Gregg Thompson
The Master Coach



How might your work be transformed if everyone around you was reaching their full potential?



Key points: Why coaching?

- Coaching is the use of intentional listening and good questions to facilitate continual growth, toward the accomplishment of clearly articulated goals.
- Coaching helps people reach their potential by utilizing and honing their innate ability and desire to learn.
- Coaching trains your team to face unknown challenges with courage, resilience and purpose.
- Coaching frees leaders to lead!

How to start

Review the literature

There are a lot of great resources available that explain what coaching is and can do. We've included a list of recommendations at the bottom of this paper.

Experience coaching through a training session

While books are helpful resources that you can return to again and again, nothing introduces coaching better than spending time with an experienced coach. An effective training session teaches through modeling — you'll learn about coaching by being coached yourself, and by watching others be coached, in an environment of trust.

Tyrone Lingley's coach helped him see the truths in himself that he had often ignored. His coach also helped him embrace his unique strengths, which changed his approach to leadership in his Strategic Partnership role at Unbounce.

“I previously had the notion that I had to be a certain type of leader and exude certain personality traits,” Tyrone explains. “My coach confronted me with the fact that I could just be myself, and lead on the qualities that got me to where I am.”

It was revelations like this that led Tyrone to sign up for a three-day coaching training course.

“During the workshop, I witnessed the ability to get to the root cause, or scratch well below the surface even in five minutes. This was a real eye-opener in the value of taking the time to coach. You never know when someone will have a breakthrough, whether in a personal situation or a work environment.”

Utilize the gift of an outside perspective

Similar to receiving training, working one-on-one with a coach is a powerful way to quickly understand why this approach to learning can be transformative. Working with external coaches can quickly build your capacity for internal coaching. Additionally, an external coach can allow space for honest exploration that might be more difficult, especially at the beginning, with a coach that is a part of your organization.

Change your habits; change your culture

Moving your organization toward a coaching culture will take time, but you can start right away just by being attentive to how you face problems and reach goals. Next time you find yourself preparing to fix someone's problem (begin with a small problem, not a crisis!), pause to consider whether this is a problem they can address themselves with the help an active listener and a series of reflective questions. *The Coaching Habit*, by Michael Bungay Stanier, is one of the best, easy-to-apply resources we've found for making this subtle shift.



What is the one step you can take today to better understand the potential of coaching?

Are we learning yet?

A self-assessment of your organization's readiness for the future of work

For each question grade yourself from 1-5, with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor.

1. When faced with a challenge, our team members have space to problem solve before seeking and receiving solutions from a supervisor.
2. When mistakes are made, we encourage curiosity, desiring a better understanding of the “whys” and the “hows” rather than casting blame on the “who.”
3. When generating ideas, our environment is open enough for all to offer their opinions without feeling at risk of personal judgment.
4. In our daily practices, we make room for asking questions.
5. Each employee can articulate personal goals they are excited about, within the context of our organization's shared vision.

Scoring

20-25: You're on your way! External coaching or coaching training could further embed these practices in your company's identity, provide affirmation for healthy habits, and unveil new opportunities for growth.

10-20: Both internal and external coaching would be helpful in strengthening your culture — consider attending an introductory workshop to get tips and be inspired.

5-10: You may be stuck in some unhelpful habits. Consider bringing in a coaching consultant to review your company's culture and to give you a customized plan for moving forward with purpose and optimism.

Recommended resources

An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2016.

Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and being Ridiculously In Charge by Henry Cloud. New York: HarperCollins, 2013.

Coaching for Performance: The principles and practice of coaching and leadership, 5th ed by John Whitmore. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017.

Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation by Daniel Siegel. New York: Bantam Books, 2011.

The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever by Michael Bungay Stanier. Toronto: Box of Crayons Press, 2016.

The Master Coach: Leading with Character, Building Connections, and Engaging in Extraordinary Conversations by Gregg Thompson. New York: SelectBooks Inc., 2017.

Who is Smart Savvy?

People are the plan™.

People make companies great. At Smart Savvy, we are firmly planted in the people business. We are a people performance company.

As a leader, you know it doesn't matter how good the plan is, if you don't have the right people to execute it, it's not worth the paper it's written on. That's why our mantra is People are the Plan™. In 2007 we built Smart Savvy, a specialized recruitment firm that helps marketing and communications leaders find #standapart people to build and execute your plans.

Twelve years in, and thousands of recruiting conversations later, we've learned people don't just want roles that execute plans, they want to be developed as employees and leaders so they can execute plans better and make a bigger impact. If they aren't learning, they're leaving. So, we built Smart Savvy Academy, a training and coaching business, to help companies develop and equip their people to accelerate performance and elevate business results. Smart Savvy Academy offers offer training programs for leaders and teams as well as options to become a certified coach or get coached.



Let's Connect

<https://smartsavvy.academy/coaching>

Coaching videos

Learn how others have benefited from coaching



Coaching programs

Whether your goal is to up your leadership skills, create a coaching culture, get certified as a coach or access a coach to help you achieve your goals, Smart Savvy has the program for you.

Get a Coach: A coach serves as an unbiased conversation partner and is a powerful ally in achieving your professional and personal goals. Finding a coach can be a challenge. That's why we've built a pool of Smart Savvy qualified coaches—to help make the process of getting the 1:1 guidance you want more strategic than serendipitous. We can help match you with a great coach, guarantee a solid fit, and put together a customized package perfectly suited to your needs.

Be a Coach: If your goal is to be a certified coach, our program provides you with all the education hours you need to achieve a coaching designation with the International Coaching Federation. Getting certified can help you improve your leadership efficacy for your current organization or launch your own coaching practice. Of course, if certification isn't a real driver for you, coaching training gives you the skills you need to bring a coach approach to your leadership.

Building a Coaching Culture: Organizations with strong coaching cultures report above-average revenue growth. Many companies are seeing the value of coaching as a way of leading and adapting to the new realities of the workforce. If this is your path, Smart Savvy can bring coaching training into your organization and work with you to ensure the training and practice permeates the organization as to sustain it and embed it into the fabric of your culture.

Let's Connect

Want to learn more? Reach out to us at hello@smartsavvy.academy

Strategic Partnership: Our coaching programs are fully accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

This white paper was written in conjunction with editorial coach and writer Lucas B. Lee.