



# Excel Leader Advisory Letter

ISSUED BY THE EXCEL LEADERSHIP GROUP

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## Excel's Mission Statement

Help business leaders exceed their goals by creating a culture that unleashes the talents and creativity of all associates.

## Thought for July

"Our policy flows from the belief that men and women want to do a good job, a creative job, and that if they are provided with the proper environment, they will do so."

-William Hewlett



**Effective leaders intentionally create a high performance work environment based on high levels of employee engagement and discretionary effort. Their cultures in turn contribute directly to producing sustainable world-class results and higher profits. Therefore, despite the current economic climate and all its related challenges to your bottom line, you should continue investing in the development of your own leadership skills and those of your management team.**

This month, I want to return to a topic that I discussed in the August 2008 letter about coaching and the value that it can bring to your business. Why is hiring a coach a good business investment? Coaches are trained to help clients get from where they are now to where they want to be more quickly. In other words, coaches help clients achieve their desired outcomes more efficiently than they can often times achieve on their own. Experienced coaches can play at least three important roles to help clients:

- 1. Accountability Partner.** An effective coach utilizes the inherent wisdom and knowledge that the client already possesses to develop alternatives, set goals and priorities and achieves desired outcomes. The client arrives at his or her own conclusions with the help of a good coach and retains ownership and accountability for results. The coach operates by being in the moment with the client, often asking probing questions to assist the client in getting to the desired outcome.
- 2. Sounding Board.** Often times, executives need someone with whom they can share thoughts, frustrations and even fears. Once coaches have built that important trust relationship with their clients, the client can feel more relaxed and speak freely about what is really on their minds.
- 3. Trusted Advisor.** There will be times when asking probing questions is not the best approach. What the executive needs at these times is advice and feedback. In these cases, an experienced coach takes on the role of trusted advisor, giving the client clear, concise and straight feedback. As well, the coach can also offer advice on which path or alternative may be best for the client, given the coach's personal experience in similar situations.

Let's now discuss some of the tangible benefits or outcomes that coaching can bring to executives and their organizations:

- 1. Greater clarity.** Coaches help their clients gain clarity in critical areas such as articulating their mission/purpose, values, and goals. As well, an effective coach can help the client draw a clear connection between mission/purpose, personal values, goals and daily tasks. In other words, a coach can assist by highlighting those areas where a client's daily task activities are or are not

closely aligned with mission, values and goals. This is an important step in the client's success journey and overall life balance.

**2. Greater focus.** Sometimes, we all experience that feeling of being overwhelmed by tasks or circumstances. That is an understandable place to be but not a place to dwell for long. That's where a good coach comes in by helping the client focus on the significant few goals, tasks or activities that are going to bring the most gain and be most closely aligned with mission and values ... the Pareto Principle in action!

**3. Improved decision-making skills.** One of the essential prerequisites to making effective decisions is ensuring that all reasonable alternatives have been explored. Again, this is where a good coach can prove to be a very valuable resource by helping the client brainstorm ideas to formulate and explore all viable alternatives.

**4. Enhanced creativity.** This is a very important area in business as it involves being open to new ideas and approaches to solving problems. Here again, an effective coach can assist the client by asking "what if" questions and brainstorming with the client to explore novel options and possibilities. The coach can also encourage the client to take time away from exhaustive demands and regenerate which enhances creativity. As well, the coach can support the executive client by encouraging the client to "declutter" the work area which will also bolster both focus and creativity.

**5. Improved work/life balance.** This brings us back to values. The coach can work with the busy executive to make sure that his/her values include all aspects of life: Relationships, Career, Spiritual, Financial, and Health/Physical. Also, the coach can assist the executive by helping him/her ensure that daily tasks are once again aligned with goals. In other words, the effective coach can help hold the executive accountable for actions that support family, health and spiritual growth as well as professional and financial goals.

To summarize then, an effective coach is a good listener, being in the moment with the client and making sure the client is both heard and validated. A good analogy that fits effective coaching is that the coach acts like a "mirror" to help executives see themselves as others see them. As I look back over my business career, I can certainly count many blessings, friends and experiences. However, one of the few course corrections I would make if I had it to do over again would be to find and hire a good coach and trusted advisor. I know that I certainly would have benefited from that type of valuable feedback and investment. I would sincerely recommend that you consider a coach in your future developmental plans both for yourself and your organization.

I trust that you will find these tips helpful in your journey to becoming a more effective leader. As always, I encourage you to contact me anytime at [mike@excelleadership.net](mailto:mike@excelleadership.net) with your comments and questions. Also, if I can be of assistance with your leadership needs, please contact me. We'll talk to you again in August. Be well and best regards.

Join our Web-based "community" devoted to open and honest discussions on topics related to leadership challenges and solutions. To join, simply visit [TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net](http://TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net) and click on "Community."



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