

**Vision Quest**  
CONSULTING

LEADERSHIP COACHING THOUGH

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Vision Quest Consulting provides leadership coaching, organizational development consulting, and training to top executives and their

**“DEVELOPING TODAY’S LEADERS FOR TOMORROW’S CHALLENGES”**

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**NOVEMBER 2006 LEADERSHIP COACHING NEWSLETTER**

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**This Month's Topic: Behavior Change that Sticks**

I just returned from The International Executive Coaching Summit. The Summit is a think tank of top executive coaches worldwide who convene to transform leadership throughout the world by sharing ideas on best practices, trends, and imagining the future of leadership. I look forward to this meeting every year with great anticipation, as it allows me to network and birth new ideas and initiatives with world class experts together in one room for a few days.

One of our main topics this year was leadership and sustainable behavior change. For those of us in positions to impact leadership within an organization, the topic of sustainable behavioral change is very thought provoking.

The core question is, “How can we get someone to change their behaviors and to retain those changes?”

Although a simple question, the answer is more complex. There are many tools, methodologies, interventions, and books focused specifically on leadership behavior change. Because of the amount of information on this subject and sometimes conflicting theories, it can be confusing and often overwhelming to know which way to turn.

The consensus at the Summit was that an individual's mindset, leads to their behavior, which in turn leads to the results they produce. To change a result or outcome that someone produces we

need to identify their behavior and influence them to shift their mindset. Therefore, sustainable leadership behavior all starts with an individual's mindset, their thoughts and beliefs about a given situation. Mainly their personal beliefs. To start this process is simple enough. Ask the individual what their thoughts and beliefs are behind why they did something the way they did it.

Here's an example: Julie is a senior manager in a financial company and a client of mine. She wants broader responsibility within her company, because she sees this as the way to move up the career ladder. Julie's boss told her that in order to be viewed as a top potential talent; she will need to develop stronger relationships and visibility throughout the organization with other senior management. Julie agreed and believes that the way to start to accomplish this goal is by communicating as often as appropriate with others throughout the company via email.

To those of us on the outside, we know that written communication, especially email, is probably not the best way to positively increase your visibility and relationships. Julie however has a deep belief that email is a very efficient tool and one that she is most comfortable with, so to her it makes the most sense. Here is how this played out in one situation, and turned out to be a repeated problem for Julie.

Sam, EVP of Marketing, was mad about an email he received from Julie. He interpreted the tone of her specific communication as volatile and accusatory. He shared his concern with his peers (all top company senior execs) at their senior staff meeting. Julie was shocked when she heard about Sam's upset, as her intention was just to communicate clearly and succinctly and wondered how anyone could have possibly misinterpreted her communication. This often is where this conversation about leadership development ends. We talked to Julie, told her she must be more sensitive and that she can't send emails that could be construed as volatile or accusatory, even if she does not think they are. Julie tried for awhile to pay closer attention to her email communication, but ultimately she thinks Sam and others like him are way too indirect and sensitive, so over time she goes back to her familiar mode of email communication certain that the interpretation of the communications is his error not hers, thereby justifying her actions as appropriate.

If all sustainable leadership behavior change starts with an individual's mindset, let's examine Julie's belief about email and communication. I determined from Julie that her beliefs included the following:

- Email is a fabulous easy succinct way to communicate.
- Email saves me time, especially compared to trying to track down the person for a face to face conversation. This is so much easier and faster.
- The recipient knows me well enough to know I am committed to getting things done and doing a good job, so anything I write in an email will be seen in that light.
- Any type of communication can be done well using email.
- Email is a great tool.

Unless we are able influence and shift Julie's belief or mindset regarding the situational effectiveness or ineffectiveness of email and communication, Julie will soon be in trouble.

Looking at other's beliefs about a given situation, will be the key to understanding sustainable behavior change.

### **Recommendations**

Recommended reading: "*You Are What You Say*", by Matthew Budd, M.D., and Larry Rothstein, Ed.D.

Recommended Corporate Leadership University training course: "Masterful Communication". A one day master's level training course that develops world-class leaders in the area of communication and large scale collaboration. The techniques learned in this course will transform your every day communication by giving you powerful tools, modes and skills to increase your power, confidence and effectiveness. Conducted by Vision Quest Consulting at your location of choice. Call or email us for more information. 978-692-4454, [wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com](mailto:wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com)

We offer leadership and executive coaching and consulting to help organizations develop a deep talent bench. We focus on giving good managers tools to use to make them into more effective leaders. Call or email us for more information. 978-692-4454, [wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com](mailto:wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com)

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