

***Be an effective change agent on your own terms  
– 3 steps to C your leadership success–***

I was recently at a breakfast meeting having a conversation with a management consultant about my work as an executive coach for business leaders. He asked, "How do you make your clients do what they say they will do?" To this I laughed. His comment implied this could very well be one of the wonders of the world, that one must have hidden powers or top-secret methods for instilling a sense of accountability in clients. In actuality, I don't *make* my clients do anything. I do however, get them thinking in a different way and, I do focus on building awareness around the powerful leadership role they play in living their success. I asked my consultant friend to share his perspective on how coaching differs from consulting and, was pleased for the invite on his part to share my own thoughts.

As an executive coach, I see my clients as creative, capable, intelligent business leaders who have answers within themselves or the resources to find them. While my clients hold the agenda, I act on the premise that the definitive expert regarding my clients work and life is – my client. My primary objective is to become a thinking partner and a navigator, to help my clients through a process that allows them to **C** their success with greater clarity, courage, challenge and confidence. Ultimately, my client is the only one who can make decisions and a commitment to actions needed to reach their objectives. A consultant on the other hand, is the expert who dispenses advice and has answers. The consultant holds the agenda, imparts knowledge and offers suggestions to improve effectiveness and increase success.

Most business leaders operate based on their values, which govern how they view the world. They plan and make decisions based on past experiences, current realities and future expectations. Our world is fast paced and demands that we have 'it' together. Our culture places high value on success and our ability to manage rapid change. We've even defined what success should look like. There seems to be low tolerance for autonomy – assimilation is the name of the game. How powerful would it be to create a balance between what we believe to be the right path to success, and the ideals of others, to be successful change agents? Leaders, who are given the opportunity to be change agents on their own terms, have a powerful and positive impact on their organizations effectiveness and bottom line success.

So, can I make the horse drink or shall I say, can I make a business leader do the things he or she needs to do for success? Can change occur? If you have a desire to overcome a challenge, or to increase effectiveness, wouldn't it be enough to say I want to do these things, therefore, I will? After all, most of us see our selves as savvy, capable professionals used to juggling the many facets of business. If we set our minds to achieving our goals, we should be able to reach them, right? In my experience, it's not enough to simply set goals and establish the right mindset for success. These are two pretty important factors in achieving what you want, but if you haven't fully examined your path to success, you stand a good chance of being blindsided and derailed along the way.

I work with business leaders to fully examine their path to success, which goes deeper than goal setting. The first step is to recognize it's *your* path, no one else's. Own it. While others will influence you, the reward in owning your path is found in your ability to risk for success with confidence. To own your path, you must *know thy self*.

- What are your strengths and gifts?
- What do you contribute that is unique and how does it positively influence others?
- How well do you leverage past successes and challenges for forward momentum?
- Do you know where your opportunities for growth are?
- Are you curious about yourself and how others view you as a leader in business?

Time spent in self-reflection, is time well spent. While you may not know if your current path will lead to sustainable change or desired results, choosing to know yourself leads to being more grounded and confident on the journey. You become more curious about others versus judgmental, more authentic and real in your interactions. You expend less energy worrying about what others think. Who would you rather follow - an approachable leader who values your contributions or one that is standoffish and close-minded?

Be willing to closely examine your beliefs, behaviors and actions (BBA's) to see what's working and what isn't – step two. Is what you value, in alignment with your goals? More often than not, I witness clients who sabotage their own efforts because they aren't aware the powerful role their BBA's play in their change efforts. I challenge clients to see BBA's that may be impeding progress. It takes courage and a willingness to shift limiting behavior to see your success. If you are willing to believe that what you thought as being tried and true, may not be serving you so well now, new insights can emerge. A new perspective on an old habit or challenge is the ticket to changing BBA's that are no longer effective. The result is the change needed to progress along your path to success.

Have trust in the process and know it's not stagnant...it will evolve. Step three requires that you get out of your own way. When you know thy self, you build trust in your abilities a leader in business. You trust your path and are prepared for obstacles along the way because in your coaching partnership, you have safely explored your obstacles and faced your fears. It's powerful when you transform fears to learning opportunities. From this position, you are better equipped to put a plan in place to overcome your challenges. The choices you make as you navigate your path are self-empowered, not from a place fear. Your journey becomes one based on progress, not perfection. You learn to trust your instincts and, become accustomed to checking in with your gut for guidance, not your head. Trusting yourself first is vital to earning the trust of others and to *Being a Better Leader* and *Risking for Success with Confidence*.