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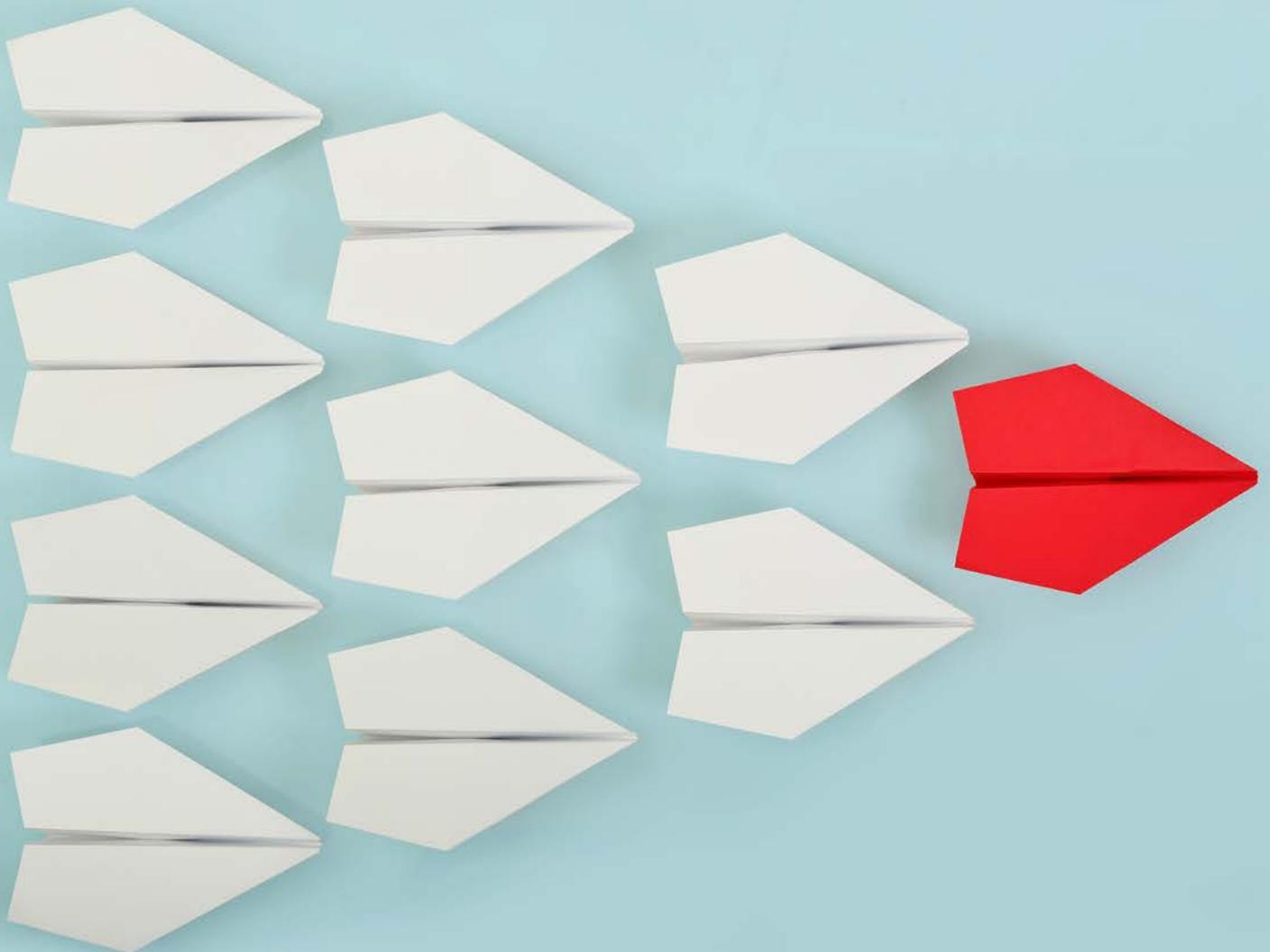
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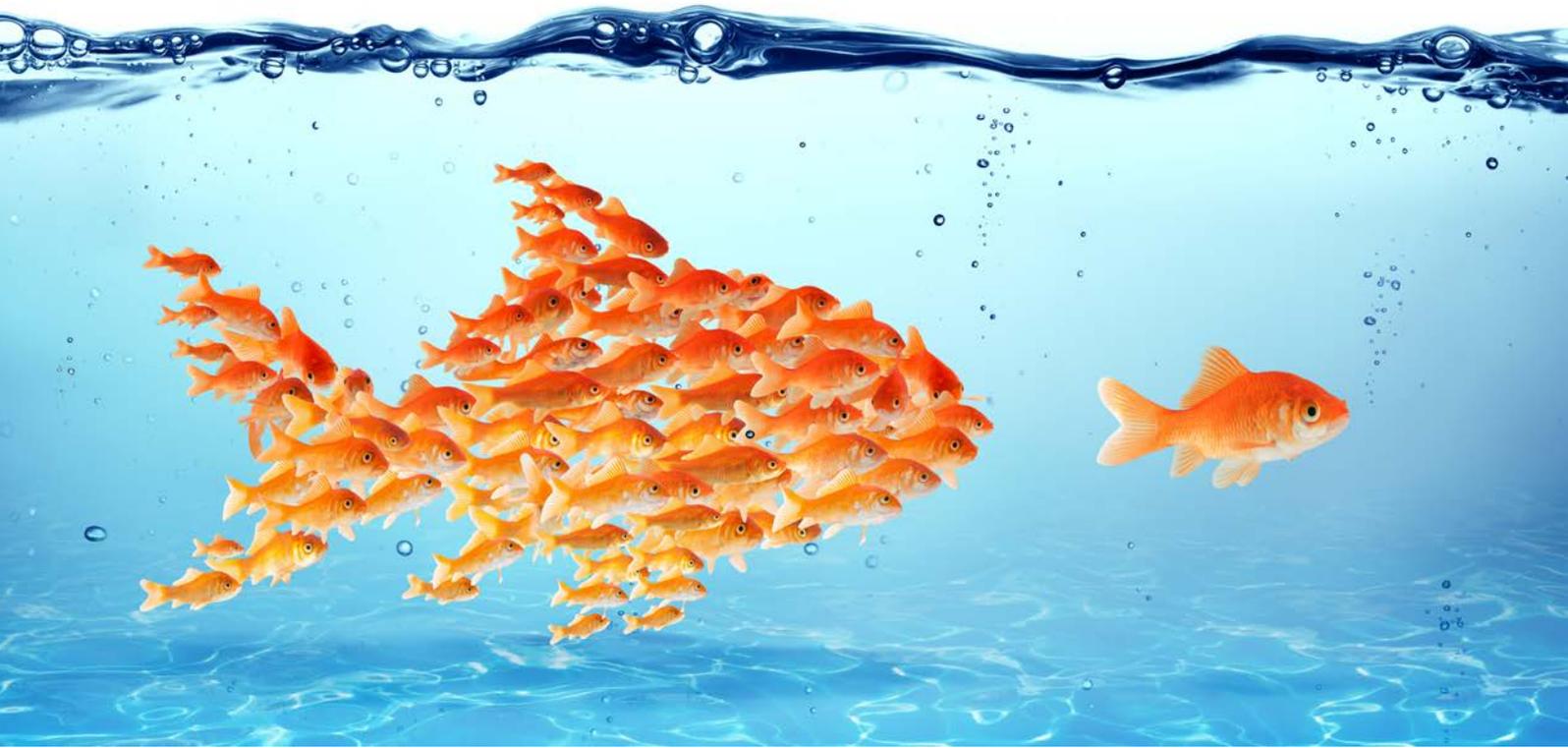
THE MAGAZINE OF HUMAN RESOURCES THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

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## The Future of Leadership

BUSINESS IS IN THE MIDST OF A REVOLUTION.  
IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S LEADERSHIP KEEPING UP?





# Coach Emerging Leaders

## ACCELERATE THEIR DEVELOPMENT

By Susan Power, MBA, CHRL

**M**any organizations have traditionally considered coaching a high cost investment dedicated almost exclusively to developing high potential executive talent. This view has taken a 360-degree shift and now leading organizations are offering coaching programs across their talent pools, with a focus on coaching young emerging leaders to attract and retain top talent.

According to *Bloomberg*, Shopify has increased nine-fold since its initial public offering in 2015 and is one of Canada's top technology firms in terms of market value. Shopify has twelve full-time coaches who engage with their employees in areas such as leadership development, career planning and setting strategies to reach their personal and professional goals.

Millennials and Generation Z greatly value development opportunities such as coaching and are looking to senior business leaders to equip them to be successful in the workplace. Based on the *Deloitte Millennial Survey 2018*, "Companies and senior management teams that are most aligned with millennials in terms of purpose, culture and professional development are likely to attract and retain the best millennial talent and, in turn, potentially

achieve better financial performance. Loyalty must be earned, and the vast majority of millennials are prepared to move, and move quickly, for a better workplace experience."

The fourth industrial revolution is upon us with artificial intelligence and massive automation, and organizations are recognizing the critical importance of developing leadership capabilities, soft skills and building the confidence of their young emerging leaders. Millennials and Generation Z feel that businesses are insufficiently developing these soft skills. *Deloitte's Millennial Survey* also indicates that over one-third of respondents (35 per cent) say it is critical to an organization's long-term success that its employees and leaders cultivate strong interpersonal skills.

To develop leadership capability, organizations are increasing their bench strength of both internal and external coaches, as well as offering training workshops for managers to hone their coaching skills. An effective coach requires excellent self-awareness, listening and emotional intelligence. These competencies take a skilled coach asking insightful questions to cultivate leadership capability with their coachees. The trend to engage coaches across job levels is part of this evolution to create a coaching culture.

# Leadership

Based on the work of Peter Hawkins in his book, *Creating a Coaching Culture*, there are six steps to move towards embedding a coaching culture in an organization.

**Step 1: Create a coaching strategy aligned to the business goals and wider organizational culture change.** This is important since defining what the end results are for each coaching engagement needs to be aligned with the wider organizational key performance indicators (KPI's) and goals. Otherwise, the coaching program will not gain traction in the organization.

**Step 2: Gain the buy-in of the organization's leaders to actively support coaching.** Coaching is not counselling and it is different than performance management. Organizational leaders need to experience working with a certified coach to understand the insights that can be gleaned and how coaching works to motivate performance. Coaches need to be trained, carefully selected and matched with their coachees. There are many unqualified coaches in the market that do not follow a proven coaching method, so the selection process needs to be rigorous.

**Step 3: Develop an effective bench of external and internal coaches.** There are benefits to using a blend of external and internal coaches. The external coaches have no political internal interests and can create a safe environment, while internal coaches better understand the internal environment, culture and key internal players.

**Step 4: Shift coaching to become the predominant management style.** As senior leaders become comfortable with coaching and it is embedded into the culture, coaching will naturally become how management leads and motivates the team.

**Step 5: Embed coaching in HR and performance management processes.** With organizations moving away from the traditional formal performance reviews in favour of real-time feedback, it is a natural progression to emphasize coaching as a development tool. Coaching can also be embedded into other HR programs such as recruitment and selection, conflict resolution, succession planning and career transition support, for example.

**Step 6: Measure results and collect team evaluation feedback at each step of the coaching culture journey.** It is important to measure the results delivered by a coaching program. This often involves 360-degree feedback both before and after the coaching engagement to track the coachee's behaviour and competency improvements. For external coaches, the value the coach is delivering can be measured by having the coachee and other key stakeholders (e.g. CHRO, CEO, direct supervisor) complete an evaluation at the mid-point of the coaching engagement and after the final coaching session. Similarly, certain organizational KPI's should improve as well, including a reduced turnover rate, a higher engagement rate and a greater per cent of high potentials.

**AN EFFECTIVE COACH  
REQUIRES EXCELLENT  
SELF-AWARENESS, LISTENING  
AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.**

By starting with a Coaching Pilot Project, an organization can introduce coaching and gain buy-in and understanding of how the process works. The process is similar to how a professional athlete works with a sports psychologist to build mental resilience and change thinking patterns. Business professionals can equally benefit from coaching to deal with change and create new thinking patterns to propel them to take positive action, optimize their interpersonal skills and increase self-awareness.

Our thinking patterns create neural circuits in the brain. The more sustained one's focus is on something, the more hard-wired that habit or mental interpretation will become. Jeffrey M. Schwartz coined the term "self-directed neuroplasticity." Many people falsely believe that once a person reaches a certain age they cannot change their thinking patterns to radically change behaviours. With neuroplasticity, fortunately, this is not the case. The existing roads or neural pathways will still be there, and a new pathway can be created and strengthened into a habit with practice. This new pathway operates as a type of neural shortcut to build a new thinking pattern in the brain and drive more productive behaviours based on new beliefs. The challenge is without a coach asking you the right questions to glean insights, the rate of development is much slower.

One of Shopify's co-founders, Daniel Weinand sums up the value Shopify has experienced with coaching: "I met my coach at a time when I didn't think I needed coaching at all. My team was doing well, and I was regarded as a good manager. Little did I know that working with a coach can catapult your capacities to new levels; ones you didn't know existed before. After this experience I was convinced that we needed to bring coaches in-house to aid the team with their development." ■

Susan Power is the owner and CEO of [Power HR Inc.](#)



Coaches can help emerging leaders with leadership development, career planning and setting strategies to reach their personal and professional goals