

## Coaching Leaders by Asking Questions

Glenn Hallam, Ph.D.

Feedback results in development only if the leader a) understands the feedback, b) appreciates its importance, c) identifies specific actions that will lead to improvement, d) makes a commitment to these actions, and e) follows through on these plans. Coaches can be instrumental in this process. The best coaches *lead* executives while allowing the executive to take control and do most of the work. This is done by asking questions to guide the leader through the process of working with feedback results. The following are questions that coaches will find helpful in this process.

### Questions to initially generate conversation:

- What specific questions do you have about the feedback?
- What about it was helpful?
- Were there any parts that were confusing?
- What about the report was surprising or concerning to you?

### Questions to better understand feedback:

- Have you received this kind of feedback (this particular message) before?
- What would your closest friends tell you about this?
- What other observations have you or other people made that relate to this?
- Is there a specific work relationship that you think might be helpful to work on?
- Is this something you feel you can change?

*The best coaches lead by asking questions, engaging executives in the feedback and driving to specific plans for improvement.*

### Questions to create appreciation of the importance of feedback:

- Have you worked for a leader who needed to work on this area? How did this person's behavior affect you?
- How does this issue relate to your effectiveness as a leader?
- What is going to help you deliver better business results?
- What will make you a truly extraordinary leader?

### Questions to generate ideas:

- What have you done in the past (in this area) that you thought was really effective?
- Can you think of exemplary leaders around you that you think are particularly good at X? What have you observed them doing? Do you think any of them would be willing to serve as a mentor for you?
- Whose opinion do you really respect about this? Would they be willing to help?

### Questions to gain commitment and closure:

- What is your plan now?
- What is the very first thing you plan to do and when will you do it?
- How would you like me to help you in the future?
- Would you like to schedule a time to follow up on this?

