

## THIS WAY FORWARD

## SMALL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS



## Self-Coaching for Leadership Strength

>>> *Perfect for today's time-challenged managers.*

*By Howard M. Guttman, Contributing Writer*

**One of the best ways for an organization to sustain success far into the future** is to develop its leadership “bench strength.” In a perfect world, organizations would be able to give their promising young managers all the skills and support needed to fully prepare them to take over the reins. Alas, reality has a way of compromising perfection: Limited resources prevent companies from investing as much as they should in the next generation of leaders. The challenge is especially acute for small- and medium-sized companies, where it’s not just dollars that are in short supply. “Lean” management means longer hours, more responsibilities, and less time for the current crop of leaders to devote to grooming their successors. Given the growing constraints, how can today’s executives grow the next generation of leaders?

Suggestion: Implement a self-coaching program for mid-level executives and contributors, especially those with high potential. Self-coaching provides an alternative when you can’t

afford to invest in professional coaching and don’t have sufficient time to serve as a mentor to this talent pool. Giving mid-level employees access to a sound coaching process that they can follow on their own or with some assistance from colleagues can make the difference between unmotivated underachievers and enthusiastic, skilled successors to today’s leaders.

**A rigorous, disciplined self-coaching process follows these seven steps:**

- Determine the individual’s coachability
- Select and commit to an intention
- Identify a mentor and stakeholders
- Solicit feedback
- Analyze and respond to feedback
- Develop and act on a game plan
- Track success and recalibrate

Self-coaching is a variation on the executive coaching process and follows the same steps. Starting a self-coaching program in your organization can be a fairly simple process. First,

you need to partner with HR and your functional leaders to identify candidates for self-coaching. They know where the talent lies - which young managers have demonstrated the potential to shoulder greater responsibility and possess the requisite qualities, the ability to set aside their ego and depersonalize the process, the willingness to view feedback as a gift rather than a threat, and an inclination to self-explore and assume personal accountability.

Next, one of your HR professionals can lead a half-day seminar with targeted employees to start them thinking about their intention, or goal; assess their self-coachability; and identify a guide and circle of support who will help them as they move toward their intention. Those who would like to take the self-coaching route can begin following the seven-step process, coming together periodically, every month or two, to assess progress and compare notes.

Self-coaching provides high-potential talent with development opportunities that they might otherwise never receive. It also sends the message that you really believe that your employees are your greatest asset. It’s the most cost-effective way to increase employee engagement and loyalty and decrease the probability that your most promising talent will look for advancement among your competitors. **NJB**

### About the Author

*Howard M. Guttman is principal of Guttman Development Strategies, Inc. His third book, Coach Yourself to Win: 7 Steps to Breakthrough Performance on the Job and in Your Life (www.coachyourselftowin.com), was published by McGraw-Hill in October 2010.*