

Book review

Innovations in Leadership Coaching

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Successful and efficient leadership in our age of uncertainty about health issues and climate change will most surely require substantial support from appropriately informed coaches. The unpredictable nature of the external factors we face requires leaders and their organisations to react quickly and appropriately to changes and in turn, coaches will need to be adaptable and flex their styles and tactics in response.

This comprehensive volume is therefore a much needed contribution to the art of leadership coaching. The book is aimed at coaches seeking continuing professional development through new ideas. It contains pertinent chapters and case studies to enable coaches, coach developers and researchers to keep abreast of the field.

Fielding Graduate University has been at the forefront of coach education and research in America and this book is testament to the expertise that staff and associates at Fielding have accrued in this area. Through each of the book's chapters, they incorporate a range of vital leadership and coaching theories and concepts. There are five parts and 19 chapters. Chapter 2 acknowledges the underpinnings of coaching, and the chapters that follow explore a variety of topics that are pertinent to leadership coaching, but are, I would argue, relevant to all coaches.

A multidisciplinary approach has been adopted with chapters written by experts from diverse fields. The first part begins, as mentioned, with an overview of the early stages of coaching outlining the theories that underpin coaching. Part two, titled 'Coaching for Leadership', then has five chapters covering models and theories that apply to coaching leaders and executives. Unfortunately, despite the title of Chapter 3 being 'Coaching Leaders for Peak Performance', the concept of peak performance is not addressed; instead strategies are presented which are deemed to enhance self-efficacy. It would have been good to have had a discussion of the relationship between peak performance and self-efficacy. Efficacy is also the subject of the fourth chapter, while the final chapters in part two present useful theoretical practical insights into emotional intelligence, neuroscience and mindfulness.

Part three of the book has four chapters that are collected under the umbrella title 'Embodiment in Coaching' and these largely examine the theories and techniques that promote transformational change with clients. Again, the chapters are very useful in any genre of coaching, not just leadership coaching.

Part four moves beyond individual concerns and looks at social processes such as group coaching, organisational contexts and cultural transformation, while the final part includes three more chapters relating to developing and educating coaches. This part includes chapters on equity, sensemaking and importantly, supervision. So overall, a good range of areas of concern to leadership coaches is covered.

My favourite chapter in the book is Chapter 17, written by Penny Potter, who notes that one of the overlooked areas of study is the process of becoming a coach. In this fascinating chapter, entitled 'Coaching Students' Transformative Experiences,' Potter examines the nature of transformative experiences, relating them to appropriate learning theory. She looks at extant literature on becoming a coach before presenting new research that highlights the personal growth that coaches undergo when learning to coach. Potter highlights six dialectics that represent the complexity of coaching conversations and links these with the suggestion that the demands of this complexity is what leads to the many transformative events reported by coaching students.

Refreshingly, the chapters in the book are presented as academic research papers, each with an abstract, a review of current literature and using qualitative or quantitative methodologies, but there is also a huge practical focus. Through this novel format and with the range of topics covered, the insights provided by each chapter will be useful and valuable to coaches as they strive to help leaders in the coming decades.

References

Hildebrandt, T.H., Campone, F., Norwood, K. and Ostrowski, E.J. (eds.) (2020) *Innovations in Leadership Coaching*. California: Fielding University Press.