

PEER-GROUP COACHING

NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



by Marcus Gottschalk

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“Over the years, I’ve observed just about every type of leadership development program on the planet. And the sad thing is, most of them don’t even come close to accomplishing what they were designed to do – build better leaders.” – Mike Myatt

Since we founded Change Leadership and Partners (CLP), we have worked to become the most innovative leadership development provider in Europe. We have refined our approach to every single one of our programmes. Why? Because we witnessed how the leadership experiences, global leadership challenges and leadership development must constantly change and adapt to modern times. Today’s leaders face a different world than the one that confronted leaders 20 years ago. Of course, organizations have always researched, planned, developed and employed leadership skills. But today, these tasks must be developed and employed almost instantaneously. Peter Vaill describes this environment of immediacy as “permanent white water.” With instant communication and daily technological innovation, change in this world has become as rapid as it has become unpredictable. Technological solutions can make entire industries obsolete overnight, while at the same time opening new markets that were not available before

At CLP it became apparent that our leadership development must continuously adapt to equip leaders for the challenges and opportunities at hand and allow them to develop the tools that will ensure their success. These are not techniques leaders can learn from textbooks and classroom lectures. CLP understands that rather than focusing on learning specific leadership skills, our approach needs to allow leaders to develop themselves. With Peer-Group Coaching (PGC) we have developed a high-impact, just-in-time, self-renewing, low-cost and easy-to-learn method to help leaders realize their full potential.

To initiate PGC, we use a single training session to prepare leaders for a development journey that empowers peers to solve their business challenges while learning together.

PGC is a form of reciprocal coaching, where 3 to 6 group members coach each other on business and personal issues without the support of an expert, external facilitator or coach.

One Peer assumes the role of mentee, with the others in the group acting as mentors. Each group conducts several sessions, so that in each PGC every participant is the mentee least once, while serving several times as a member of the team mentoring others. The duration of the coaching can vary, depending on the group’s needs. Groups can meet for PGC on a regular basis, either face-to-face or virtually via telephone conference or Webex, Microsoft’s Lync, Skype or other web conferencing software.

In PGC, leaders meet frequently in groups of 3 to 5 peers. One peer contributes a relevant case on which he or she wishes to be coached. The other peers serve as coaches and use CLP’s coaching methods to increase learning. Roles rotate; so all peers will coach several times and act as the “coachee” at least once. Apart from an initial training and supervision session, no external coach or expert is present during the peer coachings. To learn more about PGC, its advantages and implementation, see our previous issue

http://www.change-leadership.net/wp-content/uploads/White-Paper-Peer_Group_Coaching.pdf

In 2011, Nick Petrie at the Center for Creative Leadership published a white paper on future trends in leadership development that has garnered wide attention. Petrie highlights four trends for the future of leadership development that are in line with PGC intentions. PGC supports the next generation of Leadership Development trends in several ways.

TREND 1: VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT

Petrie (2014) identifies four leadership trends which can be crucial in effectively leading and navigating the future. He insists that historically most leadership training has focused on competency development. In challenging situations, companies often use frameworks that stress identifying mission-critical skills in a certain position within a firm. These kinds of selection and development processes are largely concentrated on adjusting and developing skills rather than developing the person who will use them. Many of our clients aim to leave this model behind after finding that it no longer sufficiently meets their leadership needs. Petrie argues that to develop leaders for the future, we have to understand that vertical leadership development across progressive stages will be more appropriate than simply developing competencies, which corresponds to horizontal development. Leaders in the future will have to develop through

graduated developmental stages.

Based on Robert Kegan's work, Petrie identifies three stages of leadership development.

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The first step, known as the socialized stage, finds leaders still defined by and confined within others' expectations. What others think and expect strongly shapes both the vision and values of the leaders. Similarly, in next phases, also known as the self-authoring mind, leader have built their own internal itinerary of values that they use to take stands against the values and ideas of others. The last stage, called the self-transforming leader, describes leaders who have developed strong internal moral compasses. These leaders have developed enduring systems of values and ideals that informs, align and guides leadership action around them. Yet, at this stage leaders are still capable of reflecting, stepping back and and questioning their internal beliefs and conventions when they are challenged. Leaders with self-authoring minds are able to flexibly transform and adapt to de facto situations and real-word necessities. They can hold different levels of contradictions and opposites in their mind.

At CLP, one of our goals in leadership development is to empower leaders to self-transform. Peer-Group Coaching gives us a platform to act as catalysts in this transformation. In Peer- Group Coaching, leaders present their own issues and cases to a group of peers that takes the role of coaches, advisors and consultants. Leaders learn from playing both roles. They act as clients, factual and process experts at the same time. During PGC, leaders learn from other leaders but are also challenged to develop their own agenda of beliefs about solutions to a problem. In PGC, coaching methods and experience both matter and the method is inherently designed to stimulate reflection. Leaders learn from helping solve each others' challenges, but also through self-reflection triggered by the coaching questions and methods taught to them at the kick-off seminar. Taking the role of coach allows leaders to see

a situation from a completely different perspective and learn different approaches to leadership rather than simply providing solutions. McGuire & Rhodes describe the process of vertical development in three stages: 1) Awaken. 2) unlearn/discern and 3) advance.

Leaders in PGC awaken themselves to a particular difficulty by becoming aware of solutions and understanding that they are not the first or only decision-maker to face such a problem and realizing that problems are solvable and sharable within a group of like-minded peers. They then unlearn by questioning their old beliefs, answering questions about the issue and being exposed to solutions they have not experienced before. They then test what they have learned in the real world. Leaders advance when the new mindsets obtained and developed during PGC prove more useful and successful, and replace their old leadership logic. Leaders in our programmes have reported that their leadership style evolves from a more rigid style to a more developing, coaching style, whenever it is appropriate.

Leaders reported that they were more readily reflective and felt more equipped to tackle the challenges they faced after they had experienced PGC.

TREND 2: LEADERS TAKING RESPONSIBILITY OF THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT

Every trainer involved in leadership development programmes has dealt with a participant who enters the room with an “entertain me” attitude, and the only thing missing is the box of popcorn in his or her hand! Unfortunately, this educator’s nightmare is more prevalent than ever. It is obvious that leaders learn best when they take responsibility for their own development. We call this

co-creation. Leaders co-create the content they want to learn according to their needs, while

leaders learn best when they take responsibility for their own development

CLP arms them with weapons to attack their challenges. Instead of passively absorbing the material, participants enrolled in CLP’s courses receive hands-on experience and use the devices we have created to overcome the individual challenges they bring to our programmes.

By bringing their own issues and cases to PGC, leaders take charge of their own development, which is another necessary future leadership trend. In a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment, it is impossible to always predict what leaders need. Our work aims at co-creating the future of leadership. We achieve this by teaching skills that allow leaders to take development in their own hands. PGC requires action by leaders, since the process itself requires choosing cases and issues to work and reflect on. Peer-Groups define their own schedule, the frequency and duration of their meetings and which cases they want to work on in their time together. They decide if they want to meet locally, virtually or on the phone. PGC avoids the passivity that is inherent to many developmental practices, where leaders have procedures performed on them. PGC rather stimulates leaders to take the lead. Leaders in our programmes have reported that this is particularly useful for them. Often problems that seemed unique to them at first, were often shared among peers.

PGC also allows development to occur organically and with versatility. Once a leader is posed with an issue that needs to be solved, it can be brought to PGC without need of further discussion, bureaucracy or scheduling a training session.

TREND 3: AWAY FROM THE HEROIC LEADER TO COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Peer-Group Coaching is distinguished from regular executive coaching by its collaborative character. A more subtle change from a model that focuses on a single leader, PGC leaders develop together as a group. Leaders become a collective and take charge as teams, rather than as assuming roles as superheroes. For decades we encountered the image of the

leader as mythical hero who rushes in, just in the nick of time, to save the day - an image that could rarely

be met. In contrast, Peer-Group Coaching emphasizes the trend of cooperative leadership growth by using peer groups of hierarchically similar leaders to mutually engage in active reflection. Rather than dwelling on problems alone, leaders are equipped with the skills to face them head on, presenting a united front to reflect on individual and organizational problems presented to them within the PGC session.

TREND 4: A NEW ERA OF INNOVATION IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A fourth leadership development trend identified by Nick Petrie is a dawn of new programmes that address the aforementioned leadership development challenges head on. Successful LD programmes must be as flexible as the leaders who are facing these challenges day-to-day. We at CLP are proud to have professionalized our dynamic approaches toward customized leadership development architectures for over a decade. We are adjusting leadership development programmes to organisations’ strategies and leaders’ needs. We are researching new methods and learning approaches such as Peer-Group Coaching to meet the challenges of learning in the future.



How you can start benefitting from PGC

- ◆ *You want to use the transformative power of PGC to benefit your own organization?*
- ◆ *You are interested in our portfolio for leadership development and how we can help you?*
- ◆ *You are interested in PGC but want more information?*

“Peer-Group Coaching is the most cost effective implementation of coaching we can offer and we are excited about its benefits in organizations worldwide.”

Marcus Gottschalk



Marcus Gottschalk, M. Sc., is CEO of Change, Leadership and Partners. Ltd. He is studying at Oxford Brookes University in order to achieve a Professional Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring and specializes in Peer-Group Coaching.

About CLP

Change, Leadership and Partners (CLP, Cologne-London-Tunis) is a knowledge institution devoted to working with leaders and organizations to build their desired future and to create sustainable value. We provide customized leadership development, change & innovation solutions, as well as coaching for growth. Clients choose to partner with us, because of our 17 years of experience, the quality of our 80 facilitators and coaches, and our global reach. We are proud to have a close cooperation with DUKE CE, No. 1 in leadership development worldwide.

We have expanded our research activities to provide a high profile knowledge value to our partners, clients, business and academic community. The current areas of our research are focusing on leadership development, business purpose, (peer-) group coaching, learning for leaders, and change management.



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