



eLEADERSHIP
ACADEMY®

A PLAYBOOK FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Building a Coaching Culture

How to move your leaders from directing to developing, and make it stick.

Ask more. Tell less.

Leadership development for the human side of work.
eleadershipacademy.com

Stop fixing and **start coaching.**

Most leaders were promoted for solving problems, so they keep solving them. It works until the team stops thinking for itself and every decision routes back through one person. A coaching culture is the alternative: leaders who ask instead of tell, and people who own their solutions because they found them.

What happens in the brain

Telling triggers the amygdala's threat response, which makes people hesitant to speak up or share ideas. Asking activates the prefrontal cortex and opens space for insight, ownership, and new thinking.

Asking also builds motivation (dopamine) and connection (oxytocin), and strengthens psychological safety: the sense that it's safe to think out loud, take risks, and be coached. When people feel safe, they think more clearly and perform at their best.

70%

of the variance in team engagement comes down to the manager.

SOURCE: GALLUP

80%

of people who receive coaching report greater self-confidence.

SOURCE: ICF GLOBAL COACHING CLIENT STUDY

86%

of organizations report a positive return on their investment in coaching.

SOURCE: ICF GLOBAL COACHING CLIENT STUDY

"We found that we were hiring external candidates to get the skills we needed. We could see that we needed more emphasis on developing our own people, and moving from a directing culture to a coaching culture is going to help us with that."

Connie McMann, VP, Training and Employee Development

Manage, mentor, or coach.

Coaching is not the right answer to everything. Leaders need all three modes and the judgment to know which one the moment calls for. The problem in most organizations is not that leaders manage. It's that they only manage. And knowing the three modes takes an afternoon; choosing the right one in a live conversation takes practice.

MANAGER

Tell

Solves the problem.
Right when the answer is fixed, the stakes are high, or time is short.

MENTOR

Guide

Offers insight from experience. Right when someone needs context they don't yet have.

COACH

Ask

Facilitates problem solving. Right when the person is capable and the goal is growth, not just the answer.

Six building blocks of a coaching culture

A coaching culture takes intention, consistency, and reinforcement. The six blocks on the next two pages are what we see where coaching became the way people lead rather than a workshop they once attended. Each comes with three things to do.

1 Leadership buy-in and modeling

2 Shared language

3 Skill development

4 Practice and feedback

5 Embed and measure

6 Sustainment

Start at the top, then give everyone **the same words**.

1 Leadership buy-in and modeling

Coaching cultures begin at the top. Senior leaders have to visibly support and model the behaviors that make coaching safe and effective.

- **Share the why.** Show how coaching drives performance, engagement, and the experience of the people you serve.
- **Connect to purpose.** Link coaching to your organization's values and strategic goals.
- **Model curiosity.** Invite leaders to try short coaching conversations, highlight small wins, and share early impact stories.

"If my CEO is doing it, I'm learning from him. If I'm doing it, my managers are learning from me. We tend to fall back on the kind of leadership we've experienced, so if we're delivering that experience, we're making it easier for our leaders to follow."

Connie McMann, VP, Training and Employee Development

2 Shared language

Before coaching can take root, everyone needs a shared understanding of what it means. Without one, "coaching" can mean many different things.

- **Normalize curiosity.** Encourage leaders to replace advice-giving with questions that help others find their own solutions.
- **Model the mindset.** In meetings and one-on-ones, lead with questions, listen longer, and hold others capable.
- **Use consistent frameworks.** One model for coaching conversations and one for setting expectations, used across the organization.

"When our leaders began using coaching questions in everyday conversation, the learning was starting to move beyond the classroom."

Joe Aspden, Manager, Learning & Development

3 Skill development

Coaching is a skill. It grows through training, practice, and feedback, and it feels clunky before it feels natural.

- **Train leaders and employees.** Active listening, asking better questions, and giving constructive feedback.
- **Practice in safe spaces.** Peer coaching or short practice sessions where leaders build confidence without pressure.
- **Develop internal champions.** Equip a small group of leaders or HR partners to model the coach approach and support others as they learn.

Practice it, build it in, and **keep it alive.**

4 Practice and feedback

Coaching mastery comes from consistent practice and reflection, not from the course.

- **Make practice regular.** Short coaching moments in daily routines: before meetings, during check-ins, in feedback conversations.
- **Seek mentor support.** Certified mentor coaches give feedback that refines how the skill is applied.
- **Reflect and adjust.** Encourage leaders to notice outcomes, reflect on conversations, and keep adjusting.

"All of our people leaders meet on a regular basis with their employees and coach them. We're starting to see employees growing and developing in their positions as a result."

Joe Aspden, Manager, Learning & Development

5 Embed and measure

Coaching becomes culture when it's woven into everyday communication and decision-making, not added on top of it.

- **Integrate into routines.** Coaching moments in meetings, project updates, and performance conversations.
- **Align systems and expectations.** Reflect coaching in leadership competencies, recognition, and development plans. Make it part of the role.
- **Measure what matters.** Gather feedback on coaching effectiveness and trust, track engagement, and share the stories that show impact.

6 Sustainment

A coaching culture lasts when the learning stays visible and ongoing.

- **Celebrate progress.** Share stories of leaders developing their teams and people growing through feedback and curiosity.
- **Keep learning alive.** Refreshers, peer practice sessions, and reflection circles that sustain the skill.
- **Share resources.** Ongoing access to tools, guides, and success stories that keep coaching top of mind.

The time question, answered. Coaching conversations don't add time. They replace directing conversations with developing ones, and the second kind reduces how often the problem comes back.

Small habits start **big change**.

Asking questions changes how people think. Neuroplasticity means reflection and feedback build new pathways. Autonomy and progress release dopamine. Connection releases oxytocin. And attention density, the brain's habit of growing what it focuses on, means frequent short coaching moments do more than occasional long ones.

Five habits any leader can start this week

- Replace answers with questions.
- Listen longer than you speak.
- Ask "What else?" to deepen reflection.
- Recognize effort and growth, not just results.
- Hold one coaching conversation a week.

Four ways organizations begin

- **Executives first.** The CEO and senior team complete the coaching program before managers, so they can model it and support what their reports are learning.
- **Pilot, then phase.** One cohort of leaders, then the next. Learn what rollout looks like before you scale.
- **Set the expectation.** A regular coaching conversation with every direct report, written into what it means to lead here.
- **Baseline it.** Measure how leaders coach today so you can show what changed.

"What we're hoping to achieve is a culture where people are empowered to identify challenges and develop solutions themselves. That lends itself to more innovation, more collaboration, and a stronger commitment to the decisions being made, because people have had a hand in creating them."

Connie McMann, VP, Training and Employee Development

Attention density shapes the brain. What we focus on grows. Focus on asking better questions and you'll grow trust, performance, and potential at every level.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Theory is easy. **Practice** is where coaching is built.

Coaching capability builds across the eLeadership Academy pathway, one program at a time, with practice at every step and support that continues after graduation.



- IGNITE** Introduces the coach approach as part of the leadership 360 view.
- eLEAD** Builds coaching into how you lead, from feedback to difficult conversations.
- eCOACH** Eight weeks: four weeks of frameworks (Ask vs Tell, a coaching model, when it's not a coaching conversation, the neuroscience of coaching), then four weeks applying them with your own team. GAIN and CLEAR models. Counts toward the Certificate in Applied Leadership (CAL).
- CLPD** The Coaching & Leadership Professional Designation, jointly awarded with Royal Roads University, for leaders who want coaching mastery.

After eCOACH, the practice keeps going

LUCA

Our AI mentor coach. A safe place to practice coaching conversations anytime, between the real ones.

eCOACH Refresh

Quarterly webinars to maintain and build on what graduates have learned.

Triad practice rounds

Monthly peer practice for eCOACH graduates, so the skill stays in use.

"It's the pathway I wished had existed, built for leaders who are still becoming."

Sandra McDowell, Founder & CEO

100,000+

hours of leadership learning

5,000+

credentials earned

1,000+

10/10 reviews

Building a coaching culture? We'll help you choose where to start, from an open cohort to an in-house rollout. Program details at eleadershipacademy.com.

training@eleadershipacademy.com · eleadershipacademy.com