

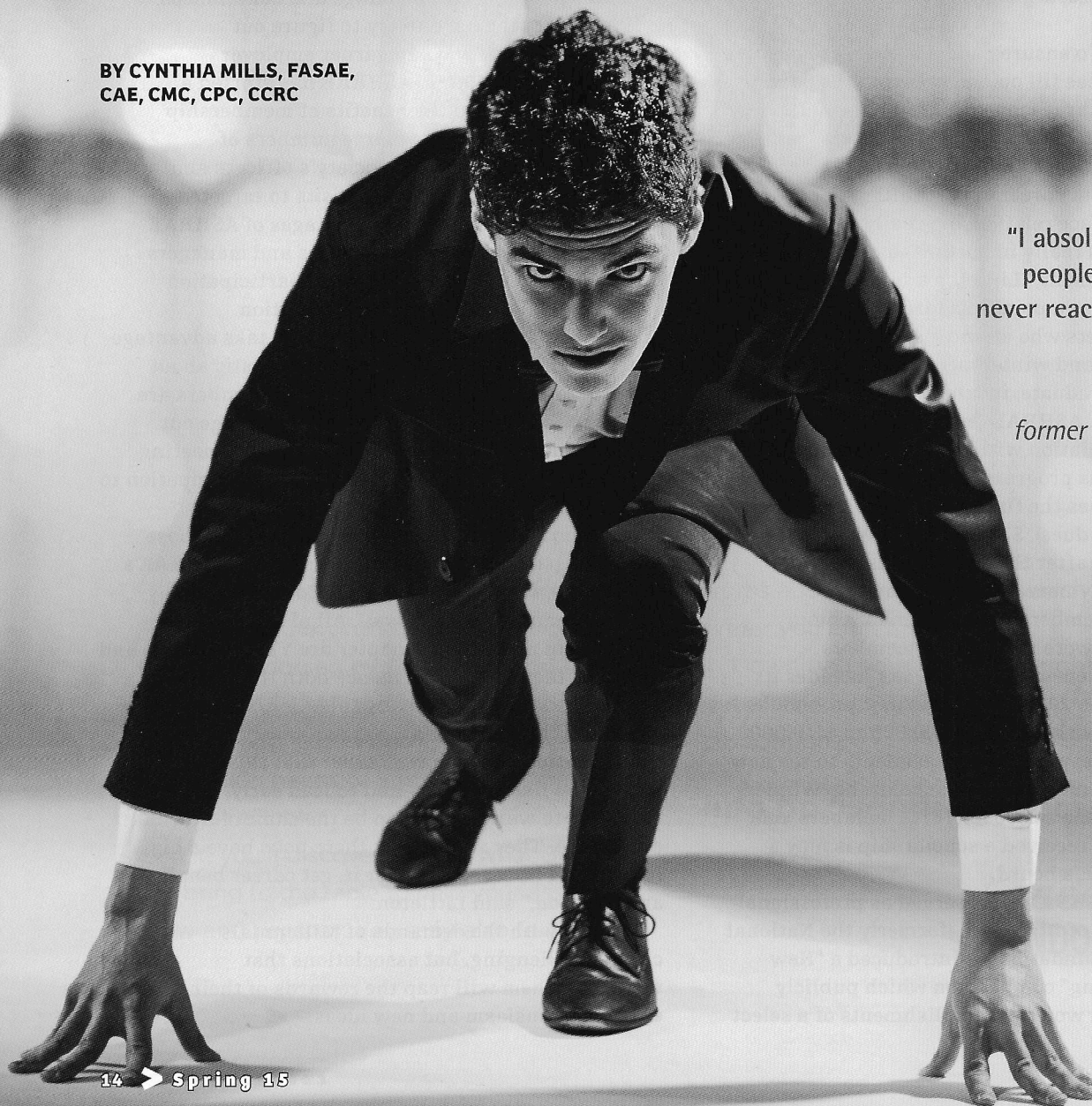
COACHING INVESTMENTS IN THE WORKFORCE

Sustainability Strategy & Competitive Advantage

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"I absolutely believe that
people, unless coached,
never reach their maximum
capabilities."

—Bob Nardelli,
former CEO, Home Depot



NEVER HAVE THE opportunities been so great to harvest the energy, enthusiasm, and confidence of young professionals and marry it with the wisdom, experiences, and discernment of leaders in our associations and the professions and industries we lead. The question is what is today's differentiator that will help us perpetuate sustainability and competitive advantage?

Today's business challenges demand more from everyone professionally, whether seasoned leaders or just starting out. How do we leverage our time and talent to fast-track leadership, create innovative cultures, enhance value and marry wisdom and experience with enthusiastic, energetic and emerging brilliance?

Where could we go if our leadership teams were able to function at peak level most of the time, communicating in synchrony? How would we stack up against our competitors if we were really paying attention to people development? How far could we stretch if we had an accountability partner who was FOR US and our success? How could the harmony in our organization be advanced if all of the generations were sharing their knowledge with each other? How might our hiring decisions change if in the interview we learned that a potential employee was not open to development through coaching? What would happen if the leader of your association or company bought into creating a coaching environment in the workplace?

Our working environment now includes the following: Millennials are now the majority in the workplace.¹ Every month, a quarter-million Americans turn 65.² Millennials have been unprepared for leadership roles.³ Generational differences will continue to play out in the Boardroom, C-Suite, your small business, and in membership-based organizations. Women are earning more degrees than men and attending graduate school in higher

numbers.⁴ Change management skills are an essential tool for all leaders at this moment in time. Do you know them and exercise them? The complexity, rate of change, and constantly altered expectations of our employees and customers know no boundaries, while no more hours have been added to a day. Leaders will continue to have to deal with these dynamics in the years ahead. Coaching is the sustainability mechanism to help our leaders and developing professionals navigate and excel as we accomplish our visions in this fluid environment.

Let's start with an easy example — reducing the chorus of complaints to a low murmur that Gen Y won't open emails and only look at subject lines; won't pick up the phone but will answer a text. Swap that for coaching and dispensing guidance on how to discern the appropriate communication methods in various circumstances, and we have an opportunity for beautiful relationships with a generation that wants to learn, learn, learn.

Younger workers are painted with the brush that they want to be thanked for showing up to work and need a trophy for coming back from lunch as opposed to being open to and desiring regular feedback. Missed is that, "They want work that is meaningful and consistent with their socially and environmentally responsible values," according to Karen Foster in *What's Good About Generation Y?*⁵ Associations are the perfectly positioned employers to fulfill this yearning and capitalize on attracting smart, capable, and excited young professionals to our organizations and then preparing them. When leaders expect a set of behaviors that we simply have not instilled in our successors, nor has the environment they have grown up in rewarded, we must be mindful of that; meeting them where they are now and helping them to develop and evolve. Choosing to interact with each other by making

them wrong; perplexes the younger generations and certainly does not yield the desired response.

According to Jason Ryan Dorsey, the Gen Y Guy® of The Center for Generational Kinetics, "Gen Y is the only generation in the current workforce that has never expected to work for one company their entire life. In fact, most audiences are shocked when I reveal the actual length of employment that Gen Y thinks equals being a loyal employee ... Where companies and organizations struggle is when they solely rely on employment strategies that worked well in the past but are not a fit for Gen Y."⁶

We have been, and continue in, a business climate that neither our education nor our parents' business experiences prepared us as leaders to handle. How do we respond to our workforces? We have grown up with train, train, train; educate, educate, educate as the mantra for developing professionals. These certainly remain valid practices, and yet, it's not enough anymore. This has become the baseline; not the gold standard.

First and foremost, with four generations in play and another coming, we are less alike than ever before in our workforce's history. This creates communication issues, differing expectations, wasted time from not trying to understand, and frustration in the workplace that no one needs. Secondly, despite The American Dream's statistics report on www.stageoflife.com that 10,000 people per day are reaching 65, "40 percent of baby boomers plan to work until they drop according to a recent AARP survey." This lack of migration to the next era of life is stunting the professional development of those who would be

Don't miss Cynthia Mills, FASAE, CAE, CMC, CPC, CCRC "So You've Been At This for a While..." at the GSAE Annual Meeting on Thursday, May 28 and Friday, May 29 in Charleston!

"I never cease to be amazed at the power of the coaching process to draw out the skills or talent that was previously hidden within an individual, and which invariably finds a way to solve a problem previously thought unsolvable."

—John Russell, Managing Director, Harley-Davidson Europe, Ltd.

moving into other phases of their career development in companies and organizations. In addition, it requires those who remain in the workplace longer to continue adapting, learning new skills and remaining flexible to a rapidly changing environment.

On the one hand, we have 20-somethings trapped in their inability to move into opportunities that will provide them with key development experiences with fewer job openings. They are not learning the skill sets, making their mistakes, and developing experiential wisdom that allows them to step into the roles we all need them to in their 30s. We must help them be ready for senior leadership with the ability to assess risks and make sound judgment calls. How do we prepare our associations, our members and their companies, for sustainability and look beyond just taking care of the day-to-day operations? This is a succession planning question that is critical to the future life of our associations, and one, which we ignore to our peril as leaders.

Those of us who are in leadership roles often use the terms professional development, networking, mentoring, training, and continuing education as if they are inter-changeable and return the same result. We need to fine-tune our understandings of what each of these can mean for our employees and become adept at knowing when to deploy what strategy to develop our workforce. We must view our investment of time and dollars in our employees' careers as part of our sustainability strategy and not a perk. It is absolutely true that our team members benefit from these experiences, and they very well may expect it from the employer.

However, we've all heard the mantra of "when I stop learning, I'm moving on to the organization that continues to teach me something;" a word to the wise for associations and company owners.

It is also absolutely true that when we fail to have a strategy around our workforce development and understand what the various tools are at our disposal, we now risk our very sustainability. One thing has never changed and that is that we get our work done through people. The perspective to take is how well we finesse our understanding of professional development, networking, mentoring, training, continuing education, and now coaching, as a competitive advantage.

What IS your strategy for deploying each of these opportunities to develop your very diverse workforce, enhance loyalty, reduce your turnover costs, create a workplace environment that your team wants to be a part of every day, and focus your remaining time on growing your association or business? Each of these ways of maximizing your workforce's performance has a return on investment for your businesses, and should not be viewed as a cost. The cost occurs when failing to invest.

Let's look at a few components of a building a strategy and their differentiators. Professional development is the over-arching term, which encompasses all of the other strategies that you might deploy. Networking is an experiential learning opportunity that can certainly be a part of your BD strategy but is also a way for your employees to have a form of "on-the-job" training. Training is providing access to specific techniques that enhance

skill and competency required to perform a job adequately. It may include written materials, exams, and on-site skills assessments. Continuing education may include support for certifications and advanced degrees.

Where there is significant confusion is the use of the terms mentoring and coaching. Mentoring is a form of experiential learning, regularly engaged in, between someone in your company who creates a formalized professional relationship with someone who usually has aspirations to more senior job responsibilities than their current employment. Mentoring is characterized by the "off-loading" of information and experiences from one person to another. It may involve exposure to company meetings to which they might not ordinarily participate. It may include introductions to key players in the industry and inclusion in outings or business lunches. There may be portions of higher level projects or assignments that are entrusted to the mentee to develop their understanding with assessment discussions along the way.

When designing a mentoring program, remember this is not seniority driven and grab the opportunity to implement "reverse mentoring." What a tremendous chance for your young leaders to be fully engaged, a key buzzword in HR these days, and to help your long-termers learn relevant new skills by interacting with younger team members! These types of relationships can have considerable value in the development of an employee; particularly one who has made commitments to the association or company with regards to their long-term intentions; not to mention fostering understanding between generations. In addition, the creation of a culture that values all voices at the table based on the contributions they can make creates a cutting-edge brand reputation for you.

Coaching is an alternative to mentoring but is not a mentoring subset. It usually involves hiring a third party from outside the organization as an executive or professional coach to an individual or a team of individuals. It is important when seeking a coach to identify someone who has received appropriate instruction and certifications. The most important aspect of coaching is that it is confidential. If there is not an expectation of confidentiality, this must be disclosed by the employer to the coachee(s) at the onset of the relationship.

The primary characteristic of coaching is the use of questioning as the methodology by which the coachee explores topics of professional development, behavioral responses, and personal/professional growth that allows them to become more effective in their work environments. Certainly, there are assessment tools that can be used throughout the process, goals and homework for the coachee to work through, and ongoing discussions of progress. However, to reemphasize, coaching is not mentoring. Coaching involves 80 percent listening and 20 percent determining the appropriate questions and paths to guide the coachee in their self-exploration.

The ultimate goal is to maximize the performance of the individual and/or the team to fulfill the mission and/or bottom line. One of the key aspects of coaching is having someone hold the coachee accountable. When goals and commitments are outlined between sessions and are not kept, that alone is a behavior that must be examined and addressed. However, coaching relationships do not involve reporting back to the supervisor, company owner, or peers in these circumstances; nor is session content part of the performance evaluation process.

Coaching can also be a skill set that is taught to the leaders of a company in order to facilitate

change management, reinforce culture, and to assist their key players in adapting to new behaviors in order to be successful. Creating a coaching environment requires an "all-in" approach. It necessitates support from the top for the financial and time resources required and a belief that people are how the bottom line will be improved.

Those participating have validated the addition of coaching to their human resources strategies. In the seminal study by The Manchester Review, "Maximizing the Impact of Executive Coaching," ROI averaged 5.7 times the initial investment. Eight-six percent of participants and 74 percent of stakeholders indicated that they were "very satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with the coaching process.⁷ Booz Allen calculated their return on investment at 689 percent.⁸

We are moving faster than ever before with technology that allows us, and demands of us, to communicate and respond to our peers, members, and customers expectations at a speed that we would not have dreamt of even 10 years ago — Blackberries to iPhones to iPads to Apple Watches to drones to gamification. Everyone is looking for the competitive edge, and once everyone adapts to the latest technological change or innovation, there IS no longer an edge.

Our edge always comes from people who improve strategy, problem solve, increase productivity and maximize services, and therefore member and customer retention. Whether hiring certified coaches as leadership partners or creating a coaching culture in your company, a coaching investment in our people is the sustainability strategy and competitive advantage of the 21st century. Our people are the difference. ◀

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