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## Helping Leaders SHINE

How coaches bring out the best  
in leaders and their teams

Perspectives  
on Leadership

Essential Tools for  
Leadership Coaching

Developing  
Future Leaders

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# Helping Leaders **SHINE**

What is leadership and how do we identify leaders? How can coaching support their development, influence and impact? What does coaching look like and how is it used vs. managing? How do we coach those in non-traditional leadership roles? What are the best tools to use to support leaders? How can we move from traditional supervision to being a coaching manager? We examine the role coaching plays on the leadership path.





# Leadership, Coaching & Horses

Developing future leaders through relationship building

By Lisa Murrell, PCC, BCC & Cindy Schwarz, PCC

**W**hat is the relationship between successful leadership, coaching and horses?

All three require the following:

**Foundation of a trusting relationship** – For a relationship to truly achieve great things, it needs to be based on trust.

**Relationship is based upon co-creation and shared responsibility** – a great leader listens to the people before making a decision. A great leader also requires input, commitment and accountability.

**Emotional and social intelligence is high** – Research at the Institute of HeartMath tells us that the heart has an

electromagnetic field 5,000 times greater than that of our brain, and that this electromagnetic field of the heart can be measured up to 10 feet away! As our natural boundary it plays a dynamic, and for the most part unconscious, role not only in leadership development, but also in coaching and in our lives in general! It is at work on an unconscious level and one of the most untapped resources in developing powerful leadership and coaching.

Leaders who cannot embrace the concept that much of their power and success, or lack thereof, is based upon unconscious influences such as their heart's electro-magnetic field, are finding that guiding an organization or team to success is more challenging than ever. Coaches who do not

coach from this place of emotional and social intelligence are not providing the optimal value for their clients.

### **The Role of Horses**

Horses are social creatures that readily and honestly respond to the challenges inherent in forming and sustaining relationships. As animals of prey whose lives depend upon their intuition, they see through the slightest incongruities of emotion and intention; subtle as well as critical leadership skills!

Horses quickly inform us when our thoughts and actions are not in alignment, which gives us as humans an opportunity to check in with ourselves and see what is really going on. Horses read our energy, not our minds and, through their responses, give us immediate, honest, non-judgmental feedback. We get to see and feel what success (achieving a goal) looks like through building a relationship with a horse and then through the coaching process, take that awareness and apply it to leading our teams and companies.

Most of the numerous definitions of leadership include getting things done through and with others, and as a result of this relationship, realizing goals. Working with horses provides a safe way for people to become aware of messages they are 'sending out' unconsciously and how this impacts their relationships, and therefore, their leadership.

### **The Role of Coaching**

Coaching plays an important role in turning this information into insights around why leaders continually create situations that don't work.

Through working with a 1200-pound sentient being, we have the opportunity to realize that we must 'co-create' a trusting relationship to achieve anything! An interaction with a horse is a way of exploring and understanding how we connect with others to build trusting relationships. This experiential learning, combined with coaching, provides powerful opportunities for self-exploration and behavior change.

### **An Equine Leadership and Coaching Pilot**

Power Construction is a business where success is based upon the strength of relationships with each other and with clients. Therefore, relationship building is a primary focus of the company's leadership development. As a director of learning and development with a strong coaching mindset, Cindy Schwarz began integrating the coach approach to leadership into the company's curriculum by inviting all managers in a position of performing reviews, mentoring and developing others to attend a coaching skills training where they learned and experienced the fundamentals of coaching.

One of many profound takeaways from the class for the managers was realizing that leadership involved moving from a problem-solving mindset (manager) to a coaching mindset (leader), and that a leader's job is not to solve problems for people but to build the capacity in others to solve problems for themselves.

While leaders at Power Construction understood the concept of shifting their mindset from manager to leader, another critical takeaway was realizing that they didn't know how to actually create that shift. The organization's culture lacked self-awareness around their actions and impact on people development and performance.

As they continued to explore and learn the coach approach during subsequent leadership training, it became

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clear that self-awareness is critical to successful leadership. Understanding who we are as individuals, our beliefs and assumptions and how they impact others, is just as important for future leaders as knowing their strengths and building conventional leadership skills.

Leadership at the organization was becoming familiar with the concept of coaching as a leadership methodology and performance management tool. The next step was to identify behaviors that either supported or interfered with this approach. Therefore, including an aspect of self-exploration into leadership development became a strategy to help the actualization of leader as coach.

Schwarz's own self-exploration led to researching leadership development in alignment with the values of the organization. It was becoming increasingly clear that leadership development for future leaders requires different skills, teaching and learning. Reflecting upon this brought back memories of her own leadership development and how working with horses as a young girl was such a powerful lesson in communication, trust, patience, and awareness; all essential leadership skills.

Perhaps coaching and horses had the potential for a powerful combination in leadership development in her organization.

To further explore the horse-human connection, Power

Construction created an equine experience for two high-level executives; combining horses and coaching as an adjunct to a new leadership program.

One of the executives came to the experience wanting awareness on leading his teams and keeping focused on a goal. We began working by communicating a goal or a vision in partnership with a horse. His vision or goal for this experience was getting the horse to voluntarily follow him in a specific pattern (this became a metaphor for leading in the organization). His leadership was working; the horse willingly following him until, for no apparent reason, the horse walked away and looked in the other direction.

When asked what just happened, the executive stated that he had lost the vision of the horse following him in a specific pattern. He said that his mind

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moved to another task or thought and took for granted that the horse would follow him. The coaching conversation explored where he might see that back with his teams.

He realized that the horse represented his direct reports and team. As a leader, he took for granted that they would follow his directives. However, without a consistent relationship, he was compromising the completion of the goal. Through this combination of horses and coaching, the experience became a powerful learning metaphor for him and his leadership that continued well after the actual experience.

Power Construction continues to use this powerful combination of the coach approach, horses and leadership as a leadership methodology and performance management tool. As well as an integral adjunct to their leadership development program they offer equine assisted coaching sessions for individuals and teams, building better teams and better leaders through better relationships. •

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