

**The assessment of the effectiveness of
one-to-one coaching in the development of
authentic leadership practice**

Research

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Summary

This research project aims to assess the effectiveness of one-to-one coaching as a leadership development tool in support of leadership development programmes with a specific focus on enhancing authentic being for leaders.

This project was carried out at Old Mutual South Africa in support of a culture change programme under pinned by a specific leadership development programme and philosophy. The leadership development programme is entitled *Leading from the Peak*, the leadership philosophy is described as new economy leadership. At the time of starting the coaching intervention in October 2005 this leadership development and culture change programme was managed as part of a strategy centre fashioned on the Offices of Strategy Management based on the work of Kaplan and Norton from Harvard Business School.

The approach used was an action research approach. All research participants had received between 4 and 24 one-to-one coaching sessions. There was a potential target research population of 55 participants. Research data was collected in two ways: the initial data was collected using a survey questionnaire in April 2006. In depth follow up data was collected using face to face semi structured interviews during October and November 2006.

Conclusions from the research indicate that one-to-one coaching is an effective developmental tool for enhancing leadership effectiveness. A coaching intervention of this nature increased awareness of authentic being for 80% of the participants. Research results indicate coaching resulted in observable improvements in leadership effectiveness for between 69% and 80% of the research participants. The number of coaching sessions received had a significant impact on the sustainability of coaching results. Leaders receiving less than 10 sessions had struggled to maintain newly enhanced authenticity and learnings.

The key recommendations from the report are:

1. One-to-one coaching can be effectively used for leadership development in support of a structured leadership development programme such as *Leading from the Peak*.
2. Coaching sessions should occur at the same time as or within a month of delegates attending leadership training sessions.
3. For sustainable transformational change to occur at least 10 coaching sessions at monthly or fortnightly intervals should be offered.
4. It is a critical success factor that participants can volunteer for coaching programmes and select their own coaches wherever possible.

Chapter 1 Introduction

I am currently employed at Old Mutual the largest insurance company in South Africa. Old Mutual is in fact a global company with business interests in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Europe and India. Like many large corporate companies in South Africa Old Mutual is starting to explore the use of coaching for leadership development.

In June 2005 I joined a small strategy team working within Corporate Solutions a division of Old Mutual South Africa. The unit was lead by Eric Le Roux a Strategy Analyst.

The Strategy Centre was modelled on the Offices of Strategy Management as described by authors Kaplan and Norton (2005) from Harvard Business School. See **Appendix 1**.

This article suggests that the Offices of Strategy management should fulfil 3 basic functions:

| STRATEGY FORMULATION | STRATEGY EXECUTION | STRATEGY LEARNING |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Environmental assessments | Balanced Scorecard performance reporting | Benchmarking |
| Strategic planning | Initiative management | Best-practice sharing |
| Budgeting | Communicating strategy | Internal coaching and change management |
| | Personal scorecards | |

In July 2005 Eric le Roux who was leading up the culture change programme for the Employee Benefits division approached me and asked the question, "Will one on one coaching help with creating the desired change in leadership behaviour towards new economy leadership practice?"

The Old Mutual organisational context was that the majority of the line managers from Employee Benefits had attended a leadership development programme entitled *Leading from the Peak* in the latter part of 2004 and early in 2005. This initiative was part of a culture change programme, the consultant to Old Mutual being Christo Nel from NULead. While many leaders attending the programme had been inspired and challenged to change their leadership practice towards new economy leadership behaviour Le Roux had not observed any major shifts in leadership practice hence the question about coaching as a leadership development tool had arisen.

At the time I was working with Le Roux in the Strategy Centre for Employee Benefits and had embarked on a Masters degree in coaching through i-coach academy and Middlesex University. My response to Le Roux was that we should obtain approval to run a coaching initiative and offer

one-on-one coaching to the 120 leaders who had attended *Leading from the Peak*. The initiative was approved by the Executive Team for Employee Benefits in July 2005 and I ran a coaching initiative as follows:

In brief

1. We offered five one on one coaching sessions to the course attendees. *Leading from the Peak* is essentially an intensely personal journey towards leadership authenticity.
2. We used a team of thirteen external coaches from the i-coach academy graduate student community.
3. We positioned the coaching opportunity within the context of the culture programme and referenced the *Leading from the Peak* learning experience and leadership philosophy.

The coaching intervention started in October 2005 and ran until the end of June 2006. See **Appendix 2** for details of this coaching initiative and the results and conclusions. This report is significant for this research report as I will be using the raw data gathered for the conclusions for this research project.

This research project is particularly important for my own coaching practice as which is primarily focussed on leadership and existential coaching. I am particularly interested in coaching as a developmental activity in enhancing awareness of authentic being. I am further intrigued by the effects of authentic being on leadership practice, if any.

The Leading from the Peak training programme links to these objectives as the programme is founded on the VISA leadership framework. This framework proposes that there are four predominant leadership profiles, Visionary, Interdependent, Structured and Action. The training programme strongly proposes that as leaders we can't be all things to all people and it is essential to therefore understand our contribution to the "village of leaders" (Nel C., 2004) within the organisation.

When attending the programme each delegate completes a self-assessment preference questionnaire that reflects the delegates preferred leadership style from each quadrant. Understanding, appreciating and valuing own personal leadership preference is one of the objectives of the programme for each delegate. Further, each delegate is encouraged to understand and appreciate how their personal leadership preference contributes to the creation of their authentic leadership footprint. On the programme we appreciated the strengths and weaknesses of each profile as well as the effects of there being a dominance of any profile versus the lack of any profile. This is described as a dominance and absence framework.

Similarly Le Roux from Old Mutual is also interested in the findings of this research in order to understand whether coaching is an effective leadership development practice towards new economy leadership practice. Pierre De Villiers from Product Solutions Human Resources will also be a recipient of the research as he is similarly intrigued about coaching as a leadership development intervention. Since submitting the research proposal Ms Aneline Rhode from the Old Mutual Business School will also be a recipient of the research proposal. She has been tasked by the newly appointed Human Resource Director for Old Mutual to put together a proposal for creating an internal coaching division for Old Mutual. The results of this research are deemed to be relevant in support of this proposal.

Chapter 2 Terms of reference/ Objectives and Literature Review

The aim of the research is to assess if one on one coaching enhances leadership effectiveness through enhancing a personal sense of authentic being. The coaching process creates increased awareness of personal strengths and shadows leading to a sense of the client's authentic leadership footprint. This enables the leader to 'become the tool I use' for leadership, for learning, for life.

A secondary aim of the research would be to confirm that one-to-one coaching is an effective tool for developing new economy leadership behaviours, in support of the culture change programme, towards creating a high performing organisation within Product Solutions.

I will be operating within the boundaries of the 40 leaders at Old Mutual who participated in the coaching initiative as well as 15 coaching clients from my own practice. Most of my own clients are also employed at Old Mutual. The respondents to the research questions have all experienced one-on-one coaching for between 5 and 20 coaching sessions during the last 18 months. All respondents are in leadership roles within an organisational context managing teams of up to 70 employees.

The research questions under review are:

Can we use one on one coaching to increase awareness of authentic self for leaders?

Does insight about authentic self release energy and potential of the leader?

Does an increased appreciation of own personal authentic leadership footprint increase leadership effectiveness?

Does personal power for leaders come from authentic being and does this increased awareness enhance leadership effectiveness?

2.1 Literature Review

The under-pin for the culture change programme mentioned above has been the work of Christo Nel and the team at NULead. I have read a number of articles and documents produced by NULead with particular reference to new economy leadership practice, VISA leadership profiles and levels of work. The important issue here is that all forty leaders who participated in the coaching initiative had been exposed to this leadership philosophy.

Some of the premises of this leadership framework are: (quoted from *Leading from the Peak* facilitator slide presentation, Christo Nel, 2004)

- One of the most important challenges for any individual is to *know and own* his/her personal leadership “edge” or authentic “fingerprint.”
- High impact leaders know they cannot be all things to all people – instead they cherish their own authenticity – they have the courage to *get out of the closet* and be who they are.
- They use this as the basis for tapping into and mining their own *contribution*¹ and the contributions of others – and for managing one another’s diversity in ways that add significant value.
- At the core of leadership lie our attitudes and beliefs about power and authority.
- At the one end of the spectrum the exercise of power and authority is a top-down flow of control and privilege.
- At the other end of the spectrum to the exercise of power and authority is the act of unleashing energy to create and contribute.
- The first task of every leader is to make this choice of leadership.

¹ I have added this word for clarity after Supervisor review. It was not in the original text but is the implied meaning

- We will never be motivated down the difficult path of “managing one another’s diversity in ways that add significant value” unless we believe that we cannot be all things to all people, and that we really appreciate the strengths that others bring.
- Our traditional views of leadership have been shaped by attitudes towards hierarchy, superiority, privilege and capacity to control resources.
- Leadership in the New Economy still acknowledges and respects these traditional views, but it also recognises the shortcomings of these views.
- Leadership in the New Economy is first and foremost an act of valuing diversity and liberating energy in ways that deliver sustainable results.”

These points from the Leading from the Peak slide presentation briefly outline the shift from old to new economy leadership practice. From my own reading of leadership literature and in particular in attending a one day workshop with Margaret Wheatley in March 2005, I am beginning to understand the shift in global leadership practice to be from command and control leadership to participative leadership. For the purposes of this discussion the term command and control style leadership is synonymous with the term old economy leadership. Similarly, new economy leadership is synonymous with the term participative leadership.

Historical leadership has been about ‘command and control’ leadership practice where power and authority was hierarchical. Leaders also controlled all resources to accomplish the task. In this world, it is my observation, that there is often assumed to be one right answer to the problem and the leader is the one who has the answer. The leadership style is predominately directive with people being told what to do with little opportunity to contribute to the design of the desired outcome. Leaders and subordinates were remunerated very differently with leaders often being enriched and subordinates earning a living wage. The language underpinning this framework is exclusive with certain layers of people being excluded from key meetings or discussions simply based on their position in the hierarchy.

It is my observation however that the world is changing. With the growth of global companies where members of the same Board of Directors may have vastly different cultural orientations the preponderance of western command and control leadership has some into conflict with eastern community based leadership. In studying socio-cultural anthropology there are many cultures which function well using so called participative or community based leadership frameworks. In South Africa we have the priveledge of seeing western command and control leadership

predominant in business with participative community based leadership predominant in government. Working side by side there is an ongoing need to find ways to resolve the seemingly mutually exclusive leadership frameworks not only in South Africa but also globally.

With the technology revolution the world has become in many ways a global village. A hundred years ago it was entirely possible that a business would function within the same cultural setting including suppliers, customers and operations. The business may have exported goods to an overseas market, however, the day to day operations would have been within the geography and time frames of one country, one culture. The world wasn't quite so complex, it was possible that the leadership were the technical experts and had all the answers. This is no longer the case. More and more all levels of organisations are being required to work with people from different cultures and hence different paradigms and ways of thinking about the world, different value systems that drive behaviour. How do we resolve the complexity this brings? How do we resolve the inherent cultural dissonance? How do we leverage cultural and personal difference towards improved business results?

New economy or participative leadership suggests that leaders can no longer be all things to all people, i.e. within one person it is no longer possible to have all the right answers. To quote from the slide presentation (Nel. C. 2004): "We will never be motivated down the difficult path of 'managing one another's diversity in ways that add significant value' unless we believe that we cannot be all things to all people, and that we really appreciate the strengths that others bring. As a developing leader myself I fundamentally agree with this notion. In my own coaching practice I have observed that in order to appreciate another's diversity and learn to leverage their strengths it is essential for the leader to appreciate their own authenticity and contribution first. It is my observation that unless leaders make this journey first they often lack the confidence and will to empower others.

The VISA leadership framework referred to in Chapter 1 provides the underlying diversity framework followed by NULead and embraced by the leadership group on Old Mutual Employee benefits. The framework suggests that for a fully functioning team the organisation requires a balance of the visionary, interdependent, structured and action leaders. If the team leader is predominantly a visionary or action leader then they need to fulfil the role requirements of structure and interdependence through others in the team.

The only way to lead an organisation is to learn to unleash the energy and potential of people in the team. To quote Christo Nel (2004) "it takes a village of leaders to lead an organisation". In order for leaders to achieve this they need to first understand and appreciate their own authentic

leadership footprint. What is their unique contribution to the leadership conversation and organisational growth? Leaders then need to learn to value the unique contribution of other team members and create the environment that will unleash the energy and potential of those around them. New economy organisations are epitomised by flat hierarchies, power *and* profit sharing. The language used is inclusive with people being invited to meetings based on the contribution they can make rather than their hierarchical position.

Key leadership competencies for the new economy leaders are the ability to influence change rather than just direct it. The ability to network and engage key stakeholders is also a key competence. In the new economy we see business inviting in their customers to help them co-create new products and services. The real valuing of diversity is essential where leaders need to learn to leverage the knowledge, skill and potential of their employees. This is essential for dealing with the inherent complexity in today's world.

A hundred years ago in the European industrial revolution leaders said to workers "bring your hands to work"². Sixty years later the message changed to "bring your hands and heads to work".³ Modern organisations are now saying "bring your hands, heads and hearts to work".⁴ Organisational value systems often espouse passion as one of the company values. Research from Margaret Wheatley's work indicates that in many organisations across the globe employees are emotionally disengaged. How do we unleash employee's energy and potential and harness it for business success? I believe that new economy leadership practice where we learn as leaders to understand and value our own contribution, and then to value diversity and the contributions of others, and create an environment where each person can make their contribution, is a very good place to start.

In my own journey towards practicing as a professional coach I have read the work of Phillippe Rossinski. Rossinski writes(pp 194 – 195 *Coaching Across Cultures*)

"As developing coaches you will have to embark on your own journey. You need to find the courage and muster the will to achieve your own objectives, doing all you can to make your dreams come true. You will have to be true to yourself, unleash your potential, and bring your contribution to society.

On this journey toward performance and fulfilment, the first dragons you will have to slay will be inside; you will need to confront the fears, beliefs and weaknesses that are holding you back.

² Quote from lecture by Thava Govender 2005

³ See footnote 2

⁴ See footnote 3

But you will also meet your heroes within: the talents and strengths that will be your resources to win those battles.

You will learn to cherish the journey itself and not just the destination.”

And pp 254 “ We have an opportunity to help foster the conditions of a better world. Before changing others, however, we must make sure we become better human beings ourselves.

Let us listen to others, seeking to understand their perspectives. Let us deal with cross-cultural differences with an attitude of openness, curiosity, and eagerness to learn. Let us strive to leverage diversity as a source of richness, not as a threat.

Let us achieve business success but without being obsessed by financial performance that we forget to care for society. Let us enjoy life to the fullest but without turning our backs on those who suffer”.

In reading Phillippe Rossinski’s book I was struck by the similarity between his philosophy for developing coaches and the underlying leadership philosophy for the development of new economy leaders. For me the deep reflection has been as leader or coach I can’t hope to unleash the energy and potential of others unless I can learn to unleash my own energy and potential. Can I claim to be a master coach or an effective leader without achieving some degree of self-mastery? In order to master myself I have to understand my own strengths and weaknesses, in fact, I need to embrace my whole authentic self, face and overcome my own shadows, learn to leverage my own strengths.

From Daniel Goleman’s book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* the key insight has been understanding the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness. Goleman (pp 61) talks about the emotional competence of accurate self assessment. People with this competence are:

- “Aware of their strengths and weaknesses
- Reflective, learning from experience
- Open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning and self development
- Able to show a sense of humour and perspective about themselves”

This accurate sense of self I believe enhances authentic being for leaders, for life. This understanding is essential for the new economy leader to be able to unleash their own energy

and potential. Who of us honestly have never had the experience of how much our energy is drained when we try to be who we are not? When we try to fill a leadership role in an inauthentic way because that is the leadership role valued by the organisation.

In South Africa we are seeing an increase of women and black people in leadership roles. This is in my view an absolutely essential change for this fledgling democracy. In my own practice many of my clients have become aware of how they have been trying to imitate typical western, masculine leadership frameworks that are completely inauthentic with their cultural and personal value and belief systems. This causes employees to become de-energized and then to emotionally disengage from the organisation, exactly what growing organisations, and emerging democracies don't need.

In their article on the Offices of Strategy Management as described by authors Kaplan and Norton from Harvard Business School (Kaplan and Norton, 2005) the link is explicitly made between the successful implementation of the business strategy and the organisational culture. In the article they suggest the culture change programme and coaching initiative in an organisation should be part of the Offices of Strategy Management.

My understanding from the article is that leaders need to ensure that the business culture will support and enable the strategy or there is a possibility that a conflicting culture and strategy may sabotage successful implementation of the strategy and place the business at risk in the long term. This is an eminently 'hard issue'⁵ for business and not a "soft nice to have"⁶. So often the culture change programme is seen as part of the human resources delivery. In my experience if the culture change programme is owned by the Human Resources team the critical links between strategy implementation and effective culture to support the strategy are never made. Realisation of business value may be mediocre at best with the culture undermining the strategy.

Organisational culture is often a direct result of leadership philosophy and practice. Leadership effectiveness is driven I believe, by self mastery and being authentic. Coaching can be seen as making a contribution towards developing effective leaders in line with the organisational leadership philosophy is making a direct contribution to business success through developing effective leadership and hence enabling business success.

⁵ In South Africa we use the colloquialism of 'hard' versus 'soft' issues to differentiate between concrete business issues versus people related issues. Hard issues are seen to be technology, or product or operational. Soft issues are seen to be related to people resourcing or performance.

⁶ See footnote 2 above.

Lastly reading the work of Irvin D. Yalom in his books *Loves Executioner and Other tales of Psycho Therapy* and *The Gift of Therapy, reflections on being a therapist*, I have been challenged by reference to the existential crisis of having to deal with being individuals in the world while simultaneously belonging to groups and teams. The inevitable conflict arising between simultaneously balancing the growth, enhancement, well-being and preservation of the individual and the community or organisation needs to be effectively managed to increase simultaneously the likelihood of team and individual success. Dr Yalom suggests this dilemma is a crisis of our existence. The dilemma is reflected in the new economy leadership practice. The dual requirements to leverage our own energy and potential as leaders, while simultaneously leveraging the energy and potential of those peers and team members with which we work, all towards organisational growth, is not an easy task to accomplish. It is however an exciting journey.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The aim of the follow up research project is to deepen understanding regarding the impact of one-on-one coaching and the development of authentic leadership practice towards increased leadership effectiveness and hence increased business success.

The methodology I will be using will be action research. Cohen and Manion 1994:194 as cited by Bell pg 9 “Action research is an approach which is appropriate in any context when ‘specific knowledge is required for a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system”. This is method is appropriate for this research project as we are attempting to add one to one coaching as a support to the leadership development programmes within a culture change programme at Old Mutual.

I would like to focus on this aspect of leadership development and complete a follow up action research project. My reasons for choosing action research are:

- The recipients of the research at Old Mutual have specifically requested an outcome leading to proposed action.
- We have taken some action in providing one-on-one coaching to approximately 55 leaders. We are assessing the outcome of the actions in terms of enhancing new economy leadership practice. New economy leadership practice is underpinned by the belief that authentic being for leaders is an essential component of effective leadership practice.

The action research I have carried out has been conducted using the following process:

1. I initiated a coaching intervention under the guidance of Dr Horner from i-coach academy and with the permission of the Executive team from Old Mutual Employee Benefits (hereafter abbreviated as OMEB) in October 2005.
2. One-on-one coaching was offered to 120 leaders who had attended the Leading from the Peak training programme from November 2004 to April 2005.
3. The coaches were sourced from the i-coach academy alumni in South Africa.
4. 40 leaders accepted the offer of 5 coaching sessions and these sessions occurred from October 2004 until April 2005. The questionnaire was circulated to eighteen of the forty leaders, some of the coaches and some of the leaders peers and subordinates. In particular there were questions relating to the experience of coaching for the clients as enhancing their awareness of their authentic being. There were also questions about awareness regarding leadership strengths and weaknesses and the leaders ability to ask for and receive candid feedback on performance.
5. The coaching clients set their own coaching goals and the questionnaire attempted to capture feedback on observable changes to leadership practice from the leaders themselves, from the coaches and from some of the peers and subordinates of the leaders across a wide range of developmental issues.
6. Appendix 2 ⁷attempts to capture some of the insights from the feedback from analysing the data from the questionnaires.
7. For this research project I wanted to research in detail one aspect of new economy leadership practice that had been highlighted as one of the common goals of the 40 leaders undergoing coaching. This referred to the goal of wanting to better understand their own personal leadership footprint and led me to researching the contribution coaching may make to the enhancing the appreciation of unique contribution and authenticity for leaders. This goal very specifically referred to the unleashing of energy and potential of the leader through appreciation of their unique contribution through being authentic.
8. I have asked for volunteers from the forty participants of the first research project and my own fifteen clients to participate in the research study. In my own practice over the last 18 months many of my own clients had been grappling with issues of learning to unleash their own energy and potential, of learning to leverage their unique contribution to the leadership role within the organisation.
9. I chose to use semi structured interviews for this purpose as I felt I would gather depth of information regarding one aspect of leadership and coaching rather

⁷ Appendix 2 was not written as a formal research report but as a feedback report to business resources in Old Mutual. I-coach academy used the data and report to write up a case study for their October 2006 newsletter.

than the broader issues raised by the initial coaching initiative which had been assessed using an electronic survey. I believed one to one interviews would provide qualitative data towards a deeper understanding the role of one-on-one coaching in the development of authentic leadership. This was enabled through the use of open ended questions to gather each respondents experiential learning from one on one coaching.

10. I gathered the data from the interview by capturing directly on to a laptop computer the responses of each person being interviewed. This data was captured into a spreadsheet for comparative purposes.
11. I have reflected the findings from the interviews and questionnaires in Chapter 5 of this report.
12. I have explicitly split the feedback between the two feedback processes, i.e. feedback from the survey and feedback from the interviews and then integrated the findings in the conclusion.
13. Indication from the feedback from the first questionnaire was that one-to-one coaching had had a significant impact on the development of authentic leadership practice. I really wanted to understand this aspect of coaching and leadership development and that led me to my follow up research feedback process using semi-structured interviews.

I had considered using a grounded theory approach. I excluded this approach because I understand the recipients of the research at Old Mutual require an actionable outcome rather than contribution to leadership development theory.

I have excluded case studies because I want to show a breadth of research using a significant number of participants rather than depth of one or two case studies.

I have excluded ethnography as it is not possible for practical or ethical reasons for me to work as a participant observer. This is due to my current senior leadership role within Old Mutual. I believe the impact of merely my presence as participant observer may negatively impact behaviour and thus the results. I also believe that confidentiality will be difficult to negotiate as participant observer in such a large and diverse organisation.

For completion of this project I have followed a quantitative and qualitative research approach and engaged in fieldwork.

3.2 My Role as Research Worker

I am currently fulfilling the role of Programme Manager for a strategic programme at Old Mutual. I am employed as a permanent employee in the Corporate Solutions division reporting directly to the General Manager, ROAR Programme, Corporate Solutions.

I have been involved in a number of coaching initiatives with Corporate Solutions over the last year:

- I have completed extensive coaching hours for leaders in Old Mutual as part of my degree.
- I have described in detail the original coaching initiative in Corporate Solutions where I played the role of coaching co-ordinator. **See Appendix 2 for details**
- I have co-created a coaching framework for Corporate Solutions with Janice Gardiner-Atkinson from the Product Solutions HR team.
- I have also engaged with Ms. Aneline Rhode from the Old Mutual Business School. Ms Rhode has been tasked by the HR Director, Dudu Nyamane to research and write a proposal for the creation of an internal coaching department at Old Mutual. Ms Rhode will also be a recipient of the research.

Thus I have established some credibility within Old Mutual and have created a good foundation for this research project.

3.3 Influences on the Worker Researcher

This is an excerpt taken from Activity 2 for my research proposal. I have included this material in this section as I believe it is relevant to the research I have undertaken. I have updated the information where relevant.

I would like to deal with three pertinent issues relating to the insider researcher. Both of these issues are pertinent to my personal circumstances as insider researcher at Old Mutual South Africa.

3.3.1 The impact of my own personal bias about the role and purpose of leadership in organisations.

The first issue relates to my attendance of a leadership development programme called Leading at the Peak. As insider researcher I am aware of my own bias concerning new economy leadership. I fulfil a senior leadership role within Old Mutual and attended the Leading from the Peak training programme *as a delegate* along with the other 120 leaders within the Corporate Solutions division during 2004. I have personally bought into many of the principles regarding

effective leadership that are taught during programme. I am aware that this belief system will affect my objectivity.

- As researchers do we simply see what we want to see?
- How much does the researcher pre determine the results they get simply by the questions they design into the surveys or interviews they use?
- How much do we get what we are looking for because of the way we ask the questions?

I have tried to mitigate these factors by asking truly non directive and open ended questions about the participants experience of Leading from the Peak and one-on-one coaching. I truly understand that we can never be truly objective in any research we do.

As insider researcher I have included a definition of one-on-one coaching and some of my own assumptions and questions to give some insight into what informs me as leader, coach and insider researcher:

- **One on one leadership coaching** can be defined as follows: **Coaching** is the planned, purposeful, *contracted learning relationship* between client and coach, focused on the client's personal and professional leadership development.
- **Leadership effectiveness** can be defined as:
 - The key role of leadership is to unleash the energy and potential of others
 - The leader needs to learn to unleash their own energy and potential first leading to a sense of self mastery
 - A leader can increase awareness of authentic self as leader through reflective practice.
 - Self knowledge of heroes and dragons within is essential for understanding self as leader
 - Can the leader leverage own strengths in such a way as to render their weaknesses insignificant?

3.3.2 The impact of organisational changes during the period of the research being conducted.

The second key issue relates to the impact of organisational restructuring on the insider researcher during the period that the research was commissioned and carried out.

Over the last six months we have had three major restructures due to a Deputy Managing Director resigning and more recently the Managing Director. Due to the organisational

restructuring and since submitting my research proposal in August 2006, I am now in a programme team who report directly to the new Managing Director of Corporate Solutions a major division of Old Mutual South Africa. A year ago I was working in a three person strategy team within one division, Employee Benefits. During the last 6 months I have reported from a Strategy Centre directly to the now Chief Executive Officer of Old Mutual South Africa. The issue here is there has been 3 occasions of restructuring with the original target research group being split up and incorporated into many departments within Old Mutual.

The team of three making up the Strategy team on Old Mutual Employee Benefits until December 2005 was primarily responsible for strategy formulation, strategy implementation and driving the culture change programme. It was within the context of these roles and responsibilities that I was asked in July 2005 to carry out research regarding the effectiveness of one to one coaching for leadership development as part of the culture change programme. I will be using data from an evaluation process for this coaching initiative for this current Masters research project.

The impact of restructuring has meant that the team I now work within has relinquished responsibility for the culture change programme. I have "lost" the organisational context for the research I needed to do. There is quite simply far less direct Executive support for the development of coaching within the organisation. The new leader for the strategy centre Mr Ralph Mupita does not wish to retain responsibility for the culture change programme. As insider researcher I am aware that from the date when the research was conceived to this point in time organisational changes have rendered the research less important for Old Mutual. How do I deal with this issue?

How will all these changes impact my relationship with the coaching participants? Will Old Mutual be willing to allow me the time to complete the research? Can I ethically continue knowing there is little perceived value for the research at Old Mutual?

I have discussed the relevance of the research with Eric Le Roux, Pierre De Villiers and Aneline Rhoda. All three colleagues have indicated some ongoing interest in the research report.

In the light of ongoing interest I decided to complete the research. There was in fact no problem with time for delegates to complete the interviews and the participants were happy to continue in spite of changing circumstances.

3.3.3 Personal leadership development

During the period of performing the research my own circumstances at work have changed. In January 2006 I was asked to assume the role of Programme Manager for a significant strategic programme at Old Mutual. This has been an intense year of personal leadership development. I have attempted to apply many of the new economy leadership practices to the newly constituted programme team. I am conscious of bias in this regard.

3.3 Ethical considerations

1. Confidentiality was maintained at all times. Interviews were conducted in a closed office for the agreed period.
2. The identity of the respondents will not be made known.
3. Names of respondents will not appear in any material what so ever.
4. I have collected the data after signing a contract and confidentiality agreement with all participants.
5. I will be the only person to see all the data. The recipients of the research will see synthesized and summarised data. Anonymity will be protected.
6. The data will be kept in a locked cupboard in Old Mutual's premises.
7. The data from the research will be used for academic purposes and for business development purposes only. This was contracted by the researcher with all participants.
Data may be used in the following ways:
 - a. Academic institutions may use the data for case study purposes and publication.
 - b. Business may use the data to alter and improve leadership development processes.
 - c. As developing coach I may use the data to further my own learning and enhance my own practice.
 - d. I may refer to the data for supervision or ongoing continuous professional development.
 - e. Ongoing continuous professional development includes sharing the findings as a member of the i-coach Academy alumni, a member of COMENSA, and as a participant member of a coaching forum in Somerset West.
8. In all instances I will abide by the standard approach and principles for case study work and supervision as contained in codes of conduct for COMENSA and i-coach academy.
9. The data may not be used for any other purpose what so ever

Chapter 4. Project Activity

4.1 Finding research participants

At the start of the process in September 2006 I approached the 55 members of the target group via email to ask for volunteer participants in the research project. The 55 people included 40 clients who had received one-on-one coaching as described in **Appendix 2** as well as 15 of my own coaching clients. The original target respondents were all employees of Old Mutual.

The original email outlined the purpose of the research, gave an indication of confidentiality, outlined clearly who the recipients of the research would be and asked for volunteers.

After one reminder I had gathered potential target group of 15 respondents. As this fell within the parameters of between 15 and 20 respondents I decided to go ahead and set up the interviews.

I originally scheduled the one to one interviews between the 1 October and the end of October 2006. Due to unexpectedly increased work pressure the interviews were spread out until the end of November 2006.

4.2 Setting up the questionnaire

I went on to design a questionnaire to be used as a framework for the interview process. I split the questions into four sections:

1. Some basic demographics about the individual's leadership role in the organisation and number of coaching sessions and the period of time the sessions had been experienced.
2. Questions concerning leadership and leadership effectiveness
3. Questions concerning authentic being and the interrelationships between authenticity and leadership effectiveness.
4. Questions regarding the client's experience of coaching and whether coaching had increased their awareness of their authentic footprint or not. This section was concluded with questions regarding increased leadership effectiveness being linked to increased authenticity.

I followed this process for the following reasons:

1. I wanted to understand how many sessions each respondent had experienced and the period over which coaching had occurred. This varied between the respondents so I

- wanted to really understand if the number of sessions or duration of coaching had any impact on the development of authentic leadership practice.
2. I was entering the interview process with my own views about leadership and what effective leadership is. What was important for me here was to understand what each respondent thought and believed about leadership. What was their own leadership framework and model? How aware were they of their own leadership framework and model and could they articulate this easily? How aware were they of their own views of effective leadership? I was of the opinion that I wouldn't be able to draw any conclusions about coaching increasing leadership effectiveness unless I established with each respondent what this was for them.
 3. I wanted to check each respondent's views and ideas about what authentic being is. Again this wasn't about a common view but rather about understanding each respondent's personal view. This group of questions also looked at the links between authentic being and leadership, if any.
 4. The final questions looked at the individual's experience of coaching. I asked questions about the benefits and disappointments of coaching as well as questions about key personal insights and about whether one-on-one coaching had increased awareness and enhanced their authentic leadership practice. I concluded the interview by asking if the increased awareness of authenticity as leader had increased their leadership effectiveness or not.

4.3 Setting up a contract

I drafted a contract that was signed with each respondent at the start of the interviews. The contract basically outlined:

1. The research questions
2. The purpose of the research
3. Outlined in detail the recipients of the research at Old Mutual, i-coach academy, Middlesex University and myself.
4. Contained a confidentiality clause.

4.4 Preparing for each interview

Interviews were either scheduled at Old Mutual's offices in Pinelands in Cape Town or Old Mutual's offices in Sandton Johannesburg. All interviews were held within a closed office.

In preparing for the interviews it occurred to me that I needed to provide a context for the research for the respondents. Many of the respondents had attended Leading from the Peak

2 years ago and many had concluded their one-on-one coaching sessions in April and May 2006.

I obtained copies of slides from Leading from the Peak we had used to create a context for the respondents when setting up the coaching initiative mentioned in **Appendix 2**. At the start of each interview I gave each respondent an opportunity to read through the slides and reconnect with the theoretical back ground of Leading from the Peak. The slides contained the same information as outlined in Chapter 2 of this report.

4.5. The interview process

1. The interview process commenced with a welcome and thank you for the respondent's time.
2. The respondent was then asked to sign the interview contract.
3. The respondents then read through the Leading from the Peak slide content.
4. I then began the interview process
5. Data was collected by my typing directly on to a laptop the respondent's answers to questions. These were captured verbatim.
6. I had originally intended using a tape recorder for the interviews. I purchased a digital recorder for this purpose but unfortunately experienced technical problems. I decided then to capture the data directly to a laptop. No data was lost because I was capturing the answers as well as using a recorder when possible.

Once I have concluded all interviews I will be in a position to analyse all data captured. Data has been captured by:

1. Firstly the questionnaire used in the coaching initiative as described in **Appendix 2**
2. Using face to face semi structured interviews as described above.

Chapter 5 Project Findings

Demographics and Quantitative Data from the interview process

Table 1.

| Client no | No of direct reports | No of Coaching Sessions | Duration of Coaching: No of Months | Attended Leading from the Peak | Own Client |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 0 | 12 | 10 | Yes | Yes |
| 2 | 18 | 18 | 15 | No | Yes |
| 3 | 0 | 24 | 18 | Yes | Yes |
| 4 | 13 | 10 | 12 | Yes | No |
| 5 | 3 | 6 | 6 | Yes | No |

| | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| 6 | 10 | 5 | 6 | Yes | No |
| 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | Yes | No |
| 8 | 1 | 6 | 6 | Yes | No |
| 9 | 0 | 7 | 7 | Yes | No |
| 10 | 4 | 15 | 15 | Yes | Yes |
| 11 | 62 | 5 | 5 | Yes | No |
| 12 | 70 | 5 | 4 | Yes | No |
| 13 | 0 | 5 | 5 | Yes | No |

Analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data

Of the people participating in the interview process there is a large range in terms of the demographic information measured:

1. 9 of the interviewees have direct reports. This ranges from 1 direct report to 70 reports.
2. The leaders had between 5 and 24 coaching sessions
 - a. The average is 13
 - b. The median is 7
 - c. The mode is 5
3. The period over which coaching took place ranged from 4 to 18 months:
 - a. The average is 12 months
 - b. The median is 6 months
 - c. The mode is 6 months
4. 92% of the respondents had attended the *Leading from the Peak* leadership development programme and had been exposed to new economy leadership theory.
5. 30% of the respondents are from my own client group.
6. The frequency of coaching sessions was in most cases monthly with a few participants having sessions every two weeks.

I asked these questions because I was curious about whether the number of, duration of and frequency of coaching sessions would have any impact on the results of using one to one coaching to enhance authenticity in leaders. From the data most respondents had less than 10 sessions. The interpretation of the results will reveal that these criteria did have an impact on coaching results. The survey results were obtained in April 2006 and the interviews were concluded six months later in October and November 2006. The overwhelming majority of delegates had been exposed to the VISA leadership frameworks and philosophy.

Qualitative Data

I divided the semi- structured interview into 3 sections:

1. In the first section I asked questions relating to the participants opinions about the key role and function of leadership and how they would define an effective leader.
2. In the second section I asked questions about authenticity and the links between leadership and living authentically as well as the linked between being authentic and understanding personal strengths and weakness.
3. Thirdly I asked questions about the participant's experience of coaching including the benefits, disappointments, key insights gained as well as the impact of coaching in increasing awareness of own authentic leadership footprint. I concluded by asking if the leader thought coaching had increased their leadership effectiveness.

Leadership and leadership effectiveness

1. This was essentially a context setting exercise and I also wanted to ascertain the meaning of effective leadership for each participant. My rationale for this was:
 - a. I didn't think I could ask questions about coaching increasing leadership effectiveness without understanding what leadership effectiveness meant for each participant.
 - b. I also noticed that in describing the key role and function of leadership and effective leadership each participant described their own leadership style or preference. In other words they described the kind of leader they were striving to be.
 - c. Leading from the Peak training programme has postulated that each leader needed to understand their personal leadership authentic footprint. I wanted to ascertain how aware each participants was of their own leadership footprint and if they were able to articulate this clearly or not.
2. The results were that all participants could articulate their view of the key role and function of leadership and how they would describe effective leadership. These descriptions were all unique but with some interesting similarities.
 - a. All participants said that a leaders role was to set direction
 - b. Many participants said a leaders role was to set the context and clarify the vision for subordinates
 - c. Many said the role of the leader was to empower subordinates to achieve the organisational goals.
3. There was a fairly common view of effective leadership.
 - a. I quote from one of the respondents " Effective leadership is when you have assisted a team of people in achieving a pre determined goal co-operatively. If it's really effective you have met and exceeded the goal or had other gains along the way in terms of people development and achieving other objectives."

- b. Other criteria included:
 - i. The ability to balance the demands of work and life
 - ii. The ability to inspire
 - iii. The ability to take the people with you
4. I concluded this section by asking questions regarding each participant's key leadership strength and shadow⁸ or weakness I was curious to see if these characteristic and abilities were top of mind. In most instances, but not all, each participant could articulate their key strengths and shadows. This indicated that in most instances the respondents have an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Some respondents indicated that while they were aware of these they weren't leveraging their strengths to full effect.

Understanding authenticity

1. I started this section by asking for a personal definition of authenticity. Again this was a context setting question. I also wanted to understand what this meant for each individual participant.
2. I followed this by asking about the links between authenticity and leadership, if any. This was an important factor because I wanted to understand if this was a relevant criteria of effective leadership for the participant.
3. I concluded by asking about the links between awareness of personal strengths and weakness and authentic leadership. It is my personal assumption that we can't really be authentic unless we have some awareness of our strengths and weaknesses. I wanted to test this assumption with the respondents as a representative sample of leaders within Old Mutual.
4. The results from this section revealed the following:
 - a. Most participants viewed authenticity as being true to oneself, as being true to ones value and belief systems and being consistent across environments.
 - b. This included being the real 'you' in a leadership role and reacting to people from a real place not from the position or role of leader.
 - c. To quote from the responses: "You can't be true to other people unless you can be true to yourself first."
 - d. A number of participants used the phrase "what you see is what you get."
 - e. One participant without being prompted said being authentic included being aware of and embracing ones strengths and weaknesses.

⁸ I have used the terminology of shadow for weakness as this was terminology introduced during Leading from the Peak and familiar for all respondents.

- f. One participant went so far as to say that being authentic was the only currency they had in the workplace. They also felt that being authentic led to being consistent which led to the establishment of leadership credibility.
- g. All participants saw being authentic as absolutely essential for effective leadership. The results of being authentic were seen to be:
 - i. Leadership consistency comes from being authentic.
 - ii. The participants said that it would be difficult to hold the vision under criticism if the leader is inauthentic
 - iii. Authenticity was seen as building trust with followers.
 - iv. Being inauthentic makes the leader fragile and vulnerable to attack.
 - v. Leaders can be inauthentic for a while but this will be difficult to maintain and people will experience the leader as unfair and dishonest.
 - vi. Authentic leadership is especially necessary for building sustainable organisations in a global economy.
 - vii. Personal power and influence comes from being authentic.
- h. Amongst the participants there were different responses to whether knowing our strengths and weaknesses as leaders contribute to our being authentic. The results were as follows:
 - i. 70% of the respondents strongly agreed there was a link between awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses being authentic. They highlighted the benefits as the awareness enables you to play to your strengths and mitigate your weaknesses.
 - ii. One respondent said the leader may get away with not being aware of their strengths and weaknesses but they ran the risk of their weakness undermining their authentic leadership practice over time.
 - iii. Two respondents couldn't see a clear link between awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and being authentic.

The interpretation of these findings suggests that for this group of leaders authenticity and effective leadership are inextricably linked. Bearing in mind that 80% of the respondents had attended Leading from the Peak this was not surprising. What was interesting was that while Leading from the Peak had created an awareness of the need for authenticity as leaders many respondents said that maintaining authentic being was difficult in the workplace especially when they were part of a minority group. For example, the only black person in a management team or the only interdependent leader in a team of visionaries. (Refer VISA leadership framework Chapter 1 of this report.)

Coaching Leaders towards Authenticity

This final section of the interview covered aspects of the client's experience of one-to-one coaching. To set the context I asked questions about their personal benefits and disappointments from coaching. I also asked about their key personal insight. I then went on to ask if one-one-one coaching had increased their awareness of their authentic selves. We then concluded the interview by asking if this new awareness had made them more effective as leaders.

A summary of the results from this section shows:

1. All participants felt they had benefited from one-to-one coaching
2. The personal insights gained were obviously vastly different for each participant, however, all had new awareness of either their strengths, weaknesses or preferences.
3. Two participants indicated that while coaching didn't necessarily provide new insights the coaching experience had confirmed their awareness of personal strengths, weaknesses and preference and had given them the confidence to play to their strengths.
4. The disappointments mentioned were two fold:
 - a. From participants who had received between 4 and 5 sessions the majority said that they were just really starting to work at some depth with their coach when the sessions stopped. Many of these participants have battled to maintain the learnings and growth started in the coaching process, i.e. maintaining authentic practice has not been sustainable.
 - b. One participant said that they just weren't getting to all their issues in coaching. This is I understand to be an issue of the coach not bracketing the clients issues adequately.
5. The extent to which coaching enhanced sense of authentic self as leader:
 - a. This was an overwhelming yes for 80% of the respondents. Coaching resulted in greater clarity about strengths, weaknesses and preferences. Coaching gave the courage to live authentically in the work place and at home.
 - b. One respondent mentioned that the journey to authenticity had enabled them to make a major job role change from a role where they couldn't be authentic to one where they could.
 - c. One respondent said new awareness of their authentic self gave them the courage to move on from an unhappy marriage.
 - d. Two respondents said that coaching confirmed their awareness and gave them the courage to live more authentically.
6. The extent to which this enhanced authenticity had made them more effective as leaders, the participants said and I quote:

- a. Increased awareness of strengths, weaknesses leading to changes in leadership behaviour was cited as the direct link to being more effective.
- b. Increase in reflective capacity leading to greater awareness was also cited as increasing leadership effectiveness
- c. "Increased awareness increasing the opportunity to learn from own mistakes."
- d. "Awareness of how I interact with my team was very useful."
- e. "Increased awareness has made me a better listener and improved the interaction with my team and peers."
- f. "Increased awareness and authenticity helped me make my own decisions and live by my values without being so dependent on senior management for approval. Gave me a voice to say what worked for me and what didn't."
- g. "Coaching brought me back to being my authentic self and that's better for everyone concerned. "
- h. "I learnt to reflect more and therefore think things through before acting. This has increased my effectiveness in dealing with stakeholders. Made me more aware of consequences of my actions."
- i. "As a first time leader helped me reflect on all the options and then decide how to respond from a place of authenticity."
- j. "Gave me the courage to communicate directly, to value myself and my own contribution, to move from wanting to control to being able to collaborate and value the contribution of others."
- k. "I am hungry to learn more. In the past I would have backed down on issues in the management team. I am much braver now and will fight for what I believe. The management team are supporting my vision now and I am not sure this would have happened before."

Interpreting these results indicated that most respondents agreed that one-to-one coaching had enhanced their authentic leadership footprint and as a result had enhanced their leadership effectiveness.

An interesting result was that many of the respondents who had received less than 10 coaching sessions indicated

1. That maintaining their authentic leadership practice had been difficult and in some cases they had been unable to do so due to work place pressures.
2. They further indicated that newly acquired habits such as regular reflection and spending time on their own development had been difficult if not impossible to maintain.

This contrasts strongly with those respondents who have received more than 10 sessions where they believe that the changes they have made are permanent and enduring.

Research Results from the OMEB Coaching Initiative 360 degree Survey

I have extracted pertinent results from the OMEB Coaching Survey raw data.:

Please note: the leaders were encouraged to set their own goals for coaching as outlined in **Appendix 2**. Growing awareness of leadership authenticity was only the explicit goal of some participants. I designed the survey around a wide range of goals set by the participants themselves and have therefore only extracted the data referring to increased awareness of leadership authenticity and improved leadership effectiveness for this study.

The survey results have been divided into 3 categories.

1. Firstly 8 of the leaders from the potential 40 participants received feedback from some of their peers and subordinates.
2. 18 of the potential 40 participants provided self assessment feedback as part of the survey.
3. 7 coaches provided feedback for 20 of the participants.

From the 360 Degree Feedback

1. The peers and subordinates said 90% of that their leaders followed their own distinctive leadership style. 5% have no observably distinctive style. 5% of the respondents didn't answer the question.
2. Respondents said they had observed an improvement in leadership effectiveness of 69% of the leaders under review.
3. Respondents said they had seen no improvement in 19% of the leaders.
4. And the remaining 12% of the respondents did not answer the question.

These results indicate that 90% of the leaders involved in the study have their own distinctive leadership style or observable leadership footprint.

Changes in leadership practice were observable for 69% of the leaders. I should mention here that 43% of the survey respondents did not know their leaders were receiving coaching prior to filling in the questionnaire but report observable changes after the coaching work was completed.

In the 360 degree coaching survey I asked the respondents if the leader they worked with, in their opinion, had a realistic awareness of their own- the leaders- personal strengths and weaknesses. The reason for this question was I had an assumption that authentic leaders would have a good

understanding of their own leadership strengths and weaknesses. That effective leaders understand they can't be all things to all people, i.e. completely fulfil the requirements of the VISA leadership profile and will need to find ways to fill the gaps by playing to the strengths of people in their teams.

The questions in the survey were unfortunately badly phrased and so most respondents indicated they were unable to answer the question. There were 17 of a possible 84 responses that said their leader was aware of and talked openly about their leadership strengths and/ or weaknesses. This included commentary that the leaders were open to constructive feedback and were working on were open about working own their developmental areas. I interpret this behaviour to contribute to leadership authenticity. Being able to be real with teams members about strengths and weaknesses creates an environment where all team members can achieve the same personal awareness. This should lead to the team being able to contribute in ways that enhance team and therefore organisational effectiveness. I would submit however, that this ability to be authentic and play to ones strengths must be leader led.

From the Coaches Feedback

1. On the clients appreciating their own distinctive leadership style:
 - a. Coaches said that the 65% of participants displayed an understanding of and appreciation for their own distinctive leadership style.
 - b. Coaches said that the 10% of participants did not display an understanding of their own authentic leadership style.
 - c. Coaches were unable to answer the question for 10% of the clients.
 - d. Coaches reported that this issue had not been discussed in the coaching sessions for 15%
2. On improvements in leadership effectiveness:
 - a. Coaches reported on an 80% improvement in leadership effectiveness and were able to innumerate specific changes in behaviour.
 - b. Coaches said that there had been no improvements for 10% of the clients.
 - c. Coaches said they were unable to report on any changes as this issue was not discussed during coaching sessions for 10% of their clients.
3. On awareness of personal strengths and weakness:
 - a. The coaches reported that 80% of clients had a good awareness of their personal strengths although 50% were not leveraging their strengths as much as they should.
 - b. The coaches reported 15% were not aware of their strengths and 5% were unsure of client's awareness of strengths.

- c. 80% of clients had good awareness of their leadership shadows with 20% of coaches unable to answer the question.

In integrating the results from subordinate, peer and coaches feedback:

Table 2: Amalgamated Results from Coaching Survey

| Criteria measured | Data from Peers and Subordinates | Data from Coaches |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Awareness of leaders distinctive leadership style | 90% | 65% |
| Improvements in leadership effectiveness | 69% | 80% |

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Kristin Armstrong for former wife of cycling legend Lance Armstrong says” The time may come when you realise the only way to restore meaning in your marriage (life⁹) is to get back the real you. It requires warrior-size courage to take a stand against the miscommunication, deception and emotional distance that breed in the shadows of inauthenticity”. Interview in Fair Lady Magazine October 2006.

With specific reference to the research questions:

1. *Can we use one on one coaching to increase awareness of authentic self for leaders?*
2. *Does insight about authentic self release energy and potential of the leader?*
3. *Does an increased appreciation of own personal authentic leadership footprint increase leadership effectiveness?*
4. *Does personal power for leaders come from authentic being and does this increased awareness enhance leadership effectiveness?*

From the research results it has become clear that leaders attending leadership development programmes such as Leading from the Peak come away from the experience with new awareness and may even be inspired by new models of leadership such as new economy leadership frameworks. While this is often inspirational and aspirational there is in many cases no observable change in leadership behaviour or practice.

⁹ I have added this word to make the quotation more pertinent to the research topic. I believe the quotation to be applicable to the leadership conversation.

These leaders also had new awareness of their strengths and weakness and in many cases had made themselves promises that they were going to enhance their leadership practice. Making transformational changes of this nature are extremely difficult working on ones own. Sustainable, observable change is unlikely to occur.

All the leaders who participated in this study have received one-to-one coaching with a professional coach. The important variant was the number of sessions each participant received.

In all cases one-to-one coaching increased awareness of authentic self as leaders. Effective coaching I would conclude is a tool for increasing reflection and awareness so this result is not surprising.

80% of the leaders themselves said that coaching enhanced their awareness of authentic self as leader while 90% of their peers and subordinates said that their leaders were distinctive in their leadership style. One can conclude from this result that one-to-one coaching does increase and enhance authentic leadership practice. Does this make us more effective as leaders how ever?

The results from the study show that:

1. The majority of leaders believed their leadership practice is more effective as a result of the enhancement of their authentic leadership practice. Each participant was able to discuss a specific example of where leadership practice had changed and improved.
2. The leader's peers and subordinates had observed an increase in effectiveness for 69% of their leaders while the coaches observed an increase of effectiveness in 90% of their clients.
3. Subordinates, peers and coaches were able to list specific examples of observed improvements in leadership practice.

The results therefore indicate an overwhelming positive result for using coaching as a development tool to increase authentic leadership practice and hence leadership effectiveness.

One of the disturbing findings was that it is not always easy to maintain our authenticity. The results has been that where leaders had received less than 10 coaching sessions their newly acquired confidence and energy to live authentically as leaders in the work place had been difficult to maintain. The number of coaching sessions therefore seems to be extremely pertinent criteria to the sustainability of the coaching result. This result is an added insight. In setting up the

coaching initiative I have not deliberately set out to measure sustainability of the coaching result. The time frame between the coaching survey in April and the interview in October/ November being six months has yielded this interesting insight.

This finding resonates with my own learning journey as leader this year. From my own learning journal: *I am struggling to day because it feels as if my own dreams are slipping away. I am losing my authentic self to the demands of others. I feel rubbed out – as if I am disappearing like a light chalk impression on a board..... if I lose myself I will lose my dreams, my life.*”

“Towards authenticity is like a treasure hunt. I find the gold and precious stones are my specific talents and strengths. I trip over obstacles, rocks, fall into holes (gaps or things that are missing) on the way. But diamonds are the hardest most enduring stones of all.”

And another quotation: *All in all it's been a lonely year for me. I have few role models. I am a pioneer in many ways. I often feel consciously incompetent which is very stressful in a senior leadership position. Quite frankly without the support, wisdom, listening and encouragement of all my coaches; both formal and informal; this year would not have been possible. Understanding this is key for successful leadership I believe. To always be learning is the only way to make leadership sustainable – being learningful is a way of life.*

I have been the happy recipient of a leadership coach for the last three years. This has not been for a continuous period but definitely during times of personal challenge, growth, change and transition. The coaching results I am getting about the sustainability of coaching results resonate with my own experience as a developing leader. For transformational change to occur where leaders aspire to change their practice for the longer term requires more than 5 sessions.

The Old Mutual Employee Benefits culture change process was aimed at moving the organisation to a high performance culture with the stated intention of improving business performance. The coaching work has been a small part of an intensive and integrated culture change programme but I believe has made a demonstrable contribution to the organisation achieving some of its goals in terms of the development of new economy leadership practice.

Organisations invest large sums of money and expertise in leadership development programmes and Old Mutual is no exception. Coaching towards authenticity is demonstrably an effective tool to develop effective leaders. Increased leadership effectiveness, one may assume, leads to an increased implementation of the business strategy and an improvement of business results.

I believe that linking the coaching initiative to organisational development programme was a critical success factor. Using the frameworks and models that were currently being used to guide organisational development gave all participants and coaches a unifying philosophy and context. This included VISA leadership frameworks and levels of work to name two. I believe that this is one of the reasons that this coaching initiative was so successful. We deliberately didn't introduce any new leadership theory but rather used the coaching intervention to enhance and build on the work already done. My learning from this is when applying leadership coaching interventions within organisations it may be relevant to build on currently espoused leadership philosophy and frameworks for meaningful results.

Recommendations

Should authentic leadership style be a desirable criterion for the leadership philosophy of the organisation then the recommendation to Human Resource and Organisational Design professionals would be as follows:

1. One-on-one coaching is an effective tool for the enhancement of authentic leadership practice.
2. The enhancement of authentic leadership practice leads to an increase in leadership effectiveness through unleashing the energy and potential of the leaders.
3. The organisation should provide a minimum of 10 - 12 coaching sessions to increase the likelihood that the results will be sustainable. Fewer than 10 sessions will only yield short term results.
4. The coaching initiative may be offered in support of a leadership development programme but should probably be offered at the same time as the leadership development programme or within a month thereof.
5. The use of professionally trained coaches is essential.
6. External or internal coaches may be used.
7. Leaders should be allowed to volunteer for coaching and to select their own coaches from a pool of coaches briefed for the assignment.
8. Having clear coaching goals at the outset is essential for meaningful measurement.
9. Thorough assessment of the results from the coaching initiative added rigour to the process and enhanced the learning. Many of the clients who participated in the interview process thanked me for the opportunity to reflect on their experience and learning. This finding was true for those participants of both the survey and interviews.

Word count 11,815

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Strategy Centre was modelled on the Offices of Strategy Management as described by authors Kaplan and Norton from Harvard Business School. (Kaplan & Norton, Harvard Business Review, October 2005, pp 72-80).

Appendix 2 – Report from Old Mutual Employee Benefits Coaching Initiative

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