



## Cultures of Competence: Coaching As Catalyst

by Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



Coaching enables competence. Competence enables confidence. Coaching operationalizes competence through confidence. Organizational cultures endorsing coaching as a catalyst for professional development can maximize stakeholder productivity and profitability. Professional competence is a key measure of comparison for determining the probability of a person's success in any business activity. The greater the professional competence; the greater the potential for success. This formula makes sense; or does it? Professional competence, like other human capitals, will remain untapped and underutilized without continuous development and refinement. Coaching can develop, refine, and enhance professional competencies.

Organizational culture is a rich and powerful context for nurturing competence; in turn confidence. Frequently, organizational leaders perceive competency development as training. This is a misperception. It is a misconception in that training develops applied skills. Professional development can include skills training, however its scope is more holistic focused on preparing professionals with increasingly integrated and comprehensive knowledge, competencies, and skills concerning a developmental areas resulting in increased capabilities and greater professional bandwidth. Acting on this misperception, organizational leaders institute training programs, delegate program administration to human resource professionals, and expect beneficial results. Sadly, this tact is often disappointing as the targeted skill training does is not transferred to practice. Inevitably, organizational leaders lament, "Why didn't this skills training investment develop the competencies we expected?" Or, "How could we make the same training investment mistake again? No one is using the training!" If these laments sound familiar, take heart as all is not lost! Legendary physicist Albert Einstein also pondered this causal conundrum. Einstein's perspective emphasized causal responsibility; the responsibility to achieve desired outcomes through a rationale approach to change. Einstein offers, "Why do we try to solve the problems we create at the same level of thinking at which we created them?" Let's explore intersections between culture, competency, coaching.

### The Misperception: Training for Competencies Is Not Enough

Training is not coaching; however training provides specific and necessary skills that can be coached into competences. For example, learning the discrete functions of a specific software application may enable an individual to acquire skills to complete certain tasks. However, once the training is transferred to practice, unless the user seeks out new and associated knowledge to build on or extending the learn skill, enhancing the skill might cease. When training is coupled with performance coaching, an environment of continuous learning is created. Coaching seasons training. It enriches trainings purpose, exposes its limits, and maximizes its effectiveness. Organizational leaders, who've cultivated their organizational cultural as cultures of coaching, understand and value the power and potential inherent in coaching to achieve long-term and enhanced competencies, in turn increased productivity and profitability.

Ms. Beverly Williams, Director of Human Resources for Langan Engineering, a global engineering and environment services firm headquartered in Elmwood Park, New Jersey identifies coaching as an essential practice in developing high performance; high productivity organizational cultures. Director Williams states "Coaching enables a high performance culture. Companies employing proven coaching strategies and best practices enhance employee capability and competitiveness. Coaching is an essential professional development practice and process. Frequently, employees perceive coaching and being coached a valuable career development benefit. As a result, employee engagement, performance, and retention increase."

### Coaching for Competency

Coaching is a process of discovery; discovering potential through practice and persistence. Practice develops cognitive and critical thinking while persistence fuels continuous discovery. Coaching focuses on client self actualization; a state of deep personal understanding, interrelatedness, and cohesion. Clearly, helping others develop professional competencies is a mighty task. Therefore, coaches must possess coaching methods and tools able to guide change and enable transformation. One coaching tool used to develop competencies is the *RAMP* method. The *RAMP* method frames the competency to be developed in specific and measurable terms, enabling coach and client to monitor progress during competency acquisition, development, and application.

Let's explore *RAMP*.

- *Relevance*—The competency to be learned is directly associated to a desired and achievable goal and has practical application
- *Accountability*—Clients willingly accept responsibility for achieving goals
- *Measurement*—Quantitative and qualitative scales of evaluation are used to measure progress-to-goal achievement
- *Persistence*—Planned and continuous attention focused on specific elements of goal achievement over a specified time.

Implementing *RAMP* enables individuals and groups to achieve relevant goals, framed in accountability, measurable by specific evaluation scales, and fuel by persistent effort and planned action.

### Cultures of Coaching: The Next Step

In his 1992 seminal work *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, social psychologist Dr. Edgar Schein reminds us that, "Culture is the product of social learning. Ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are shared and become the elements of the culture." Coaching can become an element of the culture. It can be used as a primary tool for competency development; a catalyst for high performance. Use *RAMP* and ramp-up your organizational culture to a Culture of Coaching. ■

Esther Muller

Co-Founder of the Academy for Coaching and Training & Master Coach  
Tel: (646) 391-7406  
esther@realestateacademy.com

Michael Williams, Ph.D.

Dean of the Graduate School of Business  
Division of Graduate Studies, Touro College  
Tel: (212) 742-8770 x2417  
michael.williams@touro.edu