



Sherpa Strength: The Newsletter of Executive Coaching

February 2010

Coaching Tips

Expectations and Executives

By Rubi Ho, VP for Curriculum Development, Sherpa Coaching

It has happened to the best of us. You assign your client homework to be completed for the week. He needs to follow up with his executive contact, seek feedback with his peers, or start tracking a new behavior. When you meet, he gives you an excuse as to why the homework couldn't be done. "I was too busy." "My executive contact was out of town." or "I just forgot." Perhaps you believe him the first time around, but the second? Allow your client to develop this habit, and before too long, you've lost your effectiveness as a coach. How do you avoid this?

Sherpa coaches teach clients to use our Sherpa Expectations process with their staff and peers. There are four steps in the process: **Communicate, Commitment, Consequences and Coaching.** Let's practice what we preach, and put the Expectations process to work with our clients when we deliver homework. This can create huge, positive improvements in your coaching results. The process holds you and your client accountable. Here's how to do it:



- 1. Communicate with their 'Why it Matters' in mind.** If you are not communicating in a way your client actually hears, you are missing the boat. How do you create active listening? Think about your client's 'Why it Matters,' his personal motivation. Why is he working with a coach? How do you weave that into your message and spur action? More importantly, what are you going to do if you *aren't* being heard? Move on? NO! Hang there. Repeat as often as you must. Find the words your client hears, then deliver the homework.
- 2. Commitment means your client can prove to you that she is "in it."** You've assigned homework for the week. Has she bought in? Has she *really* bought in? How can you be sure? Don't move on until she proves her commitment. That's the difference between spinning your wheels the following week and making progress.

3. **Consequences create change.** A client knowing what behavioral changes need to take place is one thing, taking the actual steps is another. Frankly, the “doing” part of coaching is the hardest part for a client. He has been this way his whole life and now he has to face the reality that it’s just not working. Talking through the consequences of his change, good and bad, may very well ensure that your client does the work necessary to change. That also entails that you have some consequences for him if he doesn’t do his homework, i.e. “We are NOT moving on until this can be completed.”
4. **Coaching:** Don’t wait until the next time you meet to see whether they have completed their homework. You may want to send your client an email reminder. Some clients need to be pushed and encouraged when it comes to homework. Will you hold her accountable to what she agreed to work on? How can she prove she is doing homework during the week? What can she do if she gets stuck? Can she contact you? Does she know this? Set clear guidelines with your clients.

Trust the process. The Sherpa process leads you through an entire coaching engagement.

The Expectations process gets things done, including your clients’ homework. Communicate, Commitment, Consequences and Coaching. Use the 4 C’s of the Expectations process in your coaching, and you will help your client reach their summit.

Rubi Ho is Vice President of Sherpa Coaching in Cincinnati, Ohio USA. He’s a co-author of ‘BE . . . don’t do: the Sherpa Guide to Coaching Skills for Managers’. He has led executive coaching certifications at the University of Georgia and Penn State. Rubi Ho can be reached at (513) 232-0002 or at rh@sherpacoaching.com.