

ICF CONVERGE

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Presented by: Helen Dann, Matt Dodson and
Dave Lipsky

Coaching Culture and the Confidence Gap: Why Organizations Struggle to Own Their Growth

The gap between intent and identity

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The Opening Question

If you ask most organizations, *“How mature is your coaching culture?”*

Typical responses are:

- A thoughtful pause
- A hedged answer
- or *“We’re working on it.”*

Quick Self-check For Your Organization



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Rate each from 1–5:

1. Managers regularly coach in the flow of work.
2. Employees feel safe to reflect, challenge, and grow.
3. Feedback is actively sought, welcomed and given.
4. Meetings include questions that invite reflection and ownership.

Intent vs. Identity

- Many organizations invest in coaching through:
 - Programs
 - Executive sponsorship
 - Internal networks
- Yet they hesitate to say, “Yes, we are a coaching culture.”
- The gap isn’t usually capability... **it’s confidence.**

The Confidence Gap

- Organizations wrestle with Impostor Syndrome, much like individuals.
- Culture is dynamic and evolving, which makes certainty feel risky.
- Owning a cultural identity can feel premature—even when behaviors are present.

Coaching Culture is a Journey

- Not a finish line—**a developmental path.**
- From isolated interventions → **systemic coaching behavior.**
- From a few trained coaches → **company-wide capacity** for inquiry, feedback, reflection.
- Progress is often uneven—and that's okay.

What is a Coaching Culture?

Simple definition:

Coach-like conversations are the norm, not the exception.

What is a Coaching Culture?

- Shows up in the flow of work: meetings, hallway chats, 1:1s, performance conversations - and access to formal coaching interactions
- Leaders listen deeply, ask powerful questions, invite reflection and ownership.
- Employees see the value of coaching
- **It's not a program. It's a way of being.**

Measuring Maturity (The Mirror Test)

- No single metric—look for behavioral evidence.
- Helpful tools exist (e.g., ICF, BetterUp, The Conference Board), but they are guides.



Measuring Maturity (The Mirror Test)

Ask yourself these type of questions:

- Are managers coaching, not just managing on a regular basis?
- Do employees feel safe to reflect, challenge, and grow?
- Is feedback welcomed—or avoided?
- Is coaching happening and accessible at all levels of the organization?
- Has senior leadership bought into and demonstrating a coaching approach?

Behavioral Indicators: **raising awareness, creating alignment, and continual progress.**

Beyond Skill-building (Myth vs. Reality)

- **Myth:** *“Send supervisors to a workshop”* = coaching culture.
- **Reality:** Culture is embedded in **systems, structures, and shared values:**
 - How you promote and reward
 - How you lead meetings
 - How you handle failure
 - How you encourage growth
- Ask yourself... **is coaching showing up in daily conversations?**

Spaghetti Sauce and Culture Fit

- Malcolm Gladwell's insight: there's no perfect sauce—only perfect sauces for different people.
- Coaching cultures have no single blueprint.



Spaghetti Sauce and Culture Fit

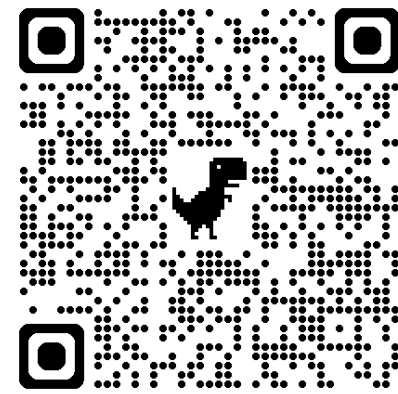


What matters:
**Fit to your
People, Purpose,
and Pace**

Three Patterns We See

Democratize coaching identity	Middle managers are the heartbeat	Reflection and curiosity over certainty
It's not limited to those with "Coach" in their title.	Their behaviors accelerate or block change.	Mature cultures ask better questions before big answers.

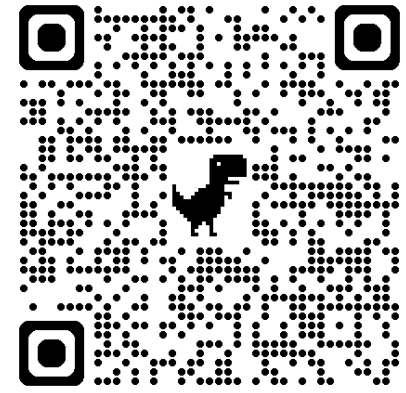
What Are You Committed To?



- In the next 90 days:
 - **One behavior** you'll model
 - **One system** you'll tweak (meeting, promotion, feedback, recognition)
 - **One conversation** you'll initiate
 - **Take the first step** by sharing your commitment with your neighbor
- Coaching culture grows by **practice, not proclamation.**



Final Thought



- Coaching culture isn't a claim—it's a commitment.
- It grows through honest reflection, ongoing feedback, and conversations that shift how people think, feel and behave.

If your organization is “working on it,” you’re already in motion.

- Keep going. Keep asking. Keep listening. Keep coaching.



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Listen to our podcast, Leadership: The Secret Sauce

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