

Catalyst, Change Manager and Sales Agent

Tasks of a CR manager as a broker for communication and innovation

A coaching program for middle management and decision makers

The Challenge

The existence of a dedicated Corporate Responsibility (CR) manager is unique in many companies. The topics linked to “sustainability” and “responsibility” are diverse and are difficult to manage in all its facets. Typically, decision makers and operational managers tasked with CR are focused on fragmented aspects of CR issues and often operate along divisional lines. In contrast, solutions for CR tend to be complex and require cooperative and holistic approaches. Where a CR department has been established staffing and capacities are usually limited in their scope and ability to integrate into operational processes. When the responsibility for CR has been allocated to an individual manager – which is common in most small companies – the person can be daunted by the wide array of CR activities. More often than not the struggle for arriving at integrated solutions is lost.

Another challenge for CR managers is finding their place and impact within the hierarchy of the organization. As consumers and citizens are increasingly scrutinizing companies, the range of tasks for the manager becomes more complex: the manager becomes a spokesperson, internally as well as externally, requiring fluency in communicating with different groups of stakeholders. But communication is not credible if it is not supported by a clear vision, principled decision making and relevant measures that are the true bearers of the sustainability message.

The principle of sustainability in itself is the best guidance for securing the future potential of the company. To accomplish this, strong and enlightened decision makers are needed to develop the company’s identity with a view to the future. The company that detects and mitigates risks at an early stage and is capable of arbitrating among conflicting interests will be the one with the strength necessary to shape its way into a sustainable existence.

Our Proposal

Each company is unique and the task of a CR manager is comprehensive.

The building elements of our program focus on a tailored but structured process that remains cognizant of the fast changing environment in sustainability matters:

- A. Developing the identity and risk profile of the company with respect to CR challenges. This focus contains an initial assessment that culminates into a company vision of its CR goals.
- B. Assisting the program participant to be confident and competent in the role as CR manager who reaches out to audiences in and outside of the company and creates a reputation of a trustworthy player.
- C. Supporting the participant as a politically savvy change agent, capable of raising the CR profile of the company with the evolving sustainability landscape within the industry.

These elements require cognitive and intellectual learning as well as character building, such as enhancing personal standing and ethical judgement. An information centric teaching approach would not be adequate for achieving progress in both dimensions.

Our recommendation is a tailored action learning programme based on professional coaching of the CR manager in his/her specific environment, allowing for information based learning on demand and focusing on personal growth and leadership capacity.

As the participant develops his/her personality through dealing with different expectations and interests the company gains a strong performer who drives and facilitates a structured approach for achieving a sustainability transformation of the company.

The Coaching Program

Approach and Method

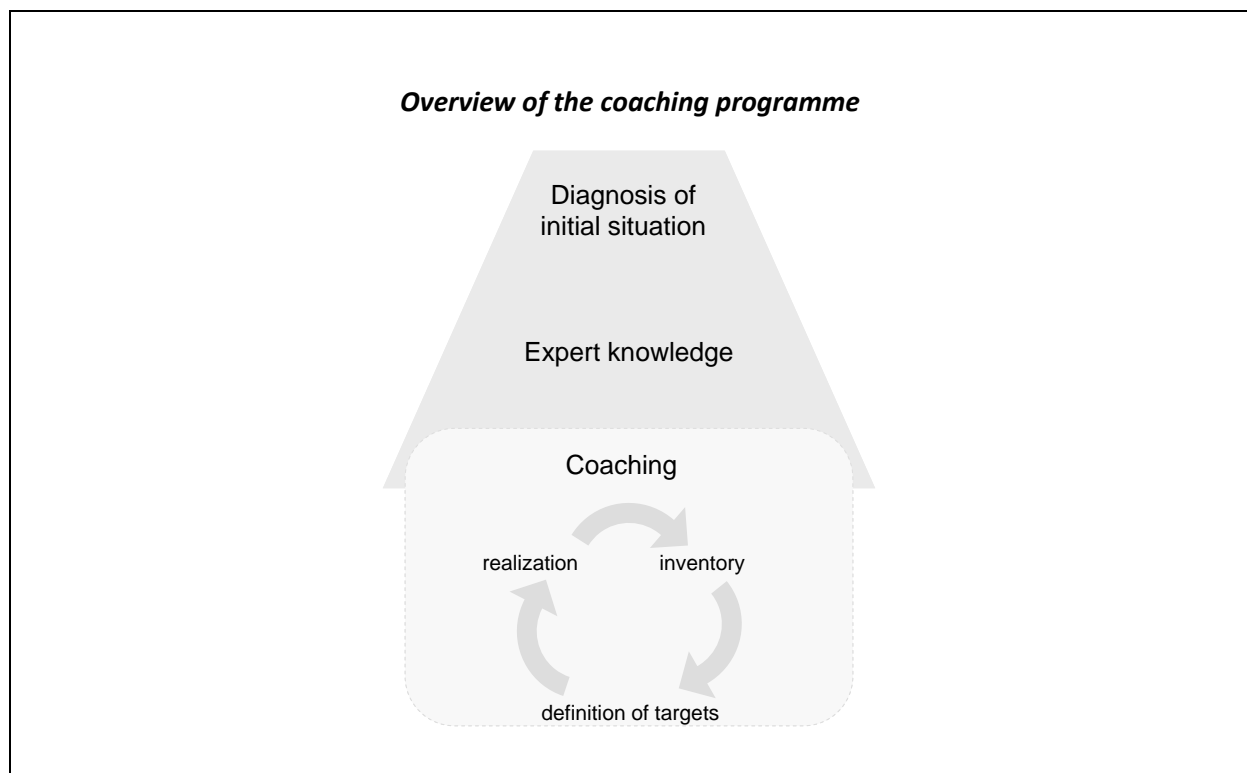
Participants of the coaching program will develop positions and measures for their company by linking questions on CR topics (e.g. 'what are the issues we have to deal with?') with those about the design of processes (e.g. 'who is to be involved in these decision making processes?'). This approach helps to advance the CR agenda in accordance with individual capacities at a pace the company can accommodate.

Coaching allows for tailor-made learning experiences catered to individual needs of the coachee, helping to avoid mistakes and creating immediate impact. It can be effective without being time consuming; a consultation of one or two hours is often sufficient when the coaching relationship has been established successfully. The coaching programme involves professionals from different fields making it possible to rely on this expert knowledge whenever necessary.

Modules

The programme consists of three major modules:

- 1) Inventory. The initial situation of each participant is assessed individually, focussing on the following aspects:
 - a. What are the material and relevant issues and risks for the company? What is its self image in the CR environment?
 - b. What are the role definition and current tasks of the participating CR manager?
 - c. How is the topic of "sustainability" integrated into organizational processes?
 - d. What are the existing frictions and potential conflicts around the topic?



2) Definition of targets. Each area is discussed and defined with the participant in order to develop an implementation schedule for realizing the targets. Major issues with the schedule are:

- a. The sustainability vision of the company's leaders
- b. Areas for action and targets
- c. Implementation schedule and measures
- d. Revisiting and adapting targets

As the company engages in sustainability matters it will learn from experience and hone its approach.

3) Realization. Following the definition of starting points and targets, the process of implementation can begin: communicating for alignment; winning support from internal constituents and gaining buy-in from top management.

These are essential steps that will be supported by the coaching process:

- a. Steering and monitoring of project related actions
 - i. Networking with internal and external players (divisions and departments, colleagues, superiors, learning partners, citizens and consumers, politicians and institutions...)
 - ii. Building expert knowledge (on demand)

- iii. Developing argumentation lines and narratives which fit different players and interest groups
 - iv. Dealing with conflicts (internal and external)
 - v. Creating and harvesting opportunities for innovation
- b. Creating and empowering a CR organization
- i. Communication forums and channels for dialogue with company leaders
 - ii. Integration of CR concerns into the main operational processes and functions, raising the CR accountability of line managers
 - iii. Organization of events ensuring the participation of external experts and creative thinkers in the evolution of the CR agenda.

Schedule

We start with a two-day **kick-off meeting** in a major city with an airport in a comfortable distance. The purpose of the meeting will be to get to know other participants, explore the tasks at hand and diagnose the individual learning needs and expectations. Fundamental technical terms and concepts of CR, sustainability, change management and communication will be introduced. **Action learning partnerships** will be established for the purpose of mutual consultation and joint problem solving.

Coaching sessions follow the first meeting. Each participant has a time budget for coaching and can make use of it either in person or virtual meetings (phone, net meeting, mail). Tentative schedules will be agreed to in the beginning of the program, while exact timing will be defined in accordance with business schedules of the coachees. Each coaching meeting is scheduled for two to four hours, as agreed.

Coaching sessions are centred on topics emerging from daily business with significant relevance for the coachee. Coach and coachee look into the background and context of the topic, consider options for action, simulate alternatives and identify strategies. Whenever necessary, new skills and expert knowledge will be imparted. Learning strategies will be developed, tailored to the complexity and urgency of the subject.

Action learning sets will involve a peer group of colleagues who will create solutions for practical business challenges relevant to all the learners. Progress of the action learning sets will be monitored by one of the coaches.

In addition to coaching and the action learning sets there will be a third element of the programme: **knowledge sharing with experts** on specific topics. Subjects of the meetings will be decided by the program participants as needed. Delivery will be in small groups via t-conferences or net-meetings.

Services and Fees

The program comprises of a kick-off meeting (two days), a personal coaching budget (three days in nine months), monitoring action learning sets (as requested), four expert meetings (half day each, in nine months) and a meeting to close the learning experience (one day).

The program is run at group sizes between six to ten persons. It is accompanied by two coaches and subject matter experts.

The fee for participation is Euro 6,000.00. Electronic copies of presentations, documents and other course material are included in the fee. Travel expenses, accommodation and catering will be paid for by the participants.