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the Coaching WAY

“The 3 Cs of Leadership”

A ‘Q&A’ with Val Williams, Executive Coach

“Your results are behind the plan...

*Your vision is unclear... Your execution has gaps... Your peers don't like working with you....
How do you plan to turn it around?!”*

These are the last types of things a busy, dedicated senior executive would want to hear, whether through the grapevine, from a colleague or board of directors or – even worse – through the media.

In today's corporate climate, customers, stockholders, employees and the bottom line are all beneficiaries of an effective senior executive or CEO. And increasingly, chief executives are turning to executive coaches for the help, guidance and expertise to develop their leadership capacity.

Val Williams is a recognized Master Certified Coach and Executive Coach who acts as a catalyst to help move top executives onto the road of more effective leadership. Following is an interview with Val on her model: “The 3 Cs of Leadership.”

Q: You developed a successful executive development model called “The 3 Cs” of Leadership.” What are they and how did you arrive at this trio of attributes as the focus for your brand of leadership development?

A: Val Williams: Of the hundreds of senior executives I've coached since 1994 – men and women from all industries, experience and backgrounds – I've discovered that the most successful leaders tend to have three distinct attributes: Clarity, Courage and Connection (and not just one or two of them) . I call these ways of being “The 3 Cs of Leadership.”

When I'm asked to coach high-potential senior executives or those struggling with certain issues, I've found that I can simplify leadership development by focusing and improving on their grasp of “The 3 Cs.”

Q: How would you translate “The 3 Cs” to a successful senior executive?

A: Val:
CLARITY is apparent when the leader has a crystal clear vision and everyone – from staff members to the general public – understands the vision, remembers it, operates within it and can verbalize it.

COURAGE is a necessary attribute in making that vision become a reality. Successful leaders have the courage to make the difficult business decisions that are needed for execution. They are able to express their viewpoint even when it isn't popular.

CONNECTION is the final key. Successful leaders have a bond with everyone involved in their business – from peers to customers, to staff to stakeholders. They easily display their ability to be deeply connected to the people around them.

Q: What makes the “The 3 Cs of Leadership” different from the many other leadership models around today?

A: Val: Simplicity and effectiveness. Because they're easy to remember, not to mention practical, “The 3Cs” can be used almost like a mantra by successful leaders as they do their daily work and encounter various issues and challenges. For example, a CEO conducting a meeting that isn't going well can actually assess him/herself on the spot and take immediate action. In that moment, they can ask themselves what's missing: Is their message simple and apparent - Clarity? Do they need to be bolder - Courage? Are they relating with the audience - Connection?

Q: What happens if a leader is missing one of “The 3 Cs?”

A: Val: Executives with clarity and courage but no connection may be deemed “bullies” or “sharks.” These leaders may have a clear vision of where they want to go and the backbone to get there, but without the connection with staff and peers, they won't be able to build enough alignment to get the vision off the ground.

Leaders with clarity and connection may be quite popular and good at generating lots of ideas, but at the end of the day, they can't drive results. Why? Because without the key element of courage, they can't or won't make the tough decisions – probably because they're more concerned about how people will react than anything else.

Finally, senior executives lacking clarity can be good implementers, but not successful leaders. Great relationships and courage won't equal success if an executive can't create a clear vision of their own.

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If executives have all three Cs working together, they have all the necessary ingredients to be a great leader.

Q: In addition to the 3 Cs, which sound like ways of being, are there specific skills that executives need to be successful?

A: Val: Yes. Successful executives also tend to have five essential skills that drive consistent and successful results. My co-author Ellen Fredericks and I explain these skills – visioning, aligning, planning, executing and developing people – in greater detail in our book, *Executive Foundation*.

Q: What would be the connection between the 3Cs and the 5 skills in *Executive Foundation*?

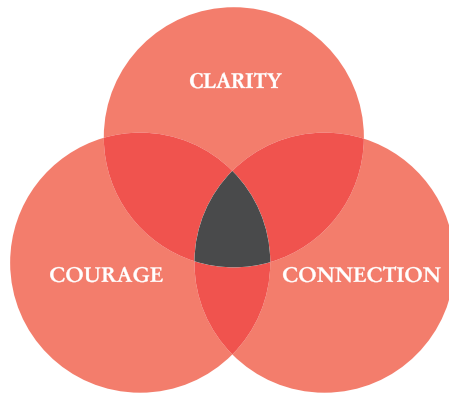
A: Val: The 3Cs are ways of being, thinking and behaving, whereas the 5 key skills referenced in our *Executive Foundation* book are practical, specific activities used on a daily basis. The 3Cs and the 5 skills are actually complementary concepts. Executives need to practice both to be the effective leaders they strive to be.

We identified the five essential skills through our work over several years in coaching executives and believe they form the foundation of any senior executive's success. *Executive Foundation* takes leaders through a series of exercises to help them gauge their degree of strength for each skill, identify gaps or weaknesses, work on gaining competency and move towards mastery.

Q: Can coaching actually help a leader develop “The 3Cs and the 5 skills of *Executive Foundation*?”

A: Val: Yes. In my particular way of coaching, I coach from my 3Cs model. I also use the Executive Foundation skill set. The coaching experience provides executives with the framework necessary to take action and gives them the tools to manage changes that need to take place. They learn how to articulate the company's needs, propose solutions in the right way and then to implement those solutions.

The goal of my style of coaching helps executives strengthen not only the general principles of being



a senior leader – like the importance of strategic planning – but gives them practical insights into dealing with day-to-day challenges that every executive faces.

Q: Let's hear more about the 3C's specifically: How do you use the “The 3 Cs” when coaching a senior executive?

A: Val: First, the executive and I work on assessing where they are with behaviors that demonstrate “The 3 Cs”. It makes the leader think about how he or she has been applying these ways of being up to this point.

The exercise gives us a good starting point and a clear direction. Then through the coaching process, I work with the leader to develop his or her personalized or ‘customized’ “3 C” behaviors. Ultimately, genuine, successful leaders demonstrate “The 3 Cs” in every facet of their careers and their lives. For example, being a CEO is not a job, it's a lifestyle – at work, at home, in the world. Leadership is not something you do. To be outstanding, it's got to be who you are!

One of the best things about the “The 3 Cs” is that they're simple and clear; senior executives can take the information and continue to work on their specific areas of leadership development even after the coaching engagement.

Q: When is the right time to seek an executive coach?

A: Val: Certainly if you are a high-potential senior executive or a senior executive in a new role, that is a great time to seek a coach. And especially if your organization is going through any major transition; that's a great time. In general, any time that you want to strengthen your leadership is a good time. I work with senior executives every day, encouraging them to include “The 3 Cs” within their businesses and their daily thoughts and actions. They might be performing well today at their current level of development, but there is always room to grow. To make fast – and especially sustainable progress – the one-on-one, confidential, ongoing relationship with a coach is an excellent development tool.

Val Williams, MCC (Master Certified Coach) is an Executive Coach, former executive and expert in senior executive development. Val has run her own business Professional Coaching and Training, Inc. since 1994. She has coached hundreds of senior corporate executives and their teams on leadership skills including: strategic planning, vision development, execution, performance management and people and team development.

Working with executives nationally and internationally Val specializes in preparing leaders to effectively engage people, clarify vision and strategy, and produce great results.

Corporate clients appreciate Val's unique combination of executive coaching skills and business skills, since – as an executive herself – Val led staffs of more than 700 people.

Val's coaching style includes three simple but powerful components: she listens at a very deep level, she tells leaders the complete truth even when it's hard to hear and she requests that leaders take the actions that demonstrate their absolute best performance.

To apply “The 3 Cs” model for executive leadership development in your organization: For individual executive coaching, team coaching, management retreats, training seminars or keynote speeches: visit Val's website: www.valwilliams.com or contact Val at val@valwilliams.com or 732-632-9647. Val also specializes in virtual leadership skills and has successfully coached senior leaders by phone anywhere in the world.

Val's books and CDs – all of which are available at www.valwilliams.com and at www.Amazon.com – include: “*Executive Foundation*”, “*Executive Think Time*”, “*Virtual Leadership*”, “*Get the Best Out of Your People and Yourself*”, “*Creating Your Leadership Future*”, and “*Building Your Personal Foundation*”.