

THE POSSIBILITY SHIFT

Leading Under Construction

AN EXECUTIVE COACHING INSIGHT BRIEF

How executive coaching helped a Director move from managing visible problems to recognizing, anticipating, and intervening in systemic leadership patterns.

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Sometimes
the constraint
isn't what a
leader can do.

It's what
the leader
can't see.



THE CASE IN BRIEF

Growth changed the organization. It also changed what leadership required.

A Director leading a rapidly expanding function was operating inside exponential growth, expanding scope, multiple simultaneous changes, competing stakeholder expectations, and leaders beneath them who were still developing into the demands of their roles.

The Director's attention was understandably concentrated on the enormous body of work in front of them. But that focus made something else harder to see.

One Manager reporting directly to the Director was demonstrating recurring behavioral patterns, capability gaps, and difficulty operating consistently at the level the role required.

Through executive coaching, those incidents began to connect. Week by week and month by month, the Director learned to step outside the urgency, recognize recurring patterns, see who and what else was being affected, and intervene earlier.

THE CASE AT A GLANCE

THE CONTEXT

Exponential growth + expanded scope + stacked change

THE HIDDEN CONSTRAINT

Leadership behavior was creating systemic consequences difficult to see from inside the work.

THE COACHING SHIFT

Incidents → Patterns → System → Anticipation

WHAT BECAME POSSIBLE

Self-awareness + stronger coaching + systems awareness + earlier intervention

The most significant outcome was not solving one leadership problem. It was developing a different way of seeing leadership problems.

THE LEADERSHIP LOAD

The title hadn't changed. The leadership load had.

As the organization grew exponentially, the Director's responsibilities changed in ways that were not captured by a title. More work became more interdependency. More people created more leadership layers. More stakeholders created competing needs and perspectives.

THEN

- Closer proximity to the work
- Fewer leadership layers
- Greater direct visibility
- Problems easier to trace
- More direct influence

NOW

- Expanded organizational scope

- More leaders leading others
- Multiple simultaneous changes
- Competing stakeholders
- Different levels of leadership capability
- Greater interdependency
- Less direct visibility
- Higher consequences

75%

of CHROs surveyed by Gartner said managers are overwhelmed by increased job responsibilities.

Source: Gartner

74%

of HR leaders said managers were not equipped to lead change.

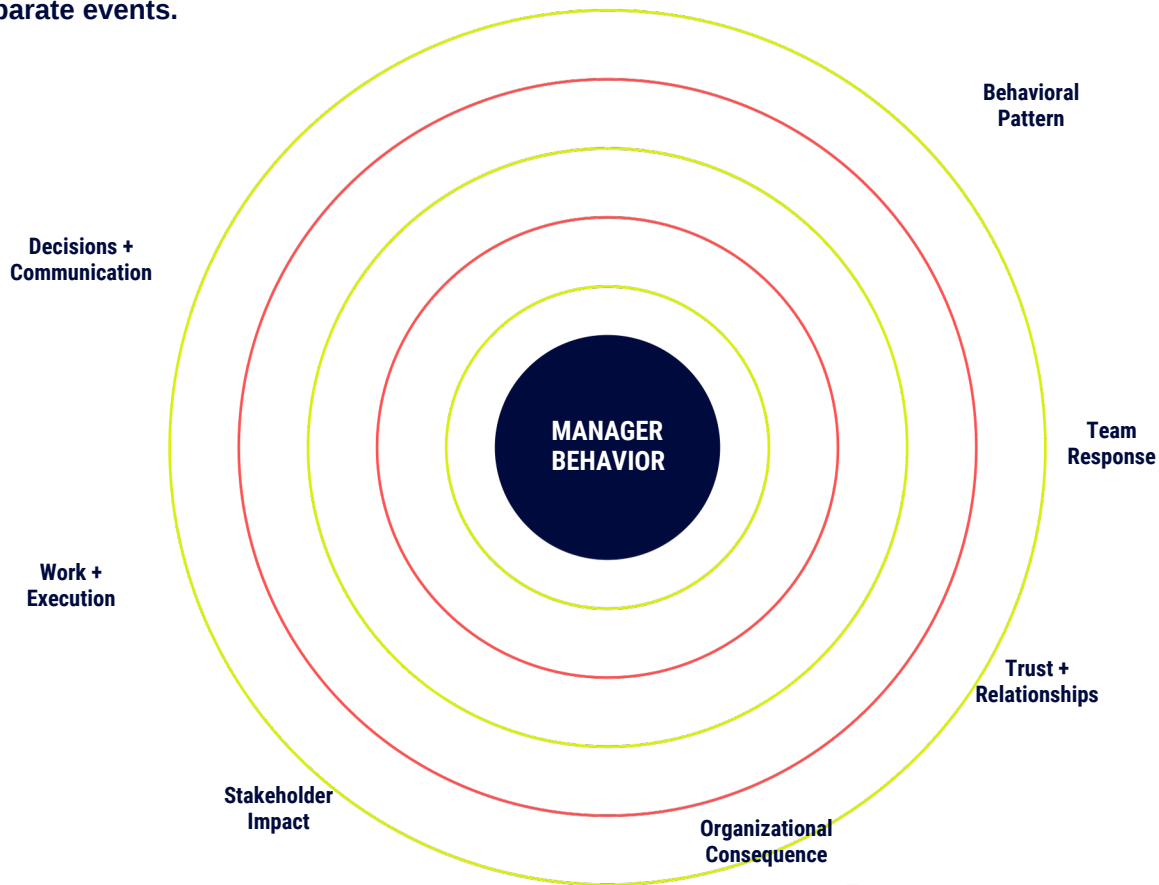
Source: Gartner

Growth does not simply create more work. It changes the system leaders are being asked to lead.

THE HIDDEN CONSTRAINT

The incidents were different. The pattern was not.

One significant coaching thread involved a Manager reporting directly to the Director. The Manager was not consistently operating at the level the role required. Behaviors were repeating, expectations were not always being met, and the effects were reaching beyond the Manager alone. From inside a rapidly expanding function, those effects first appeared as separate events.



The effects moved upward as well: escalation, Director attention, stakeholder strain, and additional leadership load.

70%

of the variance in team engagement is attributable to the manager.

Source: Gallup

One leader's behavior is rarely contained to one leader.

THE COACHING PROCESS

The coaching strategy helped the Director step outside the urgency of the work, widen their field of awareness, and make more intentional leadership choices. **Widening the field of view.**

HOW WE WORKED

WE EXPLORED real situations as they happened.

WE IDENTIFIED recurring patterns across time.

WE WORKED ON multiple perspectives and system impact.

WE USED observation and leadership experiments.

INCIDENT → PATTERN → SYSTEM → CHOICE

THE COACHING LENS A multi-perspective, systems-aware approach expanded the Director's range of responses.

Multi-Perspective

See more than one vantage point.

Systems Thinking

Trace behavior through the organization.

Reflective Inquiry

Connect events across time.

**MULTI-PERSPECTIVE + SYSTEMS-AWARE
COACHING**

Assumption Testing

Separate observation from interpretation.

Behavioral Experiments

Test different leadership responses.

Reflective Practice

Turn insight in to independent capability.

THE COACHING MOVED AS THE PATTERN BECAME CLEARER.

01 RESPOND

What happened?
Immediate situation

02 RECOGNIZE

Where have we seen this before?
Repeated incidents → pattern

03 ANTICIPATE

What is likely to happen next?
Pattern → prediction → earlier intervention

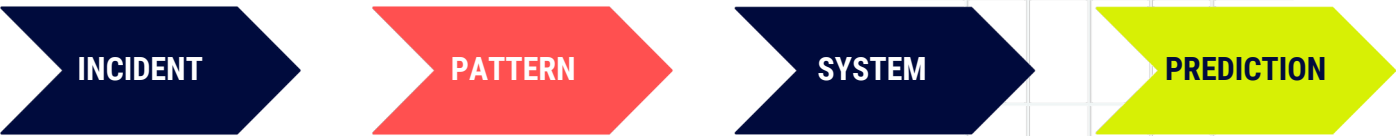
NOTICE → CONNECT → INTERPRET → COACH → ANTICIPATE → INTERVENE

Coaching created the space to step outside the urgency long enough to see what the urgency was hiding.

THE POSSIBILITY SHIFT

The shift wasn't more answers. It was a wider field of awareness.

At first, the dominant question was: "What should I do about this situation?" As coaching progressed, the Director's field of awareness expanded.



FROM

TO

Responding to incidents	→	Recognizing patterns
Managing around capability gaps	→	Coaching underlying behavior
Discovering impact after it occurred	→	Anticipating consequences
Carrying more personally	→	Leading through leaders
Seeing work and people as separate problems	→	Reading the system
Reactive intervention	→	Earlier intentional intervention

Leadership range matters because the environment does not remain still.

WHAT BECAME POSSIBLE

Behavioral outcomes without manufactured ROI.

01**Greater Self-Awareness**

Clearer awareness of gaps in their own leadership approach and how attention shaped intervention.

02**Behavioral Pattern Recognition**

Stronger ability to distinguish isolated incidents from recurring behavioral patterns.

03**Stronger Coaching Capability**

More intentional coaching of behavior and capability issues underneath the problem.

04**Systems Awareness**

Examining how behavior affected people, work, relationships, stakeholders, and capacity.

05**Anticipatory Leadership**

Predicting where patterns might create problems and intervening earlier.

06**Expanded Leadership Choice**

Seeing the system more clearly created more intentional leadership choices.

The Director didn't leave coaching with all the answers. They became better able to see what required attention - and choose what to do next.

COACHING AS LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE

This isn't one leader's problem.

Organizations are asking leaders to navigate more change, complexity, and interdependence—often faster than traditional leadership development can keep pace.

85%

of leaders say building organizational and workforce adaptability at today's required speed is critical.

Source: Deloitte 2026 Global Human Capital Trends

7%

say they are leading in helping the workforce continuously grow and adapt.

Source: Deloitte 2026 Global Human Capital Trends

27%

believe their organizations manage change effectively.

Source: Deloitte 2026 Global Human Capital Trends

Those numbers point to a development problem - not simply a performance problem.

FOR LEADERS

Where is complexity out running the way you currently lead? Executive coaching creates space to recognize patterns beneath pressure, understand the system around you, and expand the choices available to you.

FOR ORGANIZATIONS

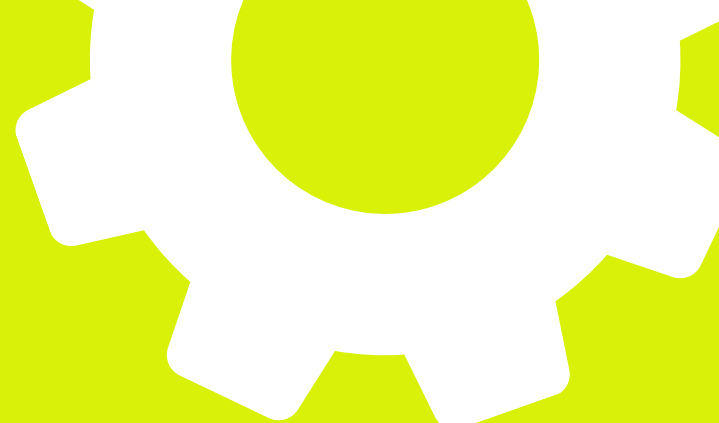
Where would stronger coaching capacity change leadership performance? PEC supports executives and helps organizations strengthen the coaching practices leaders use to develop other leaders.

START WITH A POSSIBILITY MAPPING SESSION

For leaders. For leadership teams. For organizations building stronger coaching capacity.

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LET'S ENGINEER WHAT'S POSSIBLE



This brief reflects Possibility Engineering Consulting's systems-aware coaching approach: helping leaders step outside immediate problems, recognize recurring patterns, understand how those patterns move through the organization, and build the awareness and judgment to intervene earlier and lead with greater range.

Contact Us



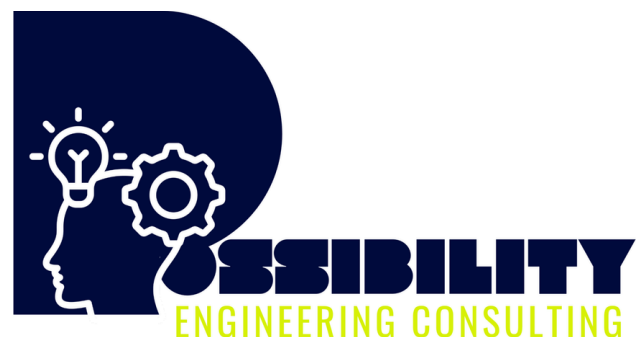
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