The Power of Coaching
WEF’s Global Leadership Fellows Program

Managing the Unpredictable
Columbia’s Mike Malefakis interviewed

Leading Professional Service Firms
Hogan Lovells’ Alison Nolan

Future Formula for Leadership
AstraZeneca and Duke CE

Global CEOs Program
IESE, Wharton and CEIBS

Experts Vs. Managers as CEOs
Amanda Goodall
Getting Personal
The World Economic Forum and the Power of Coaching

The World Economic Forum’s Global Leadership Fellows Program (GLFP) is dedicated to developing the next generation of world leaders. It is designed to accelerate the leadership development of highly able mid-career executives through a three-year employment contract with the Forum. Although the Program has evolved over its seven years of operations, it still retains a core balance of formal learning, coaching, mentoring and experiential learning.

Gilbert Probst, Managing Director and the Dean of the Fellows Program, has developed the GLFP with a particular focus on how the Fellows can progress their development to higher stages of leadership maturity and competence more rapidly than they would achieve under normal experiential, at-work learning. The acceleration of this development is something that Probst is actively monitoring.

By assessing each Fellow at the outset of the Program and at specific points during the three years, as well as through a final assessment, the Forum is acquiring a rich set of data to evaluate the effectiveness of the acceleration process. While this data will be ready in 2013, what is already becoming clear is that while the GLFP has many classic learning attributes (such as access to leading business schools, ground-breaking workshops at Columbia University’s Earth Institute and School of Arts, and access to business and world leaders), the Program’s ‘secret sauce’ is that it offers the Fellows a series of coaching opportunities.

1 A general outline of the GLFP was published in Developing Leaders Issue 6, http://goo.gl/VHd9c.
Whether you subscribe to the 70-20-10 theory of learning as an absolutist formula or a loose indication of the key ways adults learn, the mixture of formal presentation of new ideas and concepts (the 10%), with on-the-job practice (the 70%), will only achieve its maximum impact if the learner can have some personalized guidance, ideally with the opportunity to self-reflect (the 20%).

The 20% can take many different forms. Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger, who developed the formula at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), refer to it generally as just “feedback”, and this can come typically from peers, superiors, mentors, experts and increasingly juniors too. Clearly, where the feedback comes from will alter the message and manner in which it is delivered and received, but in all cases, if provided honestly and thoughtfully, such feedback is hugely valuable. The feedback process is the core of coaching.

Juraj Ondrejkovic, Associate Director, is responsible for the Fellows Program’s coaching process and development. According to Ondrejkovic, the different types of coaching in the Program provide support and feedback to the Fellows, helping them to identify the skills and capabilities within them to improve their personal effectiveness as leaders in the organization and beyond. These interventions are different from the also practiced mentoring, which refers to a developmental relationship between a more experienced person or senior (mentor) and the mentee. It is a more hierarchical relationship and typically involves advising and telling. In addition, the mentor often gives the Fellow access to his/her professional network.

The GLFP is built on the same basic principles as the 70-20-10 rule, and it is therefore no surprise that coaching holds such a central role in the Program. At the very beginning of the Program, Fellows are allocated a “buddy” – a more experienced colleague – to act as a mentor for the first few weeks. This experience plays a role in the Fellow’s direct learning experience, as it socializes the newcomer quickly into the organization and
“Initially, it can feel uncomfortable as you are opening yourself up to others… Sugar-coating or glossing over your shortcomings only hurts you… when you embrace that vulnerability with full honesty and trust, the growth opportunities are tremendous”

creates an atmosphere where they feel more confident to ask questions and connect with others; this is a strong enabler of learning.

More mentoring is provided later in the Program, when each Fellow has a choice to select from a pool of well-respected leaders externally and senior leaders internally. Beside professional and life experience, there is no specific qualification required for a person to become a mentor. It is important, however, that the mentors are volunteers (as opposed to volunteered) as they need to have a natural interest in developing others. Yet still, the mentees are expected to drive the interactions, coming up with questions, setting up the meetings, driving the conversations, and so on.

During the selection process, Fellows have to take emotional, intelligence and personality assessments. Once accepted, they are then debriefed by Ondrejkovic on their results in order to better understand their strengths and development needs, allowing them to focus more on the part of the Program which is most relevant for them. Furthermore, some of these validated results are made available to the line managers who are instrumental in the Fellows on-the-job development.

Early in their first year, Fellows spend a week at INSEAD where they immerse themselves in self-assessment tasks and are allocated peer-coaching groups that they will work in, formally and informally, during the Program. The groups are decided on by Probst and his team, who have had several weeks to get to know the new Fellows by this stage, as well as the results from the pre- and on-boarding personality assessments. The key is to make the five-person peer-coaching groups as diverse as possible in terms of backgrounds, experience and outlooks. Typically, the peer groups become very close, though occasionally some do change, usually as a result of external factors.

Under the guidance of Professor Gianpiero Petriglieri and Jean-Claude Noel, the introduction into leadership and peer coaching starts at INSEAD with training on coaching, active listening and feedback sharing. The main instrument used for the coaching interventions is a 360° competency-based feedback tool, designed by Manfred Kets de Vries, which allows comparability to a larger sample of executives in different industries. This feedback is complemented by results from self-assessed personality and emotional intelligence. The start of the peer-coaching group is a key event for the Fellows, the majority of them not having experienced anything like it previously, so the groups are initially guided by their group lead coach, who is a member of the INSEAD faculty or a certified external professional.

“Initially, it can feel uncomfortable as you are opening yourself up to others with full transparency on your flaws,” says third-year Fellow Abigail Noble, who graduated from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and worked as a management consultant with Deloitte. “Sugar-coating or glossing over your shortcomings only hurts you … it limits your ability to learn and grow from your peers. On the other hand, when you embrace that vulnerability with full honesty and trust, the growth opportunities are tremendous, and
Above all, peer coaching relies on a huge level of trust and faith among the members, building a close relationship that might not normally be expected within a work organization.

In many cases, especially in our group, there was the extra benefit that we all became closer to each other as we understood each other in a deeper and fuller way. The proof of this is that the group continues to work together two years on and rely on each other whenever they encounter a seemingly insurmountable professional and sometimes personal challenge.

“You don’t know what you don’t know at the beginning,” adds Noble. “Having an experienced coach sit in on the early sessions to guide and reassure us as we navigate our way through the process is useful.”

The group lead coach is a vital part of the early stages of the peer-coaching group. As the sessions continue, the mentor becomes less involved and the very process of the peer sessions “start to mimic what leaders should do”. At that point, there is no authority figure or expert to refer to so decisions are evaluated and taken on the merits the group members allocated them and nothing else.

Above all, peer coaching relies on a huge level of trust and faith among the members, building a close relationship that might not normally be expected within a work organization. It also teaches the Fellows how to coach and better understand not just themselves, but also their colleagues; Fellows share their lives in the coaching groups with each other as well as their work-related challenges. In sum, this process clearly offers an investment for the Fellows, allowing them the opportunity to build skills that will serve them well as leaders, not least of which in how to lead constructive conversations.

Second-year Fellow Darko Lovric has a Master’s in Psychology and worked at Goldman Sachs and Deloitte before joining the GLFP. He understands that coaching’s purpose is “to provide an objective and interesting mirror to you at a time it is useful to you”. It is this timeliness that makes coaching in the Program so powerful; the 10% and 70% referred to above are essential inputs to make the coaching element effective. If things are not changing and challenging, then there is little for a coach to work on.

“The peer coaching in the GLFP is unusual as the groups are sufficiently similar yet diverse with a mixture of familiarity and distance among the Fellows,” notes Lovric. This is a reference to the fact that the Fellows, by the very fact they are in the Program, are capable “high-potential” executives who are used to being successful in their fields. But as individuals, they are also diverse in terms of nationality, culture, wealth and outlooks. This GLFP cohort feel works well and makes the coaching interventions a retention tool for Fellows in an initially stressful high-fliers environment.

In the middle of the second year, the peer-coaching groups are complemented by one-on-one professional coaching. Probst has around 15 professional coaches – from the academic and professional to several former CEOs or senior executives in large organizations – from whom the Fellows can select to be their coach for the remainder of the Program.
“Experience and reflection are the crucible of adult learning,” says Heather Cairns-Lee, a professional coach on the Program who has also worked at the IMD Business School. As well as being one of the coaches for some of the Fellows, Cairns-Lee first met the full GLFP cohort at the Gemmi Pass week that occurs in the winter of the second year of the Program under the guidance of Professor Petriglieri of INSEAD. This experiential week high in the Swiss Alps gets the Fellows to examine their leadership skills in an unfamiliar setting.

“Leadership is an activity that occurs in a group or social setting,” observes Cairns-Lee, “and the mountain experience allows them to see how the group influences them and how they influence the group. For instance they might be tasked with building an igloo, this would be followed by debriefing conversations with a coach which provides an opportunity for them to learn about the exercise of leadership, of how they work together in a group and the ways in which they interact, structure tasks and make decisions. On reflecting about their experiences, they might explore how they individually and collectively influenced their group culture in working together, for example, some groups are competitive, some take the tasks very seriously, while others approach it more playfully.

For the individual coaching of the GLFP, Cairns-Lee explains, “as leadership is relational and not an individual pursuit, coaching is most helpful when based on the context of the individual and the organization in which they operate,” explains Cairns-Lee. “This offers people an opportunity to learn from their direct experience and the possibility to examine their assumptions, thinking, behaviour and relationships, and the implications of all that within a safe space. Coaching is the difference between introspection and reflection. Hearing yourself say something helps clarify it and illuminates the assumptions on which you are operating.”

Not all GLFP coaches come from a pure coaching background though. Gunter Fleischer, who accompanies the peer-coaching process, was HR Director for Hewlett-Packard Europe and is now a familiar figure among the Fellows. Fleischer brings the HP approach to the Program, which is firmly grounded in action learning. This shows the variety in approach that the different coaches can bring. Those with senior commercial experience
inevitably add elements of mentorship to their coaching sessions, where they can advise and instruct as much as they facilitate and get the Fellows to reflect. Without a doubt, there is a demand for the coaches who can bring this insight too.

Another personal coach available to the Fellows is Paul Zeven, former Chief Executive of Philips North America. He spends his time coaching not only the Fellows, but high potentials at large organizations across Europe. Zeven realizes that “as your career grows, your activities with people intensifies”, so the need to be able to know yourself and also understand others becomes more critical all the time.

This echoes the comments of Bernard Bourigeaud, founder and former CEO of Atos Origin, who remarked to IEDP recently that to be an effective leader you need an understanding of people, which could be described as genuine emotional intelligence. “If you meet someone in a corridor and he is unwell and you cannot tell that he is unwell then maybe you are not right for the job.”

The coaching process can be an extremely effective way to enhance these people awareness skills. Experiencing it as the coach of the peer group sessions and as the “client” in the one-on-one sessions gives a powerful insight into one’s own behaviour and others behaviour as managers and in stressful change situations.

There are, of course, limitations to the impact of coaching. As Matt Miller, a Yale MBA graduate and former management consultant with Oliver Wyman who completed the GLFP in the summer of 2012 noted, “I was definitely open to it conceptually, but also fearful of engaging properly with it … in the GLFP the coaching is a substantial element, but it is only as substantial as you want it to be. Yes, my coach would reach out to me, but more importantly I reached out to him.”

Darko Lovric echoes this noting that “early on you have to make a choice as to how honest you want to be and how far you want to take it”. But he also sees that while the coaching is a formal part of the Program, its real importance is that it creates an environment of trust and honesty among the Fellows and faculty, which enables informal learning to flourish. This is where the real accelerated development that Gilbert Probst and his team seek can really happen.
Despite much discussion about the need for leadership development in corporate and public organizations, and the considerable industry that surrounds it, this is the first authoritative periodical focused entirely on this area.

*Developing Leaders* looks at the critical confluence between the provision of executive education and the real everyday needs of organizations to strengthen their management teams, their corporate performance, and their leadership.

The publication presents the latest thinking and most recent developments in both academic and commercial executive education provision worldwide, what it is achieving and which are the best models for success, sharing the experience and expertise of top leaders and world class educators.

*Developing Leaders* is published in both hardcopy and online “page turning” format. The quarterly magazine complements the IEDP website - the definitive resource for executive developers worldwide.

www.iedp.com