



Perspectives on Leadership

**Insights from Executive Coaching
in a Changing World**

Sari van Poelje, Annejet de Blécourt, Marianne Eussen,
Rob de Ruiter, Sonja Wekema



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Edited by: Sari van Poelje
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Illustraties: Erica Heykoop

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Contents

- 5** Why this book is important now
- 10** **Perspective 1: Executives and Self-Understanding**
I see, I see, what you don't see
- 30** **Perspective 2: Optimising Working Relationships**
Going the extra mile for work relations pays off
- 48** **Perspective 3: Team Development**
How to build high-performing teams
- 62** **Perspective 4: Cross-Functional Team Collaboration**
How to create cooperation between teams
- 78** **Perspective 5: Power and Ethics**
If you don't play the power game, you get played
- 100** **Perspective 6: Intercultural Leadership**
The key to success in a globalising world
- 124** **Perspective 7: Managing the Environment**
Anticipation for innovation
- 136** Which executive coach suits you?
- 149** Authors
- 152** Acknowledgments
- 153** Index

Why this book is important now

In a rapidly changing world, there is a demand for a new style of executive leadership. In this book, we present seven perspectives on leadership aimed at developing a more adaptive style. We see executive leadership as the ability to provide direction and create a structure within which you inspire a group of people to work together toward common goals.

As boundaries around control and responsibility shift, executives face the challenge of cross-functional collaboration, hybrid working and diversity. Moreover, the power base is changing, with a move towards more autonomous employees and self-managing teams, and innovative revolutionary ideas are becoming more important. As a result, executives need to shift their focus from production to anticipation and innovation.

There is also a growing realisation that innovation requires cross-functional collaboration within and across teams. The question is no longer who the best leader is, but which leader can best create interdependency and manage collaboration across disciplines and functions.

To achieve this type of collaboration, executives must shift to a more democratically distributed form of leadership, creating leadership teams, networks of cooperation and innovation. This book also explores the concepts and tools that executive coaches can provide to make this shift possible.

To share is to multiply

In 2021, five senior executive coaches decided to join forces and conduct an inventory of the perspectives on leadership that are essential for the future. The ‘7 Perspectives on Leadership’ were born, based on our collective years of experience as executive coaches across various continents and organisations.

Realising new leadership requires new forms of development that focus on 'on the job' and 'just in time' learning. These will make use of the executive knowledge and experience today to solve tomorrow's problems. Executive coaching is ideally suited for this new form of learning because coaches operate across organisations, disciplines and hierarchical layers and offer an unparalleled insight into the competencies needed by executives now.

In addition, a growing need has arisen to demarcate executive coaching as a profession, distinct from general coaching. We want to provide executives with the tools they need to select executive coaches that can help them develop the seven perspectives of leadership. Our collaboration as coaches has led to new insights and perspectives on the forms of leadership and coaching necessary in this rapidly changing world.

Executive leadership and 7 perspectives

The 7 perspectives are arranged according to granularity i.e. from the smaller perspective of managing self and managing relationships at work, to the larger perspective of team development, cooperation between teams, intercultural leadership, power and ethics, and the innovative management of the environment.

Perspective 1. Executives and Self-Understanding

As an executive, the influence you have on those around you and on the success of your organisation cannot be underestimated. That is why it is important to know what your own patterns are. Where are your blind spots? What are the cornerstones for understanding yourself? What characterises top-level leaders? And what are the obstacles to self-understanding?

Perspective 2. Optimising Working Relationships

In this chapter, you'll read about why people leave organisations and why good working relationships are priceless. What are the building blocks for good work relationships and what is the mortar that holds them together? The 'Work Relationships Lemniscate' provides you with tools to optimise working relationships.

Perspective 3. Team Development

Executive leadership demands an ability to lead the team as a whole and to create healthy strategies, collaborative cultures, and inspiring partnerships. What is the difference between groups and teams? What are the characteristics of high-performing teams and how can you develop them? What is the art and science of team building?

Perspective 4. Cross-functional Team Collaboration

For your organisation to really make a difference and serve customers in the best way possible, departments and teams need to continually improve the way they work together. Things often go wrong at the touch points between teams. The fourth perspective is about understanding the relationship between teams. What can you, as an executive, do to collaborate across teams and drive innovation?

Perspective 5. Power and Ethics

Knowing how power works, and how it plays a role in daily activities, is essential to good leadership and decision-making. Making it easy to discuss power dynamics helps to create support where it is needed and enables clearer decision-making. How can you act ethically as an executive in this context?

Perspective 6. Intercultural Leadership

In an increasingly globalised and digitalised world, the role of the executive is becoming ever more important in building bridges across differences. Are you aware of your beliefs and the culturally determined patterns of behaviour you unconsciously bring into every dialogue? Can you develop ways of creating a new, third culture where everybody feels included, safe and can develop their talents?

Perspective 7. Managing the Environment

As executives, you must be able to manage the environment to anticipate the needs of customers and stakeholders. How can you set up organisational processes to quickly detect changes in this environment and turn them into meaningful scenarios for the future? How can you learn from customers and drive innovation?

What can an executive coach do for you?

For us, executive (team) coaching is a specific form of organisational and leadership development, where a leader or team is prepared to reflect, and learns new methods and tools to be more effective in the organisation as well as in the wider environment.

Executive coaching is a profession that requires specific knowledge, experience, and skills. For us, the distinction between general coaching and executive coaching is the ability to incorporate the principles behind these seven leadership perspectives, to ask relevant questions which distinguish personal, professional, and systemic issues, and to offer tools for development on the job.

Our purpose with this book

Our goal was to create a book for executives and executive coaches that is easy and enjoyable to read. We focus on practical situations, with short theoretical introductions and discussions of case histories throughout. In all the case studies, names and situations are fictitious.

With this book, we use our knowledge and experience as executive coaches to share our insights on the 7 perspectives of leadership. By doing so, we hope to support executives in their development and encourage executive coaches to develop themselves across the 7 perspectives.

Each chapter stands alone and is part of the overall model that forms the basis of this book. Each chapter contains:

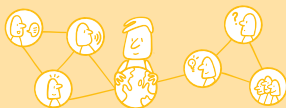
1. The reason: why is this perspective relevant?
2. Theoretical framework: what do we know?
3. A tool or methodology to explore leadership in practice.
4. A case study illustrating the work of executive coaches.
5. Questions for personal reflection.
6. Reading and viewing tips.

The final chapter provides tips for finding a good executive coach and a self-test on the 7 perspectives, so you can create your own development plan.

We hope you enjoy our book.

**Sari van Poelje, Annejet de Blécourt, Marianne Eussen,
Rob de Ruiter, Sonja Wekema**

**Perspective 7.
Managing the
Environment**



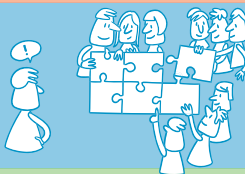
**Perspective 6.
Intercultural
Leadership**



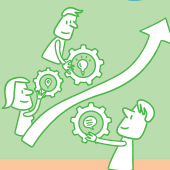
**Perspective 5.
Power and Ethics**



**Perspective 4.
Cross-Functional
Team Collaboration**



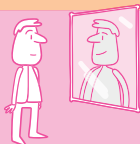
**Perspective 3.
Team Development**



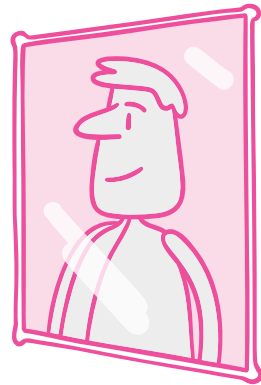
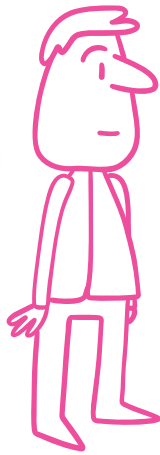
**Perspective 2.
Optimising Working
Relationships**



**Perspective 1.
Executives and
Self-Understanding**



1



Perspective 1 Executives and Self-Understanding

I see, I see, what you don't see

■ Annejet de Blécourt

*I don't actually need a coach.
I've got enough knowledge and experience myself!!*

Research repeatedly shows that everyone, even the best leader, has blind spots. Executives fail to see their mistakes, while those around them can point out what they are. Blind spots hinder leaders' ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. They can be the greatest threat to personal success as well as to the success of the organisation (Shafer, Bryant & Reimer, 2020).

As a director, executive or leader, you have a big impact on people and their lives. But, like them, you will have run-ins with other people and have to face yourself. The ability to see your blind spots, to reflect on yourself and your actions, and deal with feedback, largely determines your success (Shaw, 2014).

This chapter aims to give you support as a leader, because it can get lonely at the top. And that's not just old folk wisdom! In a poll of CEOs, half of the respondents said they experience loneliness in their role (Saporito, 2014). Later studies also confirm that senior managers are more susceptible to loneliness because of their role (Zumaeta, 2018).

This chapter is about executives and self-understanding. What are the threats to your self-understanding? What are the cornerstones of learning? How, by doing what is least logical, can you become the most successful?

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.
(Aristoteles)