How to Stop Deterioration of Agile Coaching Quality: Organizationally, Industrially

by Gene Gendel

GLOBAL SCRUM GATHERING™
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Problem Statement

> **Today, on-average, industry-wide, quality of agile coaching, training and guide-level agile leadership… has gone down.**

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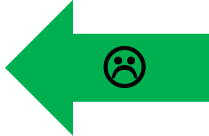
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...there is lots of low quality coaching out there...

Understanding This Problem

➢ **What is the problems' origin?**

➢ **Examples of the problem's manifestation?**

➢ **How can we solve the problem?**

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Upstream Systemic Dysfunctions leading to This Problem

➢ **Lack of clarity and strategic vision by organizational leadership**

➢ **Lack of understanding what Agility really means ("faster", "cheaper")**

➢ **Lack of desire to get Agile education by organizational leadership (seniority-based "exemption")**

➢ **Blind Pursuit of KPIs and Maturity Metrics** ☹

➢ **Peer Pressure and Internal Competition** ☹

Note: the above links will take you to articles and blogs

Upstream Systemic Dysfunctions leading to This Problem
(example)

Attention: This graphic is a cartoon and its purpose is to expose a dysfunction through irony. This is **NOT** an invitation to experiment the presented case ☺.

Avoid This:

GOAL:
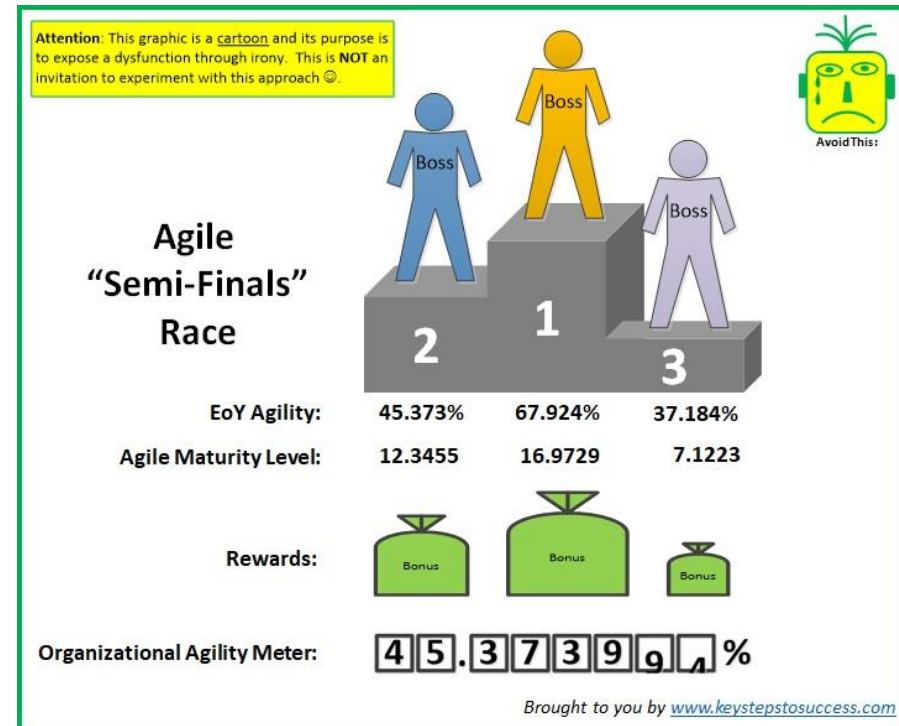## 45.3734999 % Agile
by EoY!!!!

(Пере)выполним годовой план за три квартала !!!

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Old Soviet Era Economic Slogan: "We shall exceed expectations, by completing our original yearly plan in three quarters"

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Avoid This:

Agile "Semi-Finals" Race

	2	1	3
EoY Agility:	45.373%	67.924%	37.184%
Agile Maturity Level:	12.3455	16.9729	7.1223
Rewards:	Bonus	Bonus	Bonus

Organizational Agility Meter: 45.37399 %

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Problem Coming from Outside

Problem: Vicious Cycle of Coaching Quality Deterioration

The "Centaur Problem"

Preferred vendors lists are outdated

Agencies hunt for weak candidates ("centaurs")

Companies create weak coaching role descriptions for new hires

Companies are flooded with resumes of weak candidates ("centaurs")

Organizations are not looking for real changes

Positive (+) Feedback Loop (Reinforcing Cycle)

Internal Recruiting process is weak

Companies are comfortable with having a low coaching bar

Many "centaurs" get lucky and get hired

"Centaurs" settle in and drive low a coaching bar

Note: Today, there is no single point of entry into the cycle; there are many.

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Problem: Bad Job Descriptions

Job Title: *Senior Agile Coach/ScrumMaster/Program-Project-Porfolio Delivery Manager*

Responsibilities: *In charge of leading organization-wide transformation of **500 people** program. Coaching and **managing Scrum** of multiple teams. **Implementing best practices** of Scrum across multiple projects. **Scheduling and running daily stand-ups, sprint reviews and other Scrum ceremonies**. Leading release planning sessions. In charge of planning and executing on deployment strategies for each release. . **Collecting and reporting metrics** to senior leadership and business at project, program and portfolio level. Working closely with PMO to **manage scope and timelines**.*

Key Skills: *Expertize in configurations and use of Jira, Version1, Rally, TFS/VSTS, Scrum, Kanban*

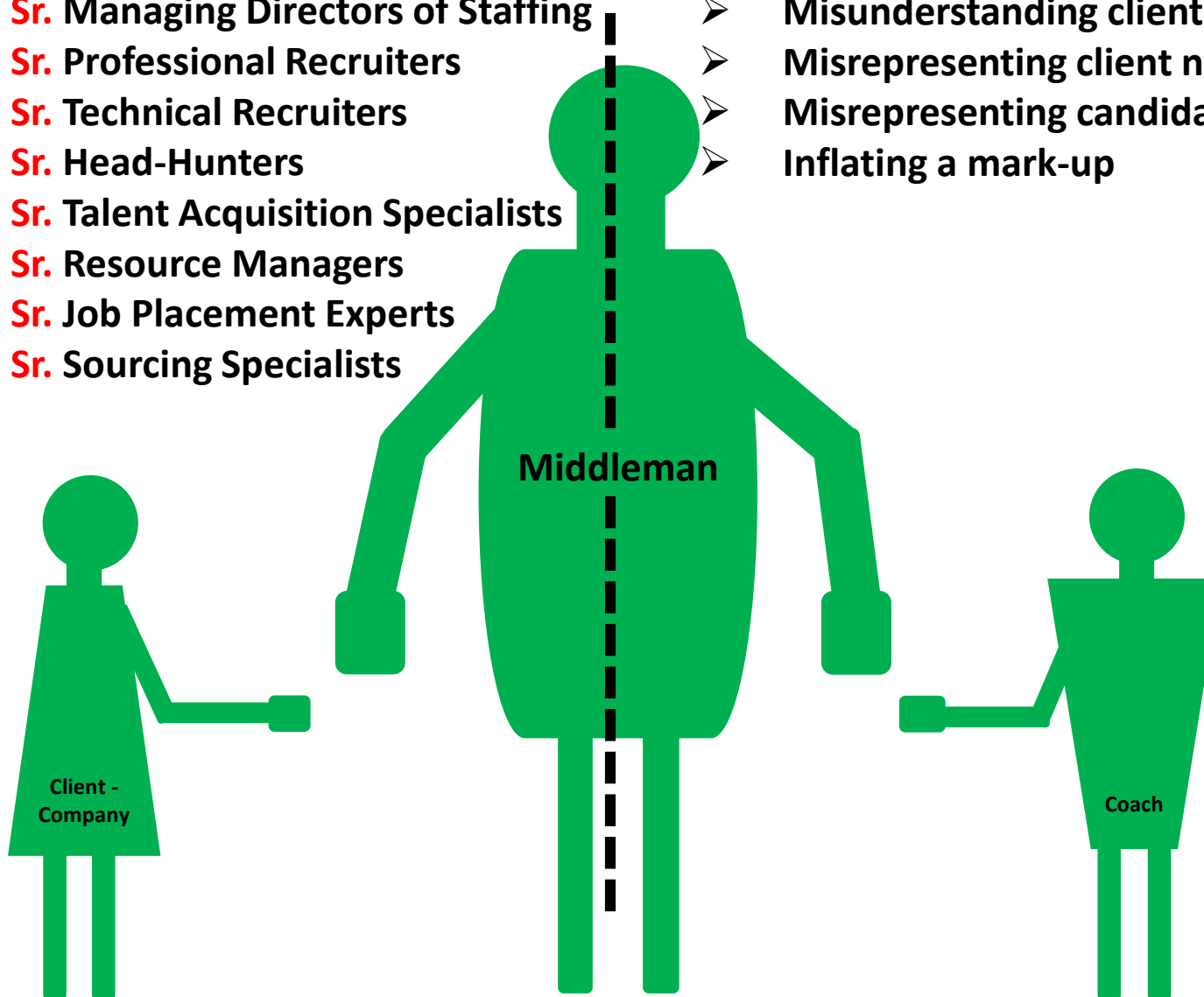**Certifications:** *CSM, CSPO, PMP, PMI-ACP, SAFe, Prince 2, Six Sigma*

Middleman Problem: Low (very) Value Proposition

By:

- ➤ **Sr.** Managing Directors of Staffing
- ➤ **Sr.** Professional Recruiters
- ➤ **Sr.** Technical Recruiters
- ➤ **Sr.** Head-Hunters
- ➤ **Sr.** Talent Acquisition Specialists
- ➤ **Sr.** Resource Managers
- ➤ **Sr.** Job Placement Experts
- ➤ **Sr.** Sourcing Specialists

In the form of:

- ➤ Misunderstanding clients needs
- ➤ Misrepresenting client needs to candidates
- ➤ Misrepresenting candidate abilities to clients
- ➤ Inflating a mark-up

Middleman

Client - Company

Coach

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Middleman Problem : What Does it Look Like From Inside?

From "The Boiler Room"

Problem Coming from Inside

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Problem: Repurposing "Left Over" People

Larman's Laws of Organizational Behavior

(Russian translation here) (Japanese translation here)

After decades of observation and organizational consulting, here are *Larman's Laws of Organizational Behavior*. These are observations rather than laws to follow ;)
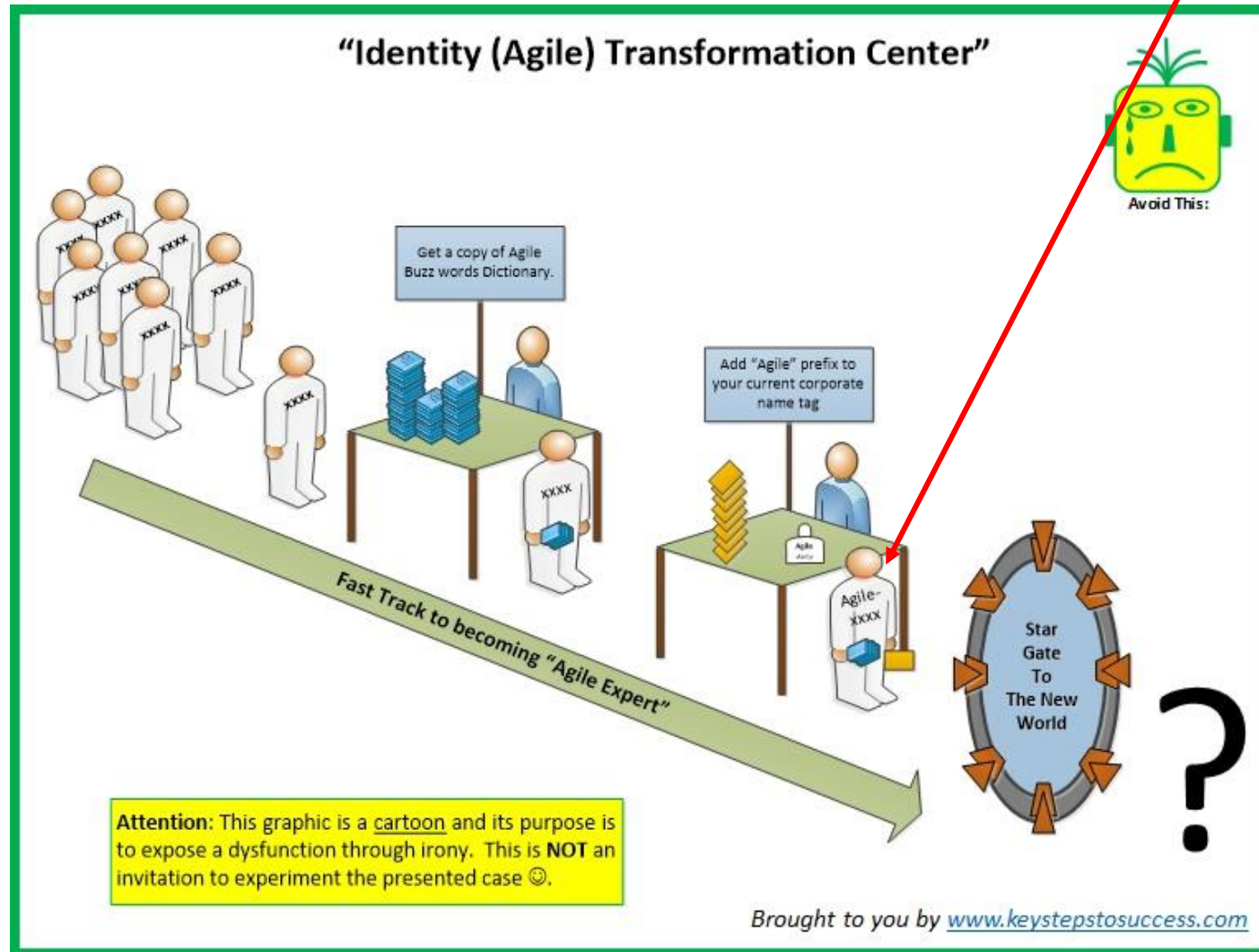
1. Organizations are implicitly optimized to avoid changing the status quo middle- and first-level manager and "specialist" positions & power structures.

2. As a corollary to (1), any change initiative will be reduced to redefining or overloading the new terminology to mean basically the same as status quo.

3. As a corollary to (1), any change initiative will be derided as "purist", "theoretical", "revolutionary", "religion", and "needing pragmatic customization for local concerns" — which deflects from addressing weaknesses and manager/specialist status quo.

4. As a corollary to (1), if after *changing the change* some managers and single-specialists are still displaced, they become "coaches/trainers" for the change, frequently reinforcing (2) and (3).
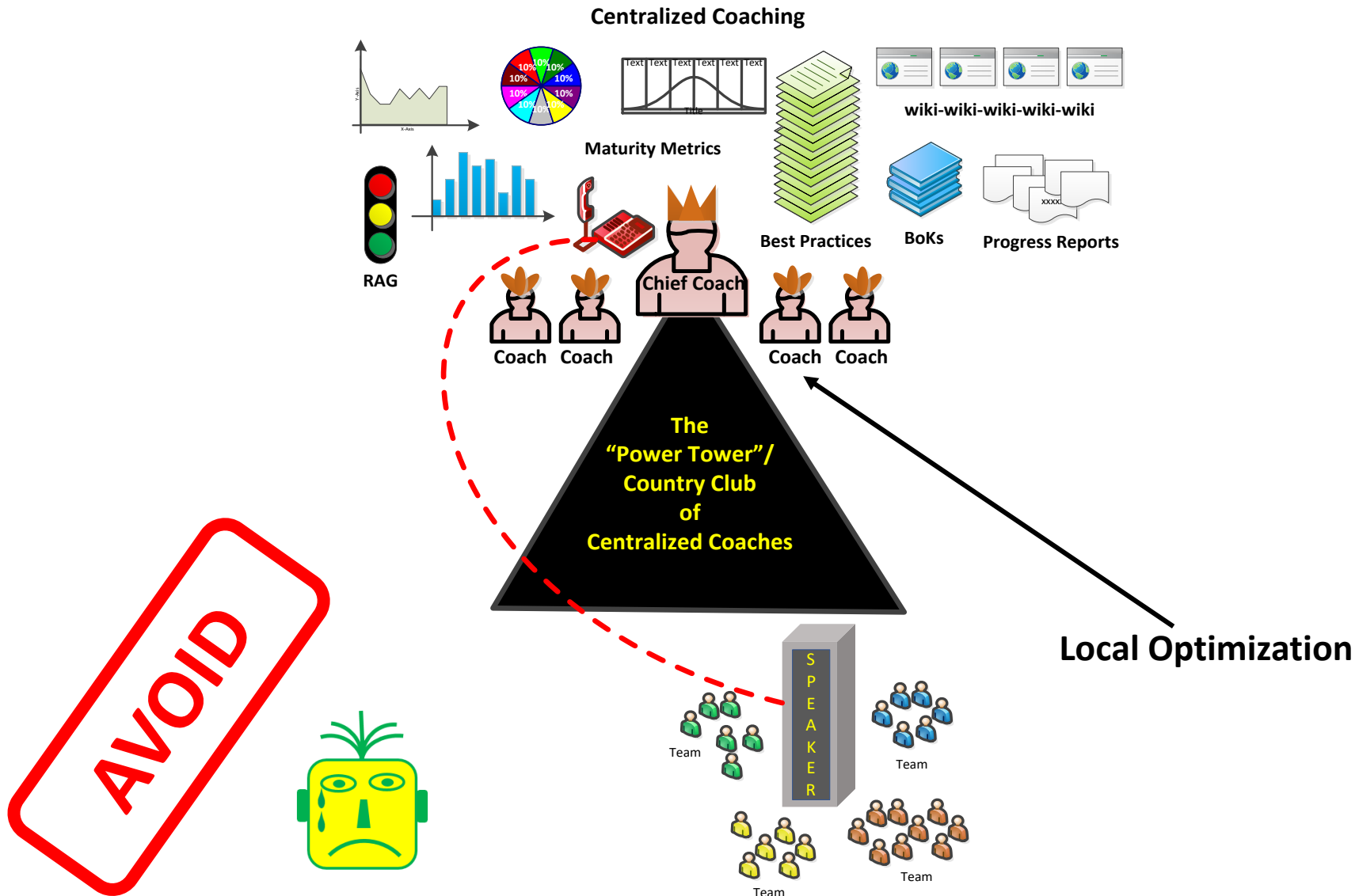
5. Culture follows structure.

"Job Security – OK. Role Security – not OK"
(One of Large Scale Scrum (LeSS) ideas")

Problem: Agile Career "Fast-Tracking"

Newly baked "Senior Agile Coach"…since he/she has lots of years (seniority) with a company ☹☹

"Identity (Agile) Transformation Center"

Avoid This:

Get a copy of Agile Buzz words Dictionary.

Add "Agile" prefix to your current corporate name tag

Fast Track to becoming "Agile Expert"

Agile-xxxx

Star Gate To The New World

?

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Problem: Internal "Power Tower" of Coaches

Centralized Coaching

wiki-wiki-wiki-wiki-wiki

Maturity Metrics

Best Practices

BoKs

Progress Reports

RAG

Chief Coach

Coach **Coach** **Coach** **Coach**

The
"Power Tower"/
Country Club
of
Centralized Coaches

Local Optimization

AVOID

S P E A K E R

Team

Team

Team

Team

Better Working Alternative to "Power Tower"

Decentralized Coaching

Senior Leadership

Coaching & Consulting of individuals that are in charge of organizational design and making executive decisions

Gemba/Go-See, Impediments Removal – to support coaching efforts at team level

Community of coaches, deeply imbedded with teams

Team · Coach · TRY

Key Suggestions: What to Avoid in Coach?

➢ Resumes 'tailored' to jobs
➢ Long resumes with bold keywords
➢ Jacks of all trades: "*Ace Pilot and Submarine Captain*"
➢ "*I have transformed 1000 people*" stories
➢ Great "scaling" success stories
➢ Metrics and tools specialists
➢ Certifications collectors
➢ **"DDT and MDT experts"**
  ➢ DDT = "Deck-Driven Transformations"
  ➢ MDTs = "Metrics-Driven Transformations"
➢ Blind Outsourcing to external vendors
➢ Settling for Wholesale Elephant-Size Body Shops
➢ "We have a request from our *Direct Client*"
➢ "We have an *exclusive* right to fulfill this req."

Key Suggestions: What to Look for in Coach?

➢ Understanding the coaching role (e.g. vs. training, vs. consulting)

➢ Well-articulated, one's own learning journey

➢ Contributing to "open source" agility (communities)

➢ Blogging, publishing, podcasting

➢ Written case studies

➢ Public presenting, conference speaking, paneling

➢ Well-rounded, educated, self-starters

➢ Mentorship: giving and taking

Mark of Quality

One of the best kept secrets in the world…still…But things are changing…

Additional Recommendations

➤ **To Companies - Clients:**
  ➤ Stop using underqualified external recruiters and 'preferred vendors'
  ➤ Do Not use existing but <u>unsuitable</u> Org. Structures (to 'host' coaches)
  ➤ Improve your own internal recruiting / HR practices
  ➤ Leverage payroll/benefits companies that will charge a fraction to 'process' a person, instead of paying a fortune to a sweat shop
  ➤ Stop using Wholesale Elephant-Size Body Shops ➔

@ deep discount $$

THE BITTERNESS OF POOR QUALITY REMAINS LONG AFTER THE SWEETNESS OF LOW PRICE IS FORGOTTEN.

➤ **To Coaches-Opportunity Seekers:**
  ➤ Do whatever it takes, to cut through organizational layers, towards decision makers
  ➤ Don't feel obligated to "meet recruiters' expectations", when meeting a client
  ➤ At interviews: ask hard questions, challenge job descriptions, take ownership of your role definition
  ➤ If hired, share with a client what it took you to be selected in the process

➤ **To Internal (Client-side) Recruiters:**
  ➤ Educate yourself on a subject matter
  ➤ Don't be just conduits/gatekeepers. Become matter experts. Deliver real value.

Q & A

Reference links:

- http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2017/07/you-get-what-you-ask-for-agile-coaches-centaurs/
- http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2017/08/who-are-the-judges-who-decides-on-who-is-gonna-coach/

Appendix

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Looking at Marketplace: Understanding Supply & Demand

Trend: Companies compete for coaches

1

Compensation

Trend: not clear

3

Quality

Coaching Demand

Trend: not clear

4

Equilibrium

Trend: Coaches compete for positions and salary

2

Coaching Supply

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