

# WORKING DEEPLY

Transforming Lives through  
Transformational Coaching

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Transformational Coaching

BY

**ROBERT BARNER**

*Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, USA*

**KEN IDEUS**

*Boston University, Boston, MA, USA*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This thought-provoking and easy to read companion provides useful techniques for anyone wanting to improve their coaching skills. Practical examples frame the principles beautifully and ensure that the essence of transformational coaching is captured succinctly. It will certainly inspire leaders who want to embark on a journey of deeper self-discovery and growth, as well as serve as an excellent reference tool for organizations and HR practitioners alike.

— *Tijen Diraz, Industrial Psychologist and Director,  
Action Learning Partners (Ltd.), Johannesburg, South Africa*

This book is not only disruptive in the most positive sense but also presents an opportunity for coaches and their “coachees” to identify what to learn, unlearn and re-learn on the journey to transformational learning. It provides applicable advice, tools that are descriptive as they are enabling in clean language that is easy to comprehend and is empowering. The concept of “use-of-self” is most poignant — as it supports the construct that “the revolution starts with the self” whether coach or leader. This must become required reading for all executives who wish to evolve not just their leadership style but to also enrich the content of their humanity. It will also serve as a living-document for coaches as they not only solve for corporates but continue their life-long learning as well.

— *Sizakele Maruthulle, CEO & Founder of Moonchild,  
a cross-cultural brand consultancy, Johannesburg, South Africa*

This amazing book deserves careful attention from any coach — and that also means any leader — who want to go deep and help create transformative growth and change. Taking a global, cross-cultural perspective, the authors unpack what it means to be a high-functioning as well as deeply-grounded human being in today’s world. Too much coaching these days is at the surface of what really matters and creates superficial change. The approach

in this book will take you further and deeper, with greater satisfaction for both you and your clients.

— *Charles J. Palus, Senior Fellow,  
Center for Creative Leadership*

In *Working Deeply*, Drs. Barner and Ideus have created an elusive combination of sound theory and productive practice. They clearly know that the world's most successful people reinvent themselves frequently and substantively. Moreover, they have offered a thoughtful, practical path to helping others transform in meaningful, lasting ways. Their book will become a seminal coaching guide that transforms the coach and client, and it will be valued highly by everyone seeking to understand the transformative power of authentic human connections.

— *Matthew Hirst, Senior Director, OD, Talent,  
and Learning, GME (GameStop and affiliated brands)*

If you want to help your client to swim faster you must first help her to dive deeper. Working deeply invites you to explore how you can develop your own coaching skills by managing yourself, and by engaging in transformational learning. Take a deep dive in this book and learn how to swim faster as a coach!

— *Jonas Janebrant, Vice President,  
MiL Institute, Sweden*

The results which I have achieved for my business and myself personally through working with Ken have been truly amazing. The power of planning, preparing and actioning today for what you want to achieve years ahead have help me transform the way that I work and live, and many of the people I have had the pleasure to work with. Understanding yourself, your family and your business, where you are today and where you want to be seems an obvious thing to want to do. Setting out a plan for the next seven years on paper seems a very strange thing to do. Looking back

seven years later, having achieved so much of what I have planned has been a very rewarding exercise for myself and my company.

— *Paul Mathews, CEO UK and Europe Pensions & Savings CEO Standard Life*

*Working Deeply* lives up to its title, taking executive coaching to levels missed in more traditional approaches. In clear, straightforward language the authors make the case for a process that addresses far more than simple business/leadership skills. A must-read for both new and experienced coaches as well as the executive seeking transformative growth.

— *Scott Spreier, CEO, SWS Consulting*

Many books on coaching are focused on the transformation of the client, with little attention paid to the necessary development of the coach. In their book, *Working Deeply*, Robert Barner and Ken Ideus have crafted a bridge for the coach between personal and professional transformations. Though directed at the practice of coaching, it is a profoundly reflective reading experience. The concepts are powerful in their depth and yet accessible to executive coaches of any level.

— *Michelle Dickson, Liberty Management Systems Regional Manager of Coaches and Internal Executive Coach; Liberty Mutual Insurance*

*Working Deeply* provides new coaches with useful concepts from Dr. Barner's previous work, such as "use of self" and "contextualizing the client's situation" while integrating leading practices in the field of Executive Coaching like mindfulness and narrative approaches. Barner and Ideus's book is immensely useful to external coaches and to those of us who manage talent on the inside of our organizations.

— *Joy Schwartz, Sr. Manager, Organizational and Talent Development, RealPage, Inc.*

*Working Deeply* entices the reader to reflect on their coaching practice as a way to work deeply and meaningful with their clients. The book addresses the importance of the coach's self-examination for how their interactions can either direct or transform a client's learning. Robert Barner and Ken Ideus introduce well-researched methodologies for tapping into the client's story and unpacking metaphors. The book gives practical exercises, specific techniques, case examples, and action steps that executive coaches and leadership development specialists can implement immediately. As an executive coach who specializes in conflict coaching, I feel strongly connected and inspired by Barner and Ideus rich experiences and in-depth knowledge that I will use it as a frequent resource book.

— *Patricia M. Porter, LCSW President,  
Conflict Connections<sup>®</sup>, Inc. dba The Texas Conflict Coach<sup>®</sup>*

*This book is dedicated with great love to our daughter, Jocelyn Eileen Kachwaha — a person who never ceases to amaze us with her ability to continue to grow and embrace life.*

— Robert William Barner

*I'd like to dedicate this book to the late Jim Ewing, a friend and mentor, who treated every human encounter as transformational.*

— Ken Ideus



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# PREFACE

## WHY ANOTHER BOOK ON EXECUTIVE COACHING?

Ken and I have been struggling with the idea of writing this book for the past several years. Our initial thought was to question whether it was actually needed. After all, a quick online search will show that the market is already flooded with books on executive coaching, so why yet another book on this subject?

The short answer is much of what has been written about executive coaching deals with such foundational topics as how to manage the initial client engagement meeting, or guidelines to use in determining whether to take on a coaching assignment. While these books certainly fill an important need by introducing professionals to the subject of coaching as a business and discipline, they don't fully meet the needs of those experienced coaches who are continually exploring ways of engaging more deeply in their practice.

To address these needs, we have attempted to focus this particular work on the subject of exactly what happens in the coaching—client interaction that encourages clients to undertake true transformational change as leaders. In reading this book, our guess is that you will stumble across a number of ideas that immediately resonate with yourself as a coaching practitioner. In doing so, our sincere hope is that you will treat these ideas as the first part of a more comprehensive dialogue among professional colleagues, and that some ideas you encounter here may spur you to add your own voice and perspective on these subjects to our common learning community.

## AND NOW, A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR AUTHORS

## About Me: Robert Barner

After completing my first graduate degree in counseling psychology, I spent the next few working in rehabilitation counseling (counseling young substance abusers and prisoners in an innovative therapeutic correctional facility). I also maintained a private practice in the area of adult transition counseling. The next 30 years of my professional life were spent working in the corporate world, as both an internal talent management executive and executive coach. A lot of this work involved performing executive coaching, both with individuals who were getting in the way of their own success, and with identified high-potential leaders who were being groomed for broader leadership roles. My work experience during this time spanned sectors that included media, engineering, hospitality, biotech, logistics, and insurance. Along the way, I obtained a second masters and doctorate degrees in the field of organizational psychology. I also wrote a couple of books (the one that you are reading is my eighth), was fortunate enough to see my writing translated into five non-English languages, and began to test my concepts about human development in the tough crucible of academic writing. (Nothing makes you more humble than watching the academic journal article that you have written being ripped to shreds by your peers in blind reviews.) Thirty plus articles later, that process has helped me establish a more disciplined approach to my writing and thinking.

Five years ago, I decided to make a major career change to take on a new vocation, that of university professor. I had spent the previous five years working as an adjunct instructor, but this is the first time that I had assumed the role of a full-time faculty member. Since that time I have never looked back. I love the high level of job satisfaction that I obtain from my teaching, as well as the opportunity to pass on what I have learned to others. Part of

my teaching job involves conducting graduate courses in executive coaching, so I have had the pleasure of training hundreds of students in our university's Executive Coaching Certificate Program. This experience has shifted me into the role of mentor to new coaches.

During my first coaching class session, I always caution my students that every coach's practice is shaped and informed by an implicit theory of what happens in the coaching process to help leaders make significant and sustainable changes in their performance. This "theory lens" shapes the practitioner's views about how change comes about in coaching, the diagnostic and intervention tools that are appropriate for use in coaching, and what constitutes the boundaries of the coach's role in the change process. Because of this, I convey to my students that it is important that they, as new coaches, articulate the theory positions that inform their practice. It is only by doing this that their clients and their clients' organizations can make informed choices regarding how each coach approaches his or her work.

With that in mind, I view myself as a practitioner who has been strongly shaped by the fields of behavioral science, social constructionism, and systems theory. As I have honed my craft, I have periodically tested my ideas about coaching by writing about them, and then running them through the gauntlet of peer review for academic journals. Through this exercise, and by engaging in in-depth conversations with other executive coaches, over the years I have received a great deal of valuable advice from my fellow academics and professional colleagues. For me, this feedback has been invaluable, given the wide range of research that is continually shaping and refining our field. My own research interests include the role of narratives and metaphor in coaching, and the application of mindfulness to transformational learning in leaders.

Concurrently, along with my teaching I maintain a boutique consulting business in the areas of executive coaching and leadership development. I continue to teach, write, consult, and coach,

while on a personal level I enjoy the great partnership that I have with my wife of 30 years, our three adult children, and our grandkids. I continue to be excited about our field, and try to model for my clients my role as a life-long learner. I still have an avid curiosity about art, history, and culture, and always enjoy the learning encounters that my wife and I experience in our travels across the globe.

### About Me: Ken Ideus

I read once that some life trajectories only make sense when you look at them in reverse. Every strand of your life leads to the present moment, and therefore, must tell a connected story, however chaotic it may have felt at the time. That is certainly true for me. While the themes of social concern and human development have always been a part of my life, they played out in very different arenas. The same goes for my love of voice, music, flying, exploring and simply being alive and living with intention.

I was raised on a farm, where, in the days when I was young, you started doing a man's work at the age of 10. Farming was fun, complex, and often dangerous. Horses were replaced by tractors, hand tools with power tools, and small vehicles with larger faster ones. Equipment was powerful and industrial safety wasn't yet a phrase any of us on the farm had ever heard. What we would now call coaching and mentoring helped you navigate the complexities and the physical realities of the farming world, and often, kept you alive.

Coaching came at me formally through sports. At the age of 7, I had a wonderful baseball coach. Isn't it funny how we remember those who had such a positive influence in our lives? He had a wooden prosthesis leg as the result of artillery fire in WWII. He never complained and coached instead of played. Through his gentle, yet specific coaching and encouragement, and watching my

father play an excellent center field, I came to learn and love the game. And (no accident here) I got very good at it.

Next came American football. Again a great coach who taught well, questioned well, and encouraged well. While very small in physical stature, I grew to love the game and played well above my grade. Later, both my sons took part in challenging physical pursuits. Andres, my oldest took up Kendo and Kyudo (Japanese swordsmanship and archery). The coaching he received was amazing to watch and hear about. In both these forms of art, the whole system is in play, and a coach addresses the whole person through the smallest, most precise exercise.

While focusing on the minutest practice, the coach not only addressed the whole person but the entire context. My second son, Rodrigo, took up sculling. Again, the coaches I met and experienced by accompanying him through his career always amazed me. Again, the coaches that could address the whole person, in context, produced the best results. Rodrigo proudly competed in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

And me specifically, I took my systems and organic view of the world through various stages that included stints in mental health, corrections, substance abuse, government and eventually corporate life. In 1995, when I was thinking of exiting the corporate world and setting up a private consulting practice in London, one of my colleagues suggested I simply continue to do what he said I was known for in the business. That thing was providing a safe place for people to come and discuss issues and problems, finding ways to get through those issues themselves and finding further direction for their future.

Sounded a bit strange, but I put it on my list of “Things I Offer.” It’s still there and has been a foundational element of my work since then. My deepest joys and memories in the coaching arena come from real transformational shifts that people make in their work and lives. Hopefully, those insights and experiences translate into something you can use and apply as you too seek to work in the transformational arena.

That's about it. We hope that you enjoy the literary journey on which you are about to embark and that somewhere in these pages you will encounter a few ideas that can support your coaching practice and, perhaps, encourage you to continue this learning conversation by putting your own ideas in print.

*Authors' Note:* For questions regarding this book, inquiries regarding how to apply this book to a university course or training workshop, or for inquiries concerning related workshops offered by the authors, please contact:

Robert Barner at [ibscribe@me.com](mailto:ibscribe@me.com) or Ken Ideus at [ken@i-deos.co.uk](mailto:ken@i-deos.co.uk)

Robert Barner  
Ken Ideus  
*Authors*

## BEGINNING THE DEEP DIVE

### EXPLORING THE OCEAN OF MEANING

We would like you to form a mental picture of what happens between a coach and her client during a coaching engagement. In this picture, visualize the coach as swimming through an ocean of meaning; one comprised of the client's worldview. Encompassed in this vast body of water are all of the factors that come into play as the client attempts to make sense of himself as both an organizational member and leader. This includes his relationships with others in his organization, the current work challenges he is facing, his history of leadership successes and setbacks, his goals and values, and those decisions and actions he has taken (or is considering taking), that will strongly shape his ability to excel as a leader in his organization.

This metaphor of the client's "ocean of meaning" is one that is derived from the paradigm of constructivism, which views learning as an active process in which we strive to derive meaning from our life experiences by reflecting on those experiences (Barner & Higgins, 2007; Hoskins, 1995). As each of us attempts to integrate these life experiences into a coherent whole, we construct stories or narratives that help us to explain to ourselves, and others, how we interpret the events in our personal lives and the world around us (Ford, 1999). In applying this metaphor to the



discipline of coaching, we contend that our coaching clients achieve their most profound learning when they are encouraged to step back and examine the meaning that they assign to their work and life experiences, and what these experiences reveal to them about the views they hold of their past, present, and envisioned futures as both leaders and human beings.

As coaches, our encounters with new clients typically begin at the “surface” of this ocean of meaning. Here, we are talking about the bare observable facts that we learn about the client’s work history, leadership competencies, behavior, organizational setting, performance against organizational expectations, and formal leadership role. All of this information is both useful and necessary. At the same time, the danger here is that it is easy to become so focused on looking for ways to accelerate our clients’ desired performance improvements, that we miss opportunities to help these leaders engage in a more in-depth self-exploration of their work experiences. Extending our ocean metaphor, another way of saying this is that we can become so fixated on “increasing our swimming speed” that we run the risk of remaining at the ocean’s surface throughout most, or all, of the coaching engagement.

In this book, we would like to propose an alternative way of thinking about the coaching process, which is that *we become more potent as coaches when we shift our efforts from trying to swim faster, to diving more deeply into our client’s worldview*. We would contend that the coaching approach we choose to employ, and the type of coaching–client relationships that we form, lead us to operate within one of three different levels of the coaching process. As we move from the surface of the ocean (Level 1) to the ocean floor (Level 3), several things happen that allow us to form more in-depth, meaningful coaching–client relationships, while supporting more significant, sustainable, and successful changes on the part of our clients. In the remainder of this chapter, let’s briefly consider the characteristics of each level.

## LEVEL 1: GIVING ADVICE

The coach who stays at the surface of the ocean assumes the coaching role of advice giver. If you were watching a coaching–client interaction taking place behind a soundproof glass window, the coach–client interactions that characterize Level 1 coaching would be easy to spot, even without the benefit of sound. You might notice that the coach tended to take the lead in the discussion, while the client appeared to be more quiet and passive. You would also see that the coach did most of the talking while the client did most of the listening. In other words, at this level the client is highly dependent upon the coach for needed information, resources, and advice.

If you were to turn up the sound in a Level 1 coaching session you would notice that the coach’s questions were primarily designed to gather discrete information about the client’s history, presented performance issues, and work setting. Examples would include the number of people in the client’s reporting structure, or how often the client conducts team meetings, or the client’s relationships with his peers and organizational stakeholders. The underlying assumption on which this style of inquiry is based is that when combined, these data points somehow form a composite, comprehensive picture of a client’s work experience. Armed with useful information about the client’s presented problem, organizational context, and coaching goals, the coach would then quickly shift to providing the client with advice regarding the most effective way to deal with whatever presented problems that this leader is encountering at the moment, such as conflicts with managers, subordinates, or peers.

For his part, in a Level 1 coaching interaction the client is tasked with clearly formulating the presented problem, partnering with the coach to gather and organize background information related to that problem, and follow the coach’s direction on targeted skill development. This development may take the form