

UNFILTERED

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

‘Coaching (from a client’s perspective) is neither a magic bullet nor a one-time event. It is a path towards self-discovery and becoming a better version of yourself which you can choose to walk on or not. This book serves as an excellent and rich guide on this path’—**Marc Bitzer**, chairman and CEO, Whirlpool Corporation

‘I remember the psychoanalyst Anthony Storr once saying that “originality implies being bold enough to go beyond accepted norms”. The book written by Ana Lueneburger and Saurabh Mukherjea passes this test. I am happy to say so because, as an early pioneer in the coaching domain, far too many coaching books are passing my desk. Unfortunately, too many of them give me a sense of déjà vu. In comparison, it is nice to encounter a very different book that’s not only truly engaging but gives the reader an in-depth view of the coaching experience. Reading this book will be a great journey, providing a wealth of insights. What’s more, it may influence you more than you think’—**Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries**, Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change, the Raoul de Vitry d’Avaucourt Chaired Professor of Leadership Development, and Emeritus, INSEAD, France and Singapore

‘To me, human resources is the true partnership between people and business—and coaching is a powerful element of our practice. What struck me most about *Unfiltered: The CEO and the Coach* was the examination of executive coaching as a partnership—a partnership that requires both sides to have an open mind and a willingness to grow. Further, Lueneburger and Mukherjea offer alternating narratives, which makes for an interesting read for any professional (HR or otherwise) who has ever wished they could read a colleague’s mind! I’m a firm believer in coaches helping to drive change and inspire leaders to be more effective—and know that seasoned and newer coaches alike will surely benefit from reading this book’—**Paige Ross**, PhD and global head, human resources, Blackstone

‘This work by Ana Lueneburger and Saurabh Mukherjea is a welcome addition to the body of work on leadership for anyone looking to raise their level of effectiveness through executive coaching. By exploring the art and science that make up the alchemy of a successful coaching relationship, this original work demystifies the process and experience of the coaching collaboration from both the coach and client perspective, and the catalytic outcomes that can be expected as a result. I have been the direct beneficiary of remarkable coaching experiences throughout my career (on both sides

of the equation), and finally, there is a guide for those looking to identify and maximize the impact of one of the most intimate and meaningful relationships in their professional life. I wish I had it as a handbook at the start of my career!’—**Matt Goldberg**, president and CEO, Tripadvisor

‘*Unfiltered’s* refreshingly candid narrative by Saurabh Mukherjea, a business CEO, and Ana Lueneburger, his coach, offers a unique window into the somewhat mysterious world of executive coaching. By sharing their real-life process, this book delivers an insider’s perspective on the power of coaching, what it feels like to be coached and the elements that are critical to the success of this partnership. An invaluable guide for any leader who is managing growth and complexity in a rapidly evolving business environment’—**Matt Reintjes**, CEO, YETI

‘A must-read! There are still too many command and control leaders who will profit from this fresh, insightful book. The average manager and coach too will also gain from this insider’s best-practice guide from both sides of the table. And so, in fact, will any reader who wishes to cultivate curiosity and lightness. I used to believe that management GURU stood for “Good at Understanding but Relatively Useless.” But after reading this, I’ve changed my mind’—**Gurcharan Das**, author, *India Unbound, The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma and Kama: The Riddle of Desire*, former CEO, Procter & Gamble India, and former managing director, Procter & Gamble Worldwide (Strategic Planning)

‘The concept of an executive coach for CEOs was not something that was widely known when I actively ran my company as the managing director many years ago. But having read this interesting book by Saurabh and his coach Ana Lueneburger, I feel there could have been occasions when I could have benefited from an outside counsel. The real-life examples make the book all the more compelling. People in corporate leadership positions will find it very useful’—**Narotam Sekhsaria**, author of *The Ambuja Story: How a Group of Ordinary Men Created an Extraordinary Company*, chairman emeritus, Ambuja Cements Limited, and chairman, Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation

‘A leader has to constantly grapple with difficult judgement calls. If you are looking to understand how coaches help leaders navigate personal and professional challenges, this book is a must-read—**Vinati Saraf Mutreja**, CEO and managing director, Vinati Organics

‘Gurus come into our lives in myriad fashions and make them richer and more meaningful. Sometimes they are parents or teachers, sometimes

friends or even competitors. Perhaps they are the experiences we have in our quotidian life that teach us valuable lessons. But to learn, we must first be open; almost make ourselves vulnerable to accepting that we need to change and evolve. Ana and Saurabh have presented a definitive book on the coach and leader equation through a candid reflection of their personal journey. This book is a must-read if you want to appreciate the value of coaching and figure out how to maximize your own learning as a mentee!—**Apurva Purohit**, co-founder, Aazol Ventures, and former CEO, Music Broadcast Ltd (Radio City)

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THE CEO AND THE COACH



ANA
LUENEBURGER
and
SAURABH
MUKHERJEA



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To Curiosity and Kindness; much like Dory and Marlin in Finding Nemo, these two bring out the best in each other.

—Ana

To Jeet and Malini, for helping me understand that a day without having fun is a day wasted.

—Saurabh

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Foreword

This book is the right book for right now. Our multifaceted and complex world is more than challenging. Leading in this environment is extremely demanding. Understanding different opinions, values, cultures and personalities around you, including your own, is vital to being effective and thriving as a leader. Not to mention that the world and people are highly interconnected, making the understanding of trigger- and tipping-points a vital skill and competence in everyone's toolbox.

Knowing and leading yourself is a must to leading others and mastering all those current challenges. Executives in their careers are confronted with several inflection points. This causes unease, a sense of urgency to up your game, a necessity to assess your known approaches and routines, and to look in the mirror and start the important process of self-discovery. Even seasoned leaders who yielded great results in the past have to go into themselves to be able to solve new problems, in the present and in the future.

Leaders often struggle to examine and understand what is holding them back. Many are preoccupied with building a career, being promoted and facing the demands of having to come up with the right answers. This is precisely the moment to ask the right questions. Ana Lueneburger, a masterful, experienced coach, understands how to cultivate deep, trusting relationships with her clients. This, in turn, allows her to pose

those vital and often challenging questions that her clients deserve to pay attention to. In *Unfiltered*, through the example of her client Saurabh Mukherjea, a high-potential leader, the reader gains an insider's perspective into that very work. Ana encourages Saurabh through her questions to effectively gather information, to question assumptions and to gain clarity. It is in Saurabh's answers that he grasps fully what he is grappling with and how he can begin to cope with different challenges. It is where he begins to thrive as a leader and an individual.

Intelligent and analytical people like Saurabh are sometimes hindered by that very intelligence and rigour from being able to recognize their own limitations. Subsequently, despite a commitment to excellence, they struggle with the important process of adequately reviewing and rethinking their thought processes. Strong leadership requires the agility to unlearn unhelpful behaviours and mindsets and to adopt new ones. As illustrated in *Unfiltered*, you need at least an equal but different intelligence (Ana) to trigger Saurabh to choose bravery over the comfort of the familiar. Together, Ana and Saurabh go beyond the visible, beyond the symptoms—they dive below the surface and go from 2D to 3D. In a search for root causes, they look at problems from different angles and how to ultimately overcome them for good.

By gently directing you towards exploring and perceiving yourself with different eyes, coaches make you aware of internal blockages and ineffective habits. Ana's coaching skills found a way around the obvious natural resistance and Saurabh's avoidance of going deeper beyond what was comfortable for him. Valuable insights that Ana so professionally brought up to the surface made Saurabh understand himself and others better. It gave him the opportunity to grow and develop as an individual. It made him better connected to himself, his team and the world around him. Vital for this remarkable

transformation were Saurabh's openness, his willingness to be vulnerable and his readiness for candid self-discovery. Another final great outcome of the partnership between leader and coach was Saurabh's newly learnt capacity of asking better questions on his own. This undoubtedly will make him more equipped to successfully manage challenges in the future.

For all the Anas and Saurabhs out there who see the need of thinking more fundamentally about what they need to be successful, this book is a must-read. Current and future leaders need to come up with better answers. The way to find them is to get inspired by asking better and different questions. You will find them here.

Bram Schot

Professor of Practice, SDA Bocconi School of Management

Non-executive board member, Shell plc and Signify NV

Senior adviser, Carlyle Group

Former CEO of Audi AG and board member of VW Group

Preface

If you are interested in this book, it is likely that you want to learn about the experiences, both uplifting and challenging, of a coach and her client throughout their professional partnership. It is a book that tells both sides of their story, with the chapters alternately providing the coach and client's points of view and their joint views.

Or, possibly, your curiosity was tickled about getting a sneak peek into what customarily remains inaccessible: the highly confidential coach-client conversations. To the best of our knowledge, the coaching relationship, explored in this way from both sides of the figurative 'boardroom desk', has not been written about in a book before. That might surprise you, given the stratospheric rise in the popularity of coaching over the last couple of decades, as well as the enduring difficulties that clients frequently face in choosing the right coach. With so many coaches out there, how can anyone distinguish between them? Does employing a coach really help leaders become more effective in their jobs? And does coaching hold its promise of lasting, positive change?

That there exists no other book capturing the coach-client relationship as presented here is even more remarkable considering how keen coaches are to learn from their peers. It is in the nature of a coach to want to know more about the various mechanisms at work behind their clients' response to

their approach and how they can better facilitate change. Are coaches really left to their own devices after receiving their initial professional training?

The reason no one has written a book on this topic seems to be relatively straightforward: the nature of leadership coaching is highly confidential. The sensitivity of the issues that executives discuss with their coaches makes it hard to open the doors and pull back the curtains to reveal the process of executive coaching. This is not only because it involves private, sensitive information, but also because executives are often public figures who would rather avoid public revelation of their ‘improvement’. These difficulties are compounded by the reluctance of many coaches to share their personal, hard-earned development secrets, let alone their own shortcomings and self-doubts. Considering all this, it is not that surprising that such a book on executive coaching has not yet been published.

As co-authors, we are striking out to change this. We plan to go against the tide by sharing our individual narratives as leader and coach and disclosing our development through our professional partnership. By providing both sides of the ‘story’, we hope to offer a well-rounded account of the coaching partnership. Above all, we are keen to ensure that readers understand that executive coaching is a *partnership*, and that only by studying both versions of the ‘story’ can we truly appreciate the multiple layers of analysis that make for effective coaching.

How to read this book

To make this book useful to our readers, we have had to be open and honest. Laying bare our confidential conversations and inner dialogues required us to be brave. Courage is also a necessary ingredient in any impactful coaching engagement,

both for the coach and the client. Throughout, we have been keen to safeguard the integrity of this book and preserve our individual perceptions. Therefore, we each first wrote down our respective stories and then only shared them with each other.

If you are already familiar with the world of coaching and are keen to immerse yourself in a coaching dialogue, we suggest you start with Chapter 6 and then explore the other parts of our journey that may interest you.

Chapter 1—Spilling the Beans is where Ana Lueneburger candidly shares from her own coaching practice of partnering with the C-suite. It covers when and why one might choose to partner with a coach. It explores several key questions that readers should ask when trying to find the right coach. It also gives readers some critical methods to apply when it comes to choosing between coaches and what such an investment may require, both in terms of time and resource commitments. Finally, the much-debated conundrum of how to measure coaching success, both *in situ* and over time, is discussed. It is essentially an industry insider's 'best practice' guide to maximize coaching impact—and is of interest to anyone in search of becoming the best version of themselves.

Chapter 2—In a Nutshell: The Coach's Perspective details Ana's impression of events in the run-up to, during and after her coaching engagement with Saurabh. As his coach, she transparently shares her lived experience, her insights as well as her critiques on how she felt and acted during her work with Saurabh, how she overcame professional obstacles and what happened throughout the coaching engagement.

Chapter 3—In a Nutshell: The Client's Perspective presents Saurabh's version of the same matters. It details his thoughts

and emotions about starting with a coach, how Ana's coaching impacted his thoughts about work (and life), and to what degree the experience shaped and transformed his professional life and general outlook. Throughout, Saurabh applies his commitment to radical candour, offering the reader unprecedented insights into the client's viewpoint, alongside some very personal details. While there are, of course, common points in the client and coach versions, their differing experiences of the same events led to surprise, new learnings and sometimes, laughter.

Chapter 4—A Leader's Hard-Won Lessons reveals the key learnings Saurabh has gained over the past five years. It explains how he utilizes his coaching sessions with Ana and the readings that she shares with him as a springboard for opening up new mental pathways and new ways of doing things. As it isn't always easy to define what *is* and *is not* important, this chapter explores how readers can ask themselves and their colleagues the right questions, emphasizing the importance of questioning and investigating over answering and solving. Finally, in a broader sense, this chapter explores how, through 'servant leadership', leaders may make their teams more productive and successful.

Chapter 5—Do We Ever Arrive? is about how, in our personal development journey, we have the power and capacity to change. As change does not occur in a vacuum, Saurabh's colleagues, friends and family offer some 'data' and perspectives on the changes in Saurabh resulting from the coaching and over time. We share Saurabh's 2017 and 2021 personal results in a globally used strengths-based assessment. Originating at the University of Pennsylvania in the US, this assessment highlights an individual's signature strengths (known as their 'strengths profile') and how these can fortify the individual's drive for positive, lasting change. Saurabh offers additional

insights into his roots and how his early experiences have shaped him and contributed to what drives and motivates his change agenda today.

Chapter 6—In Session: A Coaching Conversation allows readers to be a ‘fly on the wall’ at one of our coaching sessions. They’ll learn what goes on in a life-coaching session and also what happens in between sessions. Readers will also have unique access to *what is not being said in a coaching session*—that rich inner dialogue of coach and client that indicates why some sessions are powerful and why others may fall flat. For those interested in coaching, this chapter might also be an opportunity to discover some coaching techniques they may wish to integrate into their own practice, whether as a coaching practitioner or leaders using coaching skills.

Chapter 7—Stay Curious, My Friends is centred on reflections on the key questions we sought to answer in this book. Why did our coaching relationship work? Is there a magic sauce? How did the experience impact the environment of the coaching? Which elements of our relationship can be replicated by others? This chapter is a co-authored dialogue on our experience of writing this book, how our relationship has evolved, some of our ‘aha’ moments, and what remains to be explored. This chapter also inspired Saurabh to think ahead aloud, openly sharing where he sees himself going next, both professionally and personally, and how the coaching might continue to be part of his future adventures.

We sincerely hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed writing it. Above all, we hope this book helps you, regardless of whether you are a coach, a client, a training institution for coaching, or simply a seeker of personal development with a growth mindset.

Who might want to read this book

Anyone who enjoys learning about the many facets of human development should find some interesting nuggets here. Audiences, in particular, are leaders looking to choose the right coach; ‘leaders-as-coaches’ who wish to apply coaching skills for their teams; HR leaders who are keen to instil a coaching culture in their organizations; beginner coaches; training institutions as part of their pedagogical curriculum; seasoned coaches with a growth mindset interested in expanding their praxis; and coaching organizations who support the growth of the coaching industry.