

The Practice of Creativity

The Practice of Stealth Coaching: Interview with Author Rob Kramer

Posted by: [Michele Tracy Berger](#) on: [November 3, 2013](#)



Everyone interested in leadership at my university told me that I needed to meet Rob Kramer. Rob is a well-known coach and facilitator. He co-facilitates a semester long academic leadership program that I attended in 2009. I also heard that he was a yoga practitioner and brought mindfulness practice into conversations about leadership. My interest was piqued. Last November I had the good fortune to sit in on a workshop, for academic leaders, that Rob facilitated. That was the first time I heard Rob's term 'stealth coaching'. Stealth coaching is about teaching people a process to have effective informal, everyday conversations that can be utilized in almost any context when a potential 'coachee' has a situation in which more than one solution is possible.

It was a great workshop and I was excited that Rob was making the elements of coaching more accessible. Recently, I got to meet Rob for lunch. By twenty minutes in, it was clear that we have mutual interests including mindfulness practice, yoga and a deep commitment to making the academy a more humane and effective place. With an MFA in theatre and an MA in psychology, he brings a multi-layered and creative approach to coaching and leadership work, as I do.

Rob has a long history in the field of coaching through his company Kramer Leadership, LLC. Since 1998, Kramer Leadership, LLC has provided executive coaching, consulting and business training for a variety of organizations including private corporations, Fortune 500 companies, non-profit and health care environments, government agencies and educational institutions. His company has consulted with organizations in the U.S., Europe, Central and South America, and Africa. Clients include CEOs, executives in public and private sectors, higher education senior leadership and faculty, political appointees in the federal government, entrepreneurs and front line managers.

I'm happy to welcome Rob to 'The Practice of Creativity' to discuss his new book, *Stealth Coaching: Everyday Conversations for Extraordinary Results*.

-Tell us about your new book, *Stealth Coaching*. What sparked your interest in writing this book?

Stealth Coaching was written as an easily accessible tool for leaders to begin incorporating coaching skills into their everyday conversations. Coaching can be tremendously helpful for developing others' potential. Time is a common complaint leaders have, and *Stealth Coaching* provides easily digestible strategies to incorporate into their everyday routines. I was inspired to write the book after teaching coaching skills to executives and managers for 10 years. In looking for books to recommend on the topic, most had good pieces imbedded in lots of theory. So I wrote a book that cut to the chase.

-What called you into the field of coaching?

Having been a manager myself for fifteen years, a receiver of coaching (still work with a coach to this day), and a utilizer of coaching, I found no other tool that creates more sustained change for people than coaching. It is a remarkable process to unleash one's potential, broaden and strengthen problem solving acumen, and develop as humans and as leaders.

-How can someone practice 'stealth coaching' with a peer in a work environment?

With peers it can be an easier place to start, as there tends to be no power or positional differential that may inhibit the field of practice. My suggestion is to approach a trusted colleague, explain the nature of the request, and create a set of clarified expectations about how the coaching relationship will work. Oh, and maybe read my book before you start!

-Let's imagine that you were hosting a magnificent dinner party and got to invite three of the world's top coaches. Who would you choose and why?

Marshall Goldsmith. He is a highly sought after practitioner in the field of executive coaching, as well as a successful author. What many people don't know is that he is a Buddhist, which brings a fascinating lens to this work.

Julio Olalla, Founder of Newfield Network, an international coach training organization. Their mission sums it up for me: "to generate and nurture reflection and learning spaces that facilitate the emergence of a new conception of knowledge and experience of knowledge allowing us a good life in a planet that is socially just, environmentally sustainable and spiritually fulfilling."

Dean Smith, former men's basketball coach at the University of North Carolina. Dean represents, to me, superior excellence in coaching through a different metaphor – sports. His former players love and respect him; his philosophy is tough but supportive, soft spoken yet grounded; and he has exceedingly high integrity and trust. He is a model for true authentic leadership.

-Besides promoting your current book, what's next for you?

I am writing a recurring column for *ADVANCE* healthcare magazine, and formulating the topics for my next book. I am traveling a lot these days for work, but look forward to a tropical getaway with my partner soon.

-What's your best writing tip that you'd like to share?

Write about topics for which you feel passionate. Otherwise you risk faking it or writing with a false voice.



Rob Kramer has worked for more than ten years in academia. As the director of Training & Development at the University of North Carolina (UNC), he provided executive coaching and

organizational development consulting, overseeing management, supervisory and leadership development curriculum for the University's 12,000 faculty and staff. Additionally, he served as the founding director of the Center for Leadership & Organizational Excellence at NC A&T State University. He continues working in faculty leadership development at UNC's Institute for the Arts and Humanities.

In his teaching and consulting, Rob brings a well-rounded, holistic approach to systems and leadership work, having studied with experts such as Meg Wheatley, Barry Oshry, Fred Kaufman, Peter Senge and Juanita Brown. Rob's background is also steeped in his experience working at the Omega Institute, where he learned from the likes of Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ram Dass, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, Babatunde Olatunji, Glenn Black, Bhante Wimala and others. He is a seasoned practitioner in meditation, yoga, cycling, performing art, healthy cooking and work/life balance.

Rob received his B.A. in Psychology from the University of Delaware, his Masters degree from the University of North Carolina, and completed his studies in Organizational Development through UNC-Charlotte. Concentrating on Social Psychology, Rob's primary focus was examining group behavior, dynamics and interaction. He is a certified coach through the International Coach Federation (ICF). Rob is an adjunct faculty member for the Federal Executive Institute, the premiere executive leadership training facility for the Federal government, where he teaches in both the residential and customized programs. He has lectured at Yale University, the University of Virginia, Duke University, NC State University, and the University of Colorado, among other academic institutions. He has served as a board member for "Chief Learning Officer" magazine's Business Intelligence Board, and is a member of the International Coach Federation, the Organization Development Network, and the International Leadership Association.



Michele Tracy Berger

Author, Academic, Creativity Expert I'm an award winning writer.