



## No Silver Bullets for Building Better Bosses

By John Green

**W**hen managers consider which coaching model will provide just the ticket that they need to improve performance, they typically act like folks who roam the self-help aisles of the local bookstore looking for the newest answer to their personal and/or professional challenges, or serial dieters who feverishly search for the magical program that will allow him or her to eat everything and never exercise. In working with a wide range of clients over the years, I have found that all too often they are looking

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– John Green



for the “silver bullet” approach to building coaching fluency. “How can I get my people to do what I need them to do without all this hard, complicated work?” “Isn’t this what I am paying them for?” “Isn’t this coaching stuff really just micro-managing?”

The truth is there is no miraculous way to force, by verbal command or by manager expectations, discretionary performance—that voluntary, above-and-beyond effort that every employer desires. There is no silver bullet. If there was, I would just sell it to you and it would make both of our lives easier! No, there is no quick fix, effortless way to inspire long-term discretionary effort, but there is a proven way to achieve the same goal: Coaching for Rapid Change™. But be warned, the kind of unique, positive and effective coaching model that I am talking about, resulting in rapid, sustainable and measureable change, requires skill and yes, **consistent effort**.

I am frequently reminded of the silver bullet response when beginning the hard work—the “rolling up your sleeves” work—with clients. Many would prefer to just read a book or go to another conference rather than having to “coach” for improved performance. Recently an article in *The New York Times*<sup>i</sup> Sunday Business Section caught my attention: “The Quest to Build a BetterBoss” by Adam Bryant. In this article, Bryant describes Project Oxygen, an effort initiated by Google (yes that

super hip, new economy, thinking outside-the-box icon). The project had nothing to do with developing the newest method for expediting Internet “searches,” nothing to do with enhancing our social network capabilities, no, nothing as “sexy” as that.

Instead, Bryant describes the predominate management approach in Google’s first 13 years which was “Leave people alone,” and “Let the engineers do their stuff.” I know companies that have implemented that laissez-faire approach for much longer than 13 years!

Two interesting points in the article were 1) in the über high-tech world of Google, “having key technical skills” came in dead last on the project’s resulting Good Behavior list, and 2) one of the “pitfalls” to being a better boss is you have to spend more time managing and communicating.

The goal of Project Oxygen was simple. Google wanted to “build better bosses”! The output of the team’s work was “Eight Good Behaviors.” The first behavior is “Be a good coach”! The two specific behaviors listed under this behavior are as follows:

- 1) Provide specific, constructive feedback, balancing the negative and the positive.
- 2) Have regular one-on-ones, presenting solutions to problems tailored to your employees’ specific strengths.



The point in this article that really resonated for me was the initial reaction of the VP for “people operations” when he read the project’s recommendations. “That’s it?” he asked, making himself a new member of the Silver Bullet Syndrome Society.

This example highlights a critical component in building a coaching fluency model in any organization: the need to engage all levels of management in the process. I describe this work as creating opportunities for deliberate practice.

The Coaching for Rapid Change model emphasizes increasing the quantity of coaching touch points and, over time, through deliberate practice, also raising the quality of coaching. Though not a “silver bullet,” this focused coaching approach is a tested and successful way to actually “build better bosses.”

For more information on the Coaching for Rapid Change™ model, contact [info@aubreydaniels.com](mailto:info@aubreydaniels.com).

<sup>1</sup> Sunday March 13, 2011

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## [About the Author]

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John Green is an experienced executive, consultant and coach. John earned his undergraduate degree from New York University and obtained a Master’s degree in Gestalt Organizational Systems and Design from the Gestalt Institute in Cleveland Ohio.

## [About ADI]

Regardless of your industry or expertise, one thing remains constant: People power your business. Since 1978 Aubrey Daniels International (ADI) has been dedicated to accelerating the business and safety performance of companies worldwide by using positive, practical approaches grounded in the science of behavior and engineered to ensure long-term sustainability. ADI provides clients with the tools and methodologies to help move people toward positive, results-driven accomplishments. Our clients accelerate strategy execution while fostering employee engagement and positive accountability at all levels of their organization.

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