

COACHING GUIDE MODULE 2

LESSON 4: ASSEMBLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The exercises in **Lesson 4: ASSEMBLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS** will help you develop the support you need to become as successful as you desire. Support systems are not optional; they're essential. Putting together the right support system is critical for each of us as no one is meant to do any of this alone. Women don't often have enough support in their lives and frequently aren't comfortable asking for the support they really need. Somehow, we feel asking for help means we are inadequate and should be able to do whatever it is, ourselves. When we do finally gather the courage to ask for help, we think we are either bothering someone or "they" will think we are incompetent because we needed help. Those who have strong support systems know that a big key to personal success and happiness is having multiple types of support in our work and in our lives. The best leaders I have had the privilege to work with know that in order to run their organizations most effectively, they need the help of many sounding boards. It is common to receive support from individuals inside the organization who can provide insider intelligence and external support from those who will provide an objective perspective. In this Lesson, you will learn how to strategically develop the right kind of support systems for yourself now and for your future needs.

Years ago, when I left my corporate job, I hung out my own consulting shingle and went into business for myself. As you might imagine, since this was my first foray into self-employment, I had no idea what to do or how to do it. I was however, smart enough to know I could use some help. I reached out to a colleague and asked if he might be interested in starting a group of like-minded consulting folks for the purpose of helping each other grow our businesses. My criteria at the time was to select people who had been in business 3 years or more, made over \$100K, a mix of gender, and local so we could get together in person. We called ourselves a Mastermind and for 5 years the 8 of us met regularly every 4-6 weeks to share resources and act like each other's advisory board of directors. The added bonus was that we adored each other, sometimes partnered on projects, and often referred business. It was extraordinary support for me both when I first started out and then as I became more confident and successful.

A Mastermind is one idea for support and of course there are many others...don't have just one. The idea is to develop the right types to support you best. So, let's get started. Use a notebook or journal to complete the exercises below and keep them together in one place so you can refer to them throughout the lessons and the entire series.

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EXERCISE 1: SURROUND YOURSELF WITH EXTREME SUPPORT

Serious athletes have multiple coaches to support them to be the best they can be and play at their best. They understand to be at the top of their game, they need extreme (great) support. Why wouldn't we do this for ourselves too? Coaching is another type of support system that can encourage and develop us into the best version of ourselves and help us remove roadblocks as they arise. In general, surrounding ourselves with those who support our needs and goals is critical to continue to grow and play our best game. Support might include those who you add to your life. Just as important, the right support can also include clearing out or minimizing relationships that no longer support you. This can be hard. Years ago when I was thinking about going into business for myself, my husband told me he didn't think I should go forward as he thought it too risky. Although it was really difficult at the time, I felt strongly that moving ahead was something I really wanted, so instead of looking for support at home, I sought out guidance and support from colleagues and mentors, therefore minimizing his negative comments that would have eventually stopped me in my tracks. As a strategy, I shared less at home and shared more in my professional network. The goal is to surround yourself with your "A" team – the people who help you soar, who think you rock, who love and admire you for who you are and not those who make you doubt yourself, feel small or less competent.

Ideas for developing extreme support:

- **Network** until you find your people
- **Hire a coach** – A professional who will help you gain self-awareness, clarify goals, achieve your development objectives, unlock your potential, remove your habitual yet unseen roadblocks and act as an objective sounding board.
- **Get a mentor** – Someone who has more experience in your field or industry who can help you gain professional knowledge and develop skills to achieve your personal career goals.
- **Find a sponsor** - Someone who is able to create an opportunity for you that you otherwise would not be able to access on your own. Someone who is in a key position who is able to guide and influence your advancement and does so without you having to be in the room.
- Clean out your **relationship** house
- Start or join a **Mastermind**
- Join a **professional organization**

In your journal, write the answers to the following questions:

- Make a list of your biggest personal and professional supporters.
- Envision the kind of personal and professional support you think you might need to go where you are heading next. What could that look like?
- Who do you know who might be a good coach to move you towards what you want?
- Is there someone who might be a good mentor for you at this time?
- Who do you know who might be a good sponsor?
- Which relationships do you need to shift (more or less) to get more support?
- If you were going to do just *one thing* that would make the greatest positive impact on your being supported more fully, what might you do?

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STOP: It is important to do this exercise before going on to the next exercise.

EXERCISE 2: GATHER IN PURPOSEFUL COMMUNITY

A purposeful community is one you develop yourself or join, with intention and purpose, with other like-minded individuals who are on a similar path. A gathering of people with common interests – a targeted community. This powerful resource will provide you with an infusion of fresh ideas, feedback, and a new perspective for yourself in addition to the extreme support structures you have or will put in place from the exercise above. I love the expression, “community is a place where your gifts are received.” Where are your gifts received fully?

For example, when I started in the Coaching profession, there were no coaching organizations yet as it was very early days. So, I reached out to some colleagues who were doing leadership and executive coaching to start a group to support and share ideas with each other. This led to the beginning of the birth of the International Coach Federation New England Chapter, which turned out to be the largest in the world at the time.

Being in a purposeful community relieves some of the pressure of having to go it alone. Purposeful communities cheer you on, allow the opportunity to provide mentoring to others, provide a reality check as to your path and goals, and witness your successes and challenges. They are a super/uber supportive network. It is important to travel together with like-minded individuals. The benefits are endless.

To get started, you need to find people (not friends) who are committed to the same values or interests as you and for the sole purpose of moving you forward professionally. Your purposeful community may have friends in it but should not be your sole focus.

Example and ideas to develop purposeful community:

- Beth is a runner and runs each morning with a group of neighbors
- Dawn wanted to lose weight joined a health and wellness group
- Susan wanted to change jobs and joined a career group whose focus was on helping members figure out their next career move
- I wanted to find my voice more powerfully, so I joined a community choir

An important factor to consider when exploring the right community is whether they can contribute to you and where you are headed next. That’s it. Plain and simple.

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In your journal, write the answers to the following questions:

- Make a list of any communities you are aware of that you might be interested in checking out or joining.
- Identify and then interview 3-5 people who already have accomplished what you are aiming for and ask them what groups they belong to and would recommend for you. Write their names down.
- What does your intuition tell you about the type of community you need right now?

STOP: It is important to do this exercise before going on to the next exercise.

Immersion is the key to a successful community of practice. Surrounding yourself with your dream and others who support it is the key. A strategy to think about is to start with one community or group to help you launch, another to keep you on track, and another to help you grow and stretch yourself further than you might do by yourself.

Without support, we can easily get discouraged or stop ourselves. Don't go it alone. We each need a personal cheering squad to keep ourselves on track and thriving. When I lift weights with a friend, I do just a little bit more as they inspire me to reach beyond what I think is possible for myself.

More detail about how to learn to develop extreme support and find the right purposeful communities for yourself can be found in my book, *Your Next Bold Move for Women* in Chapters Six and Seven.

JOURNAL AND REFLECTIONS

These exercises are meant to work together synergistically to help you move more effortlessly towards what's next by supporting the heck out of yourself. This will require intention and action to put into play. Journal your answers to the questions below. Journaling is more about writing stream of consciousness versus getting it right or making it sound pretty. Journaling is a process that unearths curiosity and wonder within us. After completing all the exercises above...

What top 3 observations do you have?

What patterns, if any, do you notice?

What specific things resonated most or seem right on target for you? And why?

What resonated least or seems less relevant for you? And why?

What are your biggest ahas or take-aways?

What did you learn about yourself that delighted you most?

What are 1-2 next steps you will take with this information you now have?

FOLLOW UP

Want more help understanding what this all means and how it relates to where you are or where you're going, reach out to me at Wendy Capland, wcapland@visionquestconsulting.com to schedule a one hour 1:1 Coaching Session. Investment-\$500.