

SARAH NIELSEN, PhD, ACC

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & EXECUTIVE COACHING PROFESSIONAL

Doctoral-level industrial and organizational psychologist and ICF-credentialed executive coach with 20+ years designing and delivering assessment-informed leadership development that produces measurable behavior change. Have coached 80-90 leaders from director to executive vice president levels across life sciences, pharma, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, higher education, and professional services. In addition, I have partnered with organizations from Fortune 500 companies to globally recognized research universities. Deep grounding in adult learning theory, instructional design, and behavioral science, paired with hands-on executive coaching, 360 feedback debriefs, and multi-session program design.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Leadership & Executive Development • Executive Coaching (ICF ACC) • 360 Feedback & Leadership Assessment • Instructional Design & Adult Learning • Program Design & Facilitation, Virtual & In-Person • Team Effectiveness • Organizational Development • Executive Stakeholder Partnership • External Partner Management • Learning Measurement & Program Evaluation

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & Senior Leadership Advisor

Emotive Coaching, LLC — Greensboro, NC | 2022 – Present

- Deliver executive coaching to senior leaders at Fortune 500 companies, global pharmaceutical and life sciences organizations, health systems, and research universities, including Broadcom, Penske Automotive Group, AMETEK, Genmab, Chiesi Farmaceutici, PhRMA, Cone Health, Stanford University, and Wake Forest University.
- Design and facilitate multi-session leadership development experiences grounded in behavioral science and adult learning theory for senior leaders and high-potential talent.
- Deliver 360 feedback and assessment debriefs, translating data into development plans that leaders and their sponsors can act on.
- Partner with client stakeholders to assess capability needs, frame complex leadership problems, and design coaching and consulting solutions aligned to organizational priorities.
- Serve as contracted executive coach in partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) and Activate 180, coaching participants inside cohort-based executive education programs.
- Contribute to cohort-based leadership programs within broader Learning & Development initiatives.

Leadership & Organizational Development Consultant

Independent | 2000 – 2022

- Partnered with leadership teams to assess organizational needs and design leadership development and culture-based initiatives aligned to business priorities.
- Designed and facilitated workshops and organizational development interventions to strengthen communication, team effectiveness, and leadership capability.
- Delivered executive coaching and assessment-informed development solutions using numerous, varied sources of data (e.g., Hogan, Facet 5, EQi).
- Created the SmartFit Hiring System, a scalable selection assessment that improved talent selection and cultural alignment for small and mid-sized organizations.

Associate Professor of Psychology (with tenure)

High Point University; Germanna Community College | 2004 – 2023

- Directed the Practicum Series, an experiential development program for Human Relations majors: built and managed a network of 20 to 30 external partner organizations that hosted participant placements, owned those relationships, and ran placement matching, program logistics, and participant advising across cohorts of 15 to 50 per semester.
- Led research teams of two to four members over several years, managing projects end to end: scoping and background research, running team meetings and work planning, navigating IRB approval, writing and revising manuscripts, managing submission for publication, and presenting findings at professional conferences.

- Designed and delivered leadership, organizational behavior, and group dynamics curriculum across undergraduate and graduate programs, aligned to program objectives and institutional standards.
- Managed cohorts of widely varying size through leadership-focused and interpersonal skills-focused programs, adapting design and facilitation approach to group size, composition, and delivery mode.
- Led cross-functional leadership development initiatives and university-wide learning programs, working through faculty committees to align programming with institutional strategy.
- Mentored early-career faculty and students through structured feedback and performance conversations, and applied behavioral science research to evidence-based curriculum design, experiential learning, and continuous program improvement.

COACHING & FACILITATION PRACTICE

Facilitation range: Groups from 4 to 100 participants, delivered both in person and virtually, spanning cohort programs, workshops, and leadership forums. Fluent with virtual delivery platforms and learning technology.

Representative coaching engagements:

- Vice President, Pharmaceutical — executive presence and cross-functional influence.
- Senior Executive, Life Sciences — leadership effectiveness and managing through organizational change.
- Senior Executive, Ivy League University — leading through change and expanding scope.
- Senior Executive, Healthcare System — emotional intelligence and stakeholder communication.
- Plant Manager, Industrial Manufacturing — behavior change and leading high-performance teams.
- Senior Leader, Technology — strategic leadership development and transition into a new role.

Coaching specialties: Executive leadership · Emotional intelligence · Interpersonal awareness · Self-insight and self-development · Transition management in the first 90 days · Women in leadership

Selected clients: AMETEK · Broadcom · Center for Creative Leadership · Chiesi Farmaceutici · Cone Health · Generac Holdings · Genmab · Indium Corporation · Kennametal · Olly (Unilever) · Penske Automotive Group · PhRMA · Stanford University · Stanford University School of Medicine · Wake Forest University

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

- Board President, Triad Coaching Connection — lead a volunteer working board for a professional coaching nonprofit; guide the organization through strategic planning and develop and manage external and community partnerships with local universities, nonprofits, and civic organizations.
- Co-Director, The Rising Tide.
- Membership Chair, Crescent Rotary Club.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

PhD, Industrial & Organizational Psychology — University of Tennessee, Knoxville

MA, Industrial & Organizational Psychology — University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Leadership & Performance Coaching Certificate — Brown University & ACT Leadership

ICF Associate Certified Coach (ACC)

CERTIFICATIONS

Hogan Assessments · Facet5 · CCL Benchmarks · Workplace Big 5 · EQi 2.0 · EQi 360 · Leader Development Network · MBTI · DISC · Persight · Change Style Indicator · Influence Style Indicator · LEGO Serious Play Certified Facilitator

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology · International Coaching Federation · Triad Coaching Connection · Association for Talent Development