



Corporate Learning

Executive Coaching

Part 1 - An overview

"A survey conducted by Manchester Consulting found an average return on investment of 5.7:1 for executive coaching where external coaches were used. Increases in company productivity were reported by 53% of executives, and 48% reported an increase in both quality and organisational strength."

Glenn Martin(1)

What is executive coaching?

Executive Coaching provides managers and executives tailored professional and business development. A coaching relationship facilitates rapid and ongoing development through a personalised plan that is implemented through one-on-one meetings with a qualified business coach.

Typically, executive coaches are external to the client organisation and have extensive business and/or behavioural science experience, or both. Being "non-aligned" they bring an objective view to the coaching relationship.

The process ensures that the time invested by the client is of high value and relevant to the individual and their desired outcomes. The development process is accelerated through specific and targeted feedback and tailored activities. A coaching program typically consists of seven to 12 sessions over four to seven months.

There are many situations when coaching will contribute to improved individual performance and eventually overall organisational performance.

For instance it:

- Targets the specific development needs of individuals
- Reduces off-the-job time and retains productivity levels
- Enhances and adds value to any formal learning program
- Achieves fast results
- Allows a person to reflect and openly discuss their current challenges and agree on a plan of action.
- Can be easily slotted into scheduled times that suit the individual's timetable



Who benefits from executive coaching?

Leaders, executives and managers at any level of the organisation, and professionals who contribute to the organisation's success can benefit from executive coaching.

The only criteria are commitment to improved performance and to work on one-on-one with a coach who shares this same commitment.

What are the expected executive coaching outcomes?

Executive coaching focuses on changing behaviour to improve performance so that better results can be achieved.

Development is focussed on areas such as leadership and people management, communication and interpersonal relationships, personal organisation and time management, strategic issues or organisational improvement.

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There are many situations when coaching will contribute to improved individual and organisational performance such as:

- Developing people in their present role and/or preparing them for future roles.
- Fast tracking good leaders to become more effective leaders.
- Fast tracking the development of a specific set of skills.
- Closing the gap between current job requirements and a person's performance.
- Ensuring performance planning and review sessions are positive developmental experiences.
- Improved productivity, increased confidence, improved time

management, motivation and work habits.

How is executive coaching applied?

The majority of coaching assignments focus on two major areas of client development, namely, skills and/or performance or high performance coaching. These two areas may then lead into strategic and career coaching or even start with this focus and move back into skills and performance coaching.

Skills Coaching

Skills coaching helps people develop the skills required to carry out specified tasks. It encompasses meeting specific development needs, direct application of skills learned in training on the job and the acceleration of learning on the job. The coach assesses the level of the client's application, and the client commits to dedicated practice within the roles they are expected to perform.

Performance and High Performance Coaching

Performance and high performance coaching begin with the evidence of the client's current performance. It is sometimes preceded by the client's subjective assessment of their performance but more often follows an objective assessment such as a 360° survey and/or Myers Briggs Type Indicator, which assist in identifying development needs and issues.

Remedial Coaching

Remedial coaching may involve "fixing" something. In other words a person is of value to the organisation but needs development in a particular area. This is not meant to remove the responsibility from the person's manager, but to support the manager in their role. In many



instances the manager may also be involved in the coaching process.

Strategic Coaching

Strategic coaching helps a person to develop a strategy to deal with a specific issue and/or to develop better long or short-term strategies to manage the environment in which they operate.

Transformational Coaching

This is the most sensitive area of coaching, since the coach and client are dealing with attitudes, beliefs, values and sense of identity. Progress here, however, can lead to exceptional leaps in leadership performance.

There is much interconnection between each of these applications. However a focus on differences serves to provide greater clarity on when and how to use coaching.

Executive coaching will contribute to improved individual and organisational performance.

How is coaching different to other behavioural change methods?

Leading

The leader sets the vision for his/her team and takes it in the direction of that vision. The leader's role is to develop trust so that a team will follow him or her into new territory, to reach new goals and embrace bigger visions of what could be, rather than what is.

Managing

Managers manage "business as usual". They provide the resources for the team, including the skills to do their jobs effectively. Managers monitor the progress of their team ensuring that business goals are met. They move from best practice as experts to coaching their players in how

they need to perform. In any one day managers may play the role of leader and manager as the situation dictates.

Mentoring

A mentor may be internal or external to an organisation. This is a one-on-one relationship and for that reason is frequently confused with coaching. However, a mentor usually focuses on the longer-term growth and development of the individual in their sphere of activity. Mentors will, more often than not, assume the role of "wise advisor" or sounding board.

In this regard they would normally have experience in the person's company or industry. They are not responsible for the performance of the individual but may have an impact on the longer-term future of their protégés. For instance they may help a new employee avoid some of the pitfalls of a new job and fast track their learning. A mentor relationship is less formal and less challenging than a coaching relationship. Typically it is an unpaid service.

Training

Training is usually carried out in a group setting by a person with experience in the subject matter and group instructional skills. Training fills a short-term gap or requirement for specific skills, knowledge or behaviour. It usually requires practise on the part of the trainee, although this is often not part of the training, since once the training is over, on-going support is often missing.

Research into the results of training indicates that unless training is followed up by application of the training skills learned in the classroom, 80 percent of the skills are lost within the first week of the training. Coaching is, therefore, used to close this application gap.



Counselling

Counselling usually deals with the past and may be carried out inside or outside the organisation. More often than not, it is problem-oriented, focusing on personal, psychological or emotional issues. Ideally, a psychologist or an accredited counsellor carries out counselling.

In a business context, it is often associated with disciplinary or corrective action and therefore carries all the "baggage" that this entails. In this regard, and in some organisations, the term counselling is used to describe the final stages before an employee is terminated or in respect of poor performance.

Consulting

Consultants are usually external to the organisation and have experience in specific areas.

Consultants may act in an advisory capacity, bring much needed managerial skills or knowledge, identify gaps that need to be filled, undertake research in or outside the organisation, bring some type of diagnosis or analysis to a situation, provide or augment capabilities and expertise to enhance organisational functioning and/or provide strategic direction.

They may facilitate processes that are carried out by employees or they may be an additional resource to those already employed. When they employ a

consultant, the client expects answers or at least viable solutions to problems.

Some useful references

1. "Coaching: Management's New Magic?" by Glenn Martin, Human Resource Writer, CCH, Human Resources Management Bulletin, February 2002
2. "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", Steven Covey, The Business Library, 1991.
3. "Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart", Mary Beth O'Neill, Jossey-Bass, 2000
4. Kilburg (1996) "Toward a Conceptual Understanding and Definition of Executive Coaching" Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 134-144
5. "The Coaching Revolution", David Logan and John King, Arrow, 1998
6. "The Tao of Coaching", Landsberg, Harper Collins, 1996
7. "Masterful Coaching", Robert Hargrove, Jossey-Bass-Pfeiffer, 1995

