



Corporate Learning

# Executive Coaching

## Part 2 - The applications of executive coaching

*As discussed in Part 1 of this series, Executive Coaching provides managers and executives tailored professional and business development. It focuses on changing behaviour to improve performance so that better results can be achieved. In Part 2, we cover the applications and success of executive coaching for individuals and organisations.*

### **When can executive coaching add value?**

Executive coaching provides significant value in many situations which not only assist the individual, but also the organisation.

#### *CEOs*

By its very nature a CEO's position is one of relative isolation from the kind of sources of advice they might expect to find in a less high-ranking position.

For this reason a mature, discreet and experienced coach is one of the most valuable assets to the CEO's support system and to the organisation.

The coach acts as a sounding board, "silent partner" and mirror for a CEO, yet must be secure enough in their own state to challenge the CEO's thinking and perspectives when, and if, this is needed.

#### *Developing management skills*

Good technicians (e.g. sales & marketing people, IT specialists, engineers, scientists, accountants, etc) don't necessarily make good people managers. Often they are suddenly thrust into the role of manager without having first gained the necessary people skills to carry out this task effectively. Coaching can fill this gap so that in a very short space of time the technician can become an excellent manager and leader of his/her direct reports.

#### *Training follow-up*

People attending training programs, particularly leadership development programs, often have difficulty in transferring what they learn into appropriate behaviour change. The investment in on-the-job training may be lost if the new skills and knowledge are not applied quickly in the work environment. Follow-up coaching after



training closes the gap between off-the-job workshop learning and on-the-job application of these new skills.

#### *Learning to lead*

Busy managers often get caught up in detail, putting off projects that could contribute to higher order business goals. In other words they become lost in management and forget to lead. They need to get more focussed on what needs to be done and then implement a plan to do it.

Coaches can help busy managers take time out to refocus on the important rather than the urgent so that, over time, crisis management with its attendant stresses, no longer presents a major problem in the workplace.

#### *Taking control*

Many people have jobs that control them rather than the other way around. A coach can ease stress by helping a person sift through priorities, prepare action plans and in the process, achieve superior results.

***Executive coaching provides significant value to the organisation as well as the individual.***

#### *Bridging the learning gap*

When a person is appointed to a new role, either new to the company or they are promoted to a more responsible role, there is often a period of learning until the new recruit finds their feet. A coach can shorten this time lag, bringing the new recruit up to speed in a fraction of the time it might ordinarily take.

#### *Personal development*

Talent is an organisation's greatest asset, yet what is often not clearly recognised is that appropriate rewards from an employee's perspective, not only come in the form of remuneration but also in the form of personal development and satisfaction within the job itself. Coaching may be crucial to this process in making the difference between retaining key people or losing them to a competitor.

#### *Flexible training*

Sometimes the demands of a particular job are such that time out for extended periods of training is just not viable. In these circumstances, coaching can become a cost-effective way to provide "just in time learning".

Coaching can also be used to complement programs such as E-learning, planning workshops, special projects, or leadership development programs.

#### *Removing blocks*

Leaders/managers often find themselves at an impasse and are so close to a problem that they suffer from a complete blockage in creative thinking. Coaching can provide an opportunity to analyse and overcome these blocks and to reactivate problem solving and creative thinking processes.

In a similar way, many people are ready to change but doubtful about how to change. The focused support of coaching can help them identify new directions and to manage each of the steps along the

way.

#### *Career direction*

Coaching can also play an important role in facilitating an individual's career development plans. Such activity can be pivotal in preparing a high potential person for higher-level positions.

### **How are companies applying executive coaching?**

Because of its flexibility and "just in time" nature, executive coaching can be applied in many and varied situations. Following are examples of how organisations have used coaching:

- Using executive coaching can reduce the time invested in programs such as leadership development programs. It is possible to reduce workshop time in



such programs with participants having a coaching session before the program starts, a brief session during the program and two or three sessions about following the completion of the program. With the addition of coaching, participants are freed up for profit generating activities and have more sustained long-term skill development.

- Some client organisations use a multi-rater (360 degree) survey so the employee can get an objective assessment on their skills and capabilities. Such assessments highlight both strengths and weaknesses. The coach then works with the client to develop new strategies, new behaviours, new ways of thinking, or identify skill areas that will close these performance gaps.
- Skills training programs followed by three or more coaching sessions, and/or group coaching sessions, make the application of the learning infinitely more cost effective.
- Performance review sessions are rarely popular with either managers or their direct reports. Coaching turns these sessions from potential disasters into positive development experiences. This ensures that review discussions achieve what they originally set out to achieve, namely, an enhancement of performance and motivation.
- Coaching can improve many different situations. For example, one organisation provided coaching for middle managers whose direct reports were attending a leadership development program that extended over several months. The client organisation got maximum value from

the development program by providing coaching for the participants' managers so that the participants got the support of their managers for their on the job projects and help in applying their new learning in their workplaces.

### Some useful references

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

*Executive coaching enhances existing programs, making them more cost effective.*

*Corporate Learning provides Executive Coaching services. We have considerable experience with leaders and managers across a range of industries. Please see our web site at [www.corporatelearning.com.au](http://www.corporatelearning.com.au) or phone us on 02 9416 1576 to discuss this topic.*

