

Change-proof your Company through Executive Coaching

or

Executive Coaching: An Overrated, Overpaid Fad?

Are you complaining about the cost of executive coaching programmes? Do you find the change in behaviours and performance negligent? Do you, for the above and other reasons, describe executive coaching as an overpaid, overrated fad of the moment? If so, perhaps you need to rethink the reasons for your experience!

Some of the benefits, (amongst others) of your executive coaching programme (as opposed to on-the-job or life coaching) should include:

- improved performance, teamwork and co-operation at senior level
- **higher levels of personal well-being and effectiveness due to an increase in optimism and resiliency, and lower levels of stress, detachment and dissatisfaction**
- stronger leadership and role-modelling which result in more loyalty and higher trust levels
- decrease in absenteeism due to improved downward relationships

Organisational resilience is the ability of companies and their employees to adapt to the changing work environment in a manner that ensures their competitive advantage, sustainability and general well-being. This flexibility requires cutting edge people development strategies, as we still get work done through people, despite operating in a high tech work environment. **Coaching offers targeted, focussed, in-depth, and customised solutions, that create a discreet, positive learning environment when time and performance pressures require quick results.**

The open-ended, highly customised nature of executive coaching blurs the boundaries of content and methodology into a fine balance between

practical solutions and 'process work'. This explains the need for coaches with a wide frame of reference and extensive people development, managerial and strategic experience. Senior managers deal with complex tasks, a high organisational profile and operational and strategic accountability which lead to stress and detachment. Counselling in the sense of empathic listening can be helpful, but a purely psychoanalytical approach will not necessarily deliver optimal results in this context. The coach needs to grasp the full spectrum of executive challenges in order to facilitate the best outcomes.

Case studies

The CEO of a smaller wireless network provider was convinced by their external HR services provider to embark upon an executive coaching programme to address low morale and poor performance in senior management. After a couple of individual sessions, and very limited interaction between the coach and the HR service provider, three senior managers were fired. In the whole process, the CEO consistently postponed meetings, arrived late, and in the single three-hour group session, even left early. There was never closure in the process, and the hit and run approach left the company in the same state as before, to the dismay of the coach.

In one of the blue chip mining companies, several senior managers experienced severe levels of stress and disorientation due to a merger, restructuring and a change in top leadership. Each senior manager had the choice to undergo executive coaching, and made use of the opportunity. Without compromising the confidentiality of the process, the HR director engaged in regular feedback sessions with the external coach/consultant, supported by feedback from senior managers and the HR department. Needless to say, the experience for both the coach and coachees was most rewarding, and improvement was evident to all.

Next time you make use of an executive coach, consider the following:

- Is the executive coach compatible with your company culture?
- Is the coach wrongfully viewed as a personal 'shrink'?
- Do other senior managers support the intervention?

- Are key players involved in the planning, structuring and monitoring of the process?
- How competent is the coach?
- What follow-up interventions will form part of the process?

Irrespective of the coaching model or philosophy, the coaching relationship and the identification of the right spectrum of development needs are determining factors in the outcome of the process. Skilled coaches merge various coaching models or approaches to fit the needs of the executive, and rather than conforming to a theoretical model or principle. **Intuition, social skills and subject expertise work in synchronisation to create a productive mutually beneficial, productive relationship.** This makes coaching one of the most effective, exciting and satisfying learning opportunities today

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