



Practice Based Commissioning

The opportunity the industry has been waiting for

Performance Management Case Study

Your guide to handling poor performance



Your Public Image

The value of your own personal PR campaign

PSM

Pharmaceutical Sales Management

Sharing Knowledge, Improving Your Performance



Executive Coaching

Ten success factors for creating a coaching culture

Coaching is subject to much media attention and the use of coaching within organisations has increased significantly throughout Europe. It is hailed to be the most effective instrument for developing managers with 5+ years' business experience, achieving a Return on Investment for the organisation of 600 – 1000%¹.

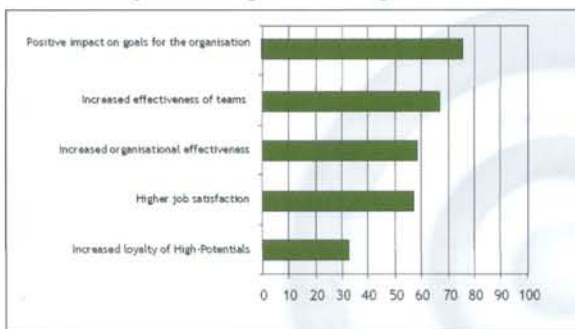
But what exactly is executive coaching? What benefits does it bring to an organisation and the individual? How can an organisation establish a coaching culture? The following article aims to shed light on these questions.

Executive Coaching is the art and science of facilitating the development, learning and performance of an executive by expanding his/her options for behaving.

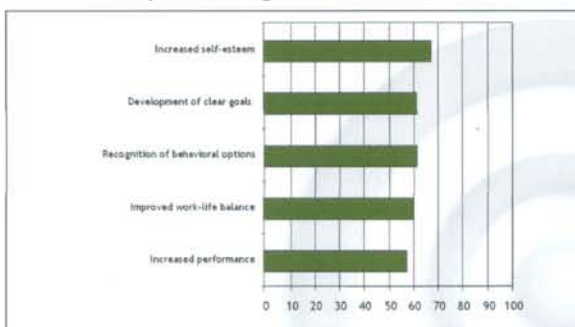
Executive Coaching is so effective because it focuses on the individual and "picks everybody up" exactly from where they are. It is "just in time" rather than "just in case" learning that happens in so many executive education programmes.

Research conducted in the US and Europe provides evidence of the benefits of executive coaching – for the organisation as well as for the individual manager. Organisations reported marked positive impact on their goals as the No. 1 benefit, whereas the No. 1 benefit for managers was increased self-esteem. The following graphs display the averages of the stated benefits from a number of research studies² across different industries. It is interesting to note that the reported benefits appear to be universal, as the same benefits were highlighted in the various studies.²

Top 5 advantages for the organisation



Top 5 advantages for the individual



These benefits can, especially, be utilised where the coach understands the strategic and organisational context of the manager's organisation. To ensure that the benefits of executive coaching can be fully utilised, pharmaceutical organisations can leverage the 10 success factors:

1. Link to the business strategy

For example, if the business strategy requires high growth, the next question must ask what the appropriate culture to enable that high growth is? In assessing their current culture, pharmaceutical organisations may identify that they do not have a "high performance culture" or a "coaching culture". The reasons for this will certainly vary and coaching is by no means the 'be all and end all'; however, it is certainly a critical part of the picture. Without leaders, at all levels within the organisation, who can work with their people to draw out their greatest performance, high growth will not be achievable, let alone sustainable.

2. Identify a sponsor

Any initiative that is linked to the business strategy, with implications for the culture of an organisation, will need a sponsor within the organisation to act as its champion. In the ideal scenario, the sponsor will be a member of the board and/or a highly respected top-executive.

3. Start offering coaching at the top to the Top-Executive team and High-Potentials

All too often coaching is regarded as a method of fixing something that is broken. In our experience, this is particularly so within the German-speaking world. Here coaching may be introduced to improve the performance of under-performing executives or as a precursor to beginning capability proceedings. In this way, the use of coaching has a problem orientation rather than a solution orientation. In the UK and US the view is more balanced. Here organisations have started to realise the benefit of utilising executive coaches for the development of the human potential of their top talents. Starting at the top sends a strong signal to the organisation and helps to address preconceptions. In addition, it has another significant benefit - Top-Executives and High-Potentials become role models. In this way they become essential multipliers of good practice and may eliminate coaching requirements at middle-management level.

4. Define quality criteria and standards for the selection of coaches

It is important to establish a clear set of criteria when appointing your coaches, to ensure that they meet organisational and individual executive expectations. It is important to be very clear about the intended outcomes of coaching; for example, is it a 'nice to have' additional support for executives which could be withdrawn at short notice or is it part of a wider cultural change? The outcomes can, and should, define the nature of the coaches you chose.

There are a variety of criteria and quality standards that organisations have defined as needing to be met by the coaches. The most common ones we have identified are listed below:

- 'Fit'. Does the person fit into the organisation?
- Educational and professional background. Has the coach business skills and experience that will complement his/her coaching?
- Coach training. Where was the coach trained? Has the coach been through a respected training programme? Training programmes are not yet standardised and there is an on-going major discussion about standards for coach training.
- Description of a coaching concept. Does the coach have a coherent and proven coaching concept that he/she utilises in assignments?
- Continuous education. Does the coach invest, on a continuous basis, in his/her own personal development? What exactly does the coach do to keep his knowledge and performance up to date?
- Supervision. Does the coach have supervision?
- Experience as an executive coach. For whom does this coach work? And at what level?
- References. There are organisations that are satisfied with a reference list but many wish to speak directly to the reference organisations before entering into a contract.
- Adherence to ethical standards. Does the coach belong to a well-respected coaching organisation such as the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and adhere to its ethical and professional standards?

5. Create a high quality coach pool

Once coaches have met the criteria, they are entered into a coach pool. We have found that many organisations prefer to operate a pool arrangement so that individual executives have a choice of coaches. In addition, should an initial coaching relationship not work for any reason, there are then other coaches who can be brought in without the need to seek out new individuals. To ensure the efficiency of a coach pool operation, it is useful to define a standard for a coach profile.

6. Active communication with the coach pool

Organisations that are serious about developing a performance/coaching culture always seek active dialogue with their coach pool. Regular meetings are arranged about 2-3 times a year, where representatives from the organisation can discuss recent developments: new strategic directions; the demands and expectations conveyed to executives; current initiatives such as management audits and, most importantly for the organisation, any plans for measuring the ROI (Return on Investment) for Executive Coaching. In this way coaches can share both the latest developments in their community and best practice examples. As a result, a joint learning culture is created and communication enhanced and maintained.

7. Ensure strict confidentiality

It is pivotal for the coaching relationship that the content of coaching sessions is subject to strict confidentiality between coach and coachee. Those who initiate coaching on the HR side can be informed about the process and general progress but the content should not be revealed. If it becomes known that information about content is leaking through the organisation, then trust in the instrument will be broken and it would be an extreme challenge to rebuild it.

8. Develop an integrated communication plan

Once the organisation has decided to offer coaching to the executives, this needs to be communicated actively within the organisation. Here it is a

question of creativity about how coaching and its benefits can be communicated.

At a minimum, it is essential to provide clear communication to those who will most immediately benefit – Top-Executives who have an allocated budget for coaching. Coaching can be promoted in feedback discussions, during annual appraisals and/or as an option that is offered after a management audit/assessment. It is important to be clear about the steps that the executive will need to take in order to enjoy executive coaching, about the budget allocation for coaching - how much does the company cover from centralised budgets - and about what might need to be covered by the business unit or the department.

9. Integrate coaching modules into the leadership programme

Organisations that are committed to creating a coaching culture go one step further and integrate coaching modules into their leadership development programmes. External executive coaches analyse the curriculum for leadership development and work with HR, the training division and other trainers to ensure a well-integrated approach so that the leaders of an organisation are able to adapt a coaching mind set. In addition, some members of the organisation may become fully qualified coaches themselves. However, roles and responsibilities of internal and external coaches need to be clearly defined. In our experience, the top-executive team remains served by external coaches.

10. Develop evaluation strategies

We have come across a lack of clarity about desired outcomes for coaching. This, in turn, leads organisations to be unclear about how to evaluate coaches and the outcome of specific coaching programmes. Some are content with 'happy sheets' – simple feedback about the coaching relationship that provides little more than a statement that the coachee enjoyed the coaching. Others prefer to have a statement of to what extent the goals set at the beginning were met. A very few organisations have started to implement measures of the ROI of coaching.

The introduction of a coaching culture to any organisation will face the same challenges as other culture change programmes. It is not sufficient merely to announce it, provide information and assume that the change will take place. As with any culture change, planning is essential to introduce the new initiative. It is important to examine all the costs and benefits and to anticipate and plan for resistance. This article has outlined some of the key success factors which should form part of the planning process and which can be used as a framework for the implementation of a coaching culture. The rewards for pharmaceutical organisations are highly attractive and few initiatives can demonstrate the evidence of ROI anywhere near to that proven in the field of executive coaching.

Sabine Dembkowski PhD is Founder & Director of the Coaching Centre – the international full-service consultancy for executive coaching and leadership services. She can be contacted through: sabinedembkowski@thecoachingcentre.com

References

- 1 LoreInternational (2003)
- 2 Graphs:
Coaching.com, 2002 und Metrixglobal, 2001 sowie Manchester Inc., 2001, Lore International (2004)
©by The Coaching Centre 2004