



Using Coaching to Effectively Aid the Transfer of Learning

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Does Coaching Work?

Source CIPD Website
Event Report – September 2005

Examples of the reported results seen from the use of coaching in case study organisations

Performance

- Improved performance by the individual and the team
- Less 'human' errors and thus less time spent correcting work and/or mitigating the effects of incorrect actions
- Increase in visible performance noted by line manager or coachee
- A decrease in managerial time required to monitor and check team members' work due to increased confidence in the individuals' performance

Confidence and motivation

- Individuals have become more proactive as their confidence levels increase
- Improved confidence and performance at work
- Early feedback is mainly positive. Those being coached are motivated by the levels of support provided and attitudes towards self-directed progress are enhanced

Behaviour change

- Re-engagement with role and organisation, greater clarity and perspective, increased proactivity and capacity for addressing issues, increased confidence, greater awareness of management/leadership styles, more effective management of challenging people and greater awareness of career options and choices
- Change in some managers' work styles – higher commitment and more focused on actions
- Behavioural changes in targeted individuals – improved performance in specific areas
- There have been behavioural changes such as leadership development, confidence, resilience and greater coaching skills



Culture

- Increased two-way communication
- Improved employee engagement scores
- Achieving IIP status from zero starting point within 12 months
- Surveys indicated organisational values are better embedded
- Results seen so far include benefits for the coachee, such as improved relationships, promotion, greater responsibility and new roles

Leadership

- More confident and effective leadership being demonstrated
- Improved leadership from team-leader level
- Decision speed improved at senior levels
- Management committee and general managers 'singing from the same song sheet'
- Improvements in confidence and motivation among the individuals being coached and a general impression from line managers that the individuals are more engaged and enthusiastic in their day-to-day work

Barriers to effective coaching

(Quotes from case study questionnaires)

Lack of understanding of the value of coaching

- Lack of understanding of what coaching can achieve
- Perception of validity of coaching and cost-effectiveness by senior managers
- Initially, confusion over what coaching was about, for example the role of the executive coach versus the role of the line manager as a coach
- Lack of listening to individuals who attempt to implement coaching activities and see this as possibly time-wasting
- Perception that there are no real benefits

Not seen as a priority for the business

- Lack of coaching being seen as a priority activity to be implemented as part of the overall learning and development strategy
- Organisational buy-in to coaching. It is not seen as a valuable business process (yet!)
- Ensuring it is positioned as part of a wider culture change process rather than an isolated development activity
- A belief that coaching is a 'nice to have'

The organisational culture

- Lack of integrating coaching as part of the overall culture that tends to be 'tell and sign' rather than letting individuals work issues out for themselves
- Organisational culture which tends to be driven by 'red tape'
- Existing leadership culture is the single biggest barrier to implementation, in other words mainly dictatorial non-supportive leaders who 'tell' or manage by threat to improve short-term performance levels, rather than seeing the benefit in using more directive and supportive behaviours that result in longer-term sustainable performance
- The nature of the remuneration and commission culture which rewards individual achievements and does not reward those that might help underperformers or good performers to improve further
- Ensuring that the business is in the right place to embrace such a change in culture

Overcoming resistance

- Overcoming initial resistance. Coaching seen as something only for underperformers
- Receptivity of coachees; good coaching example set from top down; consistent follow-through of relationship and actions
- Senior executives initially reluctant to use internal coaches
- Coaching by line managers tends to get a lower priority than other tasks and therefore tends to be intermittent and not always effective

Low levels of skills and experience in the organisation

- Line managers' coaching skills have been shown to vary greatly. An underlying issue is the recognition of coaching as a core leadership skill
- Educating established managers in using a coaching style. This takes time and education and must be embedded and maintained
- There needs to be expertise and ownership of the process within the organisation and it does require ongoing management, promotion, communication, refreshing the pool of coaches, and so on, and this has resource implications
- Accepting the outcomes can be a real challenge for those managing the team. Coaching gives you a healthy dose of reality, when many do not have the strength of character as managers to manage and address



Time and resources

- Coaching needs to be properly funded. Resource is needed to support the whole process
- High workloads are the main barrier
- 'I don't have time' is a common comment

Factors that help to promote effective coaching

(quotes from case study questionnaires)

Providing support for coaches

- Make sure there are support groups of coaches, formed of employees who have been through the training to support each other
- A buddy system for 'new' coaches with those who attended early on
- Managers must take responsibility for coaching and development
- Encourage participants to identify opportunities for coaching from the start and use the support group to discuss their experiences
- It works best with an effective sponsor for the learner. Individuals who have experienced coaching are keen supporters of it, make excellent sponsors and are keen to do so
- Opportunities must exist to support experiential learning

Internal expertise and training

- Qualified personnel undertaking and supervising coaching
- Learning about coaching ourselves and not 'contracting out' the whole process to another organisation
- Set up universal framework of coaching/mentoring so that we could clarify what we mean and our approach, explain structures and processes and how strands interrelate
- Establish local ownership with local co-ordinators, set up tools and resources for support
- Coaching needs to be designed to address the underlying issues that impact on personal performance
- A clear training process
- Coaching/training must be in line with the individuals' abilities and expectations
- Getting a critical mass of people through the coaching programme



Communication

- Communication of the benefits and allaying the fears of the possible negative aspects of coaching which individuals tend to perceive is a very important starting point before coaching or any other 'soft skills' initiative can be implemented
- Sell it, case studies, stories, results and so on.
- Be prepared for change to take place over time. There are no quick fixes. We would put more effort into communicating about coaching and its benefits if we were starting again
- It takes time to change from direct management styles to a coaching style and this time must be allowed for when seeking results

Evaluation

- There need to be clear business measures, formal accreditation and evaluation of benefits for the organisation
- Quantifying the benefits
- Evaluation, as in any other intervention, needs to have clearly defined outcomes

Senior management buy-in and support

- Senior executives have to be willing to make the necessary investment without 'cast iron' guarantees or immediate payback
- Having a senior management champion was critical to the impetus to introduce coaching in a more structured and systematic way
- Coaching first needs to be recognised as a key tool to achieve business goals and given the necessary priority when it comes to role descriptions, tasks and targets and therefore performance appraisal and development
- Always keep department managers and directors involved. This keeps buy-in high on the agenda
- Needs support from top down – managers must buy into and support coaching
- Buy-in from the top may appear genuine but if their own leadership style does not model what they want and expect from their subordinate line, then the whole change is in jeopardy or at least may be short-lived

Forming part of wider change or strategy

- The introduction of coaching is most effective when introduced as a part of a 'bigger picture' of organisational and cultural change
- Cascading a coaching culture



Preparation

- Before the coaching intervention starts, think through all possible outcomes, not just the positive ones you hope to achieve
- Sessions need to be properly managed and outcomes agreed at the beginning of each session
- Clear objectives must be set for the coaching
- Expectations must be managed

Rewarding and recognising coaching behaviours

- Leadership behaviours that support continuing improvements via coaching need to be measured and rewarded or at least recognised as contributing to successful businesses in order that the link between the two is apparent and understood



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References

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