



COACH coaching

Sports coaches know that it is the whole team that will deliver success or failure, yet business coaches are often only asked to focus on individual performance. By **Vanessa Fudge**.

How can you be sure that your coaching and training spend is geared to maximise the competitive advantage of your business?

There are three factors that are overlooked by many coaching buyers in corporate Australia today:

1. Selecting the most powerful combination of executive, team and organisational coaching
2. Alignment between individual, team and business goals and objectives
3. Establishing return on investment (ROI) metrics to monitor the impact of the coaching on the performance of the organisation as a whole.

1. Selecting the right coaching solution

Drawing on the maturity of sport as a coaching marketplace (whereas the business-coaching market is barely adolescent), how does a successful soccer team deploy coaching? Do they only have their poor performers and star players coached in isolation, or, do they embrace a mix of team and individual coaching content that is more likely to deliver overall success for the team. The latter, of course.

If this is the case in sporting clubs, why is it that in the corporate arena, coaching buyers favour executive or one-on-one coaching and tend to overlook group

coaching and the bigger opportunity of an organisation-wide coaching program?

Imagine the accountability and leverage from coaching that is directly linked to the overall business vision and strategy.

Executive coaching typically focuses on the performance and development of the individual, whereas team and business coaching focuses on the performance of the group or organisation respectively.

Picture the competitive edge for a company whose leaders have developed the resilience and openness to be coached together through any performance hurdles; be they commercial or personal.

In today's climate, where companies are under pressure to grow their markets, business coaching becomes a greater imperative.

Taking a practical example, ask yourself how is learning and experience shared across your business? Say, for instance, HR implements a significant change project. In such an exercise there is typically a great deal of learning that occurs. Yet how many companies share these vital learnings across the organisation to improve the planning and implementation process for the next big finance project? Business coaching is a very real way to fully leverage learning and change across the entire organisation.

2. Designing an aligned coaching program for maximum reach

Business coaching generally starts at the top of the organisation with the CEO, board and executive setting the organisation's vision and creating the strategy. Once unanimously agreed, an aligned program of team and executive coaching can be implemented. The coaching investment can then be aimed at achieving the vision and goals for the organisation.

The most obvious point here is the opportunity to multiply the coaching impact by reaching more people with the same number of coaching hours. The reach can be tenfold without any additional spend when you consider that top executive coaches often charge the same rates as their business-coaching peers.

Not only do you get the benefit of increased individual performance, you get the rich dynamics of an evolving team and its complex interrelationships; outcomes that can reach far into the business and potentially span all departments.

3. Measuring ROI on your coaching program

A recent *Harvard Business Review* survey of top executive coaches' found that less than a quarter of participating companies maintained quantitative data

on business outcomes related to the coaching. Indeed, beyond the anecdotal, the coaching industry has very little ROI research available for even long-term corporate programs.

ROI on a coaching program needs to be discussed and agreed to upfront. This can be a challenging conversation when coaching programs address a combination of tangible outcomes, for example: productivity and efficiency gains or increase in revenues; and intangible outcomes, for example: employee motivation and cultural change.

Even the intangible, however, can be estimated in commercial terms by identifying the value of these outcomes for the business concerned. For instance, staff retention can be assessed via staff-replacement costs and productivity losses; cultural change can be estimated by impact on client retention.

There is an opportunity for coaching buyers to initiate conversations internally. This should be done not only to determine the expected returns on a coaching investment but also to identify the true cost of not embarking on a program that could develop the company as a whole. **mt**

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(1. HBR Research Report, Jan 2009, *The realities of executive coaching*, Diane Coutu & Carol Kauffman).