



EXECUTIVE
DEVELOPMENT

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Enterprise-wide Executive Coaching: Bringing Executive Coaching into Your Organization

Executive Coaching has not only become more prevalent in organizations but has rapidly advanced in its method and impact. Today companies are utilizing Executive Coaching beyond the C-suite, leveraging its benefits to support strategic plans, drive organizational change and advance leadership pipeline capacity. The keys to maximizing Executive Coaching are to properly design the program and effectively implement it into your organization.

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What is Executive Coaching?

In the past few years we have seen the field of Executive Coaching explode into an undeniable force in the business world. A large majority of Fortune 500 companies and a growing number of government agencies use executive coaching in some form. Additionally, the development of advanced methodology and intellectual rigor has improved the quality of coaching delivery and the caliber of available coaches. Organizations are waking up to the tangible benefits of coaching. According to the 2010 HDA executive coaching Survey (2), 97 percent of organizations believe that executive coaching impacts positively on business performance, and 88 percent of organizations surveyed state that executive coaching provides value for the money.

A growing variety of coaches provide services in the world today, including Executive Coaches, life coaches, transition coaches, career coaches and retirement coaches. All of these specialties are of worthy purpose but the focus here is on executive or managerial coaching. Even among executive coaches, there are huge disparities in skill, training and experience and companies should carefully vet any coach they are considering - for coaching engagements. (We will cover that topic in another whitepaper.)

Executives have come to see the value of executive coaching, both for themselves and their organizations. In the face of relentless work demands, coaching provides a much needed opportunity for reflection, evaluation, feedback, and purposeful dialogue. Coaching provides leaders with tools and resources to

become better leaders - to refine strategy, to evaluate themselves and their performance with an expert third party. It allows executives an opportunity to get candid feedback, guidance and the development they need to prepare for the future. Coaching also provides executives with timely and targeted strategies for improving the less-developed facets of their leadership and using their strengths to their advantage. The most important benefit of executive coaching is its real potential to produce lasting and meaningful change. According to the 2010 Sherpa Executive Coaching survey (1), "Executive Coaching means regular meetings between a business leader and a trained facilitator, designed to produce positive changes in business behavior in a limited time frame."

As coaching is a relatively new field, it is still shrouded in confusion and stereotype. So it is important for business leaders to understand what coaching is, and what coaching is not. Coaching as a practice focuses on future-forward. That is to say it is all about gaining a clear picture of the present and shaping the future for the coachee. And although coachees find the process generative and sometimes cathartic, it is critical to remember that coaching is not clinical counseling or psychotherapy. These disciplines can also be very beneficial for people, but are very different from coaching.

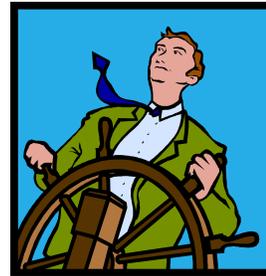
Psychotherapists are trained clinicians who have the skill and qualifications to diagnose and treat mental illness. They can take clients/patients into deep exploration of the past for the purpose of healing emotional wounds or traumas.

Executive coaching also is not athletic coaching. Athletic coaching has a different purpose and methodology than executive coaching. Although sport coaches try to get the best performance out of their players, they do so by leading from the front and running the show. Executive coaching is all about leading from behind and ensuring that the coachee is ultimately driving the process and doing the work.

Finally, executive coaching is not consulting. Consultants have expertise in specific areas and are paid to assess situations and provide solutions. Consultants tend to drive initiatives in organizations and provide direct expertise to businesses. At Denisoff Consulting Group, we are both consultants and coaches. We work very hard to be supremely clear with our clients when we are performing each distinct role. Often we are consulting on very specific projects and change efforts while concurrently coaching leaders to better support the initiative. Most Executive Coaches utilize an approach that blends in consulting when appropriate, but keeps the focus primarily upon coaching the executive to his or her own solutions.

Currently, coaching is unregulated in most parts of the United States. Many people identify themselves as coaches; but without some qualifying mechanism, the public has no clear way to know what service they might actually receive from a “coach.” The International Coach Federation (ICF) is the world’s leading governing board that sets and oversees professional and ethical standards, provides independent certification, and joins together a global network of credentialed coaches—

www.coachfederation.org. We believe it is very important to hire qualified and experienced coaches. Denisoff Consulting Group carefully vets its talented pool of certified coaches. All of our coaches are certified through the ICF with the designation of PCC (Professional Certified Coach) or MCC (Master Certified Coach)



Reasons to Use Executive Coaches – Individual

Coaching is rapidly becoming one of the key approaches to developing leaders in organizations. In the dawn of coaching, most engagements centered on getting low performers ‘to bar’, so to speak, or up to a baseline of performance. Often it was a last ditch effort to help get a manager up to speed. Because this tended to work really well, it was soon determined that coaching would be a great tool to help managers go from *good to great*. Soon companies were providing coaching to high potential managers and other high performers to fast-track their learning and progress as leaders. Due to the positive and tangible results, coaching continues to be a very important aspect of leadership development. In many companies today, coaching is seen as a very important investment in the leadership pipeline, and the coached individuals perceive coaching as an important aspect of their development and a perk from the

organization. Coaching improves performance today and bolsters development for tomorrow.

Other organizational applications of coaching have expanded to facilitate the on-boarding process of new leaders to organizations. With coaching, a new leader will more efficiently implement his or her the first months of a new role. This decreases ramp-up time and missteps that often occur when taking over leadership duties. Coaching is similarly applied for internal leaders being promoted to higher levels of leadership within the organization. Leaders really can benefit from coaching during these “leadership turns” to better make the transition and get a head start on developing the necessary skills they will need in any new role. Additionally, coaches are brought in to help specific individuals who are struggling to develop a plan for their career development.



Executive Coaching Programs in Organizations

Today organizations are taking a holistic and integrated approach when bringing coaching into their organizations. There are three general areas by which a coaching program can be implemented:

- Supporting strategic initiatives
- Leading deep cultural change efforts

- Augmenting the leadership development approach

When companies implement an enterprise-wide initiative or a new strategic plan, it more often than not requires leaders in the company to bring new skills to the table and show up in new and effective ways. Rarely do we implement a major consulting engagement without a portion of the intervention dedicated to coaching select leaders. Coaching becomes one of the pillars in the change management efforts facilitating a smooth and effective transition.

Additionally, companies with deep-seated cultural challenges are coming to understand that improving leadership and leadership by example is the most effective way to bring about cultural change. A comprehensive and intense coaching initiative that concurrently coaches a large number of leaders creates a deep and sustainable change force that actually can transform culture. It is truly change from the inside out, as opposed to an external cultural change program laid on top of the organization that often turns out to be more show than substance.

Many organizations that are intent upon culture change will issue directives and expect everyone to simply fall into line. The problems show up when the culture change requires skills and mindsets that the company’s leaders do not currently possess. Without individual support for skill development and a shift in patterns of thinking, many valuable leaders are not able to “get with the program” and will ultimately be forced out of their roles.

Companies are also integrating coaching into their Leadership Development programs to strengthen efforts to develop their leadership pipeline. According to a Princeton University study, the most effective mode of development for managers is real-life on-the-job learning and problem solving experiences. Together, these account for up to 70% of the actual learning on the part of executives. Feedback from observing and working with mentors make for 20% of learning, with the remaining 10% coming from classroom training. The coaching process fortifies and leverages on-the-job learning and the feedback process. Coaching is turning out to be a real and highly effective complement to classroom training. This has significant impact in both current performance and in improving the succession planning process.

The Players and Parts

When implementing a coaching initiative within an organization, the roles of key players and components of the process must be properly clarified to maximize the benefits of the coaching process.

- **The Coachee:** The person receiving the coaching is called the coachee, or the coaching “client.” Ultimately coaching has to be a voluntarily accepted process. The role of the coachee is to fully engage in the process and use coaching to achieve mutually desired results.
- **The Coachee’s Boss:** The Supervisor of the coachee must be clear on what the coaching process is and how it works. Too

often managers of the coachee lack knowledge of the process and either have skewed expectations or do not support the process as much as they could.

- **Human Resources (HR):** For the most part, HR is the conduit for managing the logistics of the process. HR can, if the team is extremely mature and talented, be another resource for the coachee to receive support and advocacy.
- **Coaching Session:** The coaching session is the one-on-one meeting between coach and coachee where the coaching discussions occur.



- **Shared Meetings:** Often it can be helpful for the coach, the coachee and the manager to get together to discuss feedback, working agreements and progress. But this should be built into the coaching agreement and driven by the coachee, not mandated by HR.
- **Supporting Documentation:** The coaching process should never be form-driven but focus on the results and clear deliverables. That said, tools such as the Action Plan or update report can be standardized for the organization for consistency purposes. However these forms

must remain subordinate to the coaching process itself.

How Should You Introduce Coaching into an Organization?

Some organizations have had very little exposure to executive coaching. Because of this, it is important to appropriately introduce coaching into the organization. For a variety of reasons, coaching has some very interesting perceptions associated with it. It also has been our experience that some companies have brought coaching into organizations in an almost secretive way. This occurs because the companies either were using coaching to help managers with performance issues or wanted to help a chosen few and did not want other managers to feel left out. This has resulted in the perception within some organizations that coaching is a negative thing done to those managers who are “in trouble.”

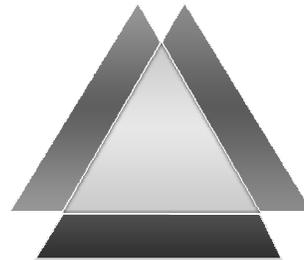
Expectation of Coaching - Organization

Although coaching has to have a clear purpose in the organization and must be action-oriented, the process itself is about the development of human beings. It is vital for everyone involved to be clear that coaching is not about fixing someone. Organizations must not have that expectation. Coaching is an approach that lends itself to change over time and it not about churning out results mechanically. By its very nature, the coaching process is organic and takes time.

It also may be tempting for the boss of the coachee to abdicate some managing responsibilities to the coach. This is an

unacceptable practice. The boss must continue to perform his or her role as manager and not expect the coach to take on managerial obligations.

For coaching to sustain long-term results, each organization must have, at the very least, a basic approach to quantify –the return on investment (ROI) for the coaching initiative, just as any other initiative. Measures around efficiency, engagement and retention all can be used to prove out the return of coaching. The ROI discipline will not only justify the engagement, but will press the sponsors of the coaching program to fully think through how coaching will be implemented.



The Coaching Triad

Organizations are investing a good deal of money into anyone they select to be coached. But just like in any other development initiative, the coachee owns the process and its consequent success. This can be confusing unless there is clarity up front because the coach has responsibilities to both the sponsor (organization/manager) and the coachee. These relationships can become problematic if not well-defined.

In general, the coach is obligated to meet the terms of the contract with the client. That would include things like number of hours coached, non-confidential status reports, and specified deliverables. The

coach has responsibility to the coachee to determine the agreement of the coaching process and individual objectives. The coach-coachee relationship is sacred because the trust has to be extremely high for the coaching relationship to be effective. Although the coach can give general updates to the sponsor, the discussions that go on between coach and coachee are highly confidential. If the confidentiality is breached, the trust goes out the window and the relationship is fundamentally over.



The sponsor must remember that the coaching engagement has everything to do with development and improving performance per the coachee's prerogatives. If the coaching process is ever used for performance ratings, compensation or discipline, the efficacy of coaching will become nullified. What goes on between coach and coachee must remain private.

But how can the organization know if anything good is happening? Doesn't there have to be some kind of control or accountability? The answer is yes, but the accountability has to be driven by the coachee. Whether it is sharing feedback from a 360 report or a personal action plan, the coachee must be the one who makes it happen. For example, coachees should share their action plan with their boss, as their boss is the one in charge of their performance and development.

The action plan can also voluntarily be integrated as appropriate into yearly goals and the yearly development plan. In this way, the manager and the organization can use existing internal processes to maximize the coaching engagement.

Expectations of Coachee

The coachee should expect to contract a working agreement on what the focus will be for the coaching sessions. This includes the process, company deliverables, objectives selected by the coachee and the period of time for the engagement. Good coaches will tend to do process checks periodically to ensure that the relationship and the engagement are working for the coachee. A well run coaching cadre will also have a Quality Control (QC) process in place in the event that any individual coaching engagement is just not working well.

Good coaching is action-oriented and moves toward a chosen goal. It is not a venting session or a comforting exercise (although that might happen in the context of a session if appropriate). Coaching facilitates a person to get to a chosen destination, with a strong focus placed upon the ongoing development of skills and capacities. Between sessions, many coaches are available for brief conversations and spot coaching to ensure progress.

360's and Psychometric Tools

A coaching engagement will often use a variety of tools to enhance the coaching process. One of the most effective and highly used tools is the 360-Feedback Assessment, an anonymous survey (in the form of a written questionnaire or

interviews) which gathers specific feedback on leadership competencies from constituents who work with the coachee. This would include boss, peers, direct-reports, vendors and/or customers. Coaching professionals have access to a variety of off-the-shelf surveys, or a customized survey can readily be developed.



Coaches will also often use psychometric tools such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the DiSC Survey, the Fundamental Interpersonal Behaviors Orientation tool (FIRO-B) or other assessments to help facilitate the individual or team coaching process. Many organizations have their preferred tool while some organizations are minimally exposed to these. The key to psychometric tools is to respect their role as a starting point for a meaningful exploration. A good assessment tool will underline for coachees specific areas of focus for the coaching, and will also provide motivation for changing behaviors and attitudes that could have a counterproductive impact on co-workers and direct-reports. Skilled coaches will see the results of such assessment tools as indicators or strengths, rather than as limitations and liabilities.

7 Must-Do's of Enterprise-Wide Executive Coaching

1. Identify Purpose of Coaching Initiative
2. Clarify Roles and Process
3. Vet and Hire capable and certified coaches
4. Thoughtfully Introduce Coaching into Organization
5. Clarify Expectations with Coachees and Coaches' Managers
6. Quality Control Coaching Sessions and Alignment to Organizational Objectives
7. Evaluate Effectiveness at program's conclusion

Executive Coaching in Organizations

Executive Coaching helps organizations improve performance in the present and in the future. When an organization decides to bring coaching to their leadership team, it is critical that they do so in a very intelligent and thoughtful way. The keys are to fully understand the impact of coaching, design a plan to implement a coaching process and connect coaching to the other business and developmental initiatives in place. By doing so, the organization will realize the payoff and many benefits that Executive Coaching can offer.

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- (1) *The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey 2010 (North America)*
 - (2) *HDA Executive Coaching Survey 2010 (United Kingdom)*
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More Information: If you have any questions about bringing coaching into your organization please contact The Denisoff Consulting Group Coaching Cadre at: info@denisoffconsulting.com.