

Performance Coaching



The use of executive coaching has been an increasingly popular trend in organisations. There are numerous professional organisations and training institutes devoted specifically to this particular intervention—each with different theoretical models, approaches, processes and ethical/professional guidelines. But is there evidence that coaching makes a difference? Dr. Kenneth Nowack, associate at ConsultingTools and expert on the topic, shares his knowledge.

A study by Manchester Inc. examined the impact of coaching in 56 companies with 100 executives. Their findings suggest that 74% of the sponsors and 86% of the participants were very satisfied with the process. It was estimated that coaching resulted in an average return of 5.7 times the initial investment. Furthermore, coaching contributed to a perception of increased productivity for 53 percent of respondents and improved quality of work for 48 percent of the respondents. Of those receiving coaching, 61% reported a significant increase in their overall level of work and job satisfaction.

In our experience, coaching does in fact make a difference. We have evidence that coaching results in significant changes in behavior and skills when comparing changes in pre and post-coaching administration of multi-rater feedback instruments. Especially noticeable were improvements in skills in the areas of communication, interpersonal sensitivity and listening.

Coaching can be targeted to each of four different presenting issues depending on two important factors: 1) Job performance and 2) Interpersonal competence.

Understanding the Four Performance Coaching Models

PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT (High Performance/Low Interpersonal Competence)

Clients demonstrating generally high job performance (i.e., they meet or exceed objective standards of performance) but characterised as less likable or interpersonally competent can best be helped by using a *Performance Development* model of coaching. These clients are at risk for potential “derailment” at some point in their career and might be described as “competent” but “difficult” to deal with. As a result, others may find collaborating and interacting with these individuals quite challenging and actually attempt to avoid them when possible.

In this model, the focus of improvement is developing social, interpersonal and communication skills that might potentially derail the client. Such clients are expected to be somewhat defensive and challenging as they sometimes lack the “self-awareness” or self-insight characterised by relatively low emotional intelligence.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT (Low Performance/Low Interpersonal Competence)

Clients demonstrating generally low job performance and also being characterised as less likable or interpersonally difficult can best be helped by using a *Performance Improvement* model of coaching. These clients are often offered coaching as a last resort before outplacement by many organisations. The use of outside coaching services should at least be questioned as these low performers typically show little return on investment for such interventions.

In this particular coaching model, the focus is on immediate and significant performance improvement of the employee. Coaches who work with such employees typically have concrete and specific developmental action plans that support the efforts of management to “turn these employees around” and enhance current performance.

PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT (High Performance/High Interpersonal Competence)

Clients demonstrating a high level of performance and demonstrating interpersonal competence can be further developed by using a *Performance Enhancement* model of coaching. These “high potential” clients are the “lovable stars” that organisations want to retain over time.

In this model, the focus is building on the strengths of these clients and enhancing their “star” potential. Such clients will tend to keep coaches challenged because they are motivated and interested in learning as much as possible to leverage what they do well and become even better.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (Low Performance/High Interpersonal Competence)

Clients demonstrating one or more deficiencies in specific competency areas (e.g., planning, oral presentation, writing, delegation, time management), but seen as basically collaborative and likable can best be developed further by using a *Performance Management* model of coaching. These clients are highly responsive to coaching specifically geared to facilitate key competencies and skill areas that might be preventing high performance.

In this model, the focus of improvement is developing specific techniques, skills and abilities. Such clients typically have high emotional intelligence and respond to specific instruction and more pragmatic techniques and tools.

Evaluating Performance Coaching Interventions

It is important to consider metrics and approaches to evaluating coaching at the beginning of the intervention. Each of the four performance coaching models should be evaluated based upon the intervention’s specific goals agreed. Some of the following should be considered as part of your performance coaching evaluation scorecard.

Analyse:

- Change scores in pre & post 360 degree feedback assessment (10 - 18 months following the first administration)
- The progress made on the client’s professional development plan to come out of the coaching intervention
- Post-then change scores from the client on self-perceived changes in knowledge, skills and behavior
- Post-coaching progress viewed by key stakeholders within the client system (e.g., the client’s manager, human resources).

Conclusion

Coaching assignments typically focus on enhancing performance of clients - either helping employees target specific competencies required to succeed or to enhance awareness and interpersonal effectiveness. Alignment of specific methods, tools and processes to each of these four performance coaching models will maximise overall success of the coaching intervention leading to increased success and effectiveness of the client.

To find out more about ConsultingTools’ portfolio of 360-degree feedback tools and how they can benefit your organisation, [click here](#).