

DOES INTERNAL COACHING WORK?

A study into the impact Workplace Coaching has had on a medium-sized Australasian consulting company.

WORKPLACE COACHING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Date that training commenced: November 2002

Specific issues the initiative was designed to address: Assist the company's employees to perform at their best by setting and achieving challenging goals for themselves. Key retention tool for high performers.

Number of coaches trained: 20 participants in November 2002 followed by a further 10 in February 2004.

Process for matching the coaches and coachees internally: The coaching program runs twice per year following the performance review process, and is used as a development option for goal setting in performance reviews. Coaches work with non-direct reports.

THE STUDY

In August 2005, a research study was undertaken by RCS to assess the impact of the workplace coaching program on key business issues for the client. The central question for the research was 'Does internal coaching work?'

The hypothesis was, training senior managers as coaches would be an effective development tool for themselves and by rolling out an internal coaching program, levels of job satisfaction amongst employees would increase, thus having a positive effect on overall performance, productivity and staff retention.

Independent Results assessors interviewed five coaches and ten coachees across all areas of the business.

Company roles of coaches interviewed included: General Manager, Senior Manager and Executive Director. Company roles of coachees included: Consultant, IT Manager, Personal Assistant, Principal Consultant and Client Relationship Manager.

This analysis will consist of three main sections: coach research findings and coachee research findings will include the qualitative data compiled during the interview process. The third section will draw conclusions from the results found.

THE COACHING METHODOLOGY

The Results coaching methodology is a structured framework designed to facilitate positive change within any individual. Coaches can use the skills both formally and informally: they work formally with a coachee over a 12-week period, usually for one hour per week; and they use the skills informally day to day across their roles.

The formal coaching framework and the models that exist within it are designed to create accountability, maintain focus, and most importantly, get results. Coaches are trained to approach coaching holistically: they typically work with three goals set in the first session, which the coach and coachee work towards over the coaching series. The goals are set in 2 separate business areas and 1 personal area. The personal goal is optional depending on the organisation, coach and coachee.

The 5 main principles of Results Coaching (that all coaches are trained in) are:

Self directed learning

Results coaches are trained to help coachees reach their own answers through probing questioning. The coach does not provide specific advice or opinions.

Solutions focus

Results Coaching focuses firmly on solutions - where you are now, where you want to be and how you can get there. Focusing on the solutions gives you a very different result to taking apart a problem.

Positive feedback

Coaching is a way of delivering encouragement and belief in people that really moves coachees forward.

Structure

Results coaches use a step-by-step systematic approach that produces real habitual change over time. Real change takes time, commitment and focus.

Stretch

People perform at their best when they are appropriately challenged. Coaches focus on empowering the individual to develop their own answers, maintain a firm focus on solutions and then challenge them to be the best they can be.

PART ONE: COACH RESEARCH FINDINGS

When examining the effect the coaching program has had on the internal coaches of the organisation, we are looking at two elements: The effect the coach **training** has had on the coaches personally and the way they believe the coaching **program** has impacted on the organisation.

Between the five coaches interviewed, 28 employees had been coached. Coaches contributed between one and five hours to coaching per week, with the average of around three hours.

IMPACT OF TRAINING AS A COACH

What becomes evident when assessing the impact this training has had on the coaches is that all have transformed their managerial style and employ the coaching skills they have developed in every day working life. They report that they are better able to empower their staff, ask rather than tell and encourage logical thought processes (60% feel more valued by team members post-training and 40% feel more valued specifically by their immediate boss).

Many coaches commented that they enjoyed the training and now find it personally rewarding to assist others in their personal development at work. One coach's comments about the program were:

"The training is very comprehensive and useable immediately. I felt confident going into my first session with the coachee. The 'Just in Time' delivery is brilliant and the structure, trainer delivery, material and accessibility was all fantastic."

As a personal development tool for these managers, coaches reported that developing coaching skills has added immense value to their lives. One commented that she is able to coach herself in day-to-day life; others reported that it has strengthened personal relationships, improved fitness and general well being, amongst others.

It was evident from the coach's feedback that they believe coaching is an essential skills set for managers and the value to their organisation is immense. One coach went as far as to say, "Coaching and coach training is amongst the top 3 most important investments an organisation could make".

Coaches reported that they believe fellow team members have responded well to their new managerial style. Coaches feel more valued by those around them since training as a coach. Many also commented that they are more effective in giving feedback in the workplace.

IMPACT OF COACHING PROGRAM ON ORGANISATION

Overall, staff morale and productivity were cited as the most significant result of rolling out the internal coaching program. Coaches mention that employees are noticeably more positive in the workplace; they're happier, and productivity as well as revenue has increased as a result. One commented:

"I have seen improvements in staff not only meeting, but exceeding their targets as a result of the program."

Coaching allowed the coaches to identify and develop high performers within the organisation. This assisted in 'bridging the gap' between senior management and employees in lower levels of the organisation, giving high performers the exposure and ability to be developed further and/or 'move up the corporate ladder' faster. It was also mentioned that this may have led to retaining staff (please note this has not been specifically measured as part of this research study but came through strongly anecdotally in comments from coaches and coachees).

Coachees were able to use the experience of their coach as a development tool for themselves. It improved relationships within the organisation and allowed senior management to keep 'in touch' with what was going on in all areas of the business.

As result of this, senior management could identify poor performers and through coaching, give them the option to use the coaching to improve their performance or leave (if they wished). Coaches found this to be of great value to the organisation. Staff who are not performing because they no longer wish to be there are of no benefit to the organisation. Coaching created a space where employees could be honest and leave if they thought it was best for them and the organisation.

The coaching program has had a positive effect on the company's image and brand, amongst both employees and the marketplace. A company that invests in the development of their people is far more appealing to clients and prospective employees. Customer service levels have improved and employees are more motivated to work harder for their clients. Senior management are promoting their coaching culture to prospective employees, boosting their appeal as an employer. They believe this gives them 'the edge' over their competitors.

PART TWO: COACHEE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Coachees were asked to answer questions relating to the goals they had set with their coach and how achieving these goals impacted both on them personally, as well as the organization.

GOAL AREAS

A crucial element of examining whether internal coaching works is looking at the goal areas that coachees work with, as these are the crux of a coaching series and where the overall benefit to the organisation can be seen with both tangible and intangible results.

53% of goals set by the coaches surveyed were work goals, 47% personal, however some goals were ambiguous and could be considered both work and personal.

Work goal areas included career progression, sales targets, improving systems & processes, building awareness, reducing stress, improving client and/or work relationships, improving quality, enjoyment, transition and raising an individual's profile.

Personal goal areas included family, finance, social, fitness and health, personal development and confidence.

THE BENEFIT OF PERSONAL GOALS

There are many indirect benefits to the organisation that can be identified by allowing employees to set personal goals. For example, setting a goal to be able to 'fit into those size 12 jeans' may not be considered to have any effect on the organisation directly but the effect on the employee is monumental. Coachees interviewed who set fitness/health goals reported that they are more alert and motivated at work, are able to contribute more and are more productive. In particular, one coachee reported:

"More energy and enthusiasm in the workplace. I can work longer hours without getting tired. It's uplifting, more energy to achieve the work goal (Goal 1). It motivates others when I'm motivated. Greater team cohesion - colleague goes for a jog at lunchtime with me."

Coachees are more likely to be interested in undertaking coaching if they feel there will be some benefit for them personally; they become more motivated and focused on achieving all their goals. It can also be considered a service to employees. On average, there was an 18% increase in how valued coachees felt by the organisation after coaching compared to before.

GOAL OUTCOMES

On average, the outcome of the goals received a 75% success rate with coachees attributing 65% of their success to the coaching directly. This demonstrates that whilst not every goal received a 100% success rate, working on the goal and having success was 65% more likely to happen because they had access to coaching.

“It gave me strategies and a process that was measurable and an accountable focus. Instead of something one should do, it provided a specific example with a time frame that made sure it did happen instead of using the procrastination basket which was common for me.”

IMPACT OF ACHIEVING THE GOALS

The impact of achieving these goals was quite substantial to both the coachees and the organisation as a whole, with the most significantly impacted being employee productivity and increased revenue or profitability. The table below shows the amount of times coachees mentioned an impact when relating to achieving their goals, out of a possible maximum of 10.

IMPACTS	NUMBER OF COMMENTS
More efficient/productive	10
Increased revenue/profitability	8
More confident/assertive	8
Improved client relationships	6
Provided personal direction	6
General feeling of well being	6
More motivated	5
Able to set strategies	5
Reduced stress	4
Awareness/Identified gaps	3
More enjoyment	3
Greater cohesion	3
Improved health	3
Solutions focused	3
Staff retention	2
Improved relationships (other)	2
Time management	2
More energy	1
Built team profile	1

80% of coachees commented that they are more productive, effective or efficient as a result of achieving their goals and/or undertaking coaching. Whilst the other 20% didn't comment directly on this, it was implied in the answers they provided.

Of particular significance is the increase in revenue or profitability to the business. Many coachees focused on either improving client relationships and/or meeting challenging sales targets with significant gains in each. One coachee reported that they not only met their goal of achieving 110% against budget, they beat that by a further 10%. Another attributed \$20,000 of his sales results to the coaching directly, billing \$40,000 in one month – a personal record.

Many commented on how beneficial they thought coaching was for the organisation and thoroughly recommended the program to others. Some even commented that their increased morale at work has had a positive effect on those around them; one commenting that it has helped their team smash a sales target. Two high performers were retained as a result of coaching.

IMPACT OF INTERNAL COACHING

In the second part of the interview, coachees were asked to provide a rating out of 10 for certain aspects of work life both before and after coaching. When looking at the broader impact of the coaching, significantly 90% of the coachees reported an increase post-coaching in how valued they feel by the organisation, with an average increase of 18% per individual. 50% feel more committed to the vision or the organisation and 60% report an increase in their engagement levels.

When we look at the impact on the individual 80% feel more motivated at work and 40% report a decrease in their overall stress levels at work.

Even though coaches worked with non-direct reports, the 50% of the coachees report feeling more valued by their own manager and even 40% note an increase in how valued they feel by their own team members. Coachees saw benefits to being coached by non-line managers internally, reporting that the coach could empathise more, was totally objective and that they were able to use the coach's experience as a tool for their own development.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that we can draw from this data is that internal coaching has worked as an effective development tool for employees within this organisation. The effect of the coaching program has surpassed the expectations of all involved. The morale of those who trained as coaches as well as those coached has increased significantly, improving their overall job satisfaction.

Indirectly, all in the organization have been affected by the program. Senior managers (coaches) have identified a change in culture within their workplace and this in turn has increased revenue, improved client relationships and strengthened their brand in the marketplace.

As a leadership development tool, coaches have transformed their managerial styles and manage their people more effectively. As internal coaches, they are able to identify more with their coachees and bridge the gap that so often exists between senior management and employees.

By accessing coaching, coachees were able to identify gaps, put strategies in place to address these and go above and beyond their normal performance levels. High performers were identified, developed and retained as a result of coaching, one of the key issues the organization was trying to address by implementing the program.