



EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Executive Coaching

Why do many Fortune 500 executives get executive coaching? More directly, why do senior executives like Chuck Prince of Citicorp insist on coaching in their organizations? The reasons: To increase quality of leadership skills at all levels, improve retention of leaders, help new leaders succeed, and address management behavior problems. And what's the basis for their belief in coaching? It's effectiveness—for example, a study conducted by the Manchester Group on the effect of coaching revealed an estimate of more than a 5 to 1 return on investment. Further, an article in *Public Personnel Management* reported a study comparing training alone to coaching combined with training. Training alone increased productivity by 22.4% while training plus coaching increased productivity by 88%.

What is Executive Coaching?

Unlike consultants and other business professionals with specific content expertise (finance, law, accounting), executive coaches enter organizations asking probing questions rather than offering judgments. Coaching utilizes a systematic methodology of inquiry that encourages the answers to emerge from the executive or team being coached. However, the executive coach drives the solution through a rigorous process involving self-discovery and awareness; goal setting and accountability; action learning and execution; and evaluation and revision.

What is the Coaching Process?

The coaching process begins with the clients' realization that they need assistance getting to the next level, solving an issue, or modifying a behavior that might be blocking their pursuit of success. Often, the organization's human resources department, senior management, or corporate board will not only initiate the process but also pay for it.

Phase One—Self Discovery and Awareness

The coach works with clients to help them discover what motivates them—their strengths, challenges, likes and dislikes. Using a personality indicator, a number of exercises, and many probing questions, the coach elicits key information about how to best understand clients and how to work with them effectively and efficiently to bring about the desired results. While the coach will certainly consider organizational input from the human resources department and CEO, ultimately the relationship between the client and the coach is the primary one, which remains committed to coach-client confidentiality.

Phase Two—Goal Setting and Accountability

With the guidance of the coach, clients articulate, first verbally and then in writing, the goals and objectives that are important to addressing their challenges. Together, coach and client determine specific goals and objectives for which both will be accountable. These objectives must be reasonable, motivating, measurable and directly related to the desired end state. Clients should share these goals and objectives with key 360-degree stakeholders in the workplace, including subordinates, peers, and supervisors, for their support. However, the decision to share any specifics of the coaching process is solely the client's choice.

Phase Three—Action Learning & Execution

Clients learn new ways of tackling challenges through positive inquiry as they discuss issues and approaches. Guided by the coach, clients will conduct personal research to solve their challenges and to build new capacities. Thus, the solutions emerge from the clients, stimulated by the coach, who will offer guidance, assignments, and direction. At the same time, both the coach and client will rigorously track progress and reset goals and objectives as required.

Phase Four—Evaluation & Revision

Every three months the coach will evaluate progress toward clients' goals and objectives. This is often accomplished by surveying key client stakeholders for objective evaluation. Further, based on feedback from stakeholders, the coach and clients will revise and/or develop new goals and objectives for the future, thus resetting the cycle until clients have accomplished their goals. In summary, executive coaching is a powerful, cost-effective way to provide support for leaders and leverage their strengths for the benefit of themselves and the entire organization. And when combined with training, executive coaching can significantly boost talent development in any company. ■

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