



Health Education East of England
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire
Accelerated Director Development Scheme



On Overview of Executive Coaching

‘What you need to know’

Submitted by:



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1. Context

This overview of Executive Coaching is presented as part of the ADD's Scheme. This document outlines our approach and methodology to Executive Coaching and is intended to stimulate thought, dialogue and debate, together with the clarification of needs and requirements.

2. An Overview of Individual Coaching Programmes

Our Individual Coaching Programmes provide a mechanism for Leaders to receive focused support and challenge in addressing emerging issues and business objectives.

Their overarching purpose is to enable an individual to develop their capability and capacity to achieve personal and organisational objectives - and to learn and develop in relation to those objectives.

The results of our programmes are seen in sustainable improvements in performance, learning and enjoyment, expressed through greater clarity, focus and effectiveness.

The programme outlined on page 7 is representative of a typical programme. Please note however that all of our programmes are designed to match the needs of the individual being coached and the organisation for which they operate.

Who is coaching for?

Coaching is of particular value to individuals who:

- Have moved into a **new role** or are facing a **specific challenge**
- Recognise they need to **work differently and more effectively**
- Are trying to **generate a change** in their organisation
- Are working towards becoming a **more complete leader**
- Are currently challenged by **audacious or stretching objectives**

3. What is Effective Leadership Coaching?

Coaching has been described as ‘the art of facilitating the development, learning and performance of another’. It is a means of enabling individuals or teams to develop their own capabilities - and in doing so to maximise their potential. It draws from a range of disciplines, including: education and business science, philosophy, and through the search for ‘optimal performance’, sports psychology, positive psychology and increasingly neuroscience, in understanding how the brain operates effectively.

Effective coaching is strongly associated with the identification of clear objectives and the building of greater self-awareness, self-management and emotional intelligence. It is aimed at enabling individuals to become more authentic leaders of themselves and others and create greater choice and flexibility in the leadership style they wish to deploy and adopt in different situations. Good coaching also focuses on increasing personal responsibility and as a result, requires ultimate authority for action, transformation and change to remain with the person being coached – or the ‘coachee’.

At an individual level, the work is undertaken in service of the coachee’s own learning, performance and enjoyment – and systemically, in service of the performance, learning and enjoyment of those that the coachee leads, manages and works with, the organisation and wider stakeholders.

The coaching process itself is framed around a series of ‘conversations’ with a coach. The coach, a highly experienced professional, will work to widen your perspective and through their training and experience; which includes strong listening skills, effective questions and the appropriate deployment of a range of concepts or techniques. They will support you in increasing your understanding about how you are working and how you can more effectively ‘lead yourself’ in achieving them. They will use their expertise to provide a safe and trusting environment for you to freely explore the topic that you wish to discuss, providing supportive challenge, feedback and stimulation to your development and learning process.

The content of each coaching session is strictly confidential – but if appropriate, the coaching programme will begin with a transparent and mutually agreed contracting and review mechanism with an organisational representative – otherwise known as the ‘sponsor’. Such ‘three way contracting’ is undertaken to ensure that the organisational perspective, objectives and needs, as well as the coachee’s objectives and requirements, are understood, monitored and explored within the coaching programme.

Organisational objectives are often framed in what are described as the ‘**public goals**’ for the coaching programme. When openly discussed, explored and understood as part of a ‘contracting session’, these can effectively inform the development of the coachee’s own objectives for the coaching, framed in ‘**private goals**’, which remain confidential between the coach and the coachee.

The coach can often play a crucial role in this work in facilitating a three way 'triangular contracting' discussion where the goals that the organisation want to see from the coaching intervention will be discussed and agreed to by all parties.

A high level of transparency and openness is required from the sponsor of the programme and the coachee at this stage. It is essential that there are no 'hidden' agenda's and that the 'unspoken' is spoken. Such unexplored thoughts or emotions may jeopardise the integrity of the coaching relationship between coach and coachee – and the coachee's ability to actively engage in a process of reflection and change.

The precise nature of the relationships and who needs to be involved in the various contracting conversations will be discussed and agreed as part of the preparation and design work.

4. What executive coaching - is not!

- Coaching should not be confused with **mentoring** which usually involves the transfer of relevant knowledge, experience or information from an 'experienced' to a 'less experienced' individual. As a result, and in building your own responsibility for action, your coach will not 'tell' you what to do and will resist responding to requests for 'advice'! They will supportively challenge you to use your own resources and wisdom to find your answer.
- Coaching is not a form of **counselling** which can have clinical overtones. While the coaching process can be 'therapeutic'- it is not a form of therapy. As a result – while you may wish to confidentially explore some very personal issues with your coach, in the recognition that personal development requires working with the 'whole' and not just 'a part' of any individual, this will only be done in service of the self-awareness you require to effectively achieve your objectives. Your coach will not act as a therapist.
- Coaching is not a form of **assessment or appraisal** of the coachee's skills or ability. While 360 feedback mechanisms are often used within coaching, this is always mutually agreed between all parties in the coaching relationship. Your coach is not there to judge or test you – but to provide you with a safe environment in which to openly explore how you wish to be even more effective in what you do.
- The Coaching assignments we undertake are never **remedial** in tone or approach. Your coach is there to support your development – and however clichéd the expression, to support the development of your potential. In doing so however - and as appropriate - they may provide you with a high level of supportive challenge in service of you reaching that potential.

Finally – it should be made clear that Executive Coaching is not a substitute for the complementary skills of good and effective leadership and management required in your role from yourself and from the organisation – though it can support, enhance and compliment these qualities over time.

5. Key Benefits

Key benefits that coaching provides to an organisation are:

- **Increased effectiveness.** Coaching gives highly tailored and individual support within the boundaries of a trusting and confidential environment. This develops and supports individuals during times of stress or challenge, allowing them to generate the 'space' with which to gain a deeper understanding of their leadership and themselves, greater clarity of the issues which face them - and confidence in overcoming them.
- **The achievement of extraordinary goals.** Coaching asks individuals to set stretching and personally challenging goals, and then think creatively about ways to achieve them – in service of their own learning and performance – and of those whom they lead and manage.
- **Alignment of individual and organisational needs.** All too often developmental interventions can cater to individual need at the expense of the business or organisation objectives – or visa-versa. Coaching programmes explore the recognition of the need to align personal and organisational needs, while ensuring that the ultimate objectives is relevant, focussed and of practical importance to both.

Key benefits to the individual are:

- **Greater self-awareness** both of how you personally operate and the impact of this on others - together with a greater awareness and understanding about specific work related issues and the factors which surround them.
- **Personal Leadership** – in understanding how to 'lead' yourself better and how to translate this awareness, responsibility and effectiveness into how you lead others.
- **Clarity about your role and objectives**, generated by challenging thinking, encouraging innovation and the creation of a personal learning and development plan to help you achieve them.
- **Success and enjoyment**, which develop as the coachee understands themselves and their challenges with greater depth and clarity and grows in confidence in their ability to shape and influence their environment.

6. A Typical Coaching Programme

We have developed a number of key stages that we have found invaluable in supporting the development of a challenging and productive coaching relationship.

Matching

After initial discussion, we will provide the coachee (or the sponsor) with details of several suitable coaches and make a recommendation on which coach we believe to be the most appropriate. The final decision remains with the coachee.

Contracting - Establishing objectives and outputs

As previously mentioned, we start the coaching programme with discussions between the coach, and the coachee and as appropriate the "sponsor" - during which the 'public' objectives for the programme are openly discussed and agreed. These public goals form the basis upon which the coaching programme is created, delivered, and evaluated.

Our aim is that at the end of the contracting and goal setting stage there will be complete clarity of the expectations and agreed outcomes - and about the coaching process itself. The means of measuring the agreed objectives must also be agreed at this stage as this will form a key part of how the programme will be evaluated.

Preliminaries (Optional)

It is our experience that feedback mechanisms undertaken before the coaching sessions begin can provide the coachee with additional stimulus and greater self-awareness. This can prove invaluable in enabling them to develop a clear agenda for future coaching sessions. A repeat of this process at the end of the programme can also form a useful means of measuring the success of the programme.

Many of our Coaches are qualified in a range of psychometric profiling techniques, while 360° feedback can be collected via questionnaires or through face-to-face / telephone interviews with peers, direct reports and superiors. The feedback is discussed during the first formal coaching session and it may cause the coachee to fine tune their programme objectives.

Formal coaching sessions

Each coaching programme normally consists of four to six, 1-2 hour coaching sessions, focussing on the agreed outcomes and objectives spaced over a 6 month period.

7. Evaluation and Return on Investment

In order to ensure that you get the highest return from your investment in coaching, we aim to measure the impact of all our coaching interventions.

Every coaching programme starts with a contracting session as a part of which, clear and measurable objectives are created for the entire coaching programme. During this session we typically define three measurable goals, in response to these questions:

1. What are the **business / organisational objectives** that are required from the coaching programme?
2. What **changes** (in approach, ability, attitude or behaviour) are needed from the coachee in order to achieve that result?
3. What are the **measures of success** that will show that these objectives have been achieved and change has taken place?

In order to ensure that these needs have been met, where appropriate we undertake 360 degree feedback or psychometric profiling both as the coaching programme starts and once it has been completed. This gives a qualitative understanding of what changes have taken place over the course of the programme.

In addition, we undertake a series of review sessions. The first takes place midway through the programme and is used to revisit and revise the coachee's objectives in light of changing circumstances, insights or context. The second review session takes place at the end of the programme and is used to get the coachee's and the sponsor's personal perspective as to how well the objectives have been met, to what extent the organisation has received a return on its investment and what further action needs to be taken.

Where possible, we recommend that the final review includes a meeting between the client, the coachee and the coach. While programme sponsors sometimes feel that they do not want to be involved in this final session, our experience tells us that having three parties around the table can lead to valuable insights.