

# Knowledge: Pass It On

## COACHING AS A STRATEGY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

It's generally acknowledged that a performance improvement and growth-oriented talent development programme plays a key role in creating an effective workforce. Companies recognise the need to align talent with evolving business needs and to create a "ready-now" workforce capable of moving into new roles quickly - both achieved in large part through a strategic development programme.

Effective development will vary by needs: basic skills and technical training, quality and/or managerial skills, and "soft" skills development focusing on intangibles such as communication or conflict resolution. Regardless of the type, development is fundamental to the preparedness of an organisation and has a positive impact on quality, customer service, employee recruiting and retention,

and global competitiveness.

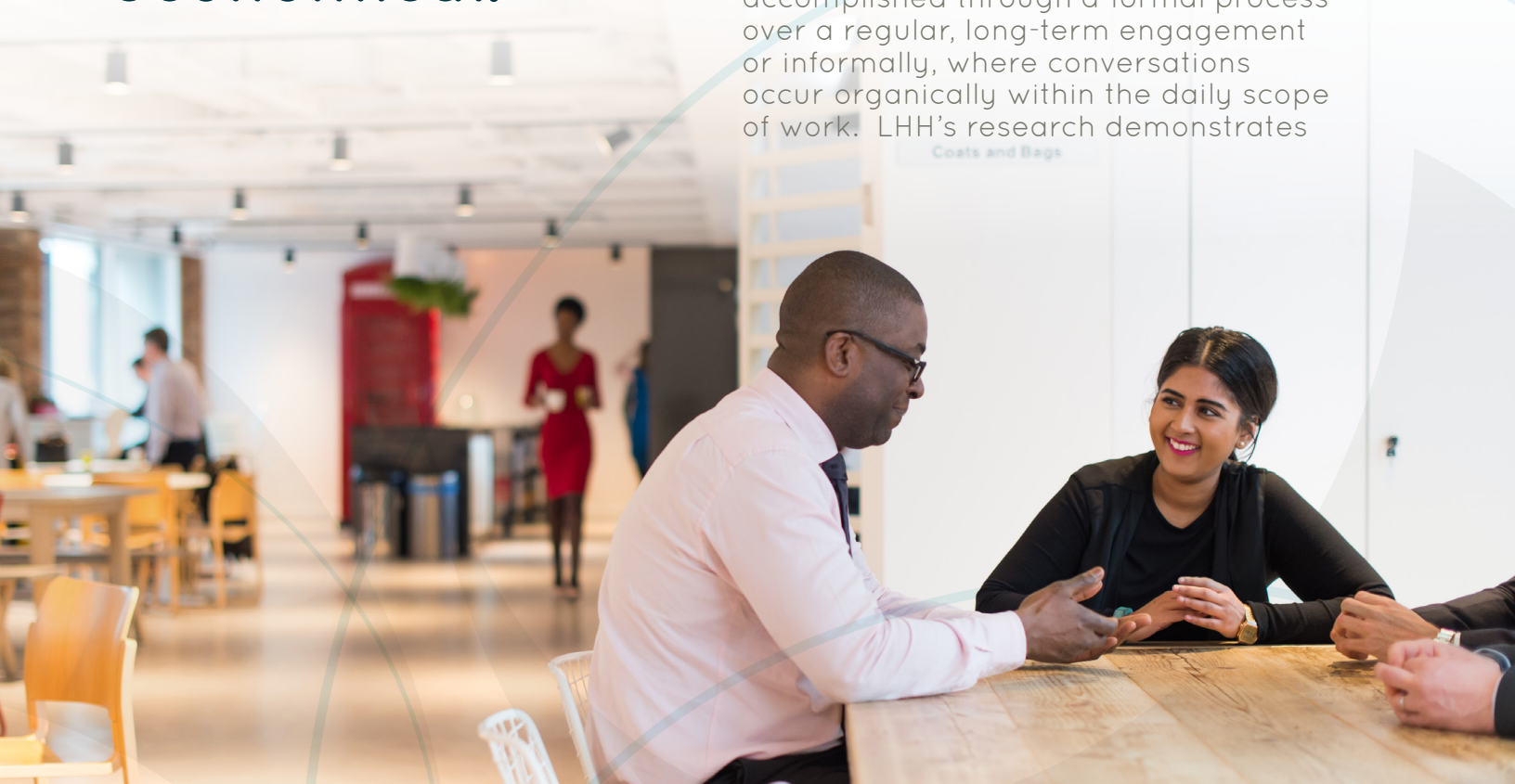
Research presented in *Scaling Executive Coaching Across the Enterprise*, a recent joint research report by talent development leader Lee Hecht Harrison and the Human Capital Institute, concludes that coaching is a development method rooted in improving performance through the introduction of new knowledge, skills, and behaviours. As one respondent asserts, "Coaching should be an ongoing offering across the organisation. It serves to identify diamonds in the rough, improve and retain the shiny ones." As a method of development, coaching provides personalised attention and allows an organization to focus on building strong and promising talent at all levels. In other words, a coaching culture can set the framework for addressing an organisation's development needs.

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## CHALLENGES

What challenges might organisations face in setting up a coaching programme that acts as a tool for employee development? Seventy-eight percent of respondents report that a lack of resources or funding is the biggest impediment to establishing a coaching culture; however, the principles of coaching can be put into practice through other, more-affordable avenues such as mentoring. While 68% of respondents felt that the executive team does not have time to participate in coaching programmes and 66% feel there’s a lack of support from upper management, these challenges may often be overcome by creating a culture of continuous learning and initiating a meaningful dialogue between human resources, organisational development practitioners and senior business leaders that illustrates the benefits of a coaching culture.

A third often-cited challenge (40% of respondents) is a lack of knowledge on how to implement a coaching programme. Depending upon the desired outcome, coaching can be accomplished through a formal process over a regular, long-term engagement or informally, where conversations occur organically within the daily scope of work. LHH’s research demonstrates



that building a structure around a coaching program is a critical step in achieving success, and this process provides insight into the role and perception of coaching. Organisations must make certain that the program has specific goals and the coaches are cognizant of and trained on a results-based methodology. A trial run with a small sample of employees will provide an avenue for evaluation and allow the organisation to make any necessary adjustments.

## RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

Forty-nine percent of the respondents to LHH's survey report that coaching is not limited to executive teams in their organisations, so it's apparent that progressive organizations have found a way to address the challenges and have begun to shift from providing coaching as a means of development exclusively to executives. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) agree that all employees should have the opportunity for coaching and 81% rate regular informal coaching between a manager and an employee as very important.

Instead of reserving coaching exclusively for executive-level leaders, organizations can create a coaching culture by capitalizing on a coaching investment for every employee. How does a cash-strapped business create this coaching culture? While coaching across the organisation can take on many forms, "coach the coach" or mentoring programmes have proven to be both effective and economical.

## THE MENTOR AS COACH

Mentoring is a cost-effective means to provide coaching across the enterprise and is easily adapted to accommodate today's multi-location organisational structure. An effectual mentor serves many purposes; however, first and foremost, a mentor is an advocate for his or her partner within the organisation, assisting with career advice, facilitating the exchange of skills and information, providing introductions and key networking contacts, offering insight into the company culture, and delivering constructive feedback.

Traditional mentoring still takes the form of one-on-one employee meetings with a trained senior member of the organisation. Today, these meetings generally occur via a combination of communication avenues: in person, via the Web, email or telephone.

Group mentoring is often employed when a small group of employees share developmental needs that can be addressed by a single mentor or a rotating group of subject matter experts. Group mentoring is less time consuming for the mentor but may pose additional challenges in addressing individual needs.

Reverse mentoring takes place when a less-experienced employee acts as a mentor to a more senior member of the organisation. This mentoring relationship is mutually beneficial. Younger workers develop insight into management decision making while heightening their visibility in the organisation. The more experienced partner may benefit from the infusion of fresh and diverse viewpoints and the social-media savvy of the younger generation.

## **BENEFITS OF A COACHING PROGRAMME    CONCLUSION**

A company-wide coaching programme designed to develop the leader's role as coach within the framework of a talent development strategy provides the organisation with a wide array of business benefits. It offers a stronger leadership pipeline – identifying high-potential employees and developing them through what could be considered the organisation's "farm team." Through the coach-coachee relationship, organisations are better prepared to handle employee succession issues and have a natural conduit for retaining the critical knowledge of retiring employees. A cadre of trained coaches will also facilitate an organisation's onboarding efforts. A coaching program's transfer of knowledge and focus on career growth also drives retention and engagement as employees expand their skills/areas of expertise and discover that new opportunities within the company become within reach.

Developing leaders to master results-driven coaching techniques and strategies extends the reach of your talent development efforts through the organisation, keeps costs down, and maintains the hallmarks of an executive coaching programme – personalised, individual and goal-oriented.

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## About LHH Penna

*Better careers, better leaders, better businesses.*

Welcome to Lee Hecht Harrison Penna, the world's leading talent development and transition company. We help businesses simplify the transformation of their talent and workforces to accelerate results and reduce risk. And we help individuals build their careers within their companies, or in transition to new opportunities.



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Client Partner.