

LEE HECHT  
HARRISON

CREATING A  
COACHING CULTURE:

**Amplifying  
the impact  
of coaching**

Rod Gutierrez  
Georg Hirschi  
Charles de Sabran

## **Coaching as a performance catalyst for individuals**

Coaching is now recognised as one of the most powerful development tools available for accelerating performance. Whether it's developing high potentials, transitioning leaders into new roles, managing change effectively or enhancing team performance, many organisations now believe that coaching can act as a catalyst to drive performance at an individual, team and organisational level. In fact, various research studies by CIPD and the Conference Board suggest that somewhere between 70 and 90% of organisations use coaching as part of their talent management activity.

---

**70 and 90% of organisations use coaching as part of their talent management activity.**

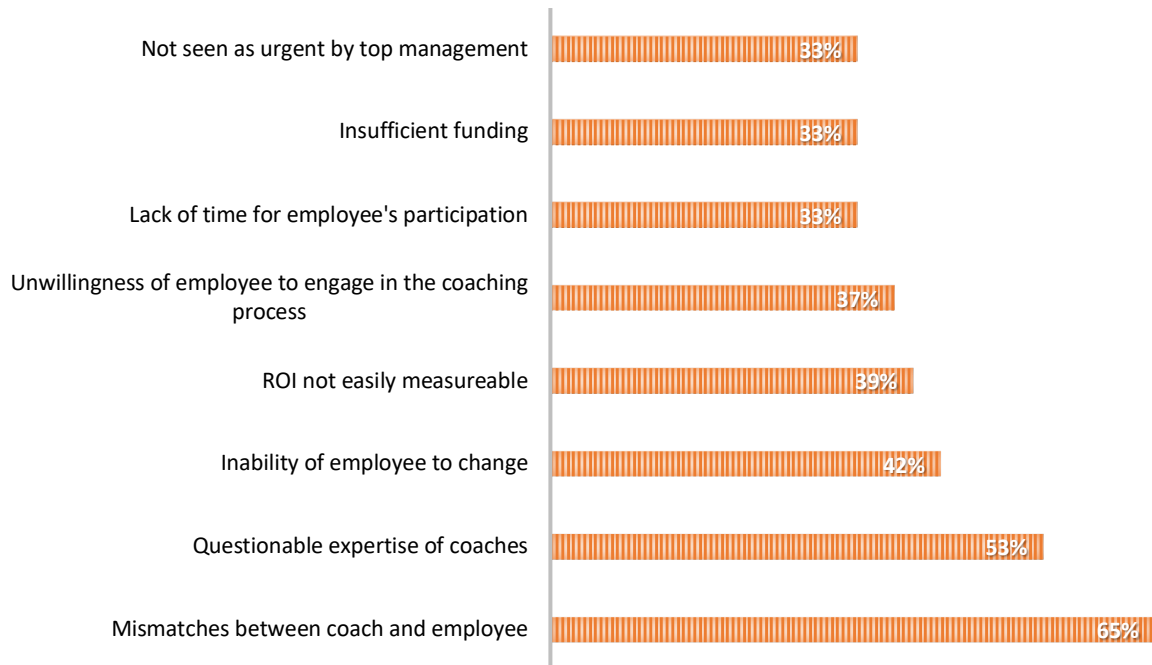
---

Although this take up is impressive, the focus of much of this coaching has been in the field of individual coaching. This aligns individuals with an externally provided coach and helps them overcome their barriers to success whilst at the same time making the most of their strengths.

## **Coaching is not being fully realised as a catalyst to increase performance for organisations**

Whilst this can be effective in many circumstances, many organisations simply do not have the budget to offer coaching to all those employees that could benefit from this form of development. In addition it's also been shown that individual coaching will not deliver the required results unless it's considered in a wider organisational context and incorporated into an organisation's culture. A survey conducted by American Management Association / Institute for Corporate Productivity (2008) explored the reasons respondents have terminated a coaching assignment prior to the end of its term (nearly one quarter of respondents indicated that they have in fact terminated coaching assignments in the past). As shown overleaf, four out of eight reasons cited were related to organisational support for coaching, or lack thereof.

To what extent do you agree that the termination was based on the following reasons?



While organisational support has in the past been shown to be vital for coaching effectiveness (MacKie, 2007), in many cases it does not go beyond provision of a budget for individual coaching interventions.

Take all these factors into consideration and it's clear that coaching as used by most businesses is not yielding the maximum potential benefits possible.



**To get the most from coaching, organisations need to look at how they can develop managers as coaches, and create a coaching management style and culture that becomes part of the fabric of the organisation.**

# LEE HECHT HARRISON

## The difference a good leader makes

Research findings confirm that where a coaching management style is practised in organisations, it has a positive impact on the working lives of many individuals and the teams that they operate in. It contributes to leadership development, creating a positive and productive working environment, improving employee engagement and retention, and boosting individual, and in turn, organisational performance.

## Engagement and Retention

One area where coaching clearly appears to have a positive impact is employee engagement and retention. In an LHH survey, participants were asked about their career intentions.



**Of the respondents who said they are likely to be still working with the company in a year's time, 59% rated their manager a good coach.**

80% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "My manager supports my development". Over a third (37%) felt that the support that they received from their manager over the last year contributed significantly to their engagement and motivation. A further 73% felt that the support they received from their manager affected their motivation in a positive way.

At the same time, the research suggests that inadequate coaching support affects engagement and retention in an adverse way. The participants who indicated they are likely to be leaving within a year were twice as likely to rate their manager as a weak coach, while 25% said the support from their manager actually reduced their motivation and engagement.

## Performance and development

Survey participants also said that coaching helped or hindered their individual performance, depending on the manager's coaching ability. 83% of participants with a good coach as a manager said that their manager encouraged continuous improvement and development, thus improving their performance. But for the people who believed that their manager was a bad coach only 18% agreed that their manager encouraged continuous improvement and development.

The effect on performance is not restricted to the individual either. What is also clear is that with good managers as coaches in place, the benefits of coaching percolate through the organisation, as those employees that are coached in turn adopt a coaching style in their interactions with others. In this way coaching style does not just impact on the follower but affects the whole system and environment.

# LEE HECHT HARRISON

## Coaching as part of the cultural landscape

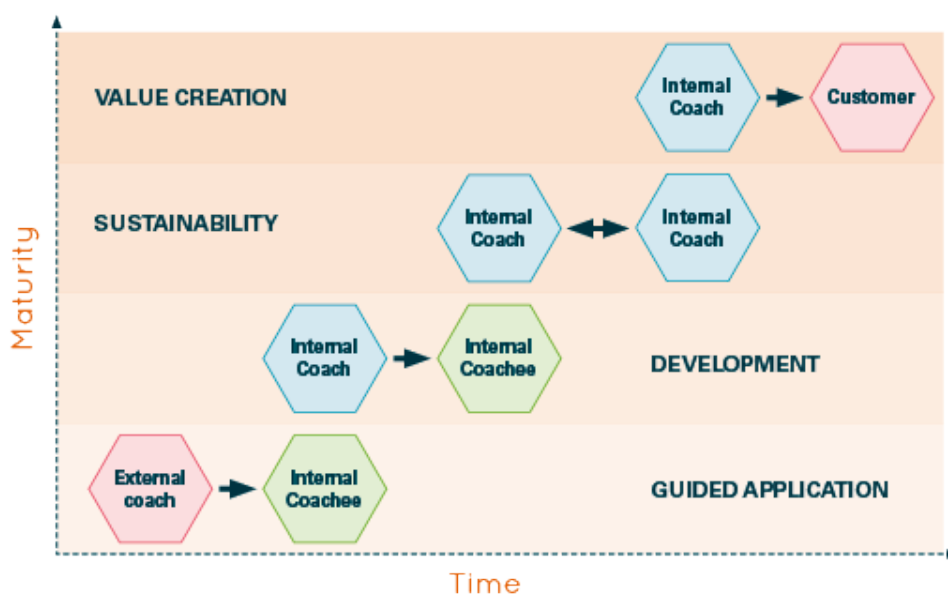
Having managers that act as coaches is only part of the jigsaw that organisations need to complete if they want to realise the full benefits that coaching can deliver. Creating a coaching culture is also a vital part of the picture.

It is LHH's experience that implementing a coaching culture is only likely to work if it is

1. **Closely tied to the organisation's strategy;** It is essential that the organisation's leaders agree on the purpose of coaching, how its outcomes will benefit the business and how individual goals will be aligned to overall organisational objectives (Lawrence and Whyte, 2013).
2. **Aligned to the wider organisational culture.** The culture itself needs to be pro learning, where feedback, development and change are supported and encouraged at all levels of the organisation.
3. **Supported by a formal and informal structure that helps to catalyse and sustain coaching effort.** Coaching initiatives need to be supported by formal and informal structures. Turner (2012) found that managers are unlikely to coach their staff on a regular basis following a coaching intervention unless their organisation has a structured process for coaching and it is embedded as part of a performance system.

At LHH we conceptualise the journey to developing a coaching culture in the context of a maturity/ improvement curve. Firstly external coaches catalyse the organisation into generating their own coaching competency through a cascading process of individuals being coached then applying the learning and indeed becoming a coach themselves by receiving support through a 'coach the coach' or group coaching process. These coaching practices are then scalable across organisations and sustainable over time, ultimately leading to the coaching approach being implemented as an important means to foster external client relationships.

## Coaching Culture Maturity Model



# LEE HECHT HARRISON

The benefits of creating a coaching culture where a coaching management style is prevalent are numerous ranging from soft measures such as increased manager loyalty and an ability to resolve conflicts (McKee, Tilin and Mason (2009) to hard measures such as increased productivity and revenue (ICF, 2017).



**Research by ICF shows that those who demonstrate a strong coaching culture boast a greater revenue growth than their peers.**

Making this a priority for your talent strategy this year may be one of the best investments you can make.

**Here are four steps you can take to start your journey.**

## **1. Start at the top.**

A commitment to creating a coaching culture within an organisation, along with the resources and support that are needed to make that happen, depends on senior management buy-in. This will only occur if the senior executives are persuaded by convincingly argued and clearly stated business benefits. Therefore it is worth revisiting and agreeing the business benefits at an executive level.

Rolling out coaching needs to start at the top too, with the new behaviours being role modelled at the most senior level. This should create a clear link between adopting a coaching style and business performance and will encourage others to follow the example rather than being discouraged by a focus on task and direction from the top.

Executives require sufficient support to make and sustain the changes. There should be a focus on business context and potential change issues, with this linked to any existing coaching programmes for senior executives. Short sessions can be provided for senior executives on techniques for improving their coaching style – including the CEO. This can be supported by 360 feedback on style and leadership approach. And CEOs can incentivise executives to consistently adopt new coaching behaviours.

## **2. Line manager involvement**

It is important that people at all levels of the organisation are clear about the aims of encouraging managers to adopt a coaching style as the management style of choice, what it involves, and how it is implemented. This is especially true for line managers, who often bear much of the responsibility for ensuring any coaching initiative is implemented, sustained, and successful.

Equally line managers need adequate development which focuses on problem solving skills, support, feedback and personal development. And not just about coaching skills, but also

# LEE HECHT HARRISON

about matching these to the current business and organisational context. So, how to coach well even when time pressed – and that a five minute coaching manager approach is possible.

For those who are already well versed in coaching skills from previous leadership development, it is worth considering refresher training. This time, though, the training can be delivered in a co-coaching environment, to explore what has worked well, and what may prevent managers using this style. This training would include both support and front line functions.

### 3. Make a business case for coaching

It is important to demonstrate how coaching drives business performance. It should be a case that is clearly articulated, and easy to understand. If the business strategy is driving increased productivity during challenging markets, for example, you might examine the part that a coaching culture has to play. When the “way we’ve always done things before” is no longer working, focusing constructively and supportively on an individual’s performance can often be the key to increasing business results.

To support this thinking within the organisation it is useful to co-opt a business sponsor or champion who relates to this approach, has experience of it, is currently adopting it, and can show and support the business benefits. Ideally this will be a highly regarded senior leader or board member. This helps to create an ecosystem that allows the coaching culture to take root, and to gain visibility as it does so. It also helps to broaden involvement across the organisation, and avoids coaching being pigeonholed as a pet organisational development or human resources project.

### 4. Integrate coaching into ‘The way we do things around here’

Finally it is worth reflecting that no one single intervention will meet the coaching challenge that many organisations face. It is unlikely, for example, that simply addressing coaching skills will create a sustainable coaching culture. A more strategic approach is required, using a combination of tactics to ensure coaching becomes ingrained in the organisation, and is successful in delivering the desired benefits. This means senior management, human resources and line managers working together to tackle any obstacles to coaching. That may mean taking on taboos, whether that is the performance management culture and processes, organisational beliefs about the use of time, or encouragement of the “heroic leader,” as well as implementing more practical things like integrating coaching into the leadership framework and highlighting examples of where and how it has been successful.

# LEE HECHT HARRISON

## References

American Management Association. (2008). **Coaching: A global study of successful practices.**

Accessed online -<https://www.opm.gov/WIKI/uploads/docs/Wiki/OPM/training/i4cp-coaching.pdf>

ICF (2017) **Building a Coaching Culture with Millennial Leaders Study.** Accessed online-  
[http://www.hci.org/files/field\\_content\\_file/2017%20ICF.pdf](http://www.hci.org/files/field_content_file/2017%20ICF.pdf)

Lawrence, P. & Whyte, A. (2013). Return on investment in executive coaching: A practical model for measuring ROI in organisations. **Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice**, 7(1), 4-17.

MacKie, D. (2007). Evaluating the effectiveness of executive coaching: Where are we now and where do we need to be? **Australian Psychologist**, 42(4), 310- 318.

McKee, A., Tilin, F., & Mason, D. (2009). Coaching from the inside: Building an internal group of emotionally intelligent coaches. **International Coaching Psychology Review**, 4(1), 59–70.

Turner, P. S. (2012). A strategic approach to coaching in organisations: A case study. **International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching**, 10 (1), 9-26.

*To find out more about how we can help you improve your coaching capability,  
connect with Mei Ling Chan, Talent Solutions Director, [meiling.chan@lhh.com](mailto:meiling.chan@lhh.com) or +65 9777 5634*

