

EXECUTIVE COACHING

What is Executive Coaching?

Since the advent of regular appraisal interviews and other forms of feedback, most people have a fairly good idea of their strengths and weakness at work. However, knowing *what* you want to change and knowing *how* to go about changing it require two different approaches. Executive Coaching involves one to one meetings with a specialist trained in how people change. It is designed to pinpoint specific changes that will be the difference that makes the difference in a person improving their performance.

What is the difference between Executive Coaching and Employee Counseling?

Employee Counseling is a valuable approach and tends to be used when people are suffering from significant emotional or behavior difficulties. Often it is the last resort in a disciplinary process or after a traumatic event in a person's life such as a sudden death of a loved one. It tends to be oriented towards fixing problems.

The focus of Executive Coaching is very much outcome oriented: "What do you want to achieve?" rather than "What is the problem?".

What types of change are executives looking for?

Basically, there are two types of change: Remedial and Generative. Remedial change is when someone wants to correct a perceived shortcoming. They may say things like "I lack the confidence to present to large groups of people", or "I'm overworked and I can't seem to delegate", or "I have a personality clash with one of my managers", etc.

Other people say, "I'm a pretty good manager and I'd really like to improve my ability to support my people during this corporate change", or "I realize I need some new ways to influence my fellow directors". This is Generative change: taking a strength and making it even better or broadening a skill so it is effective in even more situations.

How long does Executive Coaching last?

This is variable, because sometimes one session is enough for someone to set themselves on the right road. However, we find most people can make change permanent only by having it happen over time. This means they put new behaviors and skills into operation, receive feedback and adjust accordingly. Therefore, the initial two-part session, each part lasting approx. 2 hours, is usually followed by up to 5 further sessions, each approx. a month apart.

What actually happens in an Executive Coaching session?

First, everything that happens is completely confidential between the individual and the coach unless the individual chooses otherwise. Second, as each person is unique, no two coaching sessions are the same. Having said that, there are some general similarities. The first meeting is devoted to two things.

a) Getting really clear about:

Outcomes: What do you want and how will you know you have achieved it; what is your evidence for success? This gives us a direction to work towards and provides a form of objectivity to this very subjective work.

Current Situation: Exactly what is happening now – what is the strategy operating that maintains the behavior and what is the motivation that keeps things repeating and therefore the same?

Long Term Effects of getting what you want for yourself and others. There are always consequences for any change, and being aware of these in advance is vital to the process.

b) Getting to know more clearly the type of person you are:

Overview of the six classic types of persons: The type overview exercise allows you to determine the type to which you belong. This is an interactive exercise with your coach, not a psychometric evaluation. It is you who makes the determinations.

Learn the characteristics of your type: Review of the main motivation and main strengths of your type, accompanied by the type's tendencies that prevent the full manifestation of strengths. You zero in on the tendency(ies) you want to work on.

Setting priorities and goals: A proven process is provided for you to define and develop the leadership behavior(s) and operational measure(s) designed to bring about desired results.

Surprisingly, there have been times when just coaching a person to answer the questions in the initial two-part session has been enough for them to change their behavior in the direction they want to go! Usually more is needed, and there are a whole range of processes available to facilitate the move from where an individual is (Current Situation),

to where they want to be (achieving the Outcome) so they and the company get the results they want (Long Term Effects).

In further sessions, progress towards the Outcome is reviewed. Then minor goals are defined and the next step on the way to the overall outcome is addressed. Often the person being coached is surprised how much change occurs *in the session*. This makes it much easier for those changes to be implemented in the work place. As progress is being made, the person being coached will know if and when an additional session is in order.

When is Executive Coaching recommended compared to other forms of development?

We recommend Executive Coaching when:

- Development is required that is specific to you and would probably not be adequately addressed by a general skills training.
- The problem is not something you feel comfortable discussing in a group.
- You are unable to attend a training course (which could take you away from your job for several days).
- It is more appropriate for you to discuss your development with a specialist from outside the company.
- You have tried other approaches without success.

Is Executive Coaching only useful for individuals?

Some far-sighted companies have offered their whole management team the opportunity to get support through Executive Coaching. This is run with two Executive Coaches who work with team members in a group setting so that everyone's development is open and supported by the group process. This unusual approach has proved enormously effective for those who were willing to take a giant step in their own development.

*If you always do what you've always done,
You'll always get what you've always got!*