

A GUIDE TO EXECUTIVE COACHING

BY

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Introduction

We know that an organization needs a winning team that consistently delivers first rate performance. We also know that this requires more than excellent business processes. At the heart of it is an attitude, at both the individual and organisation level, capable of

consistently delivering innovation and change in a continuously complex and evolving landscape. At the senior level of the organization in particular, the ability to manage change and transformation requires skills and competencies beyond the practical technical skills of management and is likely to include the crucial skills of managing people. It is widely accepted and recognised by both practitioners and professional institutions that executive coaching is the most appropriate tool to develop the skills required of senior managers which will enable them to consistently deliver sustainable business results. However, the challenge for managers is to sift through the plethora of available coaches and coaching styles to find the coach that is right for them, their team and their organizations.

The Benefits of Coaching

In understanding the benefits to the senior team and the organization, you will begin identifying the requirements a coach has to comply with if they are going to be the right match for you and your organization. You will, of course, have specific requirements which apply to you and your organization. However, understanding the generic benefits provides you with a starting point. The use of Executive Coaching as a significant tool in the development of senior management has rapidly increased across all business sectors.

A consistent theme as to the benefits of coaching is its ability to support senior managers with the sense of isolation they experience as well as the lack of opportunities to discuss areas of concern with others or explore opportunities for growth. Executives rate

coaching as one of the most valuable and effective means of resolving these issues.

Coaching also provides the challenge and the support managers need to develop both their own as well as the competencies of their organisations. The essence of coaching is the time and space it provides to learn through action and a detachment from day-to-day activities. The opportunity to view the organization from a distance allows for clarity and insight. A coach acts as sounding board for testing new ideas and solutions in a way that those close to an Executive could not possible provide.

What Coaching Might Mean to Your Organization

However, the rapidly growing popularity of Executive Coaching has led to a cacophony of coaches and coaching styles from business coaching to life coaching. The rapid growth has also meant inadequate training, resulting in a failure to deliver on the expectations of those they attempt to coach. The credibility, training and competency of those offering their services as Executive Coaches has become a concern for institutions and professional bodies involved in maintaining and ensuring the quality of training and development. As a process and a profession still in its infancy, there is very little recognised training and or accreditation available for the development of coaches and managers who want to coaching skills to their management competencies. In summary the following are the key characteristics of coaching as it applies to organizations:

- a reflective practice based on a one-to-one relationship with the coach;
- tailored to the needs of the individual;

A Guide to Executive Coaching by Angélique du Toit

- stimulating growth in areas of organisational importance or weakness;
- present and future focused;
- action orientated;
- a non-directive intervention form of development;
- aimed at the development of individual performance and abilities

A Guide to Selecting a Suitable Coach

It is important for buyers of coaching to be vigilant when employing the services of a coach and to ensure the above characteristics are shared by the proposed coach. At present there is very little formal and credible training available to coaches nor professional accountability to guide and monitor the quality of the profession. Many therapists and counsellors are marketing their services under the banner of coaching and the managers need to be clear as to the type of coaching they require and the coaching style that would be appropriate to their needs. Although there is no blue print available to avoid making the wrong choice when selecting a coach, the following will act as a guideline:

- assess the need of the individual;
- should the services of an internal or external coach be employed;
- match the profile of the coach with that of the need of the individual, the issues to be explored and the organization;

- what is the relevant experience of the coach and what how much experience have they had;
- ensure you obtain testimonials from previous clients;
- how will quality be monitored during the coaching assignment;
- agree measurable outcomes for the coaching assignment;
- determine qualifications and any membership of professional bodies;
- match personal qualities and characteristics with the individuals they will coach

Conclusion

Despite the risks involved in selecting a suitable coach, there is growing research to suggest that there are powerful benefits to both the individual and the organization in employing coaching as a performance development tool. Furthermore, when successful, it is perceived as a sound investment which does impact the bottom line of an organization; coaching focuses on doing which impacts on the business.

As an Executive Coach of some eight years and an academic responsible for the education and development of future managers, it has been a personal crusade of the author to provide training and development to both aspiring coaches and managers. Sunderland Business School is one of the few institutions that offer a rigorous programme for those who want to develop their own skills and competencies in coaching.