Executive Life Coaching Implementation

The purpose of this section is to augment the Executive Life Coach Training program with tips that organizations can use to align coaching principles with the materials, communication, and delivery of coaching and consulting. Generally speaking, there are three major best practices when looking to implement a coaching program into an organization. The first is to get clear on the scope, structure, and expectations of the coach program. The second looks at the assumptions coaches or employees make about coaching and its application within an organization. And the third looks at elements of crafting a coaching culture with an awareness of both the scope and theory behind a successful and thriving coaching program.

Best Practice #1: Take time to clarify the intended outcome and measurements of success.

(This section is based on the ideas and model of creating a strategic outcome using the T.I.M.E. model found on page 49 in the Executive 1.0 Coach Training Guide.)

It is important to set the tone around the purpose of coaching and how it can support the companies objectives. Having a clear understanding of what the coach and employees are working toward is a crucial first step in determining how long the coaching relationship should be, who should participate in coaching, where a coach can help and where another service professional (such as a mentor or a counselor) might be more appropriate, and what can be realistically accomplished in the scope of the program. This also helps you as the coach design a program that supports the objectives of the organization. Some questions to consider are:

- What is the organizational goal for implementing a coaching program?
- Why now? Why do the stakeholders consider this program important?
- What is the criteria or measurement for success?
- What is your role in the process?

- What are the expectations that the organization has of you as the coach?

Best Practice #2: Explore approaches and assumptions about coaching

Part 1: Explore the balance in your approach between knowledge and empowerment bases.

When considering the balance between managing, consulting, or coaching in an organization, it's useful to look at two different models of providing value. The first model is the knowledge basis. In this model, the consultant or manager knows the path and the next steps to take. They have more knowledge and understanding of the resources required as well as those that are available to the organization. Knowledge of next best steps is extremely useful, which makes this model valuable. The downside to this model is that it doesn't necessarily empower employees to add ideas or suggestions or to try out different ways of doing something.

The second model is the empowerment basis. In this model, people are given the freedom to explore and take action steps they think will be the most useful. Working with someone from an empowerment basis relies on curiosity. It relies on asking excellent questions rather than giving advice. The coach's role is to explore, allowing the person being coached to do most of the work of arriving at new insights. Because the client arrived at their own insights — relying on their view and knowledge of the situation — it becomes an opportunity for them to grow both personally and professionally. Such growth is much more achievable and sustainable — and thus more useful — than trying to always have an outsider's solution or suggestion be the best answer.

The challenge in any organization or anyone working as a coach, manager, or consultant is in how to balance the approaches.

Part 2: Explore usual myths associated with coaching and asking for help.

This is an important step in the process as it sets a the tone for the coaching relationship. It helps clarify any misconceptions clients have about working with a coach. Coaching is really about gaining a skill set and increasing awareness, not just solving a problem. Essentially, coaching flips on its head the cultural stigma that asking for help means you are weak. It helps people see that getting help, even when you are doing well, means that you're strong. It means that you are more resilient because you have more resources.

- **Fixed Mindset (Theory of Entity Intelligence).**

  Those who embody this worldview assume that intelligence and skill are fixed or predetermined. In other words, you either "have it," or you don't. They set performance-oriented goals that showcase their inherent abilities and generate praising judgements from others. They define success by talent and view challenging tasks as negative reflections of their core identities - they believe that because their intelligence and skill are fixed, difficult tasks should be easy for them. Since success is deeply tied to their core identity, they tend to experience failure as a fixed reflection of their inherent incapacities and therefore avoid pursuing tasks that are difficult for them.

- **Growth Mindset (Theory of Incremental Intelligence).**

  Those who embody this worldview assume that intelligence and skill are malleable and limitless. In other words, with enough hard work and dedication, you can achieve anything. They set learning-oriented goals and actively seek out challenges, which they use to incrementally grow better or stronger at something. Since success is a mere product of the process of hard work, the hard work itself is their litmus test for well-being. They experience failure as an opportunity for learning, and tend to problem-solve when met with setbacks to map pathways for generating the knowledge or skill required for a given task.

Best Practice #3: Cultivate a Coaching Culture

The best practice when it comes to implementing a coaching program is to brand, define, and communicate coaching with the same level of care as the organization does to influence employee recruitment and hiring decisions. When you look at the communication an employee receives from their perspective, you can plant the seeds for a coaching culture that balances a knowledge and an empowerment basis when it comes to working with employees.

Balancing Invitations and Requirements

Now is your chance to conduct an internal audit of the messaging an employee receives from the moment they fill out an application to when they are approached with an offer letter. The following are questions to consider as you review the communication to employees before, during, and between coaching sessions from the perspective of the previous concepts.

Timeline

1. **Pre-session communication.**

   When organizations mandate coaching, or when they heavily recommend it, they often lose touch with the communication around the experience that makes employees want to participate. One of the trickiest aspects of communicating with employees about coaching is balancing the invitation to work with a coach while enforcing a requirement that an employee work with a coach. Usually when organizations rely too heavily on requiring coaching, the messages that employees receive makes establishing a coaching relationship that includes a safe space to dive deep into personal growth more challenging. The best practice in communicating with employees about the benefits of coaching is to adopt the perspective that you are creating and marketing a coaching program that employees have complete choice on whether or not to participate - as if you were an entrepreneur in your own organization crafting a package that would attract employees to participate, even if they had to pay extra for the service.

2. **During session communication.**

   The key here is the difference between having a conversation with an employee from a knowledge perspective versus an empowerment perspective. In general, coaching's empowerment perspective will structure conversations that place the coach in the role of asking powerful questions to stimulate the employees to self-reflect in order to learn and grow, rather than offering any direct knowledge or advice. Because of this approach, coaching sessions from an empowerment perspective naturally become more personally individualized to each employee and very fulfilling for them.

3. **Between session communication.**

   Depending on how you structure your coaching program (how many visits, when, whether it's congruent all the way through a quarter or year, etc.), we help you think about how to incentivize employee participation. What drives employees to come back is ultimately whether they're getting something out of these sessions, which the coaching approach naturally achieves. From pre-session communication to post session communication to communication during the whole year. Whether coaching is mandatory or voluntary, if they're getting something out of these sessions, they'll come back.

Here are some questions to consider:

- To what degree does the messaging speak to an empowerment v. knowledge paradigm?
- How is coaching introduced?
- How much of the message is based on explaining the process or requirements versus identifying perceived problems and benefits?
- How often do employees receive messages about coaching?
- What is the usual attitude that supervisors and executives have about the coaching program?
- How are employees who are struggling with their work identified?
- What happens when an employee expresses interest in coaching? (What are the resources available for employees to learn more about coaching before any sessions?)
- What is the method of communication after a coaching session?
- How is follow up and tracking progress in a coaching session designed?
- What is the engagement and show rate for coaching sessions?
- To what degree does coaching culture influence your department and its executives?
- What is the balance between empowerment and knowledge you want to create for employees throughout the entire coaching experience?