

Coaching: When Time and Tenure are Not Enough

Q What is executive coaching?

A Executive coaching is a partnership and process whose purpose is to enhance performance, ease a transition, improve competence, or develop potential. The process typically includes detailed feedback on strengths and weaknesses, development of an action plan, and ongoing advice and counsel in how to strategically change behavior or develop competence.



Q What are the steps involved?

A A typical PBS coaching engagement includes (1) clarifying the reason or rationale for the coaching, (2) reviewing the role and its requirements, (3) selecting and/or reviewing standardized assessments (such as personality surveys, 360 degree performance appraisals, or an interview), (4) providing in-depth feedback to the candidate on individual strengths and weaknesses, (5) working with the candidate to identify performance goals and strategies for change/development, (6) verifying alignment of individual goals with corporate needs and expectations, (7) providing support and counsel in implementing change initiatives, and (8) measuring progress and evaluating success.

Q How can coaching be successful when people generally are not open to change?

A The goal of a coaching engagement is not to fundamentally change who someone is, but to enhance their performance or develop their potential. The goal is not to change the person but to change their behavior. Coaching focuses on making sure that the person understands how to manage and adapt his/her approach to the specifics of the situation and/or to achieve the desired impact. It is a process of helping people to become more self aware, to learn the right lessons, and to consider alternative approaches.

Q When is coaching appropriate?

A Coaching works well to:

- guide professional (and/or high potential) development.
- ease a role transition.
- provide in-depth feedback necessary for behavior change.
- enhance personal mastery/competence.
- prevent career derailment and/or remove obstacles to success.
- promote work-life balance.
- realign performance with expectations.
- prepare for changing role requirements or performance expectations.
- develop an individual career path.
- build bench strength.

In short, coaching is effective any time you want to build skills, enhance performance, realign effort, and/or prepare someone for a new role/challenge.

Q How can we tell if a coaching engagement was successful?

A It is our experience that people who participate in coaching report that the process was one of the most meaningful and significant experiences of their professional career. That alone is valuable, yet rarely sufficient to justify the time and expense of a coaching engagement. We believe it is imperative to begin each coaching

engagement by defining the criteria for success – that is, what does the organization expect to see 6 or 12 months down the road as a result of the coaching? It is important to define the target outcomes when we begin so that the objective is clear, the coaching is focused, and its success is measureable.

Q Why use coaching instead of a more structured development strategy?

A Coaching is high impact. It is tailored to the individual – his/her strengths and development needs, opportunities, performance history, and career goals. Coaching supports change by tailoring the approach, methods, and content to the needs of the person being coached. It is focused and encourages practice in a real-world context and as a result achieves positive results quickly.

Q Is coaching really only used for executives?

A Not at all. Coaching can be, and is, effective at all levels and for all jobs. Generally, however, executives and/or managers assume responsibility for coaching their own direct reports. They can, however, use many of the skills they have learned through coaching to effectively develop others.