

When is an Executive Coach Right for Your Organization?

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For HR managers one of the challenging parts of the job is improving employee performance. If you could replicate yourself 10, 20 or even 100 times, you could accomplish more work, including coaching all the employees in your respective organization. If a part of your role is to develop employees and you have been wondering about whether an executive coach is right for your organization, this article will help you identify the key criteria to consider.

Executive coaching has emerged in recent years as a powerful and ever more popular way to develop leadership skills. Recent studies conducted with Fortune 500 companies indicated that leadership coaching consistently delivers value in several types of situations. When managers discuss an employee's performance, it is usually because the performance is either very good or very poor. Ironically, these are also the two most common situations where coaches are used.

The organization will rely on the skills of an executive coach when they need to get a high performer up to speed fairly quickly. The coach works with the person to identify specific competencies that the organization feels are important for the next role and assesses the person's skill level against those competencies. Coaching can be very effective when used in this manner as it:

- allows the individual to gain an understanding very quickly of the skills needing improvement
- reinforces the individual's belief that the company values him and is willing to invest time and resources in his development.

In the second scenario, a coach can be used for an employee who is not performing well and the company wants to give the person one final chance to improve his performance. In this case, coaching works when the employee:

- is motivated to make a change in behavior
- can feel positive about the company's willingness to take the time to invest in the development of his skills.

Regardless of which scenario you find your employee in, a good executive coach should:

- help the employee choose the right skill building activities
- hold the employee accountable to learning skills to improve the competencies
- routinely schedule review meetings
- encourage the employee if setbacks are encountered
- recognize and celebrate accomplishments
- provide helpful advice
- be honest and direct with the employee

The role for HR managers is to determine when the situation calls for an executive coach, and whether that coach should be external or internal. The internal coach comes from within the company and is tasked with creating a mentoring type of relationship with the employee. HR can help make that match (software is available to accomplish this easily) and sets up the coaching relationship. HR is also asked to source the external coach while ensuring the right coach is matched to the right employee.

Determining whether to use an internal or external resource depends on several criteria including:

- Internal coach availability
- Internal coach's skill sets possessed
- Length of time available to improve individual's skill level
- Funding

After you have assessed the individual's motivation level to change and your company's development resources, then you can determine whether an internal or external coach is best for your employee. Refer to the Coaching Options Chart below to help you make this decision. Once you have set up the coaching arrangement, the HR manager should monitor the relationship. However, you should remember that the employee's success is not solely determined by picking the perfect coach, but rather by the employee taking responsibility for his own life. ●

Employee Motivation to change	Organization's Development Resources	
	Low	High
Many	Consider other development options	Internal Coach
Few	Consider other development options	External Coach

