

Coaching- A Leadership Development Tool

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ABSTRACT : Does coaching really work? Does it help improve leadership effectiveness? This empirical study aims to answer these questions by tracking the progress of 50 executives participating in a six-month coaching and 360 feedback process. The effectiveness of coaching session on the five Leadership competencies (Self-management, People Management, Business Communication, Decision-making and Customer relation) was studied. A 360 degree survey was implemented to get feedback from Boss, peers, and direct reports before and after the individual coaching sessions. The results suggest that the combination of multi-rater feedback and individual coaching do increase leadership effectiveness. Implication of the results for further study is discussed.

Keywords: Coaching, Competencies, Decision Making, Leadership, 360 degree feedback.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, executive coaching combined with 360 degree feedback has been one of the fastest growing executive development options within global companies (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Judge and Cowell, 1997)[1]. Despite the lack of hard numbers on coaching results, the literature is filled with numerous articles on the types and processes of coaching (Cunningham, 1991; Diedrich, 1996; Flaherty, 1999; Hargrove, 1995; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Judge and Cowell, 1997; Kilburg, 2000; Koonce, 1994; Saporito, 1996; Thach and Heinselman, 2000)[2][3] and in the last few years many new organizations and consulting firms have sprung up to offer coaching as a service (Hall et al., 1999). In anecdotal conversations with executives and human resource professionals, most profess to be pleased with the results, but are hard-pressed to provide quantitative data to support their viewpoint.

II. COACHING

Kilburg (1996)[4] defines executive coaching as “A helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority . . . in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals . . . within a formally defined coaching agreement. This definition is very inclusive of most concepts espoused in other descriptions provided in the literature (Flaherty, 1999; Hargrove, 1995; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Judge and Cowell, 1997; Koonce, 1994; Thach and Heinselman, 2000)[5].

The coaching Process

Many articles and books have been written on the process of “how to do coaching?” and vary from three to six steps in length (Cunningham, 1991; Flaherty, 1999; Hargrove, 1995; Hudson, 1999; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Kiel et al., 1996; Koonce, 1994; Kilburg, 1996, 2000). Likewise, there are lists of coaching methods and techniques, which range from 360 degree assessment and feedback to training, simulations, role playing, and confrontations just to name a few. In general, the process of coaching includes the following three phases: In the **contracting phase**, the coach and client (which can sometimes be the individual client and / or the organization) develop an agreement regarding the coaching contract. This includes the goals of the coaching, estimated resources, time and confidentiality commitment, potential methods and cost. Often several planning conversations occur in order to come to agreement on a written contract. The **second phase** involves some sort of data collection. This often takes the form of 360 degree assessments, personality and skill inventories and / or one-on-one interviews by the coach with direct reports, peers, the manager, and customers of the client. The **third phase** consumes the largest amount of time - the coaching phase. The coaching phase includes follow-up meetings to assess progress, observe client interactions, offer advice and support and eventually to assist the client in evaluating the results of the coaching process and terminate the relationship.

Multi-rater, or 360 degree feedback has been defined as the process of: Gathering information about a person’s behavior from a boss or bosses, direct reports, colleagues and other key stakeholders such as customers and suppliers (Lepsinger and Lucia, 1997)[6]. In the present study a 360 degree questionnaire was administered with the five Leadership competencies (Self-management, People Management, Business Communication, Decision-making and Change management) to get feedback from peers, direct reports and boss.

III. METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 50 Managers, age ranging from 30 - 35 years with work experience of 10 - 15 years, for the present study. They were all working at a mid-size IT-ITES organization from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India with Headquarter in USA. Specific criteria for the sample were set: must hold the title of manager, worked in the current position at the company for at least six months.

Procedure

The present study was conducted in three stages and Spanned over a period of six months, monthly two sessions of 1 - 2 hours of individual coaching sessions. The details are given below:

Stage I: During this stage, 360 degree survey was administered to the executives. An online survey was triggered to the 50 managers, their peers, direct reports and their bosses. The survey included 30 items, measuring 5 leadership competencies using a five-point rating (satisfaction) scale, with 1 being “Very unsatisfied,” and 5 being “Very satisfied.” It took approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete the survey. Access to this survey was restricted to maintain confidentiality. Final results were mailed directly to the coach for review. The coach discussed with the Manager’s for one hour, for survey debriefs session. The one hour meeting allowed the coach to assist in the analysis of the 360 degree feedback and preliminary drafting of a development plan based on the results.

Stage II: Coaching session. During this session, the coach discussed with the executives how the follow-up conversations went? And finalized the development plan, including specific actions the Managers would begin to implement. Examples of development actions could include behavior changes as simple as saying thank you to direct reports or as time consuming as attending a two week intensive seminar.

Stage III: Termination of the coaching session. In this stage, the managers are reassesses and briefed upon to keep track of their development plan for continuous growth. An hour face-to-face coaching is planned, in which, the coach and Manager assessed the results of implementing the development plan to date, identified any obstacles or issues, modified the plan, if necessary and prepared again for the executive to follow-up informally with peers, direct reports and manager again to seek feedback on results to date.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

% of increase in Leadership Effectiveness								
Leadership Competencies	N	According to Self	N	According to Boss	N	According to Peer	N	According to Direct Reports
Self- Management	50	70%	50	60%	100	30%	120	59%
People Management	50	60%	50	60%	100	48%	120	62%
Customer Relation	50	60%	50	55%	100	50%	120	62%
Decision- making	50	58%	50	65%	100	50%	120	48%
Business Communication	50	50%	50	50%	100	49%	120	66%

TABLE-I Mean Percentage of increase in the Leadership Effectiveness

Table 1 shows the Mean Percentage of increase in the Leadership Effectiveness. As a result of the coaching sessions, there is a significant percentage of increase in the Leadership Effectiveness as perceived by self, peers, Boss and direct reports. An average increase of 30 to 60 % noticed in the 360 degree post survey, direct reports, peers and managers rated leadership effectiveness as having as a result on the overall coaching and 360 degree process. Furthermore, this study illustrates that more frequent follow-up and interaction with 360 degree raters during the coaching and improvement cycle, results in higher ratings of Leadership Effectiveness on the post 360 degree survey. Managers, who received coaching, shows significantly improved percentage performance on all the five competencies of Leadership Effectiveness. They have significantly progressed toward attaining their nominated workplace goals as observed by others to have increased leadership behaviours. This would suggest that at the individual level, the coaching process is beneficial to both the felt and observed experience of those coached. Finally, this study supports the positive impact of coaching in terms of developing leaders.

The findings of the present study are corroborated with the results of Linley et al.,[7] 2010; Green et al., 2006; Spence and Grant, 2007[8]; Grant et al[9]., 2010; Cerni et al.,2010 in supporting the relationship between coaching and improvement in transformational leadership measures. It also supports in establishing an empirical link between coaching and increases in psychological well-being and goal attainment.

V. CONCLUSION

There is a significant improvement in the Mean percentage of Leadership Effectiveness in managers as a result of coaching program The coaching session has a positive impact on the Leadership Effectiveness

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