

# Maximise your leadership coaching investment



Coaching is invaluable for today's high-level executives who must operate in a complex workplace, that requires its leaders to succeed under intense pressure and produce quick results. *David Wee*, managing director of Lee Hecht Harrison observes that leaders must be agile and innovative while simultaneously adhering to proven practices

**T**oday, coaching is a strategic investment used when identifying and developing future leaders of an organisation, as well as those currently in challenging leadership positions. It is a competitive advantage that companies need to include in their strategic planning.

Here are some principles of successful coaching which will aid in producing investment results for your organisation.

## Coaching should be linked to measurable outcomes

The coach and the executive should plan a developmental schedule that has both behavioural and business outcomes as determinants of success. When changes on the job can be quantified and evaluated for the business, a return on the investment occurs for both the individual and the organisation.

## Coaching requires candid feedback and supportive confrontation

Coaches must be able to communicate in a way that helps an executive become more self-aware and better able to make in-the-moment behaviour adjustments based on situational needs.

## Coaches can be both inside the organisation and external

The most successful combination of coaching in an organisation is the use of internal coaching practices by line managers who are on the job and can provide immediate feedback and support, and external coaches for those executives who need an outside perspective provided by trusted senior partners who are not stakeholders.

## Coaching is most effective when targeted at the right person, in the right situation and at the right time

When an organisation decides to invest in coaching for an executive, the payoff will be greater if there are key deliverables the executive is tasked to achieve in the business, has the authority and influence to make those happen, and is open to learning new and creative approaches. Coaching is less effective if offered with no driving issue or internal sponsor to support it.

Coaching is a critical part of an organisation's business strategy to retain high performers and develop high potential employees for future leadership positions. In today's global marketplace, organisations should think of it as an investment that will return measurable outcomes for the individual and the business. **HRM**

## 10 leadership tips

### 1 Shared leadership is the most powerful leadership

The most effective leaders develop other leaders. They share authority, influence accountability with peers and direct reports, even when it may be easier to do it alone.

### 2 Leadership must be an organisational capability, not just an individual competency

Organisations that invest in both current and emerging leaders look at talent as an asset, and they get a higher return on that asset than their competitors.

### 3 Leadership is developed on the job with trusted advisors

Without those whom they can trust to advise and coach, support for development and change does not get reinforced.

### 4 Get comfortable with ambiguity

When you need to make decisions without having all the necessary information, you are operating in the most powerful learning environment.

### 5 Learn without blame

Future leaders must learn to assess value and calculate risk without worrying about punishment. Otherwise, you create fearful, cautious followers.

### 6 Play around with it – there is more than one 'right' answer

Show them your own critical thinking and problem-solving process and be open to new ideas or by leaving the discussion for the moment without a decision.

### 7 Diagnose, focus and shift

Leadership is about much more than just mastery; it is about agility: the 'intentional selection of when' to use a specific skill and when to move on. Disengagement can be as important as engagement.

### 8 Thrive on paradox

Paradox and competing demands on a leader will only intensify in the future. How you work 'with' them, not 'against' them, will determine your sustained effectiveness.

### 9 Be a purposeful initiator

One who anticipates and creates change to serve both your organisation and your people.

### 10 Take the long view, work the short term

Look at each situation with both the immediate needs and the long-term strategy in view and be willing to weigh the choices and options from both perspectives.