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What Are the Academic Findings About the Impact of Coaching on Individual and Organizational Performance?

Abstract

[Excerpt] The definition of coaching has evolved alongside developments in Organizational Psychology and Human Resources. One such definition is, “a helping and facilitative process that enables individuals, groups/teams and organizations to acquire new skills, to improve existing skills, competence and performance, and to enhance their personal effectiveness or personal development or personal growth.”

For this Executive Summary, we mainly focus on two subsets of coaching: Manager and Executive coaching.

Keywords

HR, human resources, coaching, mentorship, executive coaching, managerial coaching, learning, retention, organizational citizenship behavior, employee engagement, organizational performance, surveys, feedback, control groups, measurement

Comments

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Executive Summary

“Coaching is a relatively new profession yet arguably as old as human communication itself. Socrates is sometimes said to be the first coach... ‘I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think.’”ⁱ

Question:

What are the academic findings about the impact of coaching on individual and organizational performance?

Definition:

The definition of coaching has evolved alongside developments in Organizational Psychology and Human Resources. One such definition is, “a helping and facilitative process that enables individuals, groups/teams and organizations to acquire new skills, to improve existing skills, competence and performance, and to enhance their personal effectiveness or personal development or personal growth.”ⁱⁱ

For this Executive Summary, we mainly focus on two subsets of coaching: Manager and Executive coaching, defined in Appendix A.

Impact of Managerial Coaching

The body of empirical research on Managerial coaching is not extensive but is growing. Of the studies available, many find positive correlations between Managerial coaching and individual behavior change. Noteworthy examples include studies which found:

- Managerial coaching has a positive influence on employees’ personal learning, organizational learning and turnover intention.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Managerial coaching improves employee organizational citizen behaviors and in-role performance.^{iv}
- Employee perception of their manager’s coaching behavior positively correlates with their own perceived work engagement.^v

It could be argued that the above results: increased learning, retention, organizational citizenship behaviors, in-role performance, and engagement of employees, also lead to improved organizational performance. Though there is not a wealth of literature that directly connect Managerial coaching and organizational performance, one recent study discovered a strong association between the two. The study found:

- A manager’s coaching skill directly related to the annual sales goal attainment of the representatives that they supervised.^{vi}

In this study, coaching skill and role clarity, explained the variability in sales goal attainment between districts. Sales representatives who worked for low-skilled coaches, exhibited worse sales performance.^{vii} See Appendix B for more details.

Limitations:

Not all managers are the same. The impact of coaching depends on whether a coach exhibits positive coaching behaviors, which lead them to perform effectively as manager.^{viii} See Appendix C for a list of relevant behaviors. Additionally, political, societal and technological factors may affect the performance of Managerial coaches, as shown in Appendix D.^{ix}

Impact of Executive Coaching:

Most organizations promote and support Executive coaching in the belief that such changes will improve leadership effectiveness. As a result, the Executive coaching industry has grown large enough to generate approximately 2 billion dollars annually.^x Despite the widespread use of Executive coaching, there is little empirical research which connect the practice to improved individual and organizational performance. Key issues in quantifying Executive coaching outcomes are:

- It's contextual/situational use, the difficulty to find best-fit professional coaches, and a reluctance in academia to agree on desired outcomes from the coaching process^{xi}

While empirical research surrounding Executive coaching is lacking as a whole, there are a few small-scale studies, which confirm some positive impacts of Executive coaching. These studies have found:

- The presence of Executive coaches improved direct report and supervisor ratings, (the measured change in ratings was positive but small).^{xii}
- The Executive coach–coachee relationship played a mediating role between the coaching received and development of the coachees' self-efficacy^{xiii}
- 360-degree feedback and coaching showed an increase in perceived leadership effectiveness of executives^{xiv}

Limitations:

The typical coaching study does not include a true experiment with random assignment. Thus, the coaching engagements that are evaluated are more likely to have positive outcomes because Executives are selected to receive coaching based on criteria designed to maximize the impact of coaching. This means that any observed positive benefits cannot necessarily be generalized to people who have not received coaching.^{xv} Additionally, Executive coaching is not a one size fits all model. Executive coaching may be so tailored towards one individual, that generalizing positive impacts of the practice as a whole may be difficult.

Conclusion:

This summary looked at the academic findings about the impact of coaching on individual and organizational performance. Our findings suggest that it is not only important to look at academia to validate Managerial and Executive coaching, but also for organizations to take internal measures to evaluate the impact of their coaching systems as well. Surveys, feedback and control groups are some suggestions in coaching literature of how organizations can successfully do this. For more measurement ideas, see Appendix E.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Wilson, C. (2014). *Performance Coaching: A Complete Guide to Best Practice Approaches*. Kogan Page. Chapter 1
- ⁱⁱ Ellinger, A., Hamlin, R., & Beattie, R. (2009). Toward a Profession of Coaching? A Definitional Examination of ‘Coaching,’ ‘Organization Development,’ and ‘Human Resource Development.’ *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 7(1).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Park, S., Yang, B., & McLean, G. N. (2008). *An Examination of Relationships between Managerial Coaching and Employee Development*.
- ^{iv} Kim, S., & Kuo, M.-H. (2015). Examining the Relationships Among Coaching, Trustworthiness, and Role Behaviors: A Social Exchange Perspective. *Sage Publishers*, 51(2), 152–176.
- ^v Ladyshevsky, R., & Ross, T. (2017). Employee perceptions of Managerial coaching and work engagement using the Measurement Model of Coaching Skills and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*. Aug2017, Vol. 15, P25-42. 18p., 15(2).
- ^{vi} Dahling, J., Ritchie Taylor, S., Chau, S., & Dwight, S. (2016). Does Coaching Matter? A Multilevel Model Linking Managerial Coaching Skill and Frequency to Sales Goal Attainment. *Personnel Psychology*, (69), 863–894.
- ^{vii} Dahling, J., Ritchie Taylor, S., Chau, S., & Dwight, S. (2016). Does Coaching Matter? A Multilevel Model Linking Managerial Coaching Skill and Frequency to Sales Goal Attainment. *Personnel Psychology*, (69), 863–894.
- ^{viii} Cox, E., Bachkirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. (2010). *The Complete Handbook of Coaching*. Sage Publisher.
- ^{ix} Ellinger, A., Beattie, R., Hamlin, R., Wang, Y.-L., & Trolan, O. (2006). *The Manager as Coach: A Review of Empirical Literature and the Development of a Tentative Model of Managerial Coaching*
- ^x Mulvie, A. (2015). *The Value of Executive Coaching*. Routledge. Page 2.
- ^{xi} Mulvie, A. (2015). *The Value of Executive Coaching*. Routledge. Page 71.
- ^{xii} Levenson, A. (2009). Measuring and Maximizing the Business Impact of Executive Coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research*, 61(2), 103–121. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.cornell.edu/10.1037/a0015438>
- ^{xiii} Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2009). The Coach–Coachee Relationship in Executive Coaching: A Field Study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20(1).
- ^{xiv} Thach, E. (2002). The impact of executive coaching and 360 feedback on leadership effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 23, 205–214.
- ^{xv} Levenson, A. (2009). Measuring and Maximizing the Business Impact of Executive Coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research*, 61(2), 103–121. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.cornell.edu/10.1037/a0015438>

Appendix:

Appendix A: Definitions of Executive and Managerial Coaching

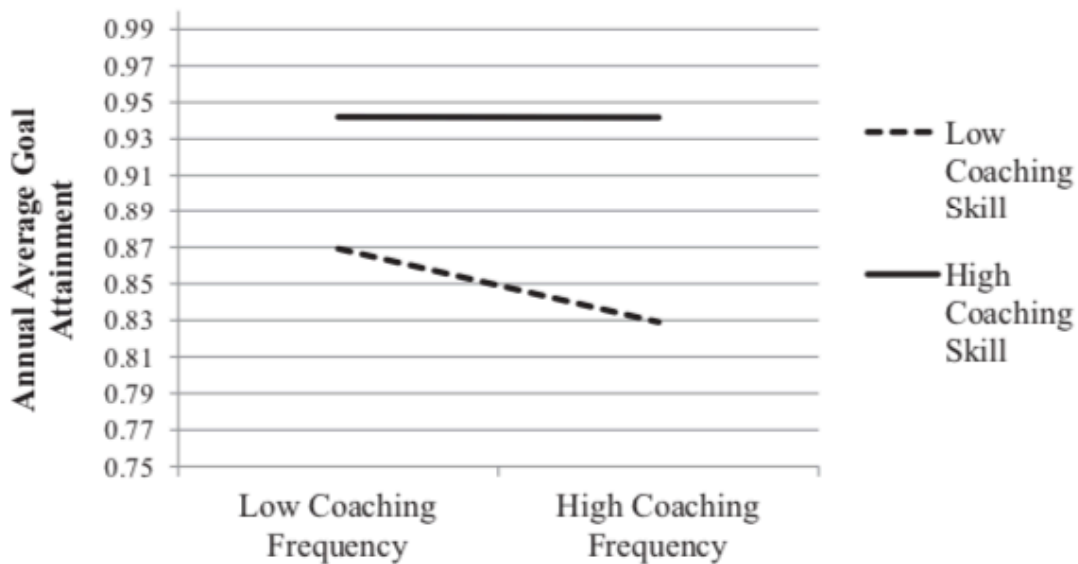
Executive Coaching: “a process that primarily (but not exclusively) takes place within a one-to-one helping and facilitative relationship between a coach and an Executive (or a manager) that enables the Executive (or a manager) to achieve personal, job or organizational-related goals with an intention to improve organizational performance.”

Source: Ellinger, A., Hamlin, R., & Beattie, R. (2009). Toward a Profession of Coaching? A Definitional Examination of ‘Coaching,’ ‘Organization Development,’ and ‘Human Resource Development.’ *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 7(1).). 2. Lawrence, P. (2017).

Managerial Coaching: “a non-directive, both developmental and goal focused, and salient on the extent to which managers are encouraged to explore underlying issues.”

Source: Managerial Coaching—A literature review. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 15(2).)

Appendix B: Sales Attainment Goal and its Relation to Coaching Skill:



Source: Dahling, J., Ritchie Taylor, S., Chau, S., & Dwight, S. (2016). Does Coaching Matter? A Multilevel Model Linking Managerial Coaching Skill and Frequency to Sales Goal Attainment. *Personnel Psychology*, (69), 863–894.

Appendix C: Academic Literature on Positive Coaching Behaviors:

Ellinger's (1997) and Ellinger & Bostrom's (2002) Behavioral Taxonomy

The empowering cluster:

- Question framing to encourage employees to think through issues;
- Being a resource – removing obstacles;
- Transferring ownership to employees;
- Holding back- not providing the answers.

The facilitating cluster:

- Providing feedback to employees;
- Soliciting feedback from employees;
- Working it out together – talking it through;
- Creating and promoting a learning environment;
- Setting and communicating expectations;
- Stepping in to other to shift perspectives;
- Broadening employees' perspectives – getting them to see things differently;
- Using analogies, scenarios and examples;
- Engaging others to facilitate learning.

Beattie's (2002) Behavioral Taxonomy:

- Thinking- reflective or prospective thinking;
- Information- sharing knowledge;
- Empowering – delegation, trust;
- Assessing – feedback and recognition, identifying developmental needs
- Advising- instruction, coaching, guidance, counselling
- Being professional – role model, standard setting, planning and preparation;
- Caring – support, encouragement, approachable, reassurance, commitment/involvement, empathy;
- Developing others;
- Challenging employees to stretch themselves

Source: Cox, E., Bachkirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. (2010). *The Complete Handbook of Coaching*. Sage Publisher. Page 261

The McLean 4-dimensional framework:

- Open communication
- Team approach
- Value people over task
- Accept ambiguity
- Facilitate development

Source: Park, S., & Young, B. (2008). *Revision and Validation of an Instrument Measuring Managerial Coaching Skills in Organizations*.

The Gregory and Levy Perceived Quality of the Employee Coaching Relationship Scale:

Dimension	Items
Genuineness of the Relationship	1. My supervisor and I have mutual respect for one another. 2. I believe that my supervisor truly cares about me. 3. I believe my supervisor feels a sense of commitment to me.
Effective Communication	4. My supervisor is a good listener. 5. My supervisor is easy to talk to. 6. My supervisor is effective at communicating with me.
Comfort with the Relationship	7. I feel at ease talking with my supervisor about my job performance. 8. I am content to discuss my concerns or troubles with my supervisor. 9. I feel safe being open and honest with my supervisor.
Facilitating Development	10. My supervisor helps me to identify and build upon my strengths. 11. My supervisor enables me to develop as an employee of our organisation. 12. My supervisor engages in activities that help me to unlock my potential.

Source: Ladyshefsky, R., & Ross, T. (2017). Employee perceptions of managerial coaching and work engagement using the Measurement Model of Coaching Skills and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*. Aug2017, Vol. 15, P25-42. 18p., 15(2).

Appendix D: Environmental Factors that Influence Managerial Coaching

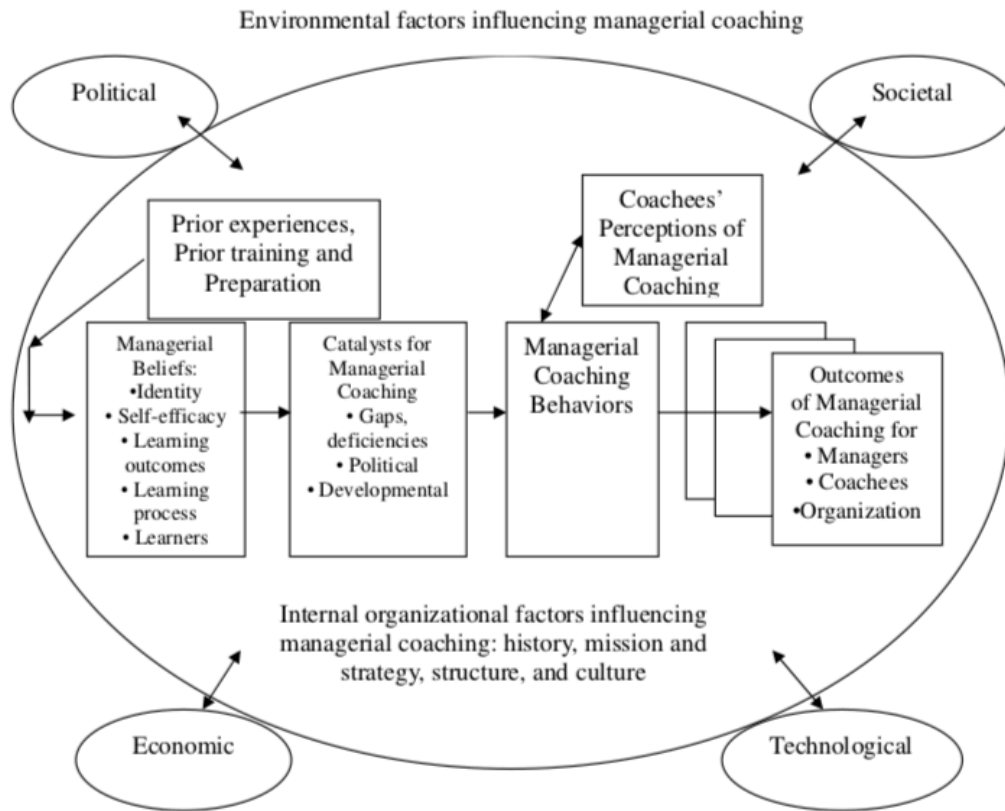


Figure 1. Tentative model of managerial coaching
Copyright ©2006 Ellinger, Beattie, Hamlin, Wang, & Trolan

Source: Ellinger, A., Beattie, R., Hamlin, R., Wang, Y.-L., & Trolan, O. (2006). *The Manager as Coach: A Review of Empirical Literature and the Development of a Tentative Model of Managerial Coaching*.

Appendix E: Tips for Measuring Coaching Impacts as an Organization

- Measure survey feedback. For example, a post-coaching event survey could ask the following questions:
 - o What are the three key benefits you have gained?
 - o Where will you use them in your work?
 - o What tangible benefits have there been for you?
 - o What are the tangible benefits for your organization?
 - o What intangible benefits have there been?
- Measure the retention of those who are coached, verses retention of those who are not coached
- Measure whether those coached are promoted.
- Have managers assess attitudes and behaviors of their direct reports.

Source: Wilson, C. (2014). *Performance Coaching: A Complete Guide to Best Practice Approaches*. Kogan Page. Chapter 1.

Kirkpatrick's 4 Levels of Training Evaluation and Phillips and Phillips ROI Measure:



Sources: Mulvie, A. (2015). *The Value of Executive Coaching*. Routledge.

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Suggested Further Reading:

Cox, E., Bachkirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. (2010). *The Complete Handbook of Coaching*. Sage Publisher.

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