Does coaching work or are we asking the wrong question?

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Within the context of an expanding market for coaching in all its forms organisations are asking the questions 'Does coaching work?' They seek evidence of a return on investment. We argue within this paper that this is the wrong question. Before we can ask whether coaching works we must ask how is it being used, is a coherent framework of practice and finally is it perceived or quantified as being effective within that framework?

We review the practitioner and academic literature as well as our own research to address each of these questions in turn. We posit a framework of practice based upon the coaching agenda identify by coachee and coach within the contracting phase of the engagement. This encompasses the coaching mode and role as well as the supervisory relationships which exist. The research literature is then considered in the context of the framework.

Keywords: coaching, evidence, review, return on investment, external, internal, manager.

SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATIONS IN the emerging knowledge economy innovate continually to maintain their place in such a dynamic marketplace. But it is the individual employee who must develop the flexibility and creativity needed to effectively drive growth and deliver appropriate results. They expect (and are expected) to constantly upgrade their technical and leadership skills. Whilst individuals view this professional development as predominantly their own responsibility, they look to their organisation to partner them in accessing and resourcing it (Lane *et al.*, 2000). The challenge for the employer is how to achieve this within the constraints of efficient time and financial resource management.

In facing this challenge organisations are turning away from the traditional training initiatives with the implied ethos of one size fits all. Flexibility and speed of response are imperative and thus development has become more person-centred and tailored to the individual. In this environment it is, therefore, unsurprising that coaching has grown in popularity as an option to meet the emerging needs of organisations and as such has become widespread and well accepted.

As identified by Dr Michael Cavanagh in his keynote address at the 2nd Annual Conference of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology at the BPS, *'coaching has been around too long to be a management fad.'*

It is an established part of the development portfolio available to the executive.

The market is still growing and recent estimates put its size as $2bn per year. In this context, it is not surprising that the question being raised by buyers of coaching is 'Does it work?'

In other words does coaching provide a return on its investment in driving performance up and impacting on the bottom line?

We argue here that this is the wrong question.

Before we can ask whether coaching works we must ask what it is being used for. Is all coaching addressing similar aims which can be quantified by a standard method or is there a number of purposes to the coaching? If the latter, then we need to consider if these purposes are coherent and form part of a framework of practice for the profession or whether the aims are too disparate to formalise.

We have looked to the academic and practitioner literatures to address this issue

as well as our own research. It is clear that coaching practice has evolved almost a quickly as it has grown and there are now a range of roles, coaching models and frameworks of practice. At first sight there seems to be a diversity of practice where few established norms can be assumed.

It can be argued that such diversity is to be welcomed, and indeed expected, as coaches respond to the individual needs of the client. We would agree if we were considering the *process* of coaching only, i.e. the nature and description of the coaching relationship. But within this paper we are looking at how coaching is being used, its *purpose*, and if it is considered effective by its clients and their sponsoring organisations. Therefore, as a review document this work does not fully expand upon underpinning issues such as the emergence and development of learning organisations nor does it explicitly cite the psychology literature which underpins the process of coaching.

Instead we have reviewed the academic literature on the efficacy of coaching published between 1990–2004 although where there is insufficient work some references are cited from 1930s. Similarly we have identified the general trend of the practitioner publications (both articles and books) to identify the focus of practice. We will also draw upon our own research into the experience of over 30 HR directors or buyers of coaching (Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis, 2006).

The first point of note is that in common with previous reviewers (Kampa & White, 2002) we have found that the evidence base for coaching has not increased at the same rate as practice. Research into the efficacy of coaching has lagged behind and it has only started to develop seriously over the last five years. As identified by Grant (Grant, 2003) the literature is at the point of expansion in response to the practice development.

We have focussed our interest on the following questions:
1. How is coaching being used within organisations and who is doing it?

2. Is there a coherent framework of practice across the identified modes of coaching?
3. Is it perceived or quantified as being effective?

The consideration of these questions structures the rest of this paper. Within it we identify the coaching agenda or purpose to be an underpinning concept which allows us to develop a framework of practice which encompasses both coaching mode and role. It is against this framework that the question can then be asked 'Does it work?'

1. How is coaching being used within an organisation?

The School of Coaching survey (Kubicek, 2002) last year provided data on which coaching modes are being used within organisations:
● 51 per cent used external coaches;
● 41 per cent trained internal coaches; and
● 79 per cent manager coaches.

We will consider each of these in turn and also briefly mention team coaches.

External coaches

Various surveys have been undertaken in recent years to investigate the use of this type of coaching within the UK; the Coaching Study (2004) published by UCE (a survey of 1153 organisations across the UK) and The Institute of Employment Studies (IES) report (Carter, 2001) are but two of them. Each sought to identify what coaches were being commissioned to do within organisations. Considering this information together with the journal and research literature we can group the potential functions for an external coach under two main headings:
1. The coaching of a senior executive to their own agenda;
2. The coaching of managers after training to consolidate knowledge acquisition and work with the individual to support and facilitate resulting behaviour change in relation to a specific organisational agenda.

The tasks associated with the first function included; supporting the induction of a senior manager, supporting particular individuals identified as high potential or as targets for extra support, and acting as a critical friend or sounding board for a senior manager where mentors are not appropriate or practical. It is also clear that coaching is being seen as a reward for senior managers and part of a retention package. Indeed it has been noted within the IES (Carter, 2001) study that the phenomenon of 'coaching envy' is a reality for the members of its research forum. As cited by (Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999), *'Executives like the confidentiality and personal attention: they also like what coaching does for their careers.'*

So once coaching is introduced to a company other executives within the company want a coach.

Traditionally within this first option the coaching agenda is totally free and defined only by the coachee. It is not even constrained to the work role but allows exploration of any issues that the coachee identifies as interesting. In our previous study on the efficacy of coaching (Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis, 2006) we found that organisations were increasingly aware of the potential difficulties for an organisation of 'free agenda' coaching. These include a perceived 'lack of control' with the potential for distraction of the coachee from the primary task and also the lack of a defined return on investment. In addition there is the real possibility that the coachee may be 'coached out of a job'.

Organisations react to this latter issue in one of two ways: either by acknowledging that the coaching is revealing a hidden problem thereby creating an opportunity to manage it effectively, or by reducing the potential for this type of crisis to occur by restricting the agenda of the coaching at the start of the contract.

In the latter strategy the sponsoring organisation will seek to have a more direct involvement in the contracting phase usually through involvement with the line manager or the HR department. Within our own research HR directors were increasingly requiring their external coaches to undergo a familiarisation process covering the company's culture and ethos and to undertake to keep within a proscribed agenda.

The issues identified within the coaching agenda will, in general, be diverse and the external coach can be working at a variety of levels of engagement. Categorisation of these levels of engagement has been developing within the literature for some time. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) identify three generic levels:

● Skills coaching which can be of short duration and which requires the coach to focus on specific behaviours;
● Performance coaching which will focus on the process by which the coachee can set goals, overcome obstacles, and evaluate and monitor their performance; and finally
● Developmental coaching which takes a broader more holistic view often dealing with more intimate, personal and professional questions. This can involve the creation of a personal reflective space rather like what they call 'therapy for the people who don't need therapy'.

Other categorisations have been also been developed, for example, Witherspoon and White (1996) identify four distinct roles for the coach: coaching for skills, for performance, for development and for the executive's agenda. For Peterson (1996) there are three different types: targeted, intensive and executive. At the present time there are no universally identified definitions of these roles. But it is clear that the level of competence and skill required of the coach increases with the level of engagement and at the highest level it is generally acknowledged that a mastery of practice is needed. Defining what 'mastery' of practice means in this context has been the work of professional bodies in recent years and the interested reader is referred to their websites and publications for further information.

It is whilst considering these levels that the concepts of professional practice, i.e. specified body of knowledge, accreditation, ethical basis of practice, are brought into focus (Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper, 2000). As Lane (2006) points out, *'This is not proposed as an argument that only psychologists should coach but rather that those who work as coaches to address complex personal and professional development should adopt the hallmarks of a profession and work to an evidence based agenda rather than promote untested propriety models built on ideas drawn from sources both spurious and credible.'*

Primary to this goal is the supervision of the coach. The various coaching professional bodies are currently developing frameworks of professionalism and accreditation of coaching and coaches. Central to the majority of these is the supervision of the coach. For example, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) states in its code of ethics, 'A coach/mentor must maintain a relationship with a suitably qualified supervisor, who will regularly assess their competence and support their development.' The external coach will be expected to be under supervision but may also provide supervision for others. We will deal with this in more detail later.

This free agenda coaching engagement is in stark contrast to the second option for the executive coach – training consolidation (Smither *et al.*, 2003) It is now widely accepted that sustained behaviour change after training can only be achieved through monitoring and consolidation activities which continue after the training itself. In the past this has been in the form of 'follow on workshops', etc., but external coaches are now taking a role in providing one-to-one assessment and feedback on the learning undertaken. This is obviously limited in duration, typically one or two sessions, and there is a highly constrained agenda defined by the training event or focus, with an outcome of facilitating behaviour change to affect the required response. One area where it is highly used is in the training of

manager coaches and the supervision of internal coaches. We will deal with those in due course.

Manager coaches

Although current research has focussed on the coach as an external consultant, there is a literature dating back to the 1930s on manager coaches (Grant, 2003). Graham, Wedman and Garvin-Kester (1993) reported an evaluation of a coaching skills programme for 13 sales managers with a total of 87 account representative reporting to them. Although this focus for research has declined in the last couple of decades it is still an active and distinct modality of coaching particularly given the recent emphasis on the learning organisation. Quoting again from the recent survey by the School of Coaching – Is coaching being abused? (Kubicek, 2002) – 'Most organisations will say 'yes our managers are coaching' and 'yes we support it'.

This survey of 179 senior HR managers in the UK during February 2002: found that most organisations in the sample (79 per cent) were providing coaching by line managers to their direct reports. Middle managers were the most likely group of employees to be receiving coaching (74 per cent). It was interesting that only 38 per cent of organisations had an initiative in place to develop their managers coaching skills and these were primarily for middle managers. Most of the respondents (70 per cent) had coaching as part of their development strategy with 40 per cent mentioning performance measures and 37 per cent a competency framework.

An in-depth example of the use of mentoring and coaching within a human resource strategy is provided by Coca-Cola Foods (Veale & Wachtel, 1996). Here coaching is viewed in its widest description which includes instruction and problem solving but the cohesiveness of the approach is worth investigation.

A study by Ellinger and Bostrum (1998) has attempted to define, through a qualita-

tive critical incident study, the ways exemplary managers facilitate their employee learning. They describe a range of behaviours and the interested reader is referred to this paper as well as the range of literature on learning organisations which can inform our training and development of the manager coach.

The coaching agenda for managers is usually solely concerned with the requirements of the organisation and is focused explicitly on the achievement of work goals. It does not have the open agenda commonly used by external coaches and, it is set for the mutual benefit of manager and coachee. The manager needs the output from the employee and seeks to develop it. The employee needs to satisfy the requirements of the post and needs the help and advice of the manager in achieving this. This mutuality sets the focus for the engagement and has an impact both on the learning needs the coaching can address and on the training and supervision required for the coach.

The benefits of this coaching are clear – the coach is on- the- spot with a clear identification of organisational culture and an assessment of the coaching needs of the individual. There is minimal time delay between identification of need and coaching intervention. As one of our case studies identified 'the business environment is changing too fast so we cannot continually retrain everyone – we need to use coaching to constantly update and upgrade'.

It is unlikely and probably unethical for the coaching to be at the developmental level where disclosure of personal and intimate information is required. But it will certainly address skills and probably performance levels. Thus the level of skill and competence required of the manager coach is significantly lower then that of the external coach. However, some level of competence is still necessary. In the School of Coaching Study (Kubicek, 2002) concern was raised that on average the manager coaches received only three days of training

to develop their coaching skills and that 67 per cent of companies had no policy/ strategy/vision with regard to the use of coaching (a strategy was more likely the bigger the organisation). As identified by Gebber (1992) the task of coaching for the manager is, *'the most difficult one to perform and requires the biggest paradigm shift of any new system.'*

We should expect managers to need support to attain competence in this role. It is, therefore, not surprising that, as we indicated previously, external coaches are contracted to provide some of this support and help consolidate behaviour change. Alternatively this support can also be supplied by internal coaches whom we will consider next.

Internal coaches

The coach manager is not the only form of internal coach. As discussed in 'The emerging role of the Internal Coach' (Frisch, 2001), *'Coaching is now seen as an investment in the organisation's future. Perhaps concurrent with this has been the emergence of the internal coach.'*

When used in the remedial role it can be argued that the external coach's separateness is essential to reduce defensiveness on the coachee's part and allow focus on their development. However, in the senior development role the trained colleague or internal coach's knowledge of the organisation and immediate availability can be beneficial.

It can be argued that HR professionals have always undertaken some coaching within their job descriptions but it was 'informal and normally transactional'. Internal coaches are now identified and acknowledged by their organisations and Coaching Professional Bodies. Frisch defines internal coaching as: *'a one-to-one developmental intervention supported by the organisation and provided by a colleague of those coached who is trusted to shape and deliver a program yielding individual professional growth'.*

There are several points arising from this definition

1. The internal coach is outside line management, i.e. distinct from the manager coach.
2. (S)he will not always use standard assessment as external coaches as (s)he will already know significant background information and have access to the results of organisational assessment.
3. Multiply interventions are assumed – it is not a single informal discussion but an ongoing programme.

This interaction was identified as different from the many other training and advice-type engagements, e.g. discussion with HR, training, etc., as these are organisationally focused as opposed to the individual focus of the internal coaching relationship. The advantages were seen to be the ability to see the coachee within their role and knowledge of the environment within which the coachee is working. The emergence of the internal coach can be seen as 'a tangible manifestation of the learning organisation'.

We have shown previously (Jarvis *et al.*, 2006) that the tasks associated with this role are:

● Coaching individuals where manager coaches are not fully used;
● Providers of coach training to managers;
● Supervision of manager coaches providing support and further skills as and when required;
● Specialist coaches for senior managers.

The coaching agenda within this mode is still well focused upon organisational objectives but it has a broader vision to that observed with the manager coach. There will be an element of mutual benefit although it can be considered 'indirect' as with external coaching. The coaching agenda can explore the underpinning aspects of the behaviour or change required although it will still be restricted to some extent by the organisational framework. As indicated previously supervision of internal coaches is necessary and is often sub contracted to external coaches.

2. A framework of practice?

In summary, current practice, as identified within our review, can be characterised by the agreed coaching agenda and the role level employed. Coaching is practiced within three modes; external, internal and manager. The breadth and freedom of the coaching agenda will increase as indicated in Figure 1 and the coach will employ a level of intervention appropriate to the agenda.

These, in turn, will impact upon the outputs that are expected. For instance a restricted coaching agenda is unlikely to impact upon the development of the coachee at the personal level. It may, however, address very specific skill enhancements which can be quantified by, for example, comparing sales figures before and after coaching in relationship building. Similarly external coaching with a broad agenda in which the coach is acting within a development role will address issues such as purpose and self for the coachee. Measurement of the impact of the coachee's development may be difficult to quantify.

An aside

Before we consider the efficacy of coaching there are several points upon which we would like to comment. From the 'Is coaching being abused?' survey there is also a perception that manager coaching is good for middle managers but not for those at the top. This has led to a lack of integration within the corporate strategies. Within this survey 63 per cent used coaching at senior manger level, 74 per cent and 69 per cent at junior and middle managers level. Blackman-Sheppard (2004) argues convincingly that 'executive' coaching should be a resource to available for all employees. There is an interesting question which has not been addressed within the literature as yet – Does the mode of coaching on offer depend upon your seniority within the organisation?

Another critical point is that coaching is not being confined to individuals – team coaching has started to be the subject of
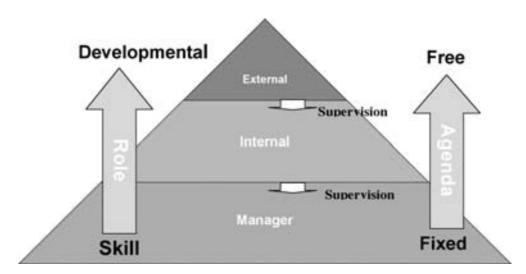
Figure 1: Coaching role, agenda and supervision.

both discussion and research publications. Diedrich (2001) discusses the lessons learned from practice and identifies a number of principles of practice. Within his practice he does NOT identify team coaching with team building or team development.

> *'The coaching of a team is a process where the consulting psychologist has an ongoing, helping relationship with both the team and the individual executives; that is he or she has time for the team as well as one-to-one coaching contacts with the team members over time. Coaching a team is an iterative process for both the team and the individual that is developmentally orientated as opposed to being a problem-centred quick fix for the team.'*

Within the literature there is not complete agreement with this view and some team coaches positively rule out coaching of individual members except for specific tasks. Coaching at the Top (Kralj, 2001) is a case study of an intervention to enable a company to redesign their organisation. All the interventions were kept to a systems or team level. The authors make a case that coaching should be expanded to include such team engagements.

3. Does it work?

As with all human interactions there are a multiplicity of factors which will impact on the whether the interaction has the desired effect. Indeed, when considering coaching there will even be a variety of criteria for what is constitutes an 'effect'. For instance, is it sufficient that the coachee perceives coaching to have enabled him/her to achieve an identified goal? Or does the output have to percolate down to the bottom-line in terms of a quantifiable performance measure for the organisation?

To date there is only two studies prepared to quote a return on investment, i.e. identify an impact upon the bottom-line. Both of these are concerned with external coaching. The most frequently cited was carried out by Right Management Consultants and published in the *Manchester Review* (McGovern *et al.*, 2001). The quoted figure for ROI was 5.7 in terms of 'tangible' or quantifiable outputs such as increased productivity. There is a difficulty with this study in terms of reliability as it surveyed the clients of the consultancy where the author was based and the results were based upon the coachee's own estimates. However, it

does identify how the clients perceived coaching had impacted upon their behaviour and hence the perceived ROI. In particular it is of note that the frequency of impact was higher for the intangible impacts (e.g. improving relationships (77 per cent) and team work (73 per cent)) then for the tangible impacts (e.g. productivity 53 per cent) and quality (48 per cent)). The other study is provided by the Philips ROI institute (Philips, 2004) quoting a figure of 2.21, however, to date this study has not been published and is only available from their website.

Generally published investigations have concentrated on the self-reporting of improvement by the coachee but some studies have looked at assessment (of improvement) by colleagues and reports. Several seek to quantify improvement of performance of the coachee's department or team but as we shall see these have so far delivered only tentative results. For all studies identified the satisfaction of the coachee was good or high and where self-reporting was used then the coaching was identified as having impact on the development of the individual. Where the studies use quantifiable performance measures, other then multisource feedback, the effectiveness is less well evidenced.

For ease of reading we have classified the studies into those addressing external coaching, internal coaching, manager coaching and team coaching.

External coaching

The most researched task of the external coach has been supporting the impact of multi-source feedback and promoting improvement in performance. We will consider three such studies.

a. The only study to date which compares the performance of coached and non-coached individuals is that by Smither, London *et al.* (2003). They also go beyond self reporting of improvement and compare 360 degree feedback pre- and post-intervention. The advantages of

360 degree feedback are well established in that it provides information on how the coachee is perceived by others; on what should be improved and obtains these ratings from a variety of groups. However, as Smither *et al.* (2003) identify, there can be major problems in working with this information; there can be an overwhelming amount of information, the difference between self and others' ratings can be difficult to reconcile and there is often a need for guidance and help to figure out next step. Locke and Lathan (1990) have shown that feedback alone is not the cause of behaviour change, it is the goals that people set in response to feedback which promotes change. The question asked by this study was: Could coaching facilitate this goal setting with appropriate follow-through and hence enhanced performance?

The subjects of the study were 1361 senior managers in a global corporation who received multi-source feedback in autumn 1999. After feedback, 404 of the managers received coaching (five to seven hours covering review of feedback within two to three individual sessions) and then responded to a brief online questionnaire. In the autumn of 2000 another multi-source feedback programme was carried out in which 88.3 per cent of managers from the initial survey received feedback. In July 2002 a brief survey was carried out in which raters evaluated the progress of the manager towards the goals set by the manager himself, based on the initial feedback.

Managers who worked with a coach were more likely to set specific (rather than vague) goals (d=0.16) and to solicit ideas for improvement from their supervisors (d=0.36). They had a higher performance improvement in terms of direct report and supervisor ratings, however, the effect size (d=0.17) was small.

It should be noted that the multi-

source feedback was being used within the appraisal system in a high accountability culture, e.g. salary and resources were all linked to the results so the effect of the coach might be masked by this driver for change. Also this was a very short intervention with 55 per cent of the managers having three or more conversations, 29.4 per cent having two and 15.6 per cent having just one.

b. On a similar vein Thatch (2002) also investigated the quantitative impact of coaching and 360 degree feedback on the leadership effectiveness of 281 executives within a single company. Within the first phase of the research a pilot programme with 57 executives was run in which the coaching concentrated on one to three development actions arising from a 360 degree assessment. After feedback from participants of phase one the programme was launched in phase two with 168 executives over one year. The participants received four coaching sessions in all before a mini 360 degree and participant survey. This was run the next year in phase three for a further 113 participants. There was no choice of coach and the duration of coaching was short although it was noted many paid for further sessions from their own funds. However, the 360 degree was not linked to appraisal and hence the impact of the coaching intervention should have been more clearly defined. Unfortunately no comparison was made with non-coached executives.

The overall percentage increase in leadership effectiveness was 55 per cent in phase two and 60 per cent in phase three. The coaching impact was also assessed through the average number of times met with coach (3.6) and it was noted that there was a trend towards higher contacts giving higher scores. From the qualitative feedback from the participants the factor of greatest impact was the relationships with the coach themselves with the 360 degree feedback as the factor of second importance.

c. On a smaller scale but with a similar remit Luthans and Peterson (2003) again used multi-source assessment in conjunction with coaching. They identified that there is usually a discrepancy between the self-rating and that of others. This is lessened by increasing the self-awareness of the coachee. Their proposition was that 360 degree programmes should not seek to deal with this by lowering self-rating but by raising performance to the level of the initial self-rating.

The authors conducted a study involving all 20 managers in a small firm to determine how effective coaching was at facilitating this improvement. At the start of the study, and again three months later, 360 degree ratings were collected. After the initial assessment the managers were met for a coaching session to analyse the results. All managers met the same coach and followed the same process. The feedback was confidential to the client and the coaching was developmental not assessment orientated. The process was structured around: what are the discrepancies, why they were present; what can be done; with the final part of the session concentrating on the responsibility of the individual to make the changes. Follow-up checks were then carried out randomly and qualitative data collected on whether the coachees had made the changes discussed.

Given the short time-scale of the study and the short duration of the coaching it is perhaps surprising that the initial discrepancy between self- and others rating was eliminated in all three factors tested, i.e. behavioural competency, interpersonal competency and personal responsibility. The reduction in discrepancy was brought about through the elevation of the others rating not the reduction in the coachee's ratings. There was an improvement in both the

managers and their employees work attitudes with a significant increase in job satisfaction with the work itself, supervision and co-workers. Organisational commitment also increased.

Thus it is suggested that coaching has a part to play in getting the most from feedback to obtain benefits such as positive attitude to work and reduced turnover. The authors also found evidence of an improvement in organisational performance, e.g. in sales figures (seasonally adjusted) following coaching and feedback. However, as they are systems level indicators they were not deemed sufficiently controlled to link directly with the individual coaching intervention.

Other studies have concentrated upon the perception of impact by clients after a coaching programme. Generally groups of clients are surveyed after completion of the coaching programme. In general these have provided a universally positive response from the clients and researchers have sought to dissect the positive impact into its constituent parts by asking 'what worked?' These have been less successful and indicate alternative research designs will be necessary to go beyond the first order question.

a. A study which didn't include multi-source feedback was conducted by Harder & Company Community Research in the US (2003). In this design 24 executives from various organisations were coached for 40 hours over 13 months and three peer round-table events were also included for the sharing of experience and support. The executive were given a choice of coach from a pool of 12 coaches recruited for their diversity of background and interest. The coachees had less then four years' experience at the executive level but no prior experience of coaching.

A learning contract was drawn up for all coachees and the research design was a survey (before, middle and end), semi-structure interviews (over phone for 20) and case studies of five. At the end of the study the overall satisfaction of the coachees was 4.6 on a scale of 5. One point of note was that significant change was apparent at six months but this rate of improvement was not sustained at 12 months.

b. A doctoral thesis from the US (Dawdy, 2004) provides a comparative design exploring the perceived effectiveness of coaching and methods. The design of the study was to identify whether 'one size fits all'. Does executive coaching suit everyone? The criterion used to group the executives was personality type.

Sixty-two participants took part in the study, all from a large engineering firm. They were all white males between 40 and 50 years of age. They had participated in a coaching programme for at least six months and completed it. The coaching was provided by a single firm using the in-house framework although little detail is given. A survey of the participants was conducted and 90 per cent of them considered coaching to be effective. Ninety-one per cent thought it was valuable to their relationships outside work whilst 75 per cent thought it was valuable to their relationships within work. On the question of whether it had facilitated behaviour change on a scale 1 not met to 7 met far beyond expectations the mean was 4.34 SE0.15. There was no effect of personality type.

There was no significant difference in perception of the success of various coaching tools, e.g. interviews, feedback, etc., although 88 per cent of those who had experience 360 degree rated it as positive or neutral. A similar result was found for communication with the coach (82 per cent agreed), acquiring new skills (74 per cent) and coach's encouragement (87 per cent). Thus this study agrees with the norm – people like to be coached and people perceive that they have changed behaviours as a result. But it goes not further.

c. Another thesis from the US (Dingman,

2004) asked the question 'How does the extent and quality of participation in an executive coaching experience affect levels of self-efficacy and job-related attitudes in job satisfaction, organisational commitment and the conflict between work and family?'

The design used sought to identify the quality of the coaching experienced for each individual, i.e. whether generic elements of the coaching process had been implemented and the perception of the coaching relationship. These were then related to the change in self efficacy and job related attitudes of the coachee. The assumption implicit in the work is that positive job-related attitudes correlate with high job performance and thus job-related attitudes indicative of more quantifiable outputs, e.g. specific measure of tasks completed.

The author had chosen to take investigation of the relationship between coach and coachee a stage further and ask the executive to rate their coach in terms of three specific behaviours which illustrate their relation, i.e. interpersonal skills, communication style and instrumental support.

All coachees were coached using the same programme to control some variables but this does restrict the generality of the results. The author looked at the evidence for executive coaching efficacy at each point using Kirkpatrick's (1983) training evaluation criteria.

The research instrument was an on-line survey distributed to the clients of one coaching centre. Response rate was 52 per cent, 82 per cent of clients were male with an average age was 42. A number of coaches were used with 53 per cent of them having a postgraduate degree.

The hypotheses tested were that there was a significant relationship between the coaching process/quality and job satisfaction and self-efficacy. The quality

of the relationship was positive for self-efficacy but negative for job satisfaction. This may have been because the executives were being coached out of their jobs or alternatively there may be some aspect of relationship which was not tested and hence skewed results.

The author goes further in the analysis and identifies that the process and quality of coaching impact on self-efficacy of the coachee and mediate job related attitudes.

There was no support for the relationship between coaching and life/work conflict or organisational commitment but we are not given any information as to whether these are considered within the particular coaching model used.

d. A very extensively cited study concerns the use of a specific tool within a coaching context (Foster & Lendl, 1996). Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) was integrated into an executive coaching programme and four case studies are reported. Participants received one to 10 hours of coaching in which EMDR was used to desensitise an upsetting event which was standing in the way of the coachee's performance. The intervention was successful in all cases and each coachee progressed well towards their identified goals. However, the study tests the use of EMDR within a coaching context and not the coaching interaction itself.

Internal coaching

The first reported attempt at examining effects of coaching in a public sector municipal agency was undertaken by Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997). Although they describe the mode of coaching used as executive coaching, within the definitions we are using here their study investigated the effectiveness of internal coaching.

Their interest was in the effectiveness of using coaching as a means to translate training into behaviour change. It is known that two of the most dominant factors which

influenced this process are the opportunity for practice and constructive feedback (Anderson & Wexley, 1983). They used an action research methodology to determine if coaching could provide this support. Thirty-one managers underwent a conventional managerial training programme. Then eight of the managers underwent a coach training programme and coached their peers, every week for two months, as they undertook a real life project. A knowledge inventory was completed before and after the workshop.

The productivity of each of the managers was measured after training and after coaching. The measures chosen were appropriate to the specific work of the manager, were quantifiably and of benefit to the organisation. The result was a 22.4 per cent increase in productivity after the management training but an 88 per cent increase after coaching.

Although these figures seem clear cut, there are a number of issues which have to be born in mind. By their very nature the projects undertaken whilst the managers were being coached would also have contributed to enhanced productivity. It is also unclear whether the intervention was coaching or action research facilitation. The authors themselves are clear that this study design cannot address all the issues but the output does provide scare information on how coaching can affect the bottom line.

Manager coach

A rare study looking at effectiveness of leaders as coaches and the performance of teams was conducted in 2001 (Wageman, 2001). The basis of the study was the generation of self-managing teams. It is suggested that the principal reason for their failure is a lack of motivation and the inability of the manager to create the right conditions for them to thrive.

In this field study of the company Xerox two factors are investigated: the design of the team and the coaching by the manager. Thirty-four teams of between three to nine members were used, split between consistent high performers and consistently poor performers (18 superb teams and 15 poor teams). Multiple measures of team design and manager coaching were identified through structured interviews and a survey of the participants. These were then used to assess the teams. Quantitative measures of performance were obtained from the organisation and these related to bottom line quantities such as response rate, parts expenses, machine reliability, etc. The data analysis was rigorous and large effects were seen.

The hypothesis that well-designed teams exhibit more self-management and are more effective then teams with design flaws was supported as expected. The hypothesis that well coached teams exhibit more self-management but NOT higher task performance was also supported.

There was a negative coaching aspect and a positive coaching aspect. Negative aspects were for behaviours such as identifying team problems and task intervention whilst positive was providing cues, informal rewards, and problem-solving consultancy. There was no support for the hypothesis that coaching alone influenced the bottom line factors. The hypothesis that coaching and design interacted positively was supported for self-management but not for performance or satisfaction. Overall positive coaching worked best for well designed teams and negative coaching impacted more on poorly designed teams.

Graham *et al.* (1993) identified that training could develop manager coaching skills, at least within a sales environment, through a study of 87 account representatives who worked for 13 sales managers. Seventy per cent of account representatives indicated that they had observed a positive change in their managers. This was most shown by those who had worked for their managers for two years whereas for lesser or more time with the same boss the percentage decreased.

Summary
3. Does coaching work?

In all the studies undertaken, investigating whatever mode of coaching, the conclusion was the same – everyone likes to be coached and perceives that it impacts positively upon their effectiveness. Thus, to the first order the answer is 'Yes it does'.

But, if we consider the question within the context of our suggested framework of practice, we can start to develop a more structured and useful answer particularly in terms of ROI.

For external or executive coaching where the coaching agenda is broad and, by definition, unconstrained then the identified outputs will be of both direct and indirect impact to the bottom-line. This is well illustrated within the two studies specifically aimed at producing a ROI. Both of these studies identified that the outputs of the coaching would have 'tangible' and 'intangible' elements. Tangible elements such as productivity and sales figures are relatively easy to measure and correct for external factors. The 'intangible' elements such as leadership or relationship handling can be identified and even quantified but their relative impact upon the bottom-line must, by definition, be considered on an individual basis. Any study seeking to address this must specifically design in this issue at the start of the investigation.

To date studies of external coaching have concentrated on quantifying the 'intangibles' and assuming these will impact favourably upon the bottom-line. The improvement in coachee behaviours, etc. post-coaching was consistent across all studies, whether the coachees self-reported or the quantification was through 360 degree feedback.

If we now consider the more restricted and organisationally focussed coaching agenda found with internal and manager coaching then the research studies are, by definition, more closely focussed on 'tangible', bottom-line outputs. The study by Olivero *et al.* (1997) is of particular note. The design used productivity as the factor to be measured before and after coaching and this was also the case with the study at Xerox. Both of these studies show significant improvement in bottom-line measures after the coaching intervention.

It is clear from this analysis that when we ask 'Does coaching work?' we must first identify where within the framework of practice the coaching is actually placed, how constrained is the coaching agenda and whether a tangible or intangible output is being sought. Only then can we identify if the evidence is available to answer the question as posed.

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