

## 7 factors that drive coaching success

Copyright © October 2015, Ian Foster, People Assured.  
Contact: [ianfoster@peopleassured.com](mailto:ianfoster@peopleassured.com)

Why are some coaching programs more successful than others?

For a recent talent management seminar, I analyzed 10 years of data from individual (and team) coaching engagements, in combination with a literature survey.

To determine the factors that led to a more positive outcome (including raised awareness, performance and sustainability) I investigated individual and organizational goals, how each program was set up and run and the environment in which coaching took place.

From the data, I identified 7 factors:

### **1. Client coachability**

The coachability of the client and their desire to actively participate in the coaching process for their own development is critical, and likely the most important factor in realizing lasting change.

Per Goldsmith: "Research on coaching is clear and consistent. Coaching is most successful when applied to people who want to improve."

[http://www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com/cim/articles\\_display.php?aid=1503](http://www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com/cim/articles_display.php?aid=1503)

### **2. A healthy balance between individual and organizational goals**

It's important that the program helps the individual to be successful in meeting organizational goals, but also that sufficient "self-interest" is satisfied – i.e. that the individual sees that they are building skills in the areas they seek to develop and grow. This combined or "holistic" approach is described as "Contextual Coaching™" by Hoover: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140925182720-23521245-contextual-coaching-the-coaching-coalition>

### **3. A supportive line manager/stakeholder team – who provide input and feedback**

If a coachee's line manager is distant from the process, it can create a sense that the organization is not fully behind the individual being coached or the process. When a line manager and other stakeholders are visible participants (e.g. providing context on goals, strengths and development needs and offering feedback) coachees are much more likely to see the organization as engaged and facilitating a positive outcome.

### **4. The opportunity to apply new skills and learning in the workplace**

Successful programs create the opportunity for learning and skill building that can be directly applied in the workplace, so that the coachee can see and feel their development. The coach can serve as a sounding board and, with other stakeholders, be available to offer feedback as the individual tries new approaches and behaviors that extend comfort zones.

### **5. A process that leverages strengths as well as addressing development needs**

Self-aware individuals recognize the need to work on their leadership behaviors and skill gaps - but are also often successful because they understand and take advantage of their strengths. Looking for opportunities to leverage and further develop strengths in addition to working on development needs, will amplify an individual's capability.

### **6. Help to navigate the organization**

Coaching engagements are often triggered by leadership transitions – where a member of staff takes on a new (typically more senior) role or additional responsibilities. This means new stakeholders to manage. If through the coaching process and interactions with line managers, peers, clients etc. the coachee can gain help on how to best work with particular stakeholders, and navigate within and across departments, they will be more successful.

### **7. A focused coaching plan to serve as a roadmap**

An agreed upon development plan (including goals, priorities and desired outcomes) produced at the outset, and owned by the coachee, will help all parties to align on objectives and to understand “What will success look like?”

Fewer (3 or less) development goals are better, particularly if working on behavioral change. If coaching is thought of as a process, the plan can serve as a roadmap with review-points to discuss progress and make goal adjustments along the way.

In summary, notwithstanding the need for a professionally run coaching program commencing with the building of a trust relationship, a participant's willingness and desire for self-improvement, a thoughtful process and a conducive environment are all key factors that contribute to its ultimate success.

Per Grenny: “In short, coaching works when it amplifies one's own motivation, enhances ability, and equips people to address their context when it inhibits their ability to change. When it fails to do that, it simply doesn't work.” <https://hbr.org/2015/02/you-might-be-the-reason-your-employees-arent-changing>

What are your experiences? Let me know what you think?