

The Truth About Executive Coaching

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One of the most in-demand services Avant delivers is executive coaching. It's one of the most significant investments organizations make in terms of how they manage and grow talent. Yet, little empirical data exist to support the benefits of executive coaching.

Here is hard research gleaned from actual coaching engagements – it reveals the truth about what makes it a worthwhile investment.



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The Study

Three groups of subjects were asked what makes a coaching engagement successful and each gave different answers. When combined, a picture of coaching success became clear.

The groups were (1) Ph.D. level consulting psychologists functioning as coaches (2) senior level executives participating as a "coachee" and (3) the manager of the coachee (person being coached).

Data were gathered in "triads." The triads consisted of a coachee, his/her coach and the person's manager who were all participants in the study. Interview data were analyzed to examine what made the biggest difference in the coaching engagement.

The Results

Nearly 92% of the participants studied mentioned that the support of the manager was an essential feature in the outcome of the coaching work. Mentioned second most was the idea that the coachee was actively engaged throughout the process. Finally, the coach who provided an insightful environment through feedback was mentioned.

Support of manager	91.7%
Coachee engagement & participation	79.2%
Insight through feedback	70.8%
Coach/coachee relationship	54.2%
Reflective space provided by coach	54.2%

So What?

Successful coaching engagements come at the intersection of a supportive manager, an engaged executive (coachee) and a coach delivering meaningful feedback.

Easy enough in theory but what does this mean in practice?

Managers (and organizations) can provide support far beyond the financial aspect of coaching by encouraging the coachee to engage fully and maximize the investment. Managers and HR leaders are the sponsors who can accelerate the impact of coaching. These sponsors can participate at the kick off, midway and near the end of a program through alignment meetings between the coach, coachee and the manager. Additionally, sponsors can serve as "internal coaches" serving as a sounding board to the coachee. While much has been made of coach/coachee "fit," just over half the participants mentioned the quality of the working alliance between the coach/coaches and successful outcomes.

Executives (coachees) need to do more than just fulfill assignments given by the coach. The coachee benefits only by opening him/herself up to the possibility of change and growth through frank and penetrating feedback, discussions and reflection. Going through the motions is not only a waste of valuable company resource but reduces the coaching impact.

Coaches should make sure that feedback is in some way part of the process – through assessment and standard methods like 360 feedback or even a comprehensive leadership assessment. All of these provide data for the executive to reflect on and grow from. Now you have it--practical ways to maximize the process outcomes of coaching engagements deployed in your organization.

The truth: The manager has the most significant impact on coaching outcomes.

For more information, contact info@avantleadership.com.

For more than 30 years, Avant has advanced leadership and organizational performance with Fortune 500 companies. Avant is led by Kristin L. Ihle, Ph.D.