

THE POWER OF CORPORATE COACHING

Executives today work in a business environment of competing demands and increasing complexity. To effectively manage this, executives are looking for practical ways to enhance their performance. Others want to explore what is most important to them and harmonise their professional and personal goals. Corporate coaching is seen as a solution by an increasing number of executives because it is a process of taking them from where they are now to where they want to be.

Since being appointed to the AICD's Coach and Mentor Connections, I have found some confusion exists between the role of a mentor and coach. Typically a mentor, much like an advisor, focuses on sharing their expertise in a specific area with a client and may provide direction. Corporate coaching goes further by taking a more holistic approach. In collaboration with the executive client, a corporate coach uses flexible coaching methods to analyse issues (goals and challenges) from different perspectives and derive workable actions for implementing and monitoring.

With coaching the process tends to be client driven rather than mentor driven. Corporate coaching benefits executives because it focuses on and encourages self-exploration, idea generation, synthesis and action. With corporate coaching individuals are more likely to stretch and achieve their professional and personal goals and aspirations with greater effectiveness benefiting themselves and their organisation.

The real value of corporate coaching comes from the process of discovery questioning. In order to ask targeted, challenging and powerful questions, it helps if the coach has sound management knowledge and hands on skills and experience in a variety of organisations and cultures. Importantly, the coach needs highly developed interpersonal skills not only to listen to what is being said but also to how things are being said (acknowledging and incorporating the human side).

The coach approach is considered very effective when implementing change because the process is client focused and driven. A large-scale doctoral study conducted with nine major organisations in Queensland found human factors such



as unconscious processes, thought processes and emotions were highly associated with an individual's level of acceptance to change (Journal publications on parts of this research are freely available at www.bovey.com.au). Coaching is effective during change because it combines both the task and human side of change.

In addition to organisational change, corporate coaching assists executives with solving business problems, professional/leadership development and career advancement or transition.

Executives generally acknowledge that two people discussing and bouncing an idea around has greater effect than working alone. Some organisations employ internal coaches to work with operational staff. Usually at a board and executive management level an external corporate coach is used for reasons including impartiality, independence and confidentiality.

It is recommended executives looking to work with a corporate coach be prudent in their choice. As with contracting any professional, the training and credentials

of the corporate coach ought to be considered. Corporate coaching is a relatively new and growing profession in Australia. It is considered important for an executive to choose a corporate coach with qualifications that have been accredited by the International Coach Federation and adheres to the code of ethical and professional conduct.

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