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The Smart way to Introduce &  
Scale Leadership Coaching into  
Your Company

## The Smart way to Introduce & Scale Leadership Coaching into Your Company

The value of leadership coaching over the last decade has become both more widely understood and valued in comparison to other leadership development options. Options such as executive education and training programs are falling out of favor for lack of tangible metrics and on-the-job application. As companies and Human Resources (HR) leaders step back and reflect on what programs and solutions derive results, the interest and demand for leadership coaching has increased.

The benefits of leadership coaching on an individual basis includes real-time learning where relevant and immediate issues/opportunities can be addressed. Coaching also provides individualized development that is based upon insight from the leader being coached, their manager, as well as data when a 360 assessment is done. When well executed, coaching can provide both the leader and company real-time results in the form of new behaviors being deployed immediately after a coaching session as well as long-term impact as a result of real and long-term behavior change.

When coaching is deployed systemically within a company, the impact can transcend individual leader development and drive broader team, division, or company performance, goal achievement and even culture change. That said, systemic deployment of leadership coaching requires consistency in methodology, metrics, and objectives.

As the awareness of leadership coaching grows, so has the variety of leadership coaching services that range from traditional premium 1:1 options to solutions that can barely be defined as leadership coaching. As someone looking to bring leadership coaching into your company, there are steps you must take to ensure that you are meeting the goals of your company and leaders' development needs, while ensuring you are making the right investment. In this document we review steps required to ensure you are making the right, informed investment in leadership coaching.

### 1. Educate Yourself

The most effective way to create a successful and sustainable leadership coaching program is to first educate yourself, and if applicable, the team that will be managing coaching. Education can range from learning the basics of the coaching process and coaching skills to actual certifications. Develop the knowledge and insights into what is coaching and what is not coaching. This will give you the ability to better identify the right coaching philosophy, coaches, as well as the larger program goals, processes, and expectations.

Beyond education, identify opportunities to turn the current leaders in your company into coaches or have coaches on staff within your company. There are pros and cons of

using an internal coach (i.e., being a colleague to the people you are coaching). The pros are that the internal coach is familiar with the culture of the company, has more context, and is able to see leaders in action first hand through direct observations in meetings. The cons include concerns regarding confidentiality, lack of outside perspective from a neutral third party, and challenges regarding hierarchy when coaching senior leaders in the organization.

Resources will also dictate availability of internal coaches. The role of coach should be an explicit part of someone's role and supported through such things as alignment in performance reviews and proper expectation setting. For example, effective coaching takes time and as such the organization needs to align reviews and incentives with that time-line.

## 2. How to Bring in Coaches in from the Outside:

If lack of time, lack of resources, and other priorities demand your attention, then you should explore external coaching solutions. You will want to identify a few critical factors that will allow you to ensure you are selecting the right coaches for your company. We have used the term, "coaches gone wild" when talking with HR organizations about their current state of coaching when there is no process for how leadership coaching is managed. More than a few companies have made the realization that they have spent millions of dollars on leadership coaching without clear objectives, strategy, and results.

Once you have identified the opportunity to bring in external leadership coaches, your next steps should include:

- Understanding the objectives of leadership coaching. Are you looking to get a small set of leaders coached or is this a broader company-wide objective? Is the coaching part of a larger company initiative such as emphasizing new behaviors that are part of strengthening or changing company culture?
- When interviewing coaches ask questions that surface their approach, methodology, and coaching philosophy. Things to uncover include whether the coach is prescriptive (i.e., provides tools and skills, reflects back patterns/themes and provides a reframe) or is more reflective and uses the Socratic method (i.e., asks more questions than providing guidance, "Well, what do you think it means when your manager cancels your meeting for the fifth time...?"). Explore what coaching methods and tools they use to help their leaders. Also, identify what their coaching experience is as well as their professional background. Note, coaching certifications are good but should not be the measure by which you select a coach as those certifications are for life coaching, not leadership coaching.
- You will want to explore with how results are measured and how data is gathered for both individual coaching assignments as well as aggregate data if multiple leaders are being coached. You should expect data that measures skill

improvement that is both self-reported as well as feedback from others. As a result of the skill improvement, how has that impacted the company and what is the ROI data.

- Avoiding a “coaches gone wild” scenario requires clear methods and tools for who gets coaching and how coaches will be managed and held accountable for results. Effective coach management ensures coaches are focused only on delivering coaching value to your leaders and not wandering your halls networking and drumming up more business.
- Lastly, the combination of both metrics and coach management enables results that can be measured across all leaders being coached and data can be mined to provide predictive analytics and leading indicators of engagement and impact. This data in turn can be used to understand a range of factors such as potential leader turnover, skill strengths and deficits, skills that need to be better aligned to company goals, further areas for leader development, succession planning, and recruitment strategies.

### 3. When to Turn to Technology

Technology-enabled coaching, which at a high-level, provides digital platforms for developing leaders at scale. When leadership coaching becomes popular and demonstrably effective in your organization, you will have to be prepared to scale as it may be cost prohibitive to have the same coaching program as your senior leaders. Turning to technology-enabled coaching can both drive down the price point but also ensure consistency of delivery and experience. Keep in mind, not all technology-enabled coaching is the same. Some technology is more a container for articles or coach scheduling. While others can provide a comprehensive professional development methodology and roadmap that is paired with a coach.

Some firms use coaches with little to no leadership or coaching experience. Some invest heavily in developing a logistics platform for matching leaders to coaches, scheduling and videoconferencing technology while others invest heavily in taking the best features and benefits of a premium executive coaching package and replicating the experience of being with a live coach. Most tech-enabled solutions will provide you with “metrics” but what kind of metrics? Some will provide surface level information like usage data and goals that were selected, while others go deeper to provide skill improvement and impact upon the organization.

The opportunity that technology provides is scalability. However, scalability requires more than just a digital interface and resources. Scalability requires methodology. With a methodology, there is an underlying process and system for the learning path, application, and behavior change. The most effective of these technology-enabled coaching solutions combines a clear methodology and learning path with robust coaching management and analytics. In addition, when scaling leadership coaching in the company there is a risk of inconsistent coaching practices. This is critical as each

coach will have different ways of facilitating learning for a competency. Scalability and achieving measurable results require a methodology that facilitates consistency no matter what coach is being used.

When investigating these options, it is critical to ensure:

- There a methodology that provides an underlying formula for learning, application of the learning, and behavior change.
- There is leadership content that guides the participant and acts as learning roadmap and provides consistency and scalability whether you have one or a thousand leaders experiencing coaching. This consistency also ensures coaches are aligned with learning process and topics.
- The technology interface is robust. Is it simply a resource library or a more comprehensive platform including learning roadmap, range of resources and learning modalities? In addition, ensure the technology utilizes smarter technologies such as machine learning.
- Data is being gathered and reporting is available to program sponsors. If there is no methodology, more than likely the data being gathered will be shallow and real coaching impact will be hard to define. Not all data is equal. Program usage data provides different metrics than skill improvement data. Know what data you need and want.
- There is an element of live 1:1 coaching. Is this done via text as some technology enabled coaching provides, brief calls once per month, or in-depth coaching sessions that reinforce learning, insights, and results. The live element increases likelihood of accountability and results.
- The topics are relevant to leadership development. Coaching should not be a replacement for therapy.

## Conclusion

When approached systemically and strategically, leadership coaching is a powerful way to improve individual leader performance and overall company performance. However, making the most of the investment in leadership coaching requires taking the right steps to educate yourself to ensure you are thinking holistically to understand the right cultural fit, leadership and coach requirements, and company objectives. Furthermore, as the world of coaching has evolved to offer a range of technology-enabled solutions, it is incumbent upon the HR organization to understand and differentiate the range of offerings as not all solutions are the same. It is particularly critical to look at the scalability and consistency that these solutions offer. Lastly, the ability of a technology-enabled coaching solution to provide skill improvement metrics, impact data, and ROI of your leadership coaching investment should not be assumed and should be a critical component of any coaching program.

More than ever before the benefit of leadership coaching is being brought to the attention of both leaders and HR professionals. The opportunity is to not only strengthen

companies through their leadership talent, but to also realize and measure impact of coaching using the today's coaching technology.

## About Skyline Group

Skyline Group is the leading provider of scalable leadership solutions. C4X combines a flexible technology platform (integrated assessment, content, metrics, and coach management system) with the personalized impact and connection of 1:1 coaching. Learn more at [SkylineG.com](https://www.skylineg.com).