

Make coaching work: Four steps to success



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Coaching – four steps to success

It's become increasingly popular in leadership and management circles as a way to improve both individual and organisational performance – so could coaching be the key to unlocking your organisation's success?

Coaching is a practical leadership and management discipline that allows you to unleash the potential of your workforce – and it's one that more and more employers are tapping in to.

ILM research¹ shows that:

- ▶ 90% of organisations with over 2,000 employees use business coaching
- ▶ 95% say that coaching has delivered tangible benefits to their business

It's a development tool that improves both individual and organisational performance, increasing confidence and motivation, enhancing interpersonal skills and increasing the rate of conflict resolution. It's also a highly cost-effective way of creating a high performance culture in your organisation.

ILM is setting the benchmark for coaching standards and accredits more qualified workplace coaches than any other UK awarding organisation. So could coaching work for you? This white paper outlines the benefits of great coaching and how to recognise it, plus how to begin creating a coaching culture in your own organisation.

Helen Mayson
Editor, Edge and inspire

¹ <https://www.i-l-m.com/Insight/Inspire/2013/May/coaching-culture-key-findings>

Understanding coaching

While 90% of UK organisations say they are using coaching in some way, are they all using it effectively? The first step to implementing coaching is understanding it properly – here’s what you need to know

What does good coaching look like?

The majority of UK organisations (around 90%) say they are using coaching in the workplace in some way, but the quality of that coaching varies wildly depending on the level of training, investment and care put into implementing and measuring it. Done well, establishing a culture of coaching and developing managers as coaches is an incredibly efficient way of improving your organisation.

Great coaching sessions are first and foremost built on strong relationships forged between a coach and the person they’re coaching. Coaching uses one-to-one conversations and guided questioning to unlock a coachee’s inner potential. It helps managers deal with change and find solutions to business problems using their own resources – it really is a way of empowering your workforce.

Coaching involves a collaborative relationship between the coach and the learner (or coachee). It allows managers – or other people in the workplace – to build stronger bonds with their teams and learn new techniques to help them perform to the best of their ability. The coach is a catalyst for change, questioning rather than telling – all the change is driven from within the employee being coached.

How to set up a strong coaching relationship

1. Lay the foundations

- ▶ A coach must meet ethical guidelines and professional standards as a manager
- ▶ The coach, person being coached and a representative of the organisation can then establish the coaching agreement

2. Create the relationship

- ▶ Establish trust and rapport between coach and coachee
- ▶ The coach can demonstrate coaching presence through experience, previous coaching successes and conversation

3. Communicate effectively

- ▶ The coach uses active listening, powerful questioning and direct communication to get the most out of the sessions

4. Facilitate learning and results

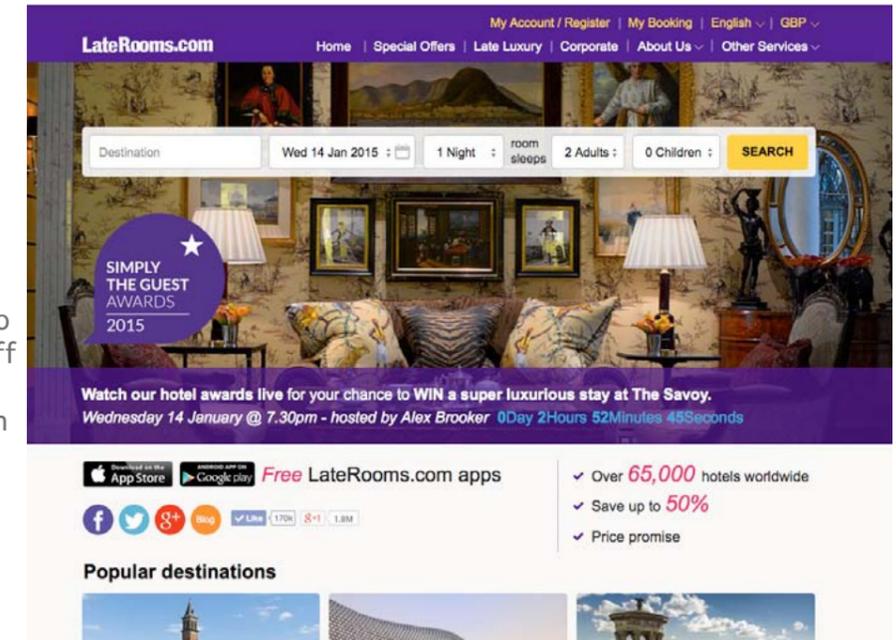
- ▶ Early on the coach, coachee and organisation plan the structure and frequency of sessions and set goals for success
- ▶ The coach has an ongoing process for managing progress and accountability for success against the agreed goals

Case study: Laterooms.com

Instilling a coaching culture in an organisation is a challenge and relying on external coaches can be costly and doesn’t always suit your purpose. One solution is to enable managers within the organisation to take on a coaching role, and for staff to use coaching techniques in their everyday work. This is the approach adopted by online accommodation specialists, LateRooms.com.

LateRooms wanted to boost its coaching capability for a number of reasons. “There were some issues around helping people to change behaviours and improving leadership capability and skills, for example,” says Nichola Hewitt, learning and development manager at LateRooms.com. “We also wanted to use coaching to help embed learning from training programmes that our people were going on.”

Hewitt put 24 senior and middle managers through the ILM Level 5 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring. The intention was for these managers to go on and provide a coaching facility within the business. Another eight people managers enrolled on an ILM Level 3 Award in Coaching programme. Here the motivation was slightly different. “It was more around them coaching in role,” says Hewitt. “These were people working in quality assurance, learning and development advisors, HR advisors, for example – where coaching within their roles should be part of the job.”



Mix up training for best results

The programmes were delivered and facilitated by organisational development consultancy Straight Forward, using a mixture of workshops, tutorials, and coaching practice back in the organisation. Both programmes were very practical, with managers getting to grips with coaching early on, and taking the skills they acquired back into the business as the course progressed.

“If you’re not careful the learning experience can be too theoretical,” says Charlotte Cook, a director at Straight Forward. “Our fundamental principle is being pragmatic, it has to apply in a business context, participants must be able to do something useful with it.” Managers should be able to relate the skills and knowledge acquired in the workshops and tutorials to the day-to-day reality of their working lives.

As part of the Level 5 programme, the managers do 12 hours of coaching inside their organisation, logging those hours in a coaching diary. Managers on the Level 3 programme do six hours each. That equates to a significant amount of coaching hours being delivered within the company. In addition, Hewitt persuaded the senior and middle managers to commit to delivering another 20 hours out of role coaching in the business after completing the programme. This helped ensure that the coaching became an integral and permanent part of the way people interacted within LateRooms.

Business benefits of coaching

The benefits of sending managers on the programme were evident almost immediately. “The people being coached told me how well their coaching sessions were going. While the coaches said that they feel more developed – they have these additional skills, and that’s boosted their confidence levels,” says Hewitt. “People are beginning to ask for coaching, they see the benefits in it, and want to do it. Plus people want to go on the programme.”

Donna Carr, a resource planning manager at LateRooms has experienced the advantages at first hand, after completing the Level 5 programme. “Every session you learnt new techniques, and those techniques become your normal way of reacting or talking to people,” she says. “It’s almost as if you become a different manager. The coaching programme has become a normal part of my working day.”

The coaching skills that Carr acquired have, she says, helped her to build a better relationship and understanding with her team and to raise their performance to another level.

To get the most from these types of programme, says Hewitt, it is important to do some preparation beforehand. Hewitt got buy-in from the senior team and made sure people in the organisation were comfortable with the concept of coaching – that it was about “getting people to be the best that they can be”.

“It’s one thing getting all the coaches on board,” she says. “But you don’t want people frightened of being coached, and there being a perception early on that coaching was because someone had done something wrong or they were underperforming.”

Choosing the right coaching facilitator

It is also important to get the facilitation that suits the company best. “Meet the facilitator and ask them what their training style is,” says Hewitt. What does a typical day look like? What would they be doing? Then monitor and get feedback from the people attending the programme. What do or don’t they like about the programme. Do that immediately, rather than waiting until you are six months down the line.”

With the right preparation, equipping managers with coaching skills and building a coaching capacity in the business can prove very rewarding. “Some people will end up being internal coaches and part of an internal coaching pool, others will use their coaching skills to manage their teams more effectively,” says Cook. “Coaching is the thing that makes the difference. It makes managers think more about the wider picture, and about developing the people in the organisation, instead of just focusing on managing their KPIs.”

Benchmarking and raising standards

It’s great that there is so much coaching going on out there, but how do you ensure you’re getting a high standard of training for your managers? Here’s a round up of what to look out for

Coaching accreditation

Business coaching remains a largely unregulated area, but recent years have seen a drive by coaching educators and bodies to professionalise the sector. For employers wishing to upskill their managers in coaching techniques and establish an internal coaching facility, there are a range of accredited coaching qualifications available. Accredited qualifications, also known as regulated qualifications, are reviewed, recognised and monitored by the regulatory bodies in order to make sure that they meet specific criteria and quality standards. Providers and awarding bodies include the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM), the biggest qualifier of coaches in Europe, and the Chartered Institute of Management (CIM). While the content and approach to courses may vary, they set out to achieve the common aim of equipping managers with a range of coaching skills and techniques appropriate to their role. Employers can use the National Occupational Standards for Coaching and Mentoring² as a guideline/frame of reference. These set out the performance standards expected of individuals carrying out coaching in the workplace and also specify the underpinning knowledge and understanding that is required.

Employers planning to introduce executive coaching should look for external coaches with accredited qualifications which show a coach is fully trained. ILM qualifications also require coaches to have performed a specific number of coaching hours to pass – which means you know your coach has experience. Membership/affiliation of/to coaching bodies such as the Association of Coaching (AC), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECs). Ideally, an external coach should also be under supervision. This

means that they have an assigned supervisor with whom they regularly check-in with and it is a mark of their professionalism and commitment to coaching.

Choosing the right qualification level

There are a number of different levels of qualifications available, whether you’re a manager looking to acquire coaching skills, an employer looking to train staff as internal coaches or someone who wants to practice as an executive coach. ILM Level 7, for instance, is seen as the qualification that gives an individual a licence to practice as a coach. When it comes to deciding which level is right for a particular manager, take into account the position they hold and experience they have but also how the coaching skills will be applied in the organisation.

If you want a team leader or supervisor to use coaching techniques in their everyday work and be able to have coaching conversations with members of their team, then one of the lower level qualifications (level 3 or 5) will enable them to do this. If the object is to skill up a



2. <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/61>

Level	Suitable for	Example qualifications
Level 3	Managers at any level wishing to use coaching techniques in their day to day work. No previous experience of coaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ILM Level 3 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring ▶ ILM Level 3 Certificate in Mentoring ▶ ILM Level 3 Award in Mentoring ▶ ILM Level 3 Certificate in Coaching ▶ ILM Level 3 Award in Coaching
Level 5	Managers with significant responsibility for coaching and mentoring as part of your day-to-day role. It will also support you if you are planning to move into a development role in your organisation or start a career as a freelance coach and mentor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ILM Level 5 Certificate and Diploma in Coaching and Mentoring
Level 7	Most suitable for executive coaches and those practicing coaching at a senior level. They're also ideal for professional coaches and mentors seeking to enhance and accredit their experience with a nationally recognised qualification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ILM Level 7 Certificate and Diploma in Coaching Supervision ▶ ILM Level 7 Certificate and Diploma in Executive Coaching and Mentoring

cohort of managers to coach individuals across the organisation outside of their immediate team, they will need training more akin to that of a practising business coach. Discuss your requirements for specific managers with the education provider who will be able to guide you as to what level is most appropriate. A manager may start on one of the lower level courses but if their coaching aspirations grow, there is plenty of scope for them to advance their education and even progress to Masters' degree level.

Keep a coaching diary

Coaches encourage individuals to reflect on their performance and assess what has gone right or wrong or what could be done better. In the same way, coaching educators encourage coaches to keep a log of their coaching

experiences at the end of each session so they can reflect on their own performance. This is particularly valuable in an individual's early days as a coach and it acts as a point of discussion with a tutor or supervisor. While qualifications and study are important, experts say individuals can only become truly great coaches by coaching, so the diary is an important part of the ongoing learning experience. As well as reflecting on the coachee's progress and whether they are achieving the goals, coaches should make a note of any feedback to improve future sessions.

Engagement - getting organisational buy-in

Once you've decided that implementing coaching in your organisation is a good idea, then getting the organisation engaged is the next step. Here's how to get senior leaders and staff on board

Coaching can have most impact when it's implemented at middle and first line manager level. These managers are often the most time-poor and under-invested staff in terms of training. Most organisations use a 'top down' approach with coaching, reserving it for senior leaders. Instead, developing more junior managers as coaches or teaching them coaching skills can have a greater impact both up and down through the management structure.

Work with your managers

Coaching is still a misunderstood area, so at the outset it is important to ensure that managers fully understand the role of a coach and how coaching techniques can be used in the workplace. Stress the initiative has top level buy-in and discuss the broad aims of putting in place an internal coaching facility and why it is important to the organisation. Secure buy-in by explaining the vital part they will play in the process (it's not something being 'done' to them) and convey the career benefits of having a formal coaching qualification. Emphasise that coaching will also help to unlock and develop their full potential as a manager and leader.

Historically, coaching has been seen as a fluffy HR initiative rather than something that can positively impact the bottom line so back up your claims with data. According to ILM research, 90% of organisations with more than 2,000 employees use business coaching and 95% claim it has delivered tangible benefits to their business. Like any training intervention, it is important to quantify the effectiveness of coaching and in the past there has been plenty of debate about tracking its return on investment (ROI). Some experts believe that becoming too preoccupied with ROI can mean that organisations get sidetracked on particular business issues and fail to maximise the full potential of coaching. Putting in place a number

of different assessment methods is therefore the best advice. Align coaching objectives with those of the business and put in place key performance indicators like you would for any other intervention but balance this with more holistic approaches. For instance, measure

Steps to getting senior level buy-in

Agree your methodology early – what will you measure, how and when

Set specific goals for each coaching interaction as well as discussing overarching goals for the department or organisation, such as increased satisfaction levels, reduced turnover or improved PDR scores

Involve finance in the early stages to agree cost of training and ROI

Coaching is a cost-efficient way of upskilling your staff – but there is an investment to be made in training. Get finance to agree a budget for training early on, using research (see resources) to prove the impact it could have

Use a combination of quantitative and qualitative assessment

Setting goals is important and measuring performance can show the impact coaching is having on your organisation, but also make time to speak to coaches and staff via informal surveys and capture responses to coaching through interviews and one to ones

Track training outcomes over an extended time period

Coaching is a 'slow burn' development tool. While some people will feel the impact right away and show early results, other development goals will take time. The longer a coaching style is used in an organisation, the greater the impact is likely to be

employee engagement, satisfaction, wellbeing and absenteeism to assess whether coaching has had a positive impact on these areas. Its impact can also be assessed in internal appraisal systems.

Set specific goals and objectives

A key way to ensure senior level and finance buy-in to coaching is to develop a set of SMART objectives and track and report clearly on the results. Set a clearly defined goal for the both the coaching programme as a whole and for individuals. 93% of organisations say they measure the success of their coaching, but exactly how that's achieved varies by organisation³. 70% measure it via the existing appraisal system, 48% measure it against existing goals and KPIs, 40% use some form of 360 appraisal and 39% use specific evaluations for coaching interventions. As well as having goals linked to an employee's individual appraisal, they should also be tied into organisational objectives and performance.

As long as there are clear indicators of success agreed at the start, eg for individuals more active participation in meetings or successfully presenting to an audience, then there is no ambiguity in whether the goal has been fully achieved or not.

Look at a mix of the 'hard' business measures – including questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and focus groups to evaluate improvements around increases in sales and productivity, accountable profit, reductions in cost, and so on and 'soft' or behavioural measures – such as 360° assessments, performance reviews and customer and employee surveys to assess performance.

Four steps to measuring ROI on coaching

- 1 Define your organisation's business strategy and identify the critical issues facing you, then place an estimated cost on them.
- 2 Align your coaching programme to address these business goals, as they are the ones that leaders will most likely value the most. Agree on your desired results, objectives and specific measures of success – this process should involve the coaches, staff and the senior team.
- 3 Build ways to evaluate the success of coaching process at the outset and integrate this with existing business and HR processes, such as performance reviews, to help keep things clear and simple.
- 4 Create shared ownership of your results by making managers, coaches and those they coach accountable for their outcomes and targets.

Resources

- ▶ **Creating a Coaching Culture, ILM**
<http://tinyurl.com/o3akmym>
- ▶ **Coaching for success: The key ingredients for coaching delivery and coach recruitment, ILM**
<http://tinyurl.com/q2dpy9q>
- ▶ **Making the case for coaching: Does it work? CIPD**
<http://tinyurl.com/n6axraq>

Making it work

Once you've set up your programme and trained your staff, it's time to make sure all your hard work doesn't go to waste. Track, measure and review your results regularly

In ILM's recent research into coaching⁴, four out of five of the top reasons for using coaching are still related to benefits for individuals. These include developing a specific area of performance and enabling career progression – all very positive for managers. Many organisations still view coaching as a tool to correct poor performance as opposed to once for building a high performance culture.

The report also found that coaching is predominantly made available to middle management and upwards. This fact and the above findings indicate that coaching is still something used selectively rather than being a generally available development tool. If coaching is going to meet the needs of progressive organisations, those implementing coaching programmes need to challenge some of these traditional assumptions.

Pass coaching knowledge on throughout the organisation

It is important to set the right tone and explain to managers and the workforce that coaching is something that the entire organisation is committed to and training initiatives have board-level buy-in. Establishing an internal coaching culture won't happen overnight but with the right training and support, it shouldn't be too long before coaching knowledge and techniques are being passed on throughout the organisation. Having made the coaching training available to managers, ensure they continue to receive support in helping them apply it in their everyday work and behaviours. Also make sure they understand their position as a coaching role model. If an individual has a good coaching conversation with a manager then they are more likely to recognise the benefits of it and replicate

it with someone else when they are in a similar position.

Coaching techniques, such as asking open questions and helping employees find a solution rather than simply telling them how to do something, are empowering to use but can also be more challenging and exploratory than traditional methods of management. If they are to become common practice, managers who've been trained in these areas are the key to drive this new approach. Having established a tier of managers as internal coaches, keep the momentum building by discussing coaching training requirements for their team members as they move into supervisory positions.

Make the most of tools available

Telephone, Skype and other video technology can all be used to deliver coaching while email and other methods of electronic communication have a part to play in the follow-up discussions and ongoing relationship building between coach and coachee. It is vital that a chemistry exists between the two sides and this is much easier if they meet face-to-face at the start and at regular intervals. There is nothing wrong though with using non face-to-face tools and techniques when it isn't possible to meet in person or distance doesn't allow on a regular basis. Coaches, especially relatively newly qualified ones though, need to be aware that they may miss out on some of the visual/non-verbal cues without face-to-face contact and it can be easy for both sides to misinterpret each other.

What next?

ILM is setting the benchmark for coaching standards in organisations. Find out more about us or how we can help you make the right steps to coaching success

The Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) is the UK's largest management development organisation. We are passionate about good leadership and management, and its power to drive organisational performance and wider economic prosperity.

We are committed to raising awareness and understanding of good leadership and management practice through an intensive programme of independent research. This helps us to maintain a clear picture of what great leadership and management looks like, and how best to achieve it.

We offer a broad range of industry-leading qualifications, training and member services to develop and support leaders at all levels, from first line managers to CEOs. Last year, our network of over 2,500 expert learning providers helped more than 90,000 people to enhance their leadership and management capability with an ILM qualification. Currently, over 35,000 managers enjoy increased professional recognition and support through ILM membership.

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If you're interested in starting a coaching culture in your organisation or developing your managers' coaching skills, visit us here:
www.i-l-m.com/businesscoaching

Want to train as a coach? Find a training provider delivering ILM qualifications here:
<https://www.i-l-m.com/Learning-and-Development/Qualifications-explained/coaching-and-mentoring-qualifications>



Get in touch with us:

Telephone: +44 (0) 1543 266867

Fax: +44 (0) 1543 266893

Email: customer@i-l-m.com

Institute of Leadership
& Management
1 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DD
www.i-l-m.com

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