

How to Increase the Value of Corporate Coaching

What organisations can do to maximise the value and return on investment from coaching

October 2014



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Executive Summary

Approaches to corporate coaching are changing

There is a growing need to improve performance and develop talent, while, at the same time, reduce costs and explicitly demonstrate the value from an investment in coaching.

Setting up a coaching programme, rather like coaching itself, is simple in theory, but not necessarily easy or comfortable in practice: particularly when it comes to justifying the investment.

When developing a coaching programme, once again the similarity to coaching is striking. We need to know where we want to get to, where we are now, how we move between the two, and how we track our progress.

Until recently, this would have been almost impossible for anything other than the smallest coaching programme. Fortunately, two developments give a new set of tools to help us. These are the emergence of proven coaching processes such as stakeholder coaching and the development of specialist cloud systems designed to meet the needs of the coaching client, the coach, and the programme owner.

The basics haven't changed

Corporate coaching will only work when the company and the individual benefit from the coaching programme. This white paper proposes that to improve the return from coaching, we need to start by reviewing the building blocks of what makes coaching successful.

Any organisation can increase the return they receive by improving any one of these building blocks; however the very best results come when the elements are aligned to work together.

How does this research add value?

In this white paper, we review the key elements that make corporate coaching programmes successful. Thirty HR and Talent Directors contributed to this report, and we are very grateful for their time and insights.

We've identified the key questions that will help:

- set up a high value corporate coaching programme;
- audit an existing programme; or
- determine where a company is on the 'coaching maturity curve'.

Developing and implementing answers to any of the following questions is likely to improve the value any organisation receives from coaching. Organisations that are further along the 'coaching readiness' curve will be on track to implementing answers to many of them.

What are the questions?

- 1: What is your company's overall business strategy and how can coaching help?
- 2: How does your senior team support coaching?
- 3: Do you have a culture where individuals are encouraged to develop themselves, supported by the company?
- 4: What results do you expect? What results are you getting? Can you link the results from the individual and team to the company?
- 5: How do you promote the benefits and the correct use of coaching to all stakeholders and potential coaching clients?
- 6: Who will participate in being coached and who will decide?
- 7: What coaching methodologies/processes do/will you use? For what reasons?
- 8: What systems do you use to support your coaching processes, for coaching follow up, and to track results?
- 9: Who will provide your coaching? Are you choosing output measures to select your coaches?
- 10: What is confidential between the coach and the end client?
- 11: How are you using the information produced to a) improve coaching b) improve the coaching process and c) improve the organisation?
- 12: How do you monitor investment vs benefits?

Report Highlights

The following areas will be of particular interest to the people that contributed to the report:

- 1: Why is coaching becoming more important (section 2.0)
- 2: The reasons processes such as Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Leader and Team Coaching, and systems such as CoachingCloud, offer a step change in the value companies receive from coaching (section 2.0)
- 3: The need for alignment and transparency (section 3.0)
- 4: Leadership development areas (section 4.0)
- 5: Contributors' views on the leadership development areas for a) HR and Talent Directors and b) HR Stakeholders (sections 4.1 and 4.2)
- 6: Contributors' views on how companies can improve the value they receive from coaching (section 5.0)

The full index of contents follows this executive summary.

If you have any comments on this report or can contribute to our future research, we'd love to hear from you.

How we can help you improve the return on coaching

We offer a series of services relevant to the issues raised in this paper. If you're looking for ways to improve the return on your coaching investment, please get in touch to talk through how we can help.

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Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	2
1.1	What is coaching?.....	3
2.0	Why is coaching becoming more important?	3
3.0	The importance of alignment and transparency	4
4.0	Leadership development areas.....	5
4.1	Leadership development areas for senior HR people	5
4.2	Leadership development areas for senior operations stakeholders	6
5.0	How organisations can improve their return on coaching	6
5.1	How to improve the return from a company viewpoint.....	6
5.2	How to improve the return from a coaching assignment viewpoint	7
5.3	What coaches can do to improve the return they offer.....	7
6.0	What this research has shown us.....	8
7.0	How we can help you maximise your coaching return	9
7.1	Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching (MGSCC)	10
7.2	NLP business training and coaching	11
7.3	CoachingCloud online coaching and mentoring platform	11
7.4	Taking this work further	11
8.0	Methodology, useful links, about Michael and EBCN	12
8.1	Methodology	12
8.2	Useful links	13
8.3	About Michael Beale and the EBCN.....	13
8.4	Contact details	14

How to increase your return from corporate coaching

1.0 Introduction

This white paper explores how an organisation can make significant improvements to the return from coaching programmes. It builds upon two previous ECBN papers and work by Marshall Goldsmith with Accenture on global leadership capabilities. The paper forms part of Michael Beale's work as a Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centred Coach and 1:1 NLP trainer.

Our starting point was to ask thirty senior HR and Talent Directors and professionals for their raw thoughts on what companies can do to improve their return from coaching and what coaches can do to help. We also asked which development areas would be the most helpful to them in the future and which development areas would benefit some of their key stakeholders.

We reviewed these results against a literature search and added the views of a number of top international coaching practice leaders to come up with a generic list of the key steps needed to make corporate coaching effective. Improvement in any one of these steps is likely to increase the value received from coaching.

As we were compiling the results it became apparent that different companies were at different stages of 'coaching readiness' and that the prize in the future would go to those companies that aligned these key steps. To do this requires the organisation, together with their processes and the coaches they use, to be some way along what we call the 'coaching maturity curve'. We will continue developing this theme in a future white paper.

This paper will be of particular interest to company leaders, HR professionals, and executive coaches who want to improve performance through leading world-class coaching programmes.

1.1 What is coaching?

There are many definitions of coaching, For this paper, we define it as:

An intervention whereby the coach helps the client clarify what they want, confirm where they are and how they reach or beat their objectives. The coach manages the process while the client focusses on the content and action. For coaching to be effective, the client must trust the coach and want to work with them.

We also use Marshall Goldsmith's definition of executive coaching as:

"To enable successful leaders to lead/behave more effectively through positive behaviour change that is sustained, recognised by acknowledged others."

At its best, corporate coaching is a partnership and an alignment between the client, his or her stakeholders, the coaching process, and the coach.

The test of successful coaching is whether the client has made progress towards his or her goals. Not everyone will get high returns from coaching. It works best with clients and teams that are already successful and that demonstrate ambition, courage, discipline, humility, and openness.

2.0 Why is coaching becoming more important?

Coaching is increasing in prominence and it is not unusual for the most successful leaders to credit executive coaching as a key factor in their success - Alan Mulally, formerly of Ford, Bill Gates from Microsoft, and Eric Schmidt from Google are just three that have publicly done so.

Coaching that encompasses both stakeholders and teams increases the impact of the results, which include:

- Making it easier for the client to connect to what's really important: for them and for their organisation. This then makes it possible to develop an empowering vision and communicate it to their stakeholders.
- Transforming learning into results. Being able to do this is a key element in developing leaders and creating a future talent pool.

- Used in conjunction with diagnostic tools such as 360 degree feedback, coaching enables clients to determine their starting point, which gives them information about where to improve and thus get the highest return for their efforts.
- Helping clients break through limitations and ‘glass ceilings’.

While the basics of great coaching remain the same, the wider availability of new coaching approaches, such as Marshall Goldsmith’s Stakeholder Centered Coaching (MGSCC) and Cloud systems, such as CoachingCloud, mean that significantly higher returns from coaching investment are within reach of organisations that embrace the opportunities on offer.

The MGSCC leadership and team coaching processes align organisation, team and individual development areas with specific behaviour change, action, follow up and measurement. We find these processes encourage answers to our 12 questions.

The CoachingCloud Online Coaching and Mentoring platform is designed to meet the complementary, but differing, needs of the coaching client, coach, and programme owner. The programme owner has a ‘traffic light’ system to check the programme is on track. The approach enables the client company to have control of their information and not rely on the coaching provider’s system. Systems such as this will become increasingly important as a coaching enabler.

3.0 The importance of alignment and transparency

Any corporate programme owner about to invest in a coaching programme should ask:

- What are coaching clients working on?
- How do these relate to business priorities?
- What are the results, and how are they measured?
- What’s the follow-up? How will the programme be improved?

Being able to answer these questions provides a sensible justification for the investment and a means of continually refining the programme. Being without answers doesn’t mean that the programme is without value, but it will be harder to justify it against other calls on expenditure.

A successful coaching programme will maximise the alignment and transparency between these elements. Each element has a part to play, but when they work together, the power is greatly increased.

Like coaching itself, this is a simple concept. Getting great results via successful implementation may be more of a challenge. This paper aims to make those results quicker and easier to obtain.

4.0 Leadership development areas

The starting point of any coaching assignment is to agree where we want to get to. We decided that a useful start was to ask our contributors for one or two development areas that they thought would lead to their own success over the next two to three years.

We then asked what the development areas might be for their key stakeholders.

The MGSCC chart of [leadership development areas](#) (available on our website) is one way of starting the discussion about the competencies that will be needed by leaders in the future. When developing a coaching programme, we recommend that you supplement this by whatever is required in that context, e.g. executive workshops, competence and behavioural 360 feedback, and so on. Remember, it's important that each leader chooses their own development areas based on their stakeholders' and leaders' input.

We've also included a link to the original [Global Leaders of the Future](#) (GLOF Competencies), which gives a definition and 360 survey questions relating to the key development areas.

4.1 Leadership development areas for senior HR people

The top six areas for personal development selected by the HR and Talent Directors for themselves were:

- communicate / develop trust,
- improve cross-cultural communication,
- create a talent pool of future leaders,
- hold others accountable,
- develop personal robustness and resilience, and
- improve the value HR offers the company.

4.2 Leadership development areas for senior operations stakeholders

The top six areas that they thought might be relevant for their own stakeholders were:

- creating and communicating a clear organisational vision,
- identifying priorities, and focussing on a vital few,
- making decisions that reflect global considerations,
- ensuring a talent pool of future leaders,
- encouraging a culture where individuals are empowered and engaged, and
- managing diversity.

5.0 How organisations can improve their return on coaching

These are the key areas our contributors suggested would increase the return from coaching programmes. We have split the answers into a company viewpoint and then an individual coaching assignment view point.

5.1 How to improve the return from a company viewpoint

To ensure a good return from a corporate coaching programme, a company needs:

- Senior stakeholders agreeing the competencies that are needed now, and that they think will be needed in the future. They need to fully understand what coaching is and how coaching (among other interventions) can be used to achieve these competencies.
- The programme sponsor and owner having a clear understanding of what development areas the individuals are being coached upon and how these relate to the success of the company, plus they need to see results.
- The coaching programme being treated in the same way as any other important change programme - being championed upwards, downwards, and sideways.
- A culture where the individuals are responsible for driving their own development, with strong support from the organisation.

- To be focused on output (e.g. business impact and results) rather than input (qualifications, time, theory).
- To use appropriate coaching processes and systems to reach the desired outcomes and keeping these systems and processes as simple as possible.
- To control all costs and resources (including expenses).

5.2 How to improve the return from a coaching assignment viewpoint

These are the key areas our contributors suggested would increase the return from coaching programmes from an individual viewpoint:

- As above, follow a transparent process and system where the programme sponsor and owner have clear visibility of the areas the individuals are being coached in, how they relate to the company's success, the results, and the level of the investment.
- Agree criteria for whom to coach. Know who is not suitable, and give the client a choice of at least three coaches.
- Involve managers and other stakeholders in the process together with appropriate diagnostics (such as 360 degree feedback).
- Choose the right type of coach: external or internal, line managers, buddies, etc.
- Choose the right individual coach!
- Agree the boundaries - confidentiality, time frame, etc.
- Complete all the agreed processes: follow up objectives and measure progress.

5.3 What coaches can do to improve the return they offer

These are the key areas our contributors suggested where coaches could help increase the return from coaching programmes. Executive coaches can contribute towards improving the return on corporate coaching by:

- Understanding the company vision, objectives, and culture.
- Understanding and following the company's coaching process and diagnostics.

- Being easy to work with.
- Knowing what's confidential, and what isn't.
- Knowing who to (and who not to) coach. Being prepared to walk away.
- Challenging clients when it is appropriate.
- Being a learning role model.
- Modelling top performers in the chosen field, and continually developing their skills.
- Controlling costs.

6.0 What this research has shown us

There is a significant opportunity for companies that fully embrace and answer the questions posed in this paper. From our discussions, together with a literature search and discussions with two international coaching practice managers, we've developed a list of questions that cover what we believe are the building blocks that make coaching successful.

We believe that answering these questions and taking action on the answers will improve the return a company receives from coaching. They are designed to be particularly useful when:

- setting up a corporate coaching programme,
- auditing existing programmes, or
- to indicate where a company is on the 'coaching maturity curve'.

With our long experience in running corporate coaching programmes, we can facilitate and help you to answer these questions. In our experience short, honest answers are most useful. However the answers must belong to you and your stakeholders.

The questions are:

- 1: What is your company's overall strategy and how can coaching help?
- 2: How does your senior team support coaching?
- 3: Do you have a culture where individuals are encouraged to develop themselves, supported by the company?

- 4: What results do you expect? What results are you getting? Can you link the results from the individual and team to the company?
- 5: How do you promote the benefits and the correct use of coaching to all stakeholders and potential clients?
- 6: Who will participate in being coached and who will decide?
- 7: What coaching methodologies/processes do/will you use? For what reasons?
- 8: What systems do you use to support your coaching processes, for coaching follow up, and to track results?
- 9: Who will provide your coaching? Are you choosing output measures to select your coaches?
- 10: What is confidential between the coach and the end client?
- 11: How are you using the information produced to a) improve coaching, b) improve the coaching process, and c) improve the organisation?
- 12: How do you monitor investment vs benefits?

We have found that, in the majority of companies, the coaching programme owners can only answer a few of these questions. This can be a good place to be though, because a small improvement can lead to a big difference in the results they achieve.

In other companies, they are coming up with credible answers to many of these questions.

In our next white paper we are going to further test and refine these questions and develop them so they become part of a simple diagnostic for a company to determine where they are on the coaching maturity curve, and wherever they are on that curve, the options they have for improving the value they receive from coaching.

7.0 How we can help you maximise your coaching return

With 14 years' experience in corporate coaching, we are well placed to help you meet some of the challenges outlined in this paper. We provide advice, consultancy and coaching services to a wide range of organisations and companies.

You are welcome to get in touch for an informal, no obligation, discussion of the ways we can work with you. All our work is designed to meet the specific needs of each client, and can include any of the following elements:

- Informal discussions to help you work out what you want.
- 360 degree feedback to understand what your stakeholders need.
- Executive team workshops to help you develop and communicate a coaching framework.
- Providing coaching.

7.1 Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching (MGSCC)

For senior leaders, this is becoming established as the No. 1 international executive coaching brand with 1000 certified coaches across the globe. Marshall has developed and refined his process with 150 top CEOs from around the world. This includes working with Alan Mulally, who led Ford from a \$14.6bn loss in 2007 to a \$8bn profit in 2013.

In MGSCC, the coach helps the leader set up a programme where the leader is coached by their stakeholders. There is also a complementary approach for developing teams.

We're so confident of the results that as long as the 12 month programme is set up correctly we offer a "No Gain, No Fee" guarantee.

The programme normally runs for a year and enables senior leaders to:

- develop in 1-2 areas that are key to their success,
- improve relationships with their stakeholders,
- build their own coaching skills, and
- develop their own personal brand and reputation.

As a members of Marshall's coaching team we can provide comprehensive local and international coaching programmes including leadership coaching, team building, and coach training. We can also introduce you to some of the very best business coaches in the UK and internationally.

7.2 NLP business training and coaching

We offer specialist one-to-one NLP training and NLP coach training. These programmes are normally for six months and enable leaders and professional people to develop in areas that are critical to survive and thrive in today's business environment. All our programmes are accredited by NLP co-founder Richard Bandler.

Clients explore opportunities and issues using frames, managing states, outcomes, rapport, improved questioning, mental strategies and rehearsal, values, beliefs, influence language, storytelling and various meditative approaches. The programme is closely aligned with the individual's personal and their stakeholders' goals. We track progress using the CoachingCloud online coaching and mentoring platform.

7.3 CoachingCloud online coaching and mentoring platform

The CoachingCloud platform can be used as a cost effective way to add value to and monitor your coaching programmes. The platform allows you to login from anywhere and use a variety of access devices. It's specifically designed for coaching, and is likely to offer significantly more functionality than the majority of in-house systems. Getting the right platform that complements your coaching processes is a key part to the success of corporate programmes. This system makes it possible for the client company to control their information without relying on the coaching provider's systems.

CoachingCloud combined with Marshall's feed-forward approach creates a powerful set of tools for mastermind group coaching, enabling coaching to be offered to suitable candidates at all levels in the organisation.

7.4 Taking this work further

Over the next few months, this work will be refined and developed as we're planning to widen the research to test what we've found so far, and include more operational contributors to see if their views complement our findings.

In early 2015 we're planning to start our next research project on exploring company readiness with regard to coaching maturity, and how this might impact an organisation's chances of getting value from coaching.

We are looking for people with expertise in the coaching field to contribute to future work. If you have any comments upon this paper, or are able to share your insights to our research, please get in touch.

8.0 Methodology, useful links, about Michael and EBCN

This section sets out the methodology of our research in more detail and also provides information about the work of Executive Coaching (EBCN) and our partners.

8.1 Methodology

This paper is the third in a series on coaching effectiveness by Michael Beale. It builds upon work by Marshall Goldsmith and Accenture on Global Leadership Capabilities.

We spoke to thirty HR and Talent Directors in the course of our research. Each was interviewed for 45 minutes and asked about their views upon ways to improve the return on coaching. We also are grateful for input from Will Linsenn, the MGSCC Practice Leader for the UK and EMEA, Frank Wagner the MGSCC Practice Leader for the US, and James and Lucinda Stokes, founders of CoachingCloud.

A number of questions stimulated their thinking:

- 1: What are the one or two leadership areas that would lead to their own future success?
- 2: What are the one or two leadership areas that would lead to the success of their stakeholders/top team?
- 3: In what areas could the organisation improve the return they receive from coaching?
- 4: In what areas could coaches improve the return they give?

The resulting answers were analysed for common themes and compared with literature research into coaching effectiveness. From this work, we drew up the list of elements that will improve the return on coaching investment.

8.2 Useful links

1:1 NLP Professional Training

[1:1 NLP Training](#)

MGSCC “No Gain, No Pay” Coaching

[Leadership development areas](#) [Global Leader of the Future Competencies \(GLOF\)](#) [Leadership coaching](#) [Team coaching](#) [Case study: How GE leveraged HR to develop leaders in real time](#)

CoachingCloud Coaching and Mentoring Platform

<https://www.coachingcloud.com/>

Recommended Books

[What got you here won't get you there](#)

[Coaching for Leadership](#)

[Global leadership | the next generation](#)

Previous EBCN Papers

[How to Measure the Value of Coaching](#)

[Corporate Coaching | What Questions to Ask?](#)

8.3 About Michael Beale and the EBCN



Michael Beale is an international executive coach and NLP trainer with more than 12 years' experience of working with senior clients across the world. Michael's specialty is as a Marshall Goldsmith Certified leadership and team coach, as well as a Richard Bandler accredited NLP trainer and NLP coach trainer.

The idea of the Executive and Business Coaching Network (EBCN) came to Michael in early 2000, when he noticed that some executive and business coaches seemed to produce great results and others didn't.

The purpose of EBCN is to take coaches who are already producing great results and make it easy for them to further develop and refine their skills. This in turn enables them to help their clients more.

In addition to their natural coaching skills all EBCN members continually develop their skills with top thought leaders across the world.

All EBCN coaches have significant business and organisational experience, over 100 hours coaching, EBCN and external accreditation, continual professional development, coaching supervision, professional indemnity insurance and contribute to our expanding library of coaching case studies.

In 2010 EBCN took a step further by embracing the use of cloud technology through the use of CoachingCloud to enable the coaching process. Coaching is very much a human to human interaction; however the right technology when used appropriately can make a significant difference to both the effectiveness and efficiency of any coaching intervention.

Co-author Joanna Brown trained as a social researcher and worked on programme management and staff development in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit before qualifying as an NLP practitioner in 2004. She now runs her own research and communication business.

8.4 Contact details

You can get in touch in a variety of ways; choose the method that works for you:

- Leave a message on +44 (0)7944 388621.
- Book a 45 minute telephone or Skype consultation in [Michael's online diary](#)
- Email michaelbeale@execcoach.net
- Visit the website www.execcoach.net for more details.

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