

Coaching the top team

MICHAEL MORAN, EXECUTIVE COACH, DESCRIBES HOW IT CAN BENEFIT SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The senior leadership team makes decisions with implications for the whole organization and future of the organization, in an environment of complexity and volatility, characterised by globalisation, disruptive technologies, political and societal change.

Organizations need to make the most of their talent, experience and skills. Executive coaching is proactive in unlocking potential and maximizing performance, providing an effective process for personal development which facilitates changes to internal thought processes. Developmental coaching helps people change how they see their world, how it might see them as a leader and, inter alia, delivers ROI to individual and organization. The best of the best use coaches – Roger Federer still has a coach. Champions would not win their titles and trophies without coaching. In business coaching is not therapeutic, but about sharing knowledge. Good coaches don't fix problems and claim to have all the answers, they see themselves as supporting the process of learning.

Room for improvement

A coach working at board level is similar to one working in sport, but aims to focus on building and running a



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successful enterprise. They inspire and empower the next level of achievement, Nick Faldo said “No one’s so good they can’t get better”. Characterized by constructive, developmental feedback for improving performance, and solving routine and non-routine problems, an executive coach provides feedback that an individual would normally never hear about personal, performance, career, and organizational issues; helping them become more self-aware through action learning methods.

There is scope for NEDs to take on coaching roles, officially or unofficially, to facilitate the transmission of knowledge, ensuring valuable experience doesn't disappear when a director leaves or retires. There is a responsibility and imperative for board directors to grow the next generation of talent; after all, leaders are promoted based on performance so it would be short-sighted not to use that expertise to coach the team.

Support your talent

In senior leadership roles it can be hard to discuss challenges and difficulties encountered at work. Coaching provides a sounding board that addresses issues effectively while building engagement and commitment to accomplish organizational objectives. New executive directors may need someone to confide in, not necessarily the Chairman, who understands the challenges. A coach with strong observational and communication skills uses high level emotional intelligence to concentrate on gathering information

and clarifying it objectively. Exploring potential and new perspectives gives an executive a competitive advantage. It's the most effective developmental intervention for those in leadership roles; it works. “I have used executive coaching several times during my career – in my quest to improve my performance and to enhance my self-awareness. It is a critical facet of a journey of self-discovery and I believe it works.” Mark Sismey-Durrant, Immediate Past Master.

Share and enjoy

Familiarity with the process enhances knowledge sharing and retention within the organization. Such skills trickle down as executives develop a coaching mind-set, affording their team a supportive space in which to improve and develop. An ICF Global study found 86% of organizations experienced real ROI in executive coaching, with 19% showing ROI 50 times greater than initial investment and 28% reporting ROI 10 to 49 times greater than the investment made. Wise counsel and knowledge sharing, create a cooperative dynamic rather than each team member ‘going it alone’. Each becomes a better manager, executive, director and leader in the broadest sense.

The organizational benefits of coaching for executive development are manifest in helping raise performance while aligning personal and organizational goals, and embedding learning and skills. It is a powerful agent for culture change and agility.