

CAMBRIA LENS

Coaching: New Perspectives

Cambria Lens is a periodic publication that details best practices and solutions which are critical to connecting talent strategy to an organization's key near and long-term business imperatives.

In this issue, we feature three articles on coaching — connecting executive coaching to strategy; how coaching can help drive organizational change; and how to build internal coaching capacity.

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Why Coaching — and Why Now?

It's hardly new to speak about volatility and change in the workplace. Leaders in nearly every industry — from the C Suite at most organizations and extending across the management ranks — understand that the requirements to lead effectively are far different today than they were three, five, and certainly ten years ago.

What's more, organizations are confronting extraordinary challenges at a breakneck pace, often while grappling with unprecedented disruption, new and emerging markets, and historic demographic shifts.

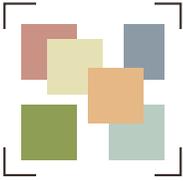
To that last point — demographic shifts: At many organizations, the talent pool has been top-heavy with baby boomers in high-level executive jobs for a number of years. As they retire in record numbers, with too few successors to fill the gap, the pressure to accelerate the development of new people for senior leadership roles is stronger than ever.

Given that challenge, and numerous others, what are the implications for how people are developed in your organization? More specifically, how can coaching play a strategic and systemic role to help drive talent development across the board?

This issue explores those questions and others in three articles:

- 1. Tying executive coaching to organizational strategy:** How coaching used holistically across the organization is key to achieving business results — and the steps for doing it effectively
- 2. Coaching to help drive organizational change:** How organizations can use coaching as a critical lever to implement change
- 3. Building internal coaching capacity across the organization:** How having employees as coaches can leverage and scale the benefits of one-to-one coaching at the top

Once considered a fad or just a way to “fix” problem performers, coaching is now viewed as a way to accelerate developing people with potential — and a wise investment. ■



Linking Executive Coaching to Strategy



BY COLLEEN GENTRY | PARTNER

Overview

Consider this: Is executive coaching done at your company on a 1:1 basis addressing individual needs or challenges with specific leaders? Or is coaching employed holistically across your organization as a strategic lever for developing key talent, tied to both organizational strategy and talent development?

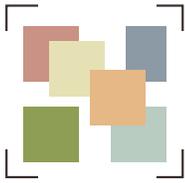
Executive coaching has moved from something punitive to a process best used with key talent to catalyze individual leaders' effectiveness and results.

The second of those two options represents a strategic evolution of coaching that more and more companies are embracing with impressive results.

Executive coaching has moved from something done punitively to a process best used with key talent to catalyze individual leaders' effectiveness. Progressive organizations understand that coaching can make a difference. But a close look at how most organizations use executive coaching shows a wide variety of approaches, most of which are useful but lack significant organization-wide impact.

Why is this? The short answer is that many organizations still use coaching as a reactive tool — a supportive individual offering designed to address a specific situation — rather than as a coordinated, planned program designed to develop leaders in conjunction with organizational imperatives and strategy.

In this more tactical approach, coaching is a service HR and leaders can tap to address individual needs, one by one. Sometimes using coaching in this way moves the organization toward an acceptance of coaching — from being seen as a last-ditch “fix-it” effort to save a



leader before he or she leaves or is let go to something more developmental that is supporting valued leaders.

In addition, even where coaching is accepted, there is still the challenge of ensuring that the right leaders get coaching support when they could benefit from it most, rather than using coaching as the default approach to developing leaders, regardless of timing or need.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with either of these approaches, coaching offers much more to organizations than just individual development. The time is ripe to rethink the role of coaching to help leaders successfully achieve business objectives or lead key critical initiatives.

Coaching to Help Drive Business Results

Executive coaching is an expensive approach to development on a per-person basis. As such, it's imperative to tie it more consciously to where the business is going, the business strategy, and what the outcomes need to be. Although it can be beneficial for many leaders regardless

Executive coaching should be used as one of a several effective levers tied to impacting business results.

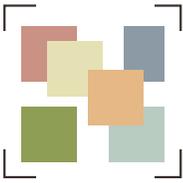
of where they sit, executive coaching is best aimed at key talent, high-value/high-potential leaders, or well-placed experts who can grow in place.

Executive coaching should be used as one of several effective levers tied to business results: leveraging coaching via talent review or succession management, where business leaders determine the necessary business results and how and where coaching can be positioned to help them think, act, and envi-

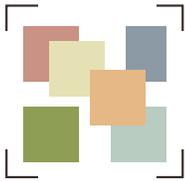
sion differently to impact those results. To further enhance talent and succession processes, consider adding discussion and focus on major business challenges, critical projects, market growth, and more to determine when and where coaching could accelerate business impact.

Challenges where executive coaching can help drive strong results include:

- **Supporting the business strategy.** Most organizations do this intuitively, but what would the impact be if decisions around executive coaching were intentionally linked to business strategies and initiatives within talent and succession discussions? How might this further enhance the outcomes as well as position HR more strongly as a partner in the business? Intentionally connecting coaching to talent development and succession planning to the critical strategies and initiatives that an organization has outlined for the future is a sure way to drive business impact.



- **Addressing global challenges.** When an organization is moving toward operating more globally, who are the key leaders that must carry out the shift? Once those leaders are identified, coaching can support them by helping them consider how to effect change in different regions, better understand the new culture they are leading or living in, or bring new country- or region-specific ideas into the existing organization to expand the repertoire of how that organization does business. It can also help a leader think about how best to develop their teams' global acumen and better utilize and develop the new non-home-office leaders who bring that cultural expertise to bear.
- **Driving innovation and new market penetration.** When an organization is moving into a new area of business or a brand-new market segment, how could coaching be deployed to help leaders think more creatively, build their skills around risk and innovation, shift and expand their industry or business networks, and develop those skills and capabilities within their teams? Coaching can support leaders who need to lead differently when driving the startup of a new business segment.
- **Implementing a new business operating model.** When organizations change the way they do business — which could involve restructuring, asset reallocation, new systems and technology, and changes in how work is done and how leaders lead — consider how coaching can focus leaders in pivotal roles on becoming more effective advocates for the change and help accelerate the shift, as well as deal with their own individual challenges about embracing the change.
- **Advancing M&A integration.** When organizations are facing a merger or acquisition scenario, consider how coaching can help support integrating different cultures, maximizing the success of the merger or acquisition by intentionally helping leaders borrow from the best of both worlds. In addition, coaching can be directed as a retention strategy for key leaders who may be at risk during this kind of scenario, providing a place to deal with the changes and simultaneously enhance their leadership in times of extreme change.
- **Aligning the senior team.** Last but not least, executive coaching can be more than an individual development initiative; it also allows coaching to focus all senior team members on building the capabilities needed to achieve common enterprise objectives and how they can work together more effectively to achieve them. Consider how coaching can be aligned with the overall business context as your coaches engage with these leaders to help the team operate more harmoniously, develop a greater sense of mutual trust, and deliver on their shared responsibilities as leaders of the enterprise.



These scenarios are just a sampling of where executive coaching can be used to make a significant difference for key talent. At Cambria, we believe that using executive coaching in a selective and high-impact manner is the best approach.

How to Pivot Executive Coaching

So, what's involved in moving from coaching deployed fragmentarily — often lacking a cohesive philosophy and with myriad coaches conducting inconsistent coaching processes — to executive coaching deployed holistically and in the service of larger organizational initiatives?

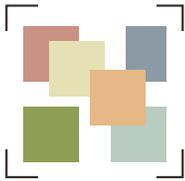
The best place to begin is with a focus on the business strategy and key objectives.



Moving Coaching from Individual to Organizational Impact

Ensuring that coaching is aimed at the right leaders at the right time for specific development objectives shifts coaching from a one-off service to a key offering that makes a significant difference in accelerating the development of key leaders.

One approach is to ensure that development planning discussions are incorporated into talent review. Once conducted, then the questions become: What avenues for development will



have the most impact for each leader now? In six months? In a year? In preparation for their next role? While many organizations have these discussions, coaching is too often not included as a part of the solution. Discussing how to include coaching as part of talent review discussions ensures that it is employed for the most appropriate leaders in the best possible way.

Organizing and overseeing executive coaching efforts then become more critical, because the attention of top leaders is focused on coaching in a way it may not have been before. When coaching is a one-off or ad-hoc offering, oversight is more difficult and less likely to occur.

Seven Steps to Tie Coaching to Strategy

1. Clarify Target Audiences

2. Identify Who Owns Coaching

3. Define a Robust Process

4. Determine Appropriate Type of Coaching

5. Pick the Best Coaches

6. Track Progress

7. Measure the Impact

Seven Steps for Driving Strong Results with Executive Coaching

For the investment to pay the highest dividends, it's vital that coaching is well-planned and well-managed. Here are seven steps to set up for success:

1

Clarify the target audiences for coaching.

Be clear about where the majority of coaching will be happening in your organization. Will it be by level or function? Potential? Position in the "9-Box"? Promotion or some other career juncture? Or coinciding with participation in a leadership development program?

In several organizations we work with, executive coaching is available to the top five levels for leaders designated as "officer potential". Then the questions are:

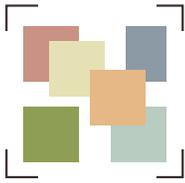
- Who would most benefit from 1:1 development via executive coaching right now or in preparation for a new assignment?

- Should leaders being promoted up a level be offered a transition coach to assist them in landing smoothly into the new role?

2

Identify an "ownership" role for coaching.

The organizations most effective at talent development have such a role, often a standalone position or part of a broader role. Establishing a point of accountability for coaching quality and effectiveness ensures that it won't be inefficiently deployed or wrongly targeted. The ideal candidate for this sort of role



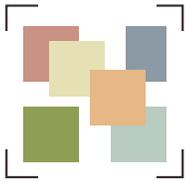
is someone who either knows coaching or has a deep passion for it. The person in this role ensures that processes are clear and connected, assesses and assigns coaches to engagements, establishes a coaching model, defines which tools and assessments can be leveraged in the organization, and works with (or reports to) the leader of talent management to ensure the connection between coaching and top talent/talent review/succession planning efforts.

Cambria has worked with a wide variety of individuals tasked with performing this role. It works best with leaders who understand the organization's talent management and succession processes and can operate as a counsel and support to the CHRO. They also benefit from having a strong sense of the organization's culture, so that coaching methods and approaches are realistic and align with the cultural norms and business style. And they understand that coaching is not about order fulfillment, so that they know to factor in the risk and reputational elements; after all, coaching is all about an organization's top talent — how they grow and how they experience coaching — so you want their experiences to be strong and impactful.

Finally, it's worth repeating: Finding someone who understands what coaching is and how it works makes a distinctive difference in how effective the overall function will be.

3 *Define a coaching process that is applicable to most executives.* This could include a general approach around executive coaching as well as an approach for leaders who are transitioning to new positions or onboarding to the organization. When you are taking an organizational stance on coaching, it's important to ensure that coaching processes are consistent across the organization and that leaders are having similar experiences. This includes:

- The process for requesting and approving a coaching engagement
- The information needed to determine if a leader is in the target audience for coaching
- Defining deliverables and milestones for coaching
- Decisions about confidentiality
- Who is part of the extended leadership development team (e.g., the person's manager, HR partner, talent management lead, the coaching program owner)
- Assessments and assessment models to be employed
- Tracking, overseeing, and evaluating coaching engagements



4 Determine the form of coaching most appropriate to your situation.

Depending on the need, any or all of the following can be applied to key talent:

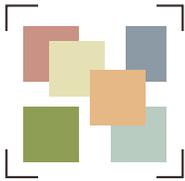
- C-suite coaching for ongoing support of the executive team (including the CEO)
- Executive coaching based on and linked to talent review discussions and succession planning objectives
- Transition/onboarding coaching for newly promoted leaders or mid-career external hires
- Coaching for leaders participating in internal multi-session executive development programs
- Coaching tied to assessment to support development planning

Each of these types of coaching requires a defined process and approach that looks different in terms of content, scope, and focus as fits the situation the leader being coached is dealing with.

5 Select and prepare the right coaches. Identifying and selecting the right coaches is an important step in implementing any kind of executive coaching in an organization. Finding coaches who understand the importance of adhering to a defined process using standard approaches and templates and who approach the work in partnership with the organization makes a huge difference in the efficacy of coaching.

When we partner with a company that is moving to a more strategic view of executive coaching, we help it identify a slate of “best fit” coaches for consideration. These coaches are interviewed and vetted by the organization, and a designated set of coaches is selected for that company’s coach cadre. Cambria then helps to create a coach orientation process: learning about the organization, the executives, the business and how it is evolving, key business initiatives, and a who’s who on the executive team. This way, coaches become de facto OD support to the organization and can provide additive and valuable perspectives to factor in as executive development and talent decisions are made.

6 Track and monitor progress. In most organizations we work with, many different coaching engagements can be going on at any one time, and it’s hard to keep track of them all. It’s a great benefit to simply know the number and scope of these engagements, not to mention their cost. Some clients depend on their external coach provider to do this for them. Others use systems like SAP or Workday to track coaching engagements.



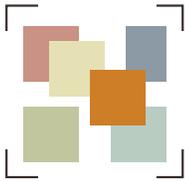
This works from an internal perspective to know who is getting coaching. However, it precludes coaches from inputting on progress and activity, so some of our clients use systems expressly designed to allow that input to be made. Cambria's Excelerated® Coaching management system enables the organization to set standards and milestones for each engagement, helps coachees and their managers keep focused on development and follow-through, and requires coaches to provide updates on progress monthly by logging activity and non-confidential notes on each engagement.

7 *Measure the impact of coaching.* Evaluating the impact of coaching is difficult because there are so many other factors that can affect a leader's growth (or lack of it) during the coaching process. That said, you can look at retention, promotion, and exit rates for leaders who are coached versus the population of leaders who have not been coached. You can also look at key drivers in the organization such as increasing diversity at specific levels, performance in expat assignments, and time to transition into a new assignment as ways to factor the positive impacts of coaching. In this area, look at what the organization's top-level leaders who fund coaching want to see; this should guide you in determining what you want to measure.

Here is where we see the widest range of measurement approaches. Some organizations only measure anecdotal data via interviews (ad-hoc or planned, formal or informal) with leaders, their managers, and HR; other organizations conduct online surveys at the close of engagements to evaluate learning, but not actual behavior change; and still others employ robust measurement of every possible indicator — from turnover and promotion to number of special assignments. Ironically, we find that the interview-based approach seems to be the most meaningful to the top-level executives who fund coaching! Nevertheless, we believe that a combination of anecdotal and post-engagement survey data is a smart approach to getting both qualitative and quantitative data.

Final Thought

The most important question that leaders in the organization are likely to ask is, "How will executive coaching impact my business objectives and challenges and the business overall?" In our view, the more closely coaching is tied to organizational objectives and specific business needs and the capabilities leaders need to handle the challenges and achieve their business objectives, the more impactful and effective the coaching will be.



Coaching for Organizational Change



BY ELLEN KUMATA | MANAGING PARTNER

Overview

At its fundamental level, coaching is all about change — helping leaders develop new ways to act and adapt to deal with current and emerging challenges and opportunities. But beyond the value of coaching to increase leadership effectiveness, what if coaching could be used by leaders to accelerate the successful adoption of broad-based organizational change, implementing a new strategy, or — even — fuel innovation across the organization?

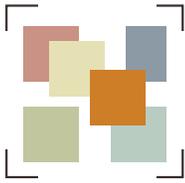
Senior leaders today are looking to coaching to help address strategic shifts or large-scale change initiatives in an evolving new frontier for executive coaching that I'll call *coaching for organizational change*. This represents an important shift for coaching — from its traditional focus on leadership development to a focus on accelerating change in an individual business or the entire enterprise.

Four questions are most critical:

- 1** What is coaching for organizational change, and how is it different?
- 2** How does this type of coaching help senior executives drive strategy and change?
- 3** What does it take to deploy coaching for organizational change effectively?
- 4** What are the implications for pursuing coaching for organizational change?

Coaching for organizational change involves coaches capable of advising on a range of strategy and change issues.

ELLEN KUMATA



1 What is coaching for organizational change, and how is it different?

First, some context. Coaching is most often employed as a point solution focused on developing individual behavior — elevating leaders’ problem-solving capacity and empowering them to respond in their roles in a more effective way. Traditional coaching is done with an eye toward the competencies and skills that an organization prioritizes for its leaders (including developing listening skills, decision-making, hiring talent, and building the bench, to name a few).

Traditional coaches challenge, encourage, inspire, sometimes provoke, and generally aim to build their clients’ confidence around thinking and acting differently. A coach’s primary focus is on facilitating and strengthening a leader’s process for reaching a solution.

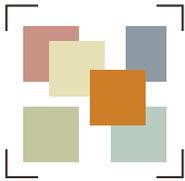
Coaching for organizational change takes that a step or two further. With their deep experience in strategy and change, coaches who specialize in this not only coach, but they also advise on a range of appropriate solutions and invite leaders to assess and validate them.

Coaching for organizational change helps leaders:

- *Drive alignment*
- *See around corners*
- *Stimulate new thinking*
- *Build critical mass*
- *Go beyond HR*

This kind of coaching is a critical lever to help leaders:

- **Drive alignment:** For a new strategy or change initiative to succeed, leaders need to be on board and aligned — from the very top on down. Coaching for organizational change is an important tool for driving that alignment.
- **See around corners:** Coaching for organizational change is highly effective at helping leaders go beyond performing their current roles well — and to ask different questions and connect to potential answers, solutions, and breakthroughs that they might not ordinarily get to do.
- **Stimulate new thinking.** This type of coaching helps create the space for asking the provocative questions that take the leader outside of their typical job and standard framework. It helps leaders go further than before to create a different culture, foster agility, and prepare for the future.
- **Build critical mass:** More than other tools, methods, or approaches, coaching for organizational change helps focus the most senior people on the key leadership behaviors necessary to transform the organization.



- **Go beyond HR:** Coaching for organizational change is not tethered to or managed by HR. Instead, it's driven by a line of business at the top with a team of coaches armed with a shared understanding of the organization's strategy and business context.

2 How does this type of coaching help senior executives drive strategy and change?

Getting people aligned and motivated is the key to success of a new strategy or any new change initiative. The organization's top leaders need to not only fully understand and buy into the new direction — they also need to help their organization adapt to the change.

Change coaches help leaders:

- Inspire
- Engage
- Motivate

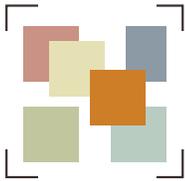
Coaches adept at change draw on a broad repertoire of skills that help leaders to:

Inspire: Leaders need to communicate a clear and inspiring vision of what the new direction is and why it's important. This is about rallying the troops — and the focus is best on the endgame. President Kennedy didn't just say that the United States was stepping up our space program; he issued an inspirational challenge for us to put a man on the moon and return him safely to earth. That vision inspired a nation.

Engage: Leaders need to meet their key people "where they're at" and connect around what's important to them. This notion drives engagement more than anything else. If your leaders don't get engagement, no amount of special techniques or methods will yield true enthusiasm.

Motivate: This is where leaders can help people overcome their own resistance, fears, barriers, and blocks to change. People often resist change for a variety of reasons — they cite being too busy or otherwise preoccupied with what's right in front of them. While that's true everywhere, it's especially rampant in organizations that aren't accustomed to change or ongoing learning.

Cambria uses a model that describes four stages of change and the core behaviors required for leaders to foster engagement and alignment. Developed by our colleague and change expert Chris Neiman, it zeroes in on the specific behaviors that leaders need to embrace for the change to accelerate and succeed.



The model is based on a weather metaphor to frame a coaching focus:



Four Stages of Change in Organizations

Gathering Storm: *Change is coming and everyone knows it. However, not a lot is confirmed about the scope of change.*

Downpour: *Specific changes are announced. People experience fear and uncertainty; some may openly resist the change.*

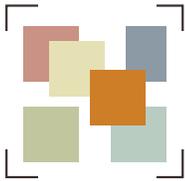
Floodwaters: *The change reaches its apex as new leadership, structures and systems are put in place. Employees are in survival mode, prompting resistance, creativity and experimentation.*

Receding Waters/Sun Comes Out: *People have integrated and are working with the change to different degrees, but things are “normalizing.”*

Leaders need to communicate consistent messages at each stage, manage their own mindset and reactions, be responsive to others’ reactions, communicate regularly, provide support, and work to build and rebuild trust. Furthermore, each stage of change requires specific actions and behaviors of leaders.

Gathering Storm (change is coming). At this stage, coaches remind leaders to expect that people will be negative, emotional, and anxious. Leaders need to overcommunicate — what’s happening, why and when, and what other changes can be expected. What’s more, leaders need to listen empathically, answer questions honestly, and promise or predict nothing.

Downpour (specific changes have been announced). Coaches help to focus leaders on meeting with people one on one to discuss their reactions and create effective personal strategies. It’s critical here that leaders accept and validate strongly-held feelings — but are urged to keep their own feelings simple and direct. It’s vital to dispel rumors and to hear negative expressions while also refocusing on what’s positive about the coming change.



Floodwaters (change is being put in place). Coaches help leaders to anticipate emotional reactions to last longer than expected — and to continue to provide forums for people to express their feelings, including negative ones. At the same time, leaders need to keep returning to the vision, refocusing their people on the tasks at hand and finding and promoting short-term wins. Throughout, employees must be engaged to use their skills and to create solutions.

Receding Waters/Sun Comes Out (change is being integrated into the organization). As leaders need to focus on anchoring the changes into the culture, coaches work to help them remove obstacles and enable constructive feedback. Leaders are urged to manage persistent resistance and to celebrate milestones.

3 What does it take to deploy coaching for organizational change effectively?

Coaching for organizational change requires multiple coaches working as a team with a critical mass of leaders — employing shared processes, milestones, check-ins, and feedback. Focusing a team of coaches in such a way is a departure from how coaching typically works, with coaches working independently with separate processes and developing one person at a time.

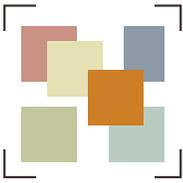
Coaches experienced in change sync to the organization's stage in the change process and help leaders accelerate change from there. In a very real sense, knowing where the organization is — what stage it is at — helps leaders understand the reactions that they and others around them will have as the process moves forward.

In collaboration with leaders, seasoned coaches get busy quickly to:

- Analyze the core challenges that present major hurdles to progress
- Identify the critical behaviors required to drive change
- Assess key leaders to learn whether they are demonstrating those critical behaviors
- Work with senior leaders to align individuals around those critical behaviors

The composition of the coaching team is very important. Coaches noted for this kind of work possess a high level of skill and experience, including:

- **A high degree of business acumen.** These coaches have a depth of experience across a wide range of business challenges — including leadership challenges of complex organi-



zations, change management, organizational culture, strategic analysis, and talent strategy. What's more, they need to be fully clear on the organization's strategy or change initiative and how the shift will have implications across the organization. Change coaches are not coming in as strategy experts, of course. But they do need to be able to hold their own around the subject matter and related content areas.

Coaching for organizational change involves advising — helping leaders to discover options they might not see otherwise.

- **Capacity for advising versus traditional coaching.** We touched on advising earlier — the idea that coaching for organizational change involves more advising than traditional coaching which is focused more on empowering individual leaders to think and act differently. This type of coaching involves providing more guidance and helping leaders discover different options that they might not

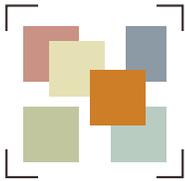
have considered. Change coaches are also familiar with the dynamics and best practices leaders use to address strategic challenges. They know what people can or should do in these situations, and are capable of moving leaders to consider a range of appropriate solutions.

- **Experience working collaboratively.** Compared to traditional practice where coaches mostly work independently and typically with one leader at a time, coaches involved in organizational change are oriented toward working on teams of coaches tasked to help accelerate change. While preserving the confidentiality surrounding their coaching conversations, they share timelines, work processes, deliverables, and what they are hearing outside of their coaching assignments.

4 What are the implications for pursuing coaching for organizational change?

Coaching for organizational change has dramatic implications for the organization. It empowers leaders to align more quickly and effectively to meet the business challenges inherent in change.

Organizations spend millions to identify the right strategy, and yet they often struggle to implement it. Most of the focus goes to the change initiatives, activities, and tasks required to pursue a new strategic direction. What's too often missing is a focus on the behaviors necessary to successfully implement change.



Coaching for organizational change is not only cost-effective — but the return on the investment in this type of coaching often comes down to a simple question: *Can you afford not to do it?* Leaders know that there's significant cost if a strategy shift is delayed by a year or two — in terms of market penetration, successfully launching new products or services, moving assertively to a market leader position versus an also-ran, or missing a market or timed opportunity.

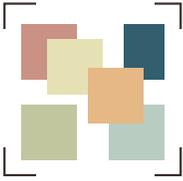
And what about those in the organization hiding behind their dissent about the new direction and adopting a variety of tactics to delay or thwart change? Coaching to support organizational change helps identify and deal with them directly to prevent them from entrenching or derailing the new initiative.

And the implications for not doing it? Not addressing the behavior piece in any change initiative often means that the initiative will fail or take much longer than it should. You can expect lots of collateral damage and fallout from that. Given the cost, the ability to operationalize new strategy and change is very important.

Final Thought

Coaching for organizational change represents a different lens through which to view coaching. It involves a focus on both the objectives of individual engagements and organizational imperatives. This type of coaching is not only good for leadership development but is a strategic means to facilitate key shifts in the business.

And for a growing number of organizations, coaching for organizational change is showing up right on time. We know that organizational change requires the people part to succeed at the right level, and coaching for organizational change has the power to give leaders the tools to make this happen.



Building Internal Coaching Capacity

BY KRISANN DAVIS | PRINCIPAL



In most organizations where coaching has taken root, it was first reserved for leaders at the top. CEOs, executives in the C-suite, and many others in key enterprise roles adopted coaching and found it to be beneficial in improving their effectiveness as leaders, helping them navigate business challenges more effectively, and preparing them to deal with the changing competitive landscape. It's an expensive affair to hire seasoned outside coaches for people at senior levels, but costs are seldom questioned if the CEO wants it or their board requires it.

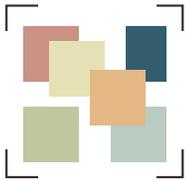
How to extend the benefits of coaching beyond executive ranks?

Many organizations with a history of executive coaching, having seen the benefit of seasoned professionals working with senior executives, have asked, "How can we capture the benefits of coaching in working with larger populations of managers, but at lower cost?" These organizations have turned to considering internal coaching — that is, coaching provided by employees of the company — as a possible response.

The Value of Internal Coaching

Substituting qualified internal coaches for outside coaching resources offers the promise of scaling this form of individualized development all the way down to first-level management at a fraction of the expense. We can think of implementing an internal coaching strategy as creating wider and deeper ripples in an organization's talent pond. It can bring greater impact, deeper penetration, and research-supported potential for results through talent development.

Our experience aligns with the internationally recognized research study on internal coaching from the 6th Ridler Report (Ridler & Co, 2015) that analyzed strategic trends in the use of



senior-level executive coaching. This report confirmed a trend toward the growing use of internal coaches — in addition to, or even in place of, external coaches. Here are the trends they cited:

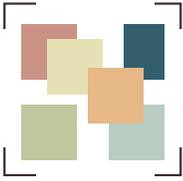
- 1** Individualized development is becoming ever more important in an increasingly VUCA world, and as a result, organizations are looking for ways to build a “coaching culture”.
- 2** External coaches are an expensive, rationed investment. Internal coaching makes coaching accessible to a broader swath of the employee population at a lower cost per engagement.
- 3** Fast growth of companies, plus speed of change, plus shorter time frames of rotations equals leaders needing to ramp up quickly. They can’t learn and grow in place anymore. Coaching helps leaders get grounded and be productive in their roles faster.
- 4** HR professionals need to “show up” in a more consultative role. Demands are increasing for HR to help catalyze growth in clients in their day-to-day activities.
- 5** Managers must increasingly take a coaching approach with their employees (versus relying solely on a traditional directive approach) to foster growth, autonomy, judgment and decision-making, self-confidence, and self-development.

Cambria has seen a dramatic increase in demand for internal coaching capability to develop key talent more quickly and for greater long-term impact. The trend is for organizations to leverage internal coaching to accomplish their talent goals faster and more cost effectively at deeper levels in the organization.

Making the Business Case

When determining the value proposition for a broader internal coaching strategy, organizations must first consider the critical business and talent objectives where coaching could help accelerate meeting them. Whether it’s investing in developing more leaders or helping leaders to hit business goals more quickly, the litmus test is whether a broader, deeper coaching effort could have an impact on the business. If the impact is likely to be limited, it’s probably not worth doing.

Leading and managing internal coaching efforts is a labor-intensive process, so planning for a gradual startup not only helps to ensure early success but also helps build a stronger business case and more “pull” for developing and implementing internal coaching efforts.



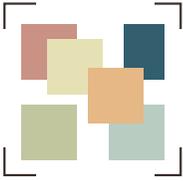
Other important considerations:

- What are the gaps that internal coaches could address?
- Would internal coaching provide adjunct support to already existing leadership programs?
- What about providing internal debriefing capability to support 360 or other assessment instruments in addition to those the organization regularly uses?
- Is there valuable rising talent that could benefit from additional coaching support at levels below the typical target audience for external executive coaches?
- Is your organization focused on diversity initiatives and wanting to provide additional development opportunities to specific groups such as women, people of color, or leaders in cross-cultural environments?

Applications of Internal Coaching

Organizations that have opted to implement an internal coaching strategy have done so for a number of different reasons, based on their immediate and/or long-term needs. Here are some that we have seen among the clients we have served:

- 1. Deepening the succession talent pool.** As baby boomers transition out, next-generation leaders often lack the skills necessary to assume those higher-level roles. Here is where internal coaches can help leaders at mid- to upper levels identify and develop critical competencies for the future.
- 2. Onboarding mid-career hires.** Internal coaches are well-suited for this, especially in light of studies that show high “organ rejection” rates for leaders hired from the outside. Organizations needing to recruit greater numbers of mid-career hires because of growing talent gaps further down the line need to onboard them rapidly to help them gain traction in their new roles.
- 3. Facilitating team development.** Newly formed teams can benefit from an internal coach facilitating the alignment of team members by clarifying roles and responsibilities and how they will coordinate to deliver results. This can be particularly helpful in forming norms and expectations within geographically dispersed teams.



4. **Coping with change.** Internal coaches can work with leaders to understand what shifts in strategy, reorganizations, mergers, or new systems and processes mean for their specific business and for their team. They can assist in identifying the new behaviors necessary for the change to succeed and stick and advise around how to model the new behaviors needed to adapt.
5. **Helping leaders in transition.** Whether it's a lateral move, a promotion, or a cross-sector change in a job, internal leaders need to assimilate into a new role rapidly and galvanize their new teams. Internal coaches can support a smooth transition for the new leader to more quickly become successful.
6. **Developing specific skills.** Internal coaches can provide brief targeted coaching as needed in areas like conducting performance reviews, engaging in difficult conversations, and having meaningful development discussions with direct reports. Adding three to four months of support to assist leaders in implementing their own development plans can yield greater results and sustained behavior change.
7. **Creating leadership program sustainability.** Incorporating coaching as a follow-up to residential leadership development programs provides the support often needed to reinforce how learning is applied back on the job. Coaching can either be individualized or used to assist teams involved in post-session action learning assignments.

The Internal Coaching Advantage

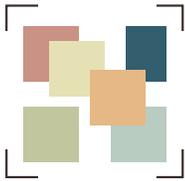
- **Cost**
- **Consistency**
- **Context**
- **Coaching Culture**

The Internal Coaching Advantage

Cost. The economic efficiency of building a cadre of internal coaches versus engaging external coaches is an obvious benefit fueling the rise of internal coaching programs. After the upfront cost of providing internal coaches with necessary training and skill development, those capabilities become embedded in the organization and can be called upon numerous times per year in a variety of coaching assignments.

Consistency. Carefully selected internal coaches can satisfy an organization's desire for consistency and quality, in accordance with its

talent strategy. A typical requirement is attendance at either an external coaching program or an internal coach development program that offers a specific coaching model and methodology. This supports having a common vernacular for the coach, coachee, and stakeholders and/or sponsors.



Context. Internal coaches have knowledge and understanding of their business, political landscape, and unwritten rules that take a much longer time for an external coach to master. Internal coaches who have an understanding of the organization's culture and nuances among different lines of business can help high-potential employees and others learn to work and operate more effectively within their environment.

Coaching culture. Having selected employees trained in the art and science of coaching provides a valuable resource to establish and reinforce a culture of coaching inside the organization. These coaches can show how others can have more effective informal conversations and interactions with leaders and others.

Getting Started

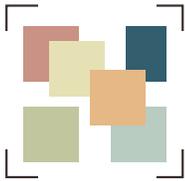
The most successful internal startups begin with a small, well-chosen cadre of internal coaches who have the commitment, capacity, and credibility to instill a solid foundation in terms of reputational brand within the organization. When considering the right internal coach candidates, those with a solid high-performer track record and impeccable reputations will prove the best resources. Such credibility enables them to quickly establish (and main-

It's critical to start with clear objectives and alignment around success measures.

tain) trust and rapport with their client. Internal coaches are also often better equipped than external coaches to handle a variety of coaching needs. They are able to leverage their unique knowledge of their organizations' context, systems, and dynamics to support and develop leaders.

They also start by focusing on just one or two applications where there is an immediate need. For example, if you are designing a major residential leadership program, consider coaching as a way to reinforce learning and application back on the job. If your starting point is a specific audience of key talent, internal coaches can be deployed selectively in partnership with the talent management function. What's important is having clear objectives for how internal coaching is to be employed and how you will define and measure success. And don't try to do too much at once.

Leading and managing internal coaching is a labor-intensive process: planning, defining a short- and long-term implementation strategy, socializing the concept with key decision-makers and other stakeholders, and maintaining a keen eye on quality are all critical elements of a successful program. Organizations often create an implementation strategy team to consider and define ways in which internal coaches will be deployed, identify initial target



audiences to receive coaching, outline the process for deciding which managers/leaders will be participating, pinpoint ways to determine success, determine tracking and monitoring processes, and more.

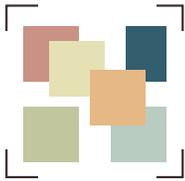
A Few Caveats

Internal coaches have a number of advantages over their external counterparts. As noted earlier, they have a deeper understanding to the organizational context, political landscape, and culture that can allow them to function more effectively. They also have insights into the kinds of development experiences (assignments, programs, outside resources) that the organization can make available to their coaching.

Despite these advantages, it's important to recognize some of the challenges that come with being an internal coach that either must be worked around or avoided altogether.

Recognize Challenges

- **Role Clarity**
 - **Accountability**
 - **Bandwidth**
 - **Confidentiality**
 - **Perceived Credibility**
- **Role clarity.** Internal coaches need to know when they are wearing their coaching hat and when they are acting as consultants, advisors, or business partners. This is especially relevant to coaches from the HR function who want a seat at the table in talent review and succession discussions and find it difficult to separate that role from their role as an internal coach.
 - **Accountability.** Internal coaches should not be called upon to handle tasks that are part of a manager's responsibility, such as addressing employee performance problems. If a coach is involved, he/she may facilitate these discussions or prepare managers to have them but not enter into these issues directly.
 - **Bandwidth.** For most internal coaches, the role of internal coach is an add-on while they still have their day job. They may not have sufficient capacity to take on the additional coaching role and responsibility. Some organizations adopt a rigorous four- to six-month coaching process for internal coaches that requires 25 to 35 hours of additional work beyond the coaches' regular responsibilities for each engagement.
 - **Confidentiality.** Coaching conversations are designed to be private and not to be shared. From the coachee's perspective, revealing serious concerns about your weaknesses with someone who may be connected with a business leader raises the potential for role conflicts and is a delicate situation for an internal coach.



- **Perceived credibility.** Despite their expertise and seniority, internal coaches are not always given the same level of credibility as external coaches. Credibility is also an important success factor in coaching effectiveness, and so it is an important factor in who is designated to be an internal coach.

Is Your Organization Ready? A Brief Checklist

- Do the most senior executives in your organization advocate for coaching and its benefits?**
- Is there at least one area where internal coaching could make an immediate impact?**
- Is there an appetite among the general management population to have coaching?**
- Are there enough people willing to raise their hands to become internal coaches?**

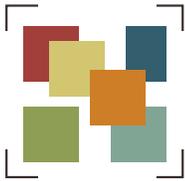
If you can say **yes** to all of these questions, your organization may be a good candidate for implementing an internal coaching program.

Final Thoughts

The decision to invest in internal coaching is not to be taken lightly: it's expensive to launch and sustain and takes significant time to establish. Senior management first needs to be convinced of its value and accept the business case for why coaching should be extended to all levels of leadership, not just to those at the top.

However, in our experience, organizations that have adopted internal coaching compared to those that haven't have demonstrated their greater commitment to development and continuous improvement. They've also shown their appreciation of how coaching leaders down into the organization contributes to building a strong talent bench, strengthening the succession pipeline, and supporting leaders in a multitude of different ways.

Of course, internal coaching is not the only answer to developing talent or even the most important one. But taken as part of a broader talent development strategy, it is one critical element.



This issue of Cambria Lens focuses on how organizations are using coaching in different ways and to achieve different goals.

What they all have in common is a view of coaching as a **catalyst** — essentially an agent of change. And the change, specifically, is in developing the capabilities of people in leadership and management roles to deal with today's challenges and the ones that are coming.

We have presented our case for coaching as a key ingredient in a comprehensive talent development strategy. This strategy, however, must necessarily be tethered to the strategy of the business, its challenges, and what people in leadership roles must be able to do to execute it.

Development for its own sake, with or without a coaching assist, can have value. But even greater value can be realized if coaching is directed to a particular organizational purpose: preparing for the future, enabling transformation and change, and creating a development culture at all levels.

In the end, it goes beyond developing people to take on greater levels of responsibility — to creating a high-performance organization through the focused development of individuals and teams in alignment with the organization's mission. In that sense, the different coaching initiatives described here are more powerful when implemented together.

One last thought: There is much to say about coaching technique, the ins and outs of building a coaching program, the benefits of coaching for employee engagement and retention, creating a coaching culture, and more. We invite you to explore our ideas about these topics and many others in our blog posts, eBooks, and white papers at cambriaconsulting.com.