

10 Step Framework to Creating a Coaching Culture successfully



What is a coaching culture? When managers and employees are able to engage in candid and respectful conversations that foster self-reflective ideas about how to improve performance. Fostering a coaching culture supports continuous individual, team and organisational learning, facilitates effective cultural and organisational change, improves the engagement and empowerment of employees, and supports the attainment of the core business strategy. When a coaching framework is followed through to the end, a coaching culture, and coaching, will become embedded within the organisation over time, and survive all the turbulence of the constantly changing world we work in.

Step 1 Why create a coaching culture ?

A coaching culture is a means to an end, so begin with clearly defining the technical and behavioural outcomes you want to achieve as a result. To this end be specific, realistic and timely, with an emphasis on defining who needs to be engaged to succeed in attaining the results. Clearly define in measurable terms how the coaching culture will support the core business strategy. Be clear and unambiguous about the desired outcomes.

Step 2 Link to the business strategy

Describe what is the appropriate organisation culture to achieve your strategy. What is the current organisation culture ? For example, the strategy may require high growth, or greater customer focus. Without leaders throughout the organisation who can draw out the best performance from their people, high growth or greater customer focus will not be sustainable. So, set up a group of people from across functions and departments and at different levels in the organisation, to elicit what is working and what is not working in the current culture, and what needs to be developed.

Step 3 Identify internal sponsors

The sponsors act as champions to develop the coaching culture. Consult with your leaders and employees to describe how they themselves will foster the culture they want for the organisation, so that the initiative becomes demand-led. Ideally one of the senior managers will head up the sponsor team. A good sponsor will be someone who has experienced coaching first-hand and can see the benefits for the wider organisation.

Step 4 Integrate coaching into leadership development initiatives

External coaches can help support the work of the OD/L&D team and facilitators/trainers, to ensure a well-integrated approach, so that a coaching mindset can be adopted. Start at the top of the organisation as this sends a strong message across the organisation and assists in addressing any preconceptions. These individuals will become role models and implementers of 'best practice'.

Step 5 Create a pool of internal coaches

Although senior management teams may benefit best from having an external coach, internal manager-coaches are invaluable in promoting the coaching culture. They will ensure that meetings with employees, team meetings and performance reviews conform to the organisation's coaching methodology and approach. Remember to define the quality criteria and standards the organisation requires of their internal coaches.

Step 6 Ensure coaching features in processes, metrics and performance measures

Coaching should become part of each leader's / manager's roles and responsibilities, as well as be part of job descriptions, selection and promotion criteria, leadership and management capabilities, and integral to the performance review process.

Step 7 Examine how a coaching approach can be implemented by all staff, with both internal and external stakeholders

Coaching skills are useful to engage customers, to encourage effective partnership working, to develop cross-functional and cross-departmental teams, and even when talking with financial investors.

Step 8 Develop evaluation strategies

Planning is essential, as for any new initiative ; it is not sufficient to announce the culture change programme, provide information and assume the change will take place. Be clear about the goals. Examine the costs and benefits, and anticipate and plan for resistance. Measures of return on expectations and ROI are critical to ensure support from the senior management team. The investment in coaching has to be put into perspective in relation to the outcome desired – “If you think coaching is expensive, try incompetence.”

Step 9 Communicate

- *Throughout the organisation.* Coaching and its benefits need to be communicated actively throughout the organisation, eg postings on the intranet, a video from the sponsors about how coaching has helped them, on the agenda of quarterly meetings where a coach and coachee talk about their work.
- *With the pool of coaches.* Regular quarterly meetings with internal and external coaches are a good idea, to share information and create a joint learning culture. The organisation can bring them up-to-speed about any recent developments, eg modifications to the strategy, demands and expectations of senior management team, new initiatives, etc. The coaches can share latest developments and examples of best practice. Ground rules for confidentiality need to be underlined and maintained.

Step 10 Evaluate and Review

Check back with the desired outcomes espoused. Has the strategy produced the coaching culture desired and contributed to the achievement of the business goals? The sponsors at all levels in the organisation, senior leaders and managers, and internal and external coaches, should be involved in any evaluation and review.

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