

# DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

## CREATING A COACHING INFRASTRUCTURE — AN HR STRATEGIC ROLE

by Sue Howarth



As coaching has evolved and its value has become increasingly apparent, organizations are beginning to see the need for a well-organized internal system to maximize success. Many find that coaching tends to occur haphazardly, with different parts of the organization using different processes, procedures, selection criteria, follow-up, and definitions of success. Some HR professionals have told us they have no idea how many coaches are at work in their organizations or what coaching is costing in total. If there is little consistency in how coaching is implemented and no system for measuring success, return on investment will remain illusive.

HR can continue to serve as a value-added strategic partner to the business by establishing a coaching infrastructure. An organized internal system will streamline the process, increase cost effectiveness, and make success more transparent. Following are the major steps in the development process:

- Ensure that there is visible executive sponsorship. Without support from the top, a coaching practice lacks credibility and is in danger of being perceived as a performance-problem intervention rather than a development opportunity for highly valued employees.
- Identify a practice manager, or at least determine who owns the coaching practice, to establish accountability.

- Define the purpose of coaching and who is eligible to receive it. Without a clear purpose and transparent selection criteria, coaching appears arbitrary.
- Carefully screen coaches using criteria that help determine not only their expertise and experience but also their fit for the organization. Identifying a coaching vendor that understands the organization's needs and culture can facilitate this process.
- Make sure that coaching is the appropriate intervention and that its goals are aligned with the goals of the business.

Standard processes, tools, and reporting procedures help provide consistency and facilitate the measuring of success. HR can help achieve coaching success for both the individual and the organization by creating an infrastructure and a coaching culture that ensures all stakeholders agree on the process and outcomes and are committed to the coaching engagement – and that support the coach and coachee throughout the process. ■

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