

COACHING FROM WITHIN

In this article Emma Bird makes the case for coaching from within (by which we mean employing an executive coach from the same stable as the consultants supporting the organisation's main programme of change). It maximises the value that the coach can deliver because the insights, concepts, feedback and action learning offered by the coach are integrated and aligned with the wider ongoing change programme.

To develop their Emotional Intelligence (EQ) leaders need to learn from their experiences in engaging with others. As for whom the leader can share their reflections with – it's lonely at the top and executive coaches are increasingly fulfilling this role.

EQ has a high profile in leadership coaching. Its essential premise is that a broader set of behaviours, beyond conventional intelligence, determines how successful we are, for example, in motivating others. Successful leadership requires awareness, control and management of our own emotions and behaviour and those of other people.

In IRIS Consulting our executive coaches work as team members within a wider consultancy assignment. As with all coaching, absolute confidentiality between coachee and coach is guaranteed. However considerable benefits in terms of cross-fertilisation and alignment are delivered from the coach sitting within the larger consulting team. For example:

Flowing from the coachee into the consulting assignment

- From the coachee the coach will understand the organisation's prevailing approach to leadership development, such as the courses (eg. Emotional Intelligence Competencies) it sends senior executives on. It is important that the consultants on the wider assignment model and reinforce these leadership behaviours in their dealings with the client organisation. The coach "within" can make sure this happens.

Flowing from the consulting assignment to the coachee

- Opportunities for action learning. Action learning is key to leadership development. What better opportunity is there to do this than to play a role in leading a business change programme? With the coachee's agreement, the coach can help position the coachee within the change programme in a role in which they get maximum exposure to leading change combined with maximum support from the consulting directors. Thus the coachee gets mentoring and exposure to leading change in addition to executive coaching
- Consistency in models, language and change philosophy. Too often senior executives are in receipt of an approach to managing change, with integral models and principles of leadership behaviour, from the consultants on the main change assignment while at the same time receiving a different and conflicting set of models and approaches from their independent executive coach. This lack of alignment makes life more difficult for everybody and lessens the opportunities for reinforcement of key behaviours that a unified approach provides.

It all comes down to singing from the same hymn sheet. Repetition, reinforcement and consistent feedback are essential for the development of strong leadership behaviours. So if you are thinking of getting in some executive coaches, take a moment to think more widely. Could you source them from the consultancy that is already working with your organisation? And if you did, how great might be the synergies that would flow from using a shared language and philosophy to drive leadership development?

Suggested further reading:

Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman, Bloomsbury, 1996, ISBN: 0 7475 2830 6

Primal Leadership by Daniel Goleman et al., Harvard Business School Press, 2004, ISBN: 1-57851-486-X

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