

Building Coaching Capability

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Building Coaching Capability

This paper is a short guide for employers. It provides some ideas and help for those who are building coaching capability within their organisations, and those who anticipate doing so. It offers:

- a framework for employers to determine the best approach to building coaching capability.
- case study examples of how First Choice Holidays, BBC and Inland Revenue have gone about resourcing, deploying and developing their coaches.

A framework for decisions about resourcing coaching

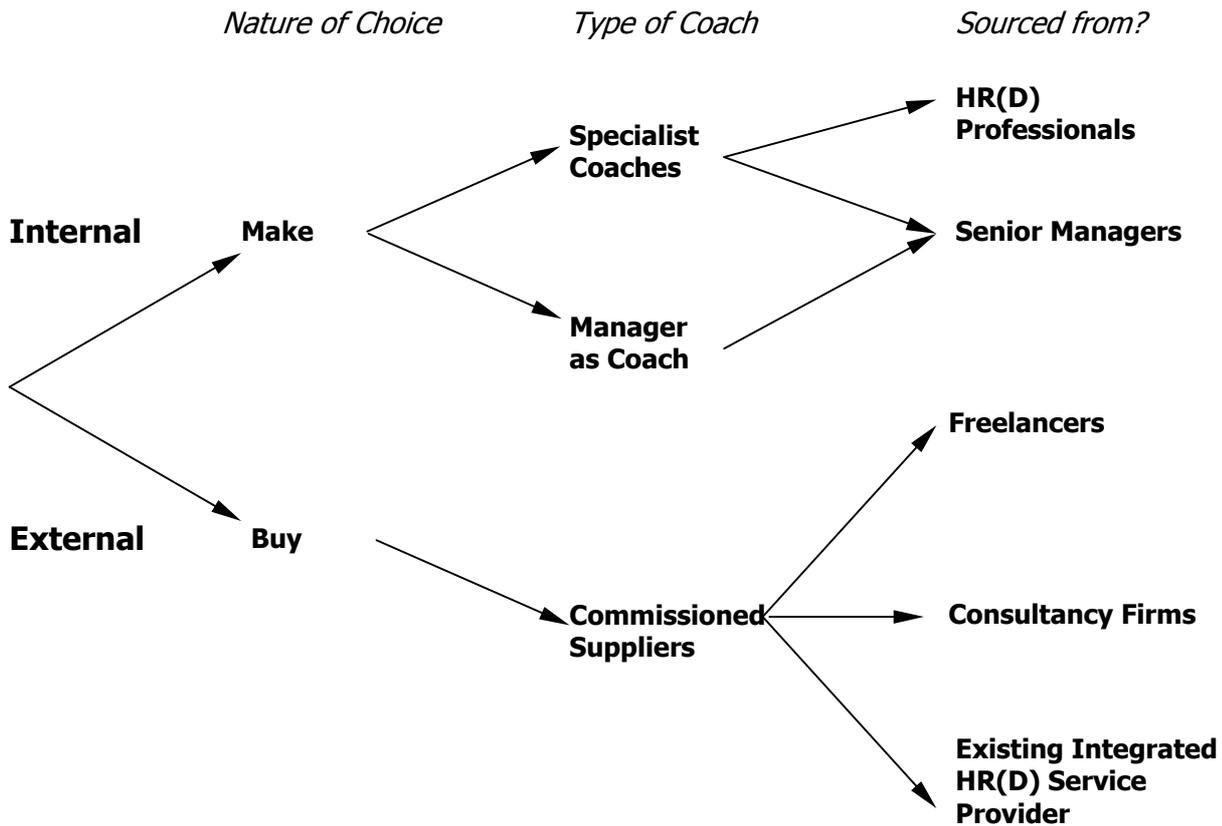
Organisations have the option to supply coaching internally. If demand for coaching continues to grow and is sustained, more organisations may choose to consider building their own internal coaching capability.

A simple decision-making model such as those used to support operational management decision making may be helpful to assist reflection about coaching provision before the decision to commission external suppliers is actually made. Drawing on the concepts of using decision trees and the 'make or buy' choices in HRM devolvement and outsourcing suggested by Reilly (2000), IES suggests a simple 'map', (Figure 1) that addresses coaching for managers and directors.

There are several choices to be made in the way in which coaching for managers and directors can be introduced and delivered. The most crucial of these is whether to 'make or buy', *ie* whether to resource coaching internally or externally.

Some organisations believe that there are benefits to commissioning external suppliers. Notable advantages include giving greater flexibility in meeting demand, keeping the cost as variable rather than fixed, improved quality of service from a specialist supplier and the freeing up of managerial time to focus on core business issues. If external suppliers are used, there are still decisions to be made:

Figure 1: Issues to be considered in building coaching capability



Source: Adapted from Reilly, 2000

- If you have outsourced HRD activities to a single integrated service provider, will they have the credibility and capability to deliver coaching to your executives?
- Will you seek to maximise consistency and minimise contract management effort by going to a single consultancy firm?
- Or will you seek to save costs and maintain flexibility by hiring a cadre of freelance coaches?

On the other hand, some organisations take the view, almost as a matter of principle, that better cost and/or service can be provided internally. These organisations have commissioned suppliers to date, either because of a limited requirement for coaching or as a temporary stopgap while they consider other options. Reasons given for preferring in-house provision include a lack of expertise in managing contractors, rising costs as more coaching is provided and ensuring consistency in delivery. If coaching services are provided internally, then decisions still need to be made:

- Do you set up an internal cadre of specialist coaches?
- If so, will these form a separate profit centre chargeable to the business units they serve?
- Will they count as an additional cost centre as part of the corporate overheads?

- Will they be a temporary resource, perhaps to support a one-off upgrading or step-change improvement in management skills?
- Will they be a more permanent resource in seeking continuously and incrementally to improve management performance?
- Or do you extend the role of line managers to operate as coaches for the individuals they manage?

In determining whether to create an internal cadre of specialist coaches or to develop the role of line managers as coaches, there will be further resourcing decisions:

- Where will these people come from?
- How easy will it be to develop and sustain them as a coaching resource?

If senior managers and directors are the target audience in question, both options imply the use of further senior management time. Specialist coaches could also come from the ranks of HR and HRD professionals within the organisation.

The following case studies are provided as examples of how employers have grappled with the questions posed above, and the ways forward they chose.

Case study examples

First Choice Holidays

In 1999, the chief executive of First Choice Holidays became concerned about succession planning at senior levels. A particular concern was a lack of choice (from internal and external sources) for appointment to business unit managing director positions. There was a clear need to look at developing the 80 general managers within the existing UK businesses so as to increase the quantity and quality of potential internal appointments in future.

It was decided that coaching was one key element of a package of real-time learning activities necessary: the other two elements were bespoke training courses, and learning centres. The first step taken was to identify the required skill set for general managers in the organisation, and an external consultancy was hired to undertake the underpinning research that resulted in the production of a six-part skill set.

The organisation then considered how best to resource the coaching. The use of line managers as coaches was considered inappropriate, as the number of top managers was so small that the burden on them would be unrealistic. Commissioning external

coaches was considered too expensive for such a large target audience: just five individuals have an external coach where functional expertise was considered essential. The development of a small cadre of in-house coaches was selected as the best approach.

Initially this 'cadre' consisted of the head of training and development, but by 2002 four other trainers had also been recruited. All have qualified, or are currently undertaking, professional coach-mentor diploma qualifications through the Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring. Undertaking the same qualifications is important in enabling the coaching they provide to be consistent across the organisation. The coaches are seen as objective and believe that this is possible because they are not part of the HR department and are therefore not involved in HR procedures such as selection for redundancy.

The process adopted involves coaches and learners working together to draw up a personal development plan (PDP) for each manager and to build up the manager's ownership of the plan so that they have the desire to do something about the actions identified. The PDPs are a shared output from the coaching sessions; everything else is regarded as confidential.

Typically one-to-one coaching sessions are held every four weeks.

Activities include:

- Self-review against the criteria in the skill set
- Optional 360-degree feedback against the skill set, by asking up to three colleagues to rate them, colleagues whose feedback the manager trusts
- Criteria-based structured interview
- Psychometric tests -- OPQ 32
- Review of business objectives.

Line managers are kept involved as stakeholders in the process through what is known as a 'performance partnership' or learning contract. There is a link to the appraisal process, where personal development plans are adapted. The in-house coaches help both parties prepare for appraisal meetings. There is a link to the succession planning process, where coaches feed in success stories.

Each coach works with all the people in the same group of business units. Although the majority of the coaching takes place with general managers, in order to prepare individuals for their possible next move 'up' the organisation's ranks, some existing managing directors have also been involved, as the coaching is seen to add value to what MDs are currently doing as well. Some

of the coaching relationships have been going on for two and a half years.

The introduction of coaching for the general managers has had a significant impact on the role of trainers within the organisation, who find themselves doing a lot less direct training delivery than they used to. Indeed the bespoke training element of the general managers programme is outsourced.

No cost-benefit analysis or formal evaluation has yet taken place. However, informally, the perceptions of those being coached, and line managers is that they believe 'it works'. It is also thought that turnover rates are down and vacancies are being filled.

Inland Revenue

A six- month pilot was set up to offer coaching to senior people in the Inland Revenue and to evaluate the benefits to the individuals and the organisation. The intention was to provide support to people new to senior levels, helping them get 'up to speed' more quickly; at the same time as helping others be more effective in their jobs. About 50 individuals took part in the pilot and a senior management team of eight people used coaching to address team issues.

The person who was asked to run the programme was someone who had worked in the Inland Revenue for over 25 years. She had worked in a variety of roles in the organisation over that time and was well known to most of the participants. She was also a qualified coach and had considerable coaching experience. It was agreed that this person would lead the design and internal marketing of the programme, as well as delivering all the coaching on site.

A maximum of six hours of coaching was offered to each participant. The predominant pattern of coaching was one two-hour initial session followed by up to eight 30 minute sessions held every two weeks. Longer sessions (*eg* 90 minutes or two hours) at less frequent intervals were also offered but the more frequent shorter sessions were preferred by all the participants as they fitted more easily into people's working day and moved people forward more quickly. Sessions were a mixture of face to face and on the telephone.

The individual coaching was offered and taken up on a voluntary basis. Common issues dealt with in coaching sessions included:

- time management and stress reduction
- providing vision and direction
- becoming a better corporate player
- improving influencing skills

- motivating oneself at work during the pre-retirement years.

An evaluation of the pilot programme was conducted by an external firm who reported that all those who were coached were able to identify concrete changes in their working patterns and attitudes which they felt brought gains for themselves and for the organisation. The biggest benefits of the coaching were thought to be in developing personal confidence and developing strategies and techniques for tackling work challenges. Without the coaching, participants felt they would have tackled these challenges but perhaps not before they had reached crisis point or in a strategic and considered fashion.

BBC

One-to-one coaching is used in a variety of ways at the BBC. Three programmes of leadership and management coaching are available for different levels of staff, from team leaders to senior managers. The length of these programmes ranges from six to 20 hours, with sessions taking place every three to four weeks.

In addition to this 'stand-alone' service, internal coaches also provide over 50 per cent of the coaching element of the BBC leadership programme, run in conjunction with Ashridge Management College. A total of 1,500 managers complete this programme each year and the coaching element consists of four monthly sessions.

Coaches are recruited from the ranks across different divisions, job roles and areas of the organisation. Delivering coaching is a long-term commitment on top of people's substantive role. Prospective coaches need the support of their line managers in order to ensure that they will be released from their day-to-day activities.

Recruiting coaches involves internal advertisement from time to time and many applications are received. A rigorous assessment process follows, including role-play exercises and a structured interview. The organisation's own occupational psychologists have developed a set of coach competencies, which are used as the basis for recruitment and training of in-house coaches.

Once selected, the coach attends the coach foundation course which comprises an initial three-day module, fieldwork coaching a couple of 'guinea pigs', two further follow-up modules, and feedback and assessment.

A written guide for coaches covers the practicalities of what needs to happen when. The guide also acts as a reminder of the standards expected and the administrative and support systems provided to help coaches.

Coaches are matched with at least three clients at a time. Coaches are supervised by one of the 'lead coaches' within the organisation who meet with them twice a month to check on progress. Lead coaches have 100 hours or more formal coaching experience in the BBC.

Peer support to help improve and maintain a good standard of coaching practice is also a mandatory part of the service. All coaches join shared learning groups that also meet twice a month.

There is an emphasis on continuing professional development, with the provision of a regular series of 'taster' seminars and more in-depth courses available on coaching-related subjects.

The matching process is undertaken by a small core team who endeavour to pair the applicant with a coach whose background and experience appears to suit his or her particular goals and situation.

Coaches are asked to express any preferences. Typically personal preferences are based on any travel limitations, an employment setting outside the division or a special knowledge or interest in the specific issues to be worked on.