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# Making the wider case for learning and development

Before we start to consider the case for coaching it is important to position it firmly within the wider field of learning and development. Identifying, developing and retaining talent are now pervasive issues for all organisations. It is widely accepted that organisations' intangible assets (ie their human capital) are crucial for building long-term value and building a flexible and agile base to support future growth. Employee and organisational learning have stepped forward into the limelight in recent years as organisations have realised that the ability of an organisation to respond quickly and flexibly to change is largely dependent on the capability of its employees to learn, adapt and evolve.

The global and competitive nature of the business world has increased the drive for productivity and performance in the UK. As a result, organisations are closely examining the different facets of the puzzle of productivity and performance. An area receiving a great deal of attention is how well workforces are being managed with these goals in mind. HR practices, including learning and development activities, are being scrutinised because of their contribution to the support and motivation of employees to deliver high performance.

As a range of growing competitive pressures mount, organisations are realising that to succeed, they require managers and leaders who can hold the organisation together and maintain staff morale through times of change. In addition, they need employees at all levels who are willing and flexible enough to embrace change and quickly adapt and develop their skills. As a result, the question of how to deliver effective and swift employee development has taken centre stage.

## **PROOF AT LAST: HR PRACTICES DO HAVE AN IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

Evidence has been stacking up in recent years to support the belief that HR practices such as learning and development activities can impact on organisational performance. One such example is the research agenda focused on high-performance work practices – a subject the CIPD has been monitoring for the last few years, and one that is steadily gaining popularity. High-performance working involves implementing a range of HR practices and policies to engage, involve and motivate employees in order to heighten their contribution and raise levels of productivity and performance across the organisation as a whole.

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Although a range of HR practices and policies are regarded as high-performance work practices, most commentators would agree that flexibility and continuous learning lie at the heart of the performance impact of the high-performance working approach. Studies undertaken all over the world have shown that investment in high-performance work practices and the skills associated with them improves productivity and impacts on the bottom line (EEF and CIPD, 2003). This has given the HR community a firm basis for believing in the contribution of HR practices to organisational performance.

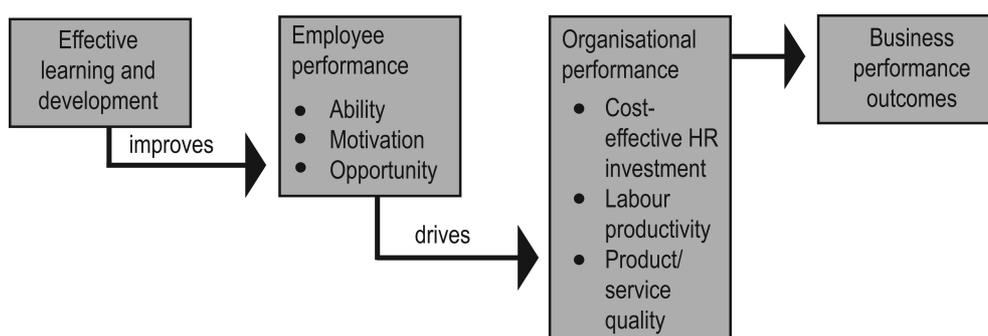
So how do learning and development practices actually improve business performance?

Despite the emergence of a significant body of research that demonstrates a relationship between people management and company performance, it still was not clear, until quite recently, how that relationship worked. Then a ground-breaking research study by the CIPD was published in 2003. *Understanding the People and Performance Link: Unlocking the black box* (Purcell *et al*, 2003) examined the mechanisms by which HR practices lead to improved organisational performance. Its findings help us understand why HR practices, and particularly learning and development activities, are vital for maximising employee skills and contribution.

The research found that employees' job performance is a result of their *ability*, their *motivation* to engage with their work, and the *opportunity* to deploy their ideas, abilities and knowledge effectively. Learning and development activities contribute to enhanced employee performance by creating opportunities to improve the motivation and skill levels of employees (Figure 3). Furthermore, if employees are satisfied with the training and development opportunities they receive, their commitment, motivation and job satisfaction are likely to be significantly higher. Motivation is seen to be absolutely critical. As Reynolds (2004) states in the CIPD research text *Helping People Learn*:

***Even skilled employees provided with superb information will not contribute to organisational success if they are not motivated to act in the best interests of the organisation.***

Figure 3: | **How learning and development activities can impact on business performance**



But alongside this, the crucial factor linking HR practices to organisational performance identified in the research was the way that HR practices build employee commitment and encourage employees to undertake ‘discretionary’ behaviour. This is when committed employees seek to excel in their work and put considerable effort into helping achieve the goals of the organisation.

**Discretionary behaviour defined**

*Making the sort of choices that often define a job, such as the way the job is done – the speed, care, innovation and style of job delivery. This behaviour is at the heart of the employment relationship because it is hard for the employer to define, monitor and control the amount of effort, innovation and productive behaviour required.*

Purcell et al (2003)

This is where some commentators argue that learning and development practices have such an important role to play. Learning and development is not just another input to the people and performance model. Instead, it pervades the whole model by helping to create the conditions in which employees are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviour. The box below describes how learning and development initiatives such as coaching can contribute to the model.

**How development activities such as coaching can help to build commitment and promote discretionary behaviour**

- They develop employee skills in line with organisational objectives.
- They engage employees with their work, make them feel valued and foster commitment to the organisation.
- They promote self-responsibility and initiative.
- They facilitate adaptation to new challenges and change.
- They accommodate and support employees’ obligations to their home lives so that they are productive and effective while they are at work.

In addition to creating a suitable climate for discretionary behaviour, one of the most important forms of discretionary behaviour for contemporary organisations is ‘discretionary learning’. This is when individuals proactively seek to learn and develop their skills and abilities to enhance their capacity to do their job. This is at the heart of organisations’ competitive advantage through people and is something that all organisations should be aiming to achieve.

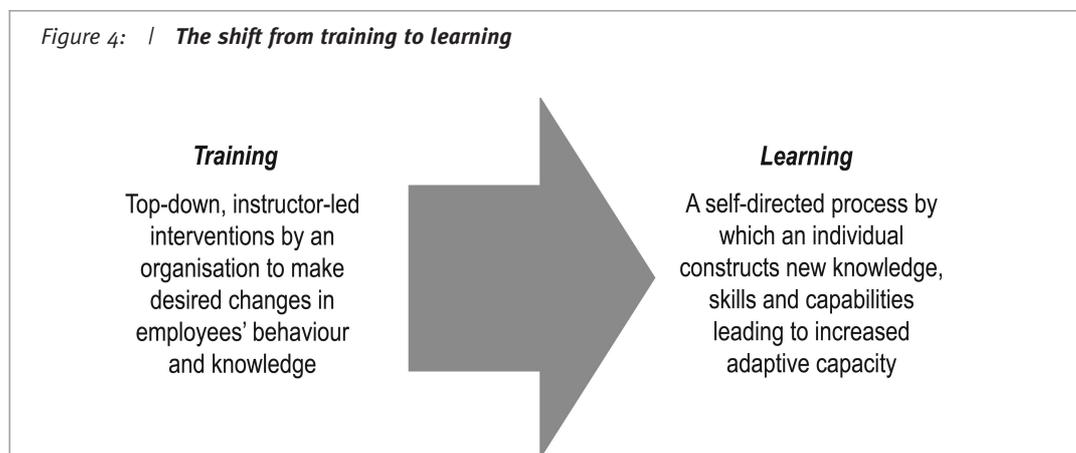
Learning and training are vitally important in influencing employee attitudes and motivation, helping to create discretionary behaviour and improving performance. By collectively improving the performance of many employees, learning and development activities can

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enable the organisation to achieve superior performance in terms of workforce productivity, quality, innovation and customer satisfaction. The good news is that gaining buy-in and support for learning and development is no longer such an uphill struggle. There is a growing recognition of the importance of effective learning and development to business success.

### A CHANGING LANDSCAPE FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Given the fast pace of change, employees must be encouraged and supported to continually update their skills and gain knowledge. How to do this – how to help people learn – has been the focus of a long-term research programme at the CIPD. Encouraging employees to learn and develop helps an organisation remain flexible in the face of uncertain future conditions. We have observed a shift in learning and development philosophy and thinking from an approach based on the delivery of training to one based on support and encouragement for individual learning. Reynolds (2004) describes this as a ‘shift from training to learning’ (Figure 4).



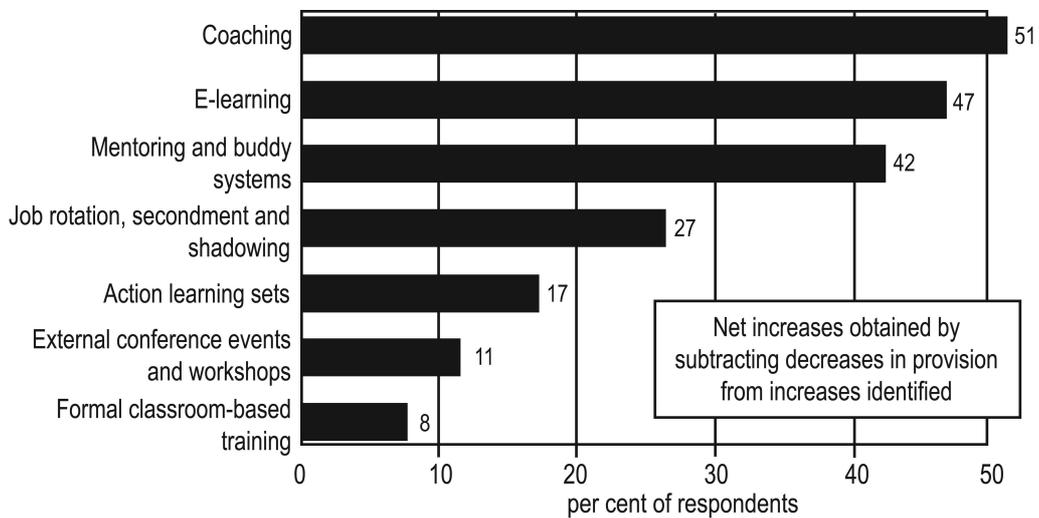
Learning can be understood as the process by which an individual constructs new knowledge, skills and capabilities, whereas training is one of several responses an organisation can undertake to promote learning.

By its very nature, learning is an individual process – no one but the learner can learn. But it is possible to put in place interventions that encourage people to learn and develop. In the shift from training to learning, we are seeing learning and development interventions and activities that increasingly focus on supporting the learner. Too often in the past organisations have attempted to develop their workforces without developing the learning skills of staff, or motivating them to learn through consideration of their perspective – the ‘what’s in it for me’ factor. Individual responsibility for learning (with assistance from the organisation in supporting learners) is now being promoted to address the balance. Significant efforts are also being made to support and encourage effective individual learning. Ninety-six per cent of respondents to the CIPD’s 2004 training and development survey agreed that individuals need advice and support if they are to take more responsibility

for their own learning. Such interventions and activities are part of an integrated approach to creating competitive advantage through the people in the organisation.

Evidence from the CIPD’s annual training and development surveys supports this trend and indicates that we are in the middle of a profound shift in attitude and practice relating to organisational learning and development. The traditional response to learning in organisations has been to send employees on training courses. However, several limitations of this approach are now becoming apparent and a total reliance on formal classroom-based training is now a rarity. Learning and development professionals are using a much larger kitbag full of different activities and techniques. There has been a huge increase in the use of coaching, mentoring and e-learning in the last few years (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: | **Net increases in the growth of different learning and development activities in the last few years**



Source: CIPD (2004)

Moreover, the popularity of concepts like blended learning and learning styles signifies the growing acceptance of the need for tailored approaches to employee development. All in all, a more developmental and individual-centred approach appears to be coming to the fore.

Organisations are also placing enormous importance on creating cultures that support learning and development. In fact, more than 70 per cent of organisations rate this among the three most important factors in supporting effective learning. And when asked to identify the single most important thing an organisation can do to promote learning, the overwhelming theme that emerged was the need for an organisational culture that supports learning. Other responses to this question are shown in the box overleaf.

A chapter from *The Case for Coaching* by Jessica Jarvis, David A. Lane and Annette Fillery-Travis. Published by the CIPD

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**Example responses to the question 'What is the single most important thing an organisation can do to promote learning?' (CIPD 2004)**

Views from the front line

***A learning culture:***

A committed and supportive learning environment – without this nothing happens. Promote an organisational culture in which individuals take responsibility for their learning and see it as an essential part of their day-to-day work.

***The role of managers:***

Clear understanding by managers of their role in developing their staff. Develop line managers to have the skills and motivation to encourage and support learning. Make 'developing others' part of a line manager's annual performance objectives. Ensure that line managers are committed and rewarded for learning and development activities.

***Adequate resources:***

Ensure adequate resources are available for development. Give employees time during the working day to 'learn'.

***Encouragement for learning:***

Make it an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Encourage employees to see their career and learning as their own responsibility. Make it interesting so the value is communicated by word of mouth. Sell the benefits of learning: What's in it for the learner? What's in it for the company? Encourage individuals to discuss training needs and to keep an up-to-date personal development plan.

***Understanding employee preferences:***

Offer learning that will benefit the employees in their current role as well as providing opportunities to acquire skills for their continuing professional development. Be open to learners' ideas of what works best for them – throw away the 'one-size-fits-all' attitude and think outside the box. Recognise that different people 'prefer' to learn in different ways – providing different pathways to learning is crucial to developing self-motivation to learn.

***Senior management commitment:***

Acceptance at a senior level that learning is important – this should be widely communicated. Commitment from senior management to provide time, resources and funding for learning. Commitment to learning must be backed up by action: it's easy to say an organisation supports learning, but what practical steps has it taken? Learning and development should be seen as an 'investment' not a 'cost'.

***Clear strategic intent:***

Have a clear strategy for the learning needs of the organisation that matches its strategic direction.

Deliver on promises – if your organisation claims ‘people are our most important asset’, put in place tangible evidence/actions.

***Supporting learning:***

Ensure that consultation takes place with employees to determine true training needs.

Ensure that learning can easily be applied back in the workplace and give people time to practise new skills after training.

Many factors intervene between the commitment to learn and the impact of learning in practice: the culture of the organisation, the quality of individual learning skills, support for transfer of learning back to the workplace. Companies are experimenting with more innovative ways to address these factors and motivate employees to learn and develop their skills.

### **WHY IS THE TIME NOW RIGHT FOR COACHING?**

The shift towards a learner-centred approach has contributed to the growing attractiveness of coaching. This is because it offers one-to-one personalised support for development that can be aligned with the organisation’s strategy and goals. However, many commentators also think coaching is popular because it fits the complexity and fast pace of modern organisational life. For example, Janice Caplan (2003) writes:

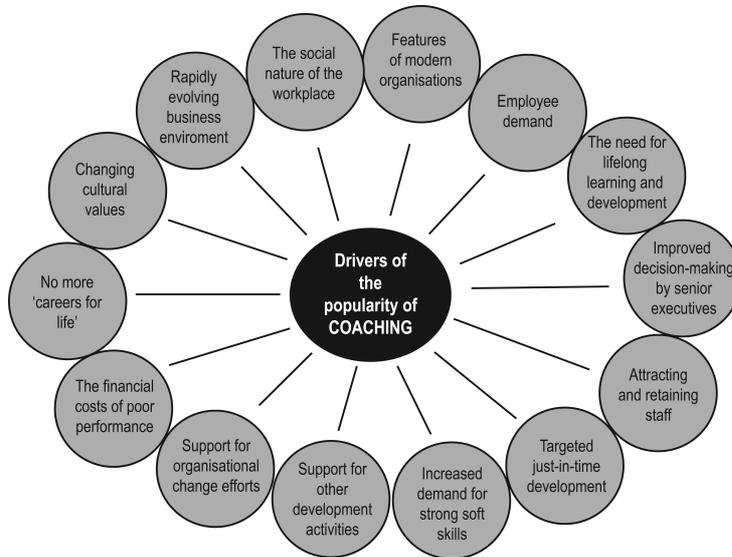
*I believe the reason for the massive increase in the use of coaching is that it is a process and a solution that suits our times. It is an effective mechanism for enabling an organisation to meet competitive pressures, plan for succession and bring about change.*

In truth, a combination of factors have collided to lead to the growth of coaching in contemporary organisations (see Figure 6 on page 24).

Factors include:

- *a rapidly evolving business environment* – The fast pace of business as well as significant time pressures mean that dealing with change is becoming an everyday challenge. The ability to learn and adapt is quickly becoming an essential skill.
- *the social nature of the workplace* – Much of organisational life occurs through groups of people working together in a series of group and individual relationships. Organisational success ultimately results from the productive functioning of people working with others in teams, departments, and ultimately as a whole organisation. How well people work together largely depends on the quality of their interpersonal skills, including communication skills, emotional intelligence and self-awareness. Coaching offers a mechanism to help employees improve this range of interpersonal skills so they can have more productive working relationships.

Figure 6: | **Factors contributing to the growth of coaching**



- *supporting organisational change efforts* – Research has shown that many change efforts fail because of the inability of individuals to effectively learn and adapt. Targeted development interventions such as coaching have become popular in helping individuals adjust to major changes in the workplace.
- *features of modern organisations* – Flatter organisational structures, broader management roles, complex career paths and lower job security have all been contributing factors to the growth of coaching. Organisational downsizing and the resulting flatter structures mean that newly promoted individuals often have to make large step-changes in performance because of the higher requirements of their new roles. Coaching can help these individuals quickly overcome gaps in their knowledge, skills, behaviour and ability.
- *attracting and retaining staff* – Today organisations are competing as fiercely for talented staff as for customers. Career progression and personal development are high on the wish-list of talented employees, and coaching can form part of a package of activities to attract and retain the best staff.
- *lifelong learning* – The importance of learning throughout a person’s life is increasingly recognised and accepted. This has paralleled the requirement for organisations and individuals to develop their skills in order to keep up with a fast-paced, turbulent world market.

- *the need for targeted, individualised, just-in-time development* – The development needs of individuals can be diverse, and in smaller organisations there are often too few individuals with specific development needs to warrant the design of a formal training programme. This usually makes the ‘one-size-fits-all’ training programme that takes place every few months inappropriate. Coaching offers a flexible, responsive approach to development that can be delivered ‘just in time’ to turn around deficiencies in current performance or to strengthen underdeveloped skills.
- *the financial costs of the poor performance of senior managers/executives* – There is a growing acceptance of the costs associated with poorly-performing senior managers/executives. Coaching provides organisations with an opportunity to undertake pre-emptive and proactive interventions to improve their performance (Greco, 2001; Kilburg, 1996).
- *increasing demand for managers and leaders with better ‘soft skills’* – Coaching, with its emphasis on self-awareness, feedback and practice, is considered a highly effective way of developing ‘people skills’ such as communicating and influencing, gaining trust and using feedback.
- *improved decision-making by senior employees* – For senior-level managers/executives it can be ‘lonely at the top’ because they have few people they can confide in and develop ideas and discuss decisions and concerns. A coach can be used as a ‘safe and objective haven’ to discuss issues and provide support (Masciarelli, 1999). This can be valuable when the return on the improvement in skill level and decision-making is considered.
- *no more ‘careers for life’* – There is an increasing trend for individuals to take greater responsibility for their personal and professional development. With the decline of ‘jobs for life’, employees can no longer rely on employers to provide them with all of their career development needs. If individuals are to take responsibility for their development and ongoing career progression, they need support and advice in taking this forward. Coaching can help individuals identify development needs, plan activities and support personal problem-solving.
- *changing cultural values* – Many organisations are trying to move from a ‘command-and-control’ leadership approach to one where the contribution and development of employees at all levels in the organisation is facilitated and supported. Coaching can act as a bridge between old and new cultures by offering a framework and mindset for managers and leaders to use when making this shift.
- *employee demand* – The best learning is not done in a training room or at a conference but at work. People enjoy participating in coaching because it focuses on immediate work issues and is therefore highly relevant and applicable to their jobs. Participants receive direct one-to-one assistance and attention from an expert. This can fit in with their own timeframes and schedules and there is the potential for quick results if the individual is dedicated.

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- *support for other learning and development activities* – Much of the money spent on training development activities is wasted if the personal development momentum is allowed to dissipate after the event. Ninety-three per cent of respondents in the CIPD's 2004 training and development survey agreed that coaching is a key mechanism for transferring learning from training courses back to the workplace. Coaching helps by creating the conditions for learning and behavioural change – security, support, feedback and opportunities to practise over time.

CIPD research has revealed that coaching is considered to be one of the most effective ways that people learn. So although training courses continue to have an important role in learning and development, they are no longer regarded as the only, or even the most effective, solutions to an individual's development needs. Other more contemporary approaches to learning such as coaching, mentoring and e-learning are now receiving much more attention as organisations look for innovative ways to develop their workforce.

## WHAT DOES COACHING OFFER THAT OTHER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES DON'T?

Part of the rise in the popularity of coaching has resulted from the problems inherent in traditional training approaches. An alarming amount of training doesn't work, in terms of promoting changed behaviour back in the workplace. In fact, Baldwin and Ford (1988) reported that the rate of transfer of learning from the conventional classroom environment to the workplace can be as low as 10 per cent. The box below shows a variety of reasons why this can happen – but for the most part it seems that training courses fail to embed suitable feedback and support for the transfer of learning into the workplace.

### Problems with traditional training

- It is hard to make training courses situationally relevant and applicable to each delegate.
- Traditional training approaches assume that each person has the same starting knowledge base.
- Content quickly goes out of date.
- Traditional training takes little account of people's different learning styles and preferences.
- Traditional training can sometimes be detached from the context in which work is produced.
- Traditional training lacks the supporting processes to follow up and make sure new ideas and skills are put into practice.

One-shot training courses can provide knowledge, but behaviour change usually requires a process of ongoing practice and feedback. This is exactly what coaching can offer. We learn best when we apply newly learned concepts and ideas to an immediate situation of personal

relevance to us. Coaching provides the means for supporting other development activities by helping people apply new learning in 'real' work situations.

Coaching has many more distinctive characteristics:

- It provides people with feedback on both their strengths and weaknesses.
- It supports changes in attitudes and behaviour that can translate into more effective performance at work.
- It enables people to refocus and take a critical look at their approaches and style at work.
- It helps people identify barriers that are preventing them from being more effective in their jobs.
- It helps people commit to new performance goals.
- It gives people someone to listen/talk to without judgement.
- It helps to promote individual self-awareness and self-management.
- It offers a flexible and tailored approach to development.
- It demands individual responsibility for performance and development.
- It is a challenging and demanding experience, but this can help to accelerate learning.

Overall, coaching offers a number of advantages over other development interventions that fail to provide the means for people to actually make lasting changes. It seems that 'knowing what you need to change' is only one piece of the jigsaw – not enough to bring about actual changes in a person's style or work habits. Coaching's unique offer is its change orientation, flexibility and support for ongoing development.

### **WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO USE COACHING?**

Although coaching is being used by a huge number of organisations, it is still only one mechanism for learning. Coaching is not a solution for all learning needs. It must be positioned carefully as one element in an organisation's total learning and development strategy. And it is important not to over-hype coaching and make excessive claims about its potential and use. In terms of overall trends in training and development, although use of coaching is increasing, it is not the most widely-used development tool or even considered to be the most effective (see Figure 7 and Table 6 on page 28).

On-the-job training remains the most widely-used type of employee development. It is considered to be highly effective and employees themselves say it is their favourite way of learning. So although coaching certainly has a lot to offer, it is important to understand that it sits within a raft of other learning activities that can all be effective in the right situation.

Figure 7: | *The percentage of organisations that use different development activities*

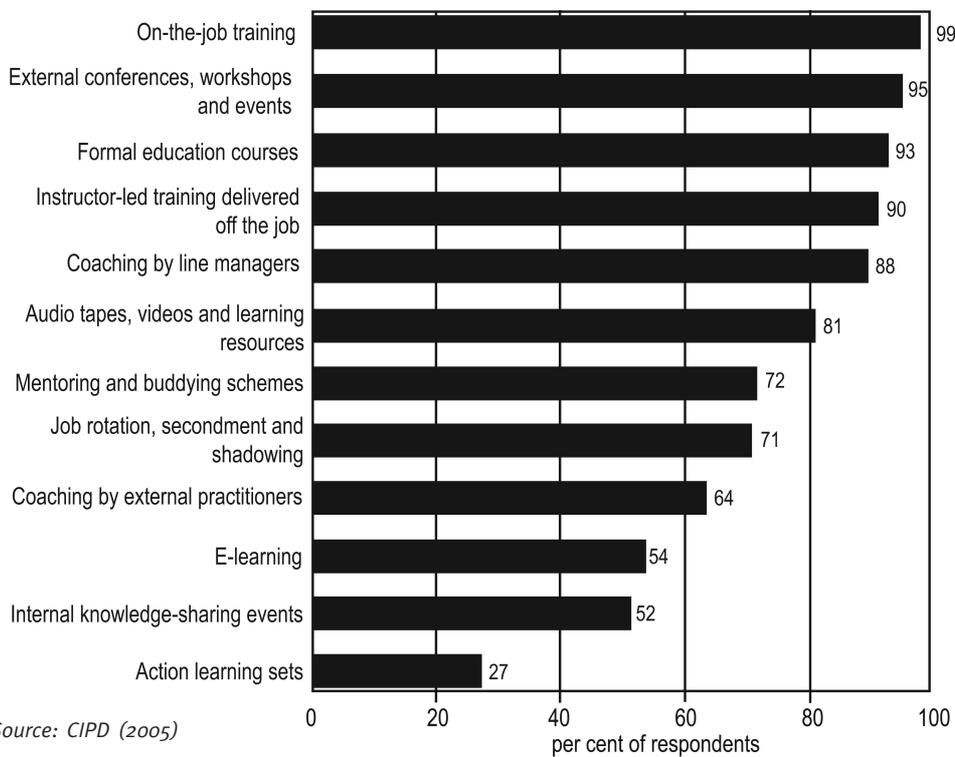


Table 6: | *The perceived effectiveness of different development activities*

	Percentage of respondents indicating 'effective' or 'very effective'
On-the-job training	96
Instructor-led training delivered off the job	94
Formal education courses	93
Coaching by external practitioners	92
Job rotation, secondment and shadowing	87
Mentoring and buddying schemes	85
External conferences, workshops and events	84
Coaching by line managers	83
Internal knowledge-sharing events	82
Action learning sets	77
Audio tapes, videos and learning resources	71

Source: CIPD (2005)

The challenge facing learning and development practitioners today is to understand what is the best and most cost-effective use of each learning method, whether it is coaching, training courses, e-learning or any other learning activity. The maximum benefit from learning and development activities can be achieved by finding the best fit for your organisation – ie the combination of activities best suited to your particular environment and strategy.

Making decisions about when to use coaching will depend on a variety of factors including the preferences of the individual learners, the nature of their development needs, the organisational conditions and whether an individual has the right attitude and approach to coaching.

There are some specific organisational situations in which coaching can be particularly helpful. Some examples of these are outlined below.

#### **Coaching is particularly helpful in certain organisational situations**

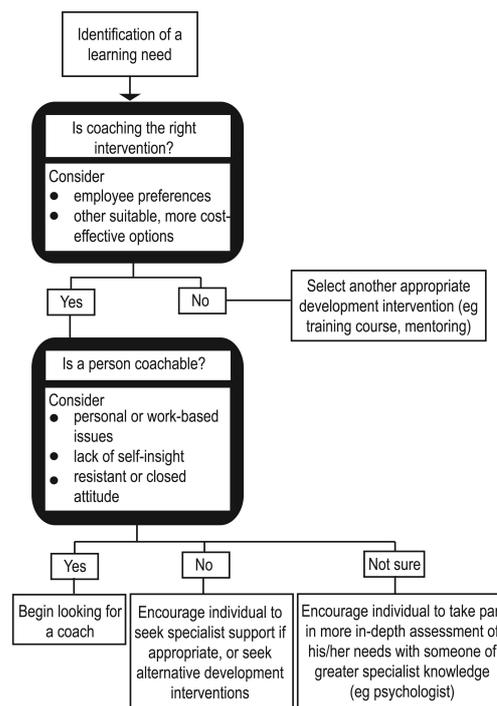
- People who initially set up *small businesses* do not necessarily have the skills to manage larger businesses and the fast-growing number of people they need to employ. It is also unlikely that they can be away from work for extended periods of time for development activities. In this situation, coaching can offer targeted, timely development on identified issues/areas that can be fitted into the individual's busy schedule.
- Organisations should only invest in coaching when there is *a belief that it can deliver significant and long-term improvements* in individuals' performance – ie when future performance will greatly exceed current performance and this can be translated into business benefits.
- Coaching can offer *support for expatriates* who have to adjust to a new culture and country. These people often have very specific requirements and they need immediate support when issues arise.
- When organisations are suffering from significant *skills shortages*, money may be better spent developing the skills of current employees through interventions like coaching, rather than spending a great deal of money recruiting external candidates.
- Where certain employees have high levels of specific skills and experience (or critical relationships with contractors/suppliers etc), the organisation might have difficulty replacing its human capital. In this situation, it may be more appropriate to provide these valued technical experts with coaching *to improve or develop some of their other skills* (interpersonal/managerial) so that their careers can progress within the organisation.
- *Periods of major organisational change* can require significant shifts in the behaviour and attitudes of some employees in order to fit in with new structures or cultures. Coaching can help individuals make these necessary changes.
- Coaching can help *individuals who are changing their job role* and require different skills and abilities. Coaching can be a valuable short-term intervention to help people adapt and cope with their role change.

The case for investing in coaching is different in each organisation. It is strongest in organisations that rely on the loyalty and efficacy of their people, and in organisations that experience a lot of change.

**Determining if an individual needs coaching**

A major part of HR’s role in coaching is working out when coaching should be used – and, more importantly, when it shouldn’t. The enthusiasm for coaching at the moment means that there is a danger that it can be seen as a panacea for all kinds of development needs. However, coaching should only be used when it is genuinely seen as the best way of helping an individual learn and develop. Coaching is just one of a range of training and development activities that organisations can use to develop their employees. It can also be an expensive proposition, the costs, time and resources involved quickly mounting up, even if the coaching initiative only lasts a few months. It is therefore important to fully consider the merits of coaching alongside other types of development interventions, such as training courses, mentoring or on-the-job training. Employee preferences should also be borne in mind. Although coaching can be a very effective development tool, as with any learning intervention it will only be effective when a genuine need for it is identified and when it is the best development tool for a specific purpose. Decisions on whether coaching is an appropriate approach are illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: | **A decision tree – is coaching the right intervention?**



Recognising that someone could benefit from some coaching can happen in a variety of organisational settings. The first step will be the identification of a learning or development need. This is most frequently pointed out by the individuals themselves, by their line managers or by a member of the HR department (eg during a developmental centre). Once a learning need has been identified, the next step is for the manager and the individual to decide how best the need can be met and whether that involves coaching or some other form of development. The box below illustrates some examples of situations in which coaching is an appropriate approach.

**When coaching can help most**

- Sometimes an individual can be performing perfectly well, but could be *even more successful with some assistance*. In this situation, the coach is not helping the individual to ‘fix’ any particular problem, but instead will try to help motivate the individual to consider his or her future plans and the next steps in his or her job or career.
- Some individuals in the workplace are highly competent, technical experts. However, they can have *poor interpersonal skills* that make them appear arrogant or stubborn to those they work with. Coaches can help managers to better ‘read’ interpersonal situations and be more effective in their interactions with colleagues.
- In some cases, managers may *handle conflict situations in an aggressive and non-compromising way* that antagonises their colleagues. This may be quite intimidating to peers and team members. Coaching can help these individuals to develop the skills of negotiation and compromise so that conflict is resolved more effectively.
- Some managers have *difficulty supporting the development of their team members*. Coaching can help managers develop junior colleagues more effectively by learning some coaching skills themselves.
- As managers move from management or front-line positions to more senior levels, they often need *assistance in gaining a more strategic perspective*. This involves making decisions based on the best interests of the organisation as a whole, rather than their specific area of the business. Coaches can help managers to become more sensitive to wider organisational concerns and understand opportunities and problems occurring across multiple business units.

**Is a person ready for coaching?**

Some people may not respond well to coaching. There is a whole host of reasons why this may be the case, as shown in the box below.

**When coaching is unlikely to help**

- *When a person has psychological problems*, he or she should be offered referral to appropriate specialist support, not coaching. Coaches do not generally have the depth of psychological training to deal with these issues nor the medical training to address any physiological components that may also be part of the problem (eg addiction, depression).

- *When a person lacks self-insight or is not able to modify his or her behaviour from situation to situation*, coaching will not be effective because a coach will not be able to overcome such strong resistance to change.
- *When a person has a common developmental need*, the individual may not require an intervention as costly or as intensive as coaching. A course or development programme may be an equally effective and more cost-effective solution.
- *When a person is resistant or closed to coaching*, especially if the person believes he or she is being forced into it, it is unlikely to be effective. Coaching works best when there is a receptive audience. Attempts should be made to understand why the person feels this way.
- *When a person sees coaching as a 'quick fix' and does not take responsibility for changing his or her behaviour*, learning is unlikely to occur at all. Long-term successful behavioural change requires a great deal of effort and hard work for it to really happen.
- *When a person engages in socially inappropriate behaviour* – eg sexual harassment – the person will need long-term intensive counselling and may be subject to formal disciplinary processes. Because coaches cannot exclude themselves from testifying against clients in legal proceedings, it is also in the best interests of employees to have professional counsellors with more experience of the boundary issues.
- *When a person is leaving the company or retiring*, it is unlikely that in such a short timeframe the organisation will see any benefits in terms of improved performance. Outplacement or career counselling may be a more appropriate solution.

In all these cases the problems are best dealt with by interventions other than coaching, either because the individual's attitude will interfere with the effectiveness of coaching or because he or she needs alternative specialist support. In many of these situations we are looking at the boundaries between coaching and therapy. Sometimes a clinical intervention will provide more appropriate support for the individual. The HR practitioner should try to identify these issues as early as possible.

**Think through the following questions when considering if someone is ready for coaching:**

- Is the issue personal or work-based?
- Is the individual a willing participant in the coaching? Is he or she receptive to coaching?
- Does the issue require more in-depth psychological expertise?
- Does the individual accept that the coaching requires considerable effort from him or her for it to be successful? Is he or she resistant to change?
- Is there another equally effective development option that may be more cost-effective?

In this chapter we have considered the case for coaching against the wider backdrop of learning and development. We are seeing growing acceptance of the value of learning and development more generally as organisations struggle with continually changing competitive

pressures, and this has aided positive attitudes towards coaching. However, coaching itself also has specific characteristics which are driving its popularity and respect. It is a highly suitable intervention in particular organisational situations, and for the development of certain individuals. But it is not a miracle cure and HR must take care that coaching is not used simply because it is the latest trend: it is to be considered alongside other development options and applied only when it really is believed to constitute the best solution to the issue being faced.

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