

FROM ASPIRATION TO *Reality*



CULTIVATING A

Coaching Culture



MEET YOUR COACH



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DEFINING COACHING CULTURE

First of all, this is not the Ministry of Coaching, and I am not an evangelist. However, I do know that coaching as a resource is pivotal to the success of your organisation. It doesn't matter how big or small, what sector or industry you are in or where you are located—coaching is something that will help advance the performance of your people and your organisation.

So, what is meant by coaching “culture”? Well, I will tell you (and provide some resources along the way). It's also helpful recognize that one size does not fit all, so I will show you how this approach can be tailored to suit you.

Let's start with the definition of coaching culture. In *Making Coaching Work: Creating a Coaching Culture*, David Clutterbuck and David Megginson describe a coaching culture as one where “coaching is the predominant style of managing and working together and where commitment to improving the organisation is embedded in a parallel commitment to improving the people.” While I fully support one aspect of this definition, I would like to challenge another part and add a third aspect for consideration.

“Commitment to improving the organisation is embedded in a parallel commitment to improving the people.”

This is a vital part of the attitude and mindset of the organisation's senior leaders, Board and stakeholders. An organisation's best asset is its people, and this is often either underestimated or even ignored.

For several years, I worked as a strategic project management consultant, helping organisations change and improve performance working with three key aspects: people, processes and systems (technology). Through this experience I observed, in almost all cases, it was the people that were considered last and given the least time, attention and resources. We then wonder why most change initiatives fail! Therefore, before we can begin to build coaching culture, the existing culture needs to be one that places genuine and tangible importance on its people.

“Coaching is the predominant style of managing and working together.”

This is the part that I would challenge, as I do believe that coaching as a way of leading, communicating and working with others is a very powerful and positive approach. However, by using the term predominant, I would not wish this to convey that coaching is the golden panacea of leadership and culture. Other styles of management, leadership and communication are also valid and have their place, and it is the intelligent combination and application of these styles that is important in building a performance culture.

The part I would like to add to our understanding of coaching culture is around principles and values.

Coaching is a behavioural practice with associated competencies, and I propose that it is much more than that. Coaching is much more than behaving in a certain way, more than displaying some behavioural competencies. Coaching, *good* coaching, is also a mindset. A coaching mindset is underpinned by principles and values that seem to typify those who apply these skills most effectively. These are qualities such as respect, trust, openness, integrity, collaboration and excellence.

Carol Dweck's reference to a growth versus fixed mindset is an important aspect of how an organisation can make the best use of coaching as a resource to improve performance through its' cultural development. In practical terms, what this means is that even if spending lots of time and money on coaching, lots of people will not necessarily leverage the long-term change and cultural qualities an organisation needs for sustained success.

What is needed is a more holistic and long-term approach, where coaching and coaching principles are used in many and varied ways so that the skills and principles become embedded within the fabric of the organisation and are not just a skill set used by and offered to a certain group of people.

In order to bring this understanding of coaching culture together, I'd like to suggest that coaching culture is when an organisation has a long-term cultural intention and strategy (who do we want to be?), genuinely recognises its people as a key asset, honours values—such as respect, trust, openness, integrity, collaboration and excellence—and takes consistent steps towards combining those values with coaching-related activities. With this mindset and systematic approach, every step along the way will reap benefits for your organisation including:

- Improved performance and results
- More effective change management
- Enhanced internal mobility
- Improved employee engagement
- Employees better prepared and ready for senior positions
- Increased retention of high performers
- Increased productivity

- Better communication skills and teamwork
- More effective leadership
- Improved decision-making

A COACHING MINDSET IS UNDERPINNED BY PRINCIPLES AND VALUES SUCH AS RESPECT, TRUST, OPENNESS, INTEGRITY, COLLABORATION AND EXCELLENCE.

Is your organisation missing out on some of these benefits? If you are not leveraging coaching in some way as a strategic resource, I think you might be. You can read more about the positive impact of building a culture that is infused with coaching skills, activities and principles in the International Coach Federation (ICF) report: *Building a Coaching Culture for Change Management*.

2

WHERE DO I START? KEY PRINCIPLES

The term “coaching culture” is being heard more and more within organisations, especially those that want to move from using coaching as a development resource for 1-1 and 1-team interventions to leverage coaching as a strategic resource at an organisational or systemic level. While this might be an appealing idea, some organisations don’t always know exactly what is meant by coaching culture or what benefits such an idea might bring. We address these questions here, but for now we are focussing on three important principles that are important to understand before taking any steps forward.

Principle 1: Be clear that high performance is the goal!

Coaching culture is more than having great conversations, it’s about having impact, successfully managing change, delivering results and fully tapping into people’s potential in support of these outcomes. Given this, how is coaching currently perceived in your organisation? Is it viewed as a “soft skill”? Organisations that successfully leverage coaching as a strategic resource most certainly know that it is not soft, quite the opposite in fact.

Coaching as a skill is underpinned by a set of competencies, created through scientific research and

in-depth job analysis. The eleven core competencies of coaching against which ICF coaches are assessed is rigorous, as is their training. This same level of rigour applies when managers and leaders learn to use good coaching skills as part of their role. Furthermore, coaching conversations and coaching-related activities are very outcome and forward movement focussed with clarity on measures of success, methods of accountability and integration of action and learning. Doing this well, consistently and comprehensively, is not a “soft” option.

High performance also relates to the performance of processes. Processes can be designed to incorporate coaching principles. This is often overlooked and becomes a missed opportunity when it comes to making the best use of coaching principles in an organisation. We’ll dive more into that later when we look at approaches and strategies.

Principle 2: Coaching is not the golden panacea.

A strong coaching culture is one where leaders know when, if and how to use coaching alongside other leadership and communication styles, tools and approaches. In addition, coaching needs to be an integrated resource and part of an overarching strategy,

COACHING NEEDS TO BE AN INTEGRATED RESOURCE AND PART OF AN OVERARCHING STRATEGY, NOT A STAND-ALONE SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS OR GOALS.

and not viewed as a stand-alone solution to all problems or goals.

During my years designing and delivering leadership development programmes, I could cite far too many examples of organisations sending someone on a training course and then expecting them to simply perform better when they return to work—just like that. There is often no context setting for why they are on the course, no pre-work with the line manager around their goals and objectives, no support when they return, no immediate opportunity to apply and practice their new skills and no ongoing review, integration or development of their new skills.

We know from learning and development theory that a single training intervention means that an individual may retain and apply approximately 30% of what they learned through a programme. However, this can be increased significantly by pre- and post-course support and development. The same principle applies to coaching. By coaching someone, there is going to be some value, like there is value in attending the training programme. However, as an isolated, unsupported and unintegrated activity, there is so much missed opportunity to realise the full potential and impact of that development activity.

The key here is to use coaching as a resource as an integrated part of a broader strategy and not a standalone answer. When these first two principles are combined, we see that a coaching culture combines and carefully balances support and challenge in order to bring out the very best potential and performance at all levels.

Principle 3: One size does not fit all and culture, including coaching culture, is unique and individual to each organisation.

It is important to take any recommended principles, steps and approaches and adapt them to suit your organisation, thereby proactively creating your own coaching culture strategy. Each organisation's strategy will be influenced by the following:

- Size of organisation
- Geography of organisation
- Employee demographics
- Current culture
- Senior sponsorship

- Strategic business goals and objectives
- Economic climate
- Available resources (people, time, budget, expertise, etc.)
- Timeline
- Significant events or initiatives

It is important that your coaching culture strategy enhances the organisation's current efforts towards success and is not experienced as yet another "project". By having a clear strategy that considers these three principles and is integrated into the organisation's current strategic plan, you are well on the way to success. Next, we will look at how you can build upon these principles and take the next steps to building a great coaching culture strategic plan.

WHERE DO I START?

FIRST STEPS

Now that you have had time to consider the three key principles to coaching culture, let's look at the first steps to put this into action.

Step One: Be clear about your vision of success.

What are your criteria, goals and aspirations for a high-performance coaching culture in your organisation? What does that mean for you? What might be some characteristics of such a culture? For this, you could draw upon some of the work undertaken by ICF and the Human Capital Institute (HCI) in their research into coaching culture. Since 2014, ICF and HCI have partnered annually to explore the characteristics of strong coaching cultures and how organisations use coaching to achieve strategic objectives.

They define organisations with strong coaching cultures as those that meet at least five of the following criteria:

1. Strongly/somewhat agree that employees value coaching
2. Strongly/somewhat agree that senior executives value coaching
3. Managers/leaders (and/or internal coaches) received accredited coach-specific training

4. Coaching is a fixture in the organisation with a dedicated line item in the budget
5. All employees in the organisation have equal access to receive coaching from a professional coach practitioner
6. All three coaching modalities (internal coach practitioner, external coach practitioner and managers/leaders using coaching skills) are present in the organisation

Let's take a closer look at these.

The first two criteria are important because of the very simple fact that you cannot "do coaching to someone". Coaching is a pull, not a push model of leadership and communication, and it is important that the person being coached or involved in coaching-related activities does so voluntarily, sees the benefit in it and is genuinely invested in the process. This leads to a much greater level of commitment, ownership and accountability and is why coaching is one of the most powerful and effective ways to improve motivation and engagement in people. The best way to do this is to offer people the experience of coaching so that they can know it for themselves. The key word here is "offer", as opposed to signing people up and telling them. This means that it is important to clearly communicate what coaching

is and its benefits so that everyone has a common understanding of coaching and how it can be used as a positive resource for the entire organisation.

This links to the fifth criteria: Coaching should ideally and ultimately be available and accessible to all employees and not just a select few. I was really impressed when a telco organisation shared with me during a visit that over 80% of their employees had access to coaching in some way. I'll expand on that when we look at approaches and strategies.

The third criteria is an interesting one. According to research by ICF, one of the greatest perceived risks to the profession of coaching is untrained individuals. This is critical in a currently self-regulated profession. Organisations have become more careful and selective about the qualifications and credentials of the external coaches they hire. This is now extending to coaching offered by internal coaches and managers and leaders using coaching skills. This does not mean that all of these internal people need to become fully trained executive coaches. However, it does mean that there is an increasing demand for internal staff to receive coach-specific training designed and delivered by subject matter experts and for the training programme to have been accredited by a credible entity. A "fit for purpose" approach is recommended so that people receive the right type and amount of coach-specific training they need in order to fulfil their role. Whether that is a one-day programme or a twenty-day programme, such training should be accredited, offering assurance and confidence of its quality and suitability given what your organisation is seeking to achieve.

The sixth criteria is also worth exploring further. In the early stages of introducing coaching into an organisation and beginning to develop a culture that adopts coaching as a powerful resource, most organisations mainly draw upon the use of external coaches. However, once they begin to understand and want to more fully leverage the benefits of coaching, many organisations seek to reduce, or even cease, the use of external coaches (often for reasons of cost) in favour of developing internal capability. The key to success here is not to do one or the other, but to do both! Moreover, the use of coaching skills by managers and leaders is also pivotal to success and is currently the fastest growing modality of coaching.

What I call the coaching culture "sweet spot" is the combined use of all three ways of bringing coaching into the organisation. It is the combination of these three modalities that creates the greatest impact, and it can

trigger a "ripple effect" that turns coaching from an activity to a way of being. It allows coaching to be available to more people and for coaching conversations to become a part of daily communication instead of limited to formally contracted coaching sessions. The exact balance between these modalities is varies for each organisation. How many internal coaches do you need? Full or part time? How many external coaches will you still engage? For whom? How many managers and leaders might you offer coach-specific training to and to what level? These are all great questions that will help inform your own coaching strategy. We will look at these questions again later when we discuss approaches and strategies.

THE COACHING CULTURE "SWEET SPOT" IS THE COMBINED USE OF ALL THREE WAYS OF BRINGING COACHING INTO THE ORGANISATION.

The final criteria to comment on is probably the most challenging. Organisations, with what is considered to be a strong coaching culture, allocate dedicated funds in support of implementing their coaching culture strategy. The amount of funds may vary greatly depending upon the organisation and the strategy, however the clear message here is: "put your money where your mouth is". There is little point in talking about coaching culture if the intention is not backed up with a clear strategy and a business plan—and business plans need budgets. The budget may simply be to train a few internal coaches, to introduce and develop managers' and leaders' ability to more effectively use coaching skills, to hire a full-time Chief Coaching Officer and associated internal functions. Once again, one size does not fit all, and the amount and nature of funding will vary based upon your own unique cultural plan and coaching strategy. The key point here is that without funding, the reach and success of the initiative will be limited. A lack of funding also says something about the level of genuine commitment to the idea in the first place.

One way to build a stronger case for funding is to clearly link the coaching culture initiative to the organisation's strategic plan. (Yet another characteristic of organisations with strong coaching culture.) This takes us back to the first principle shared previously—coaching culture is in service of performance, and performance is articulated within the strategic goals and strategic plan.

Step Two: Sell the vision!

How can you present this strategy to all stakeholders in a way that is compelling? I have come across several organisations that have invested considerable funds into developing internal coaches and managers and leaders using coaching skills but didn't do anything to communicate it! Internal coaches struggle to fit coaching into their already full schedules, and employees don't know or understand what coaching is, that it's available for them or how to access or make best use of it ... so what happens? The internal coaches find that they do very little coaching, their skills stagnate, they lose confidence and motivation, and before you know it, the investment in training them has been wasted. If you really want to get the best return on your investment (from that hard fought-for budget), then make very best use of the assets created from that investment by communicating the vision.

Don't forget to reflect on what motivated the organisation to consider a coaching initiative in the first place. Is your organisation being reactive, responsive or proactive when it comes to introducing coaching? Why is your organisation doing this? Is it because you have a dream? An aspiration to be the best? Or, is it because there is a burning platform that needs to be addressed? Either way, coaching can help, but how you position and "sell" it will be different.

Step Three: Determine "coachability."

Even with a great vision, strategy and communication plan, it is important to carefully consider how this type of initiative will be received. In coaching, there is a concept called "coachability". Consider if the client/coachee is coachable at this stage. Are they ready to be coached on this topic, at this time, by this coach? The same thing will apply to the organisation. Is the organisation ready for this? How will you know? What is needed for this to be successful? Yet again, being able to proactively create your own unique coaching culture strategy is going to help you address these important questions.

APPROACHES & STRATEGIES

Let's look at some practical approaches and strategies you can use to introduce, and begin benefiting from, coaching within your organisation.

Before that, a brief word of advice on how to make the best use out of this information: firstly, note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all possible options, and secondly, remember that one size does not fit all and this issue offers a range of approaches, some of which, and perhaps not all, are necessary or suitable for your organisation. The key here is to take the time and care to proactively develop your own bespoke strategy that is aligned with what you want to achieve.

In terms of introducing coaching and initiating steps to gain progress and momentum, there are typically four key approaches:

1. “Top-down”

A “top-down” approach begins with senior leaders receiving coaching and developing/using coaching skills with the initiative, which then cascades down throughout the organisational “hierarchy”; i.e., starting with a small audience and then increasing the size of the population involved.

2. “Bottom-up”

A “bottom-up” approach focuses on first-line managers and their teams having access to coaching and coaching skills (largely through

coaching as part of the line management relationship) and then gradually moving upwards to gain support and greater engagement from senior leaders as the benefits of the initiative become evident; i.e., starting with a larger audience and gradually making the focus increasingly targeted and specific.

3. “Multi-pronged”

A “multi-pronged” approach is initiated with several, potentially separate projects across the organization. The intention being that, over time, the ripple effect of their impact in the organisation will reach a tipping point and reap more evident systemic change.

4. “Multi-functional pilot”

A “multi-functional pilot” approach takes a defined population within the organisation (e.g., a department, division, business unit or geographical location) and implements a scaled-down version of the big picture and what the long-term strategy might look like, and it is “mirrored” in a “mini” version. This can encompass various approaches across the infrastructure and hierarchy in a measured and controlled way. The results of the pilot are reviewed and adjusted for further roll out.

All of these approaches have their merits and drawbacks. The “multi-pronged” approach can easily turn into

a “scattergun” approach that lacks focus and clear intention. On the other hand, it offers the broadest and possibly fastest way to introduce coaching practices across the whole organisation.

How do you decide which approach will work best for your organisation? Here are a few questions to consider:

- What is the current level of awareness of and support for coaching from senior management?
- How many first-line managers are there in the organisation and where are they located?
- Is your organisation structured in such a way that a multi-pronged approach could be sufficiently tracked and monitored for progress and success in a cohesive way?
- Is there a part of your organisation that would suit being a pilot for coaching? (e.g., a specific branch/location, a particular business unit of function, a specific project or initiative?)
- What budget do you have available?
- What timescales do you have in mind?
- What do you see as the pros and cons of each of these approaches in your organisation?
- How does each approach align with your ultimate vision for success?

These four approaches focus on exploring and deciding the initial target population.

Additionally, you need to consider what specific activities and methods will be used within that population to tangibly bring coaching into the organisation. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

Coaching related activities:

ICF research indicates that the following coaching-related activities are utilised by High-performing Organisations (HPOs) for the greatest impact:

- Group coaching with a professional coach (78%)
- 1-1 coaching with a professional coach (78%)
- Access to managers with coaching skills (70%)
- Team coaching with a professional coach (67%)

Other activities that might include or incorporate a coaching approach:

- Conversations adopting a coaching style
- Online learning and development packages (self-coaching)
- Reflective journaling

- Meeting with senior leaders
- Action learning
- Focus groups
- On-the-job training
- Learning labs
- Stretch assignments/Job rotations
- Projects
- Change management initiatives

Schemes and processes utilising coaching:

- Coaching integrated as part of a development programme (either during workshops or in between modules)
- Graduate schemes
- First 90-day/new role induction
- Talent management programmes
- Return-to-work programmes (e.g., after long-term illness or other absence)
- Maternity programmes (pre-/during/post-maternity leave)
- Workplace transitions (in, out, across, up, etc.)

ONE CHARACTERISTIC OF ORGANISATIONS WITH A STRONG COACHING CULTURE IS WHEN ALL THREE MODALITIES ARE PRESENT.

Leveraging the 3-modalities:

Previously, we noted that one characteristic of organisations with a strong coaching culture is when all three coaching modalities (internal coach practitioner, external coach practitioner and managers/leaders using coaching skills) are present. Not only is it important to utilise all three, it is also useful to consider when, if, and how they will be intertwined and fully leveraged in order to maximise the benefit coaching activities. Here are a few things to consider:

- How many internal coaches do you need?
- What type of coaching activities will they be involved with?
- Full or part time?
- Dedicated or as part of, or in addition, to their current role?
- How many external coaches will you engage?
- For whom?
- How will you source and “manage” them?
- What type of 1-1 coaching engagements will be offered (by internal or external coaches)?

- How many managers and leaders might you offer coach-specific training to and at what level?

Operational processes:

Finally, let's think beyond the obvious ... coaching is also about how we do things and not just who does it. What if coaching was integrated into some of your operational processes? For example, one great business function to utilise a coaching approach is sales. Imagine your sales teams being trained to coach prospective clients to explore and elicit their expectations and criteria to buy your products or services? Some other examples might be to utilise coaching in handling complaints, establishing user requirements, or during interviews and customer service calls.

As you can see, coaching culture is about a lot more than formally arranged coaching sessions. By utilising a coaching approach and infusing it into the very fabric of your organisation's operations, culture becomes informed and a powerful growth mindset is nurtured.

Once you have decided upon an initial approach, good project management comes into play so that your strategy leads to successful implementation! All good plans have clear milestones, objectives and measures of success, which is exactly what we will explore next.



MEASURING PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

Now that we've covered multiple approaches and strategies for how to introduce coaching skills and coaching related activities into your organisation, it's time to consider measurement. How do you know that coaching is making a positive difference?

Several years ago, while working as a continuous process improvement consultant, our mantra was to measure what's important, not just what's measurable. This principle most certainly applies to measuring the progress of your investment when building a coaching culture. There are many, many things that an organisation can measure, but how useful are they and what do the results tell you? The key here is to really think about what it is that you want to achieve and develop an approach to measurement that provides meaningful data and evidence.

In the early years of using coaching within organisations, some viewed it with scepticism. The evidence of success seemed based on subjective responses as opposed to empirical data, and most organisations tend to favour empirical data as evidence of success when it comes to making a financial commitment. Today, there are much better methods to establishing this empirical data, and there is far more recognition and acceptance that the subjective response is not only valuable, but critical, to the success of a culture that is truly infused

with the principles of coaching. This mindset is very noticeable in organisations that demonstrate a strong coaching culture.

We will look at both aspects, but first, I'd like to share a simple model that can be used to provide a framework for measurement. The Kirkpatrick Model was originally developed to provide an evaluation of the four levels of learning, and it can be easily adapted to coaching as follows:

Level 1: Reaction: What did the coachee think or feel about the coaching engagement?

Level 2: Learning: What did the coachee learn during the coaching engagement?

Level 3: Behaviour: How did the coachee apply their learning? What changes in behaviour were evident?

Level 4: Results: What impact did the changes in behaviour have? What changes in results or productivity were evident?

Here are some examples of how these levels could be translated into measures:

Level 1: Capture an overall level of satisfaction score from the coachee. This could also be broken down into some sub-measures such as:

- Level of confidence
- Level of motivation or engagement
- Level of clarity

Level 2: What are some of the skills, habits or attitudes that are desirable or expected as a result of the coaching engagement? These could be things like:

- Time management
- Delegation
- Participation

Level 3: What changes in behaviour are desirable or expected? For example:

- Completion of tasks within a timeframe
- Developing and involving others in tasks/projects/decision-making
- Frequency and quality of participation in meetings, client presentations

Level 4: What business impact is desirable or expected? For example:

- Growth in productivity/sales
- Growth in team satisfaction scores
- Growth in peer engagement feedback
- Reduction in costs (either direct or as a result of time/efficiency savings)

In order to make this model work, there are a few factors to consider. First, start with the end in mind. In effective coaching engagements, the coach and coachee take time to establish clarity on the goals and desired outcomes for the coaching work along with some associated measures of success. You may also want to consider developing a personalised balanced scorecard for the coachee that outlines and captures the evidence at each level with the associated measures and results.

Note that this approach to measurement can also be applied beyond the more formal 1-1 coaching engagements and can be useful for some of the other coaching related activities we noted earlier:

- Team coaching
- 1-1s with line managers
- Action learning
- Focus groups
- On the job training
- Learning labs
- Stretch assignments/job rotations
- Projects

Levels 2-4 of the Kirkpatrick Model focus on seeking to make the intangible tangible: moving from mindset to behaviour to impact. In this way, there is not only a focus on return on investment (ROI), but there is also a focus on return on expectation (ROE). It is this approach that is most typically adopted when evaluating coaching: What are the expectations from coaching or coaching related activities and how can they be expressed and measured in a tangible way?

Some of the typical measurement vehicles are:

- 360-degree surveys (pre- and post-coaching)
- Employee satisfaction/engagement surveys
- Customer satisfaction/loyalty/advocacy surveys
- Specific feedback from line managers, peers, and customers around a particular behaviour

These vehicles can enable you to track some specific measure often associated with coaching interventions, such as:

- Reduced employee absenteeism
- Reduced employee turnover
- Increased employee engagement
- Increased individual/team performance

One final point on this tangible, empirical aspect of measurement is that it is also important to remember that a certain result may not always be attributed exclusively to coaching and other factors are also at play, for example:

- General market conditions
- Economic climate
- Social and political climate
- Competition
- Changes in products, services, technology
- Life changes for the coachee
- Change in leadership/strategy/direction of the organisation

What are the measures and measurement methods that will give you evidence of how coaching is having an impact in your organisation? Proactively exploring and

developing these into a balanced scorecard will provide you with a powerful tool.

For organisations wanting to focus on establishing a clear Level 4 measure, the standard formula for calculating coaching ROI involves subtracting the costs of coaching from the estimated value of the outcomes of coaching and then expressing this as a percentage. However, there are some challenges with this formula as, in practice, organisations sometimes adjust the metrics so that the financial return or benefits are underestimated to give a conservative figure or, on the other hand, the change evidenced is fully attributed to the coaching engagement. These fluctuations in how the formula is applied can lead to this being an unreliable and inefficient or inconsistent measurement method.

Taking a purely formula-based approach to measuring coaching is often used as a marketing tool than for measurement. This takes us back to Level 1 evaluation: the reaction of the coachee as to how they think and feel about the coaching and the goals and outcomes being worked on with their coach. Interestingly, most coachees report an increase in their self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of coaching, even if those were not specifically stated as desired outcomes from the coaching engagement. The value of more confident employees is not to be underestimated and is further described by A.M. Grant in his paper: “ROI is a poor measure of coaching success: towards a more holistic approach using a well-being and engagement framework”.

Imagine the benefits of having employees who are engaged, motivated, confident and feel safe and supported at work. Now imagine what happens when they are absent. These examples of mindset can have an enormous impact on the culture of an organisation, and it is the culture that sets the tone for how people behave and, therefore, perform. I highly recommend that your measurement of progress and success for how coaching is impacting your organisation does not just focus on the direct, tangible business benefits, but that it also places equal importance and attention to the external and internal benefits to the person being coached.

In order to give you an indication of the types of measures and results that can be seen from organisations that are utilising coaching in this way, here are a few examples from ICF's *2015 Building a Coaching Culture for Increased Employee Engagement Study*. According to their findings, most organisations are not using sophisticated methods to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching; in fact, 27% of organisations reported that they did not evaluate its effectiveness at

all. For those organisations that do evaluate coaching's effectiveness, the most popular measures utilised are employee feedback (58%), coach feedback (42%) and performance appraisals (32%). Some organisations are using ROE and ROI to evaluate coaching, but to a lesser degree.

Past research found that coaching can deliver an ROI of seven times the value invested by an organisation. Coaching does provide a number of benefits to organisations, and respondents highlighted increased engagement as the top outcome of coaching within their organisation. Faster onboarding and leadership development are also cited as key outcomes, as are the more intangible results of increased emotional intelligence for employees and improved team functioning.

Finally, apart from the more tangible measures, there are some highly positive characteristics and behaviours that organisations display when coaching becomes “systemic”. In *Coaching and Mentoring* (2016), Eric Parsloe said: If you could be a ‘fly on the wall’ in a coaching culture, here's what you'd see:

- Managers looking for opportunities to help others learn
- People asking each other open questions
- Employees at all levels having open, honest and supportive conversations
- People routinely giving one another feedback—supportive and critical
- Managers coaching team members to help them develop, rather than just to tackle poor performance
- Coaching relationships forming spontaneously
- Senior leaders with a clear vision that coaching and mentoring are at the heart of how you operate
- Teams working with clear goals, roles, processes and relationships
- Relatively few people ‘playing politics’
- A pragmatic focus on delivering results and at the same time building the long-term health of the business

At this point, we've covered the building blocks for creating a strategy for coaching culture and ways to fully utilising coaching as a strategic resource within your organisation. Next, we will show you how to create sustainability for long-term success!

SUSTAINABILITY

In this Coaching Culture series, we have now covered the main building blocks for establishing the foundations of a coaching culture in your organisation and how you can fully utilise coaching as a strategic resource. We now turn our attention to how you can not only sustain, but also enhance the impact that coaching can have over time. Here are some of the ways that you can underpin long-term success and impact.

Educating the organisation:

Often, the broader organisation may not be aware of what is defined and understood by coaching or its associated benefits. In order for your efforts to be a success, a wide-scale communication plan will be helpful to educate the organisation on what coaching is, its benefits and how it can be accessed/used. In this way, you can start to create a common language around coaching that will help people to identify with it in a more routine, business-as-usual way.

Marketing:

Once you have established a strong coaching offering, albeit from internal and/or external coaches, it is important to tell people that these services are available—sell the vision! One organisation I worked with spent a lot of time and money building internal coaching capability but did very little to let people know about it. What good is this valuable resource if no one knows about it? Employees, therefore, didn't use it and resulted

in no clear evidence that it has made a difference. Educating and marketing coaching as a resource is vital to the success of your efforts!

Qualifications:

Research undertaken by ICF indicates that one of the greatest risks to the profession of coaching is untrained coaches, and this risk is also now extended to the use of coaching skills by managers and leaders. One of the criteria for an organisation with a strong coaching culture is where “managers/leaders (and/or internal coaches) receive accredited coach-specific training”. If you really want this to work, then ensuring that your internal coaches, and the managers and leaders using coaching skills, have been properly trained by specialists in this area and that the training has some form of recognised accreditation is an important investment in the long-term benefit and impact from their application of those skills.

Continuous development for your internal coaching resource:

External coaches usually invest a considerable amount of time in their ongoing professional development. Why not adopt the same principle for your internal coaching resource? As highlighted previously, coaching is not just a behavioural skill. Coaching is also a mindset and staying current and “fit for practice” is an important part of offering

the best coaching possible. Ongoing development could take on a number of formats including:

- **Advanced learning packages** – to extend the individual's coaching knowledge and skills
- **Mentor Coaching** – to focus specifically on the core competencies of coaching and deepen the individual's understanding of how to bring them into their coaching conversations in a natural and effective way
- **Supervision of Coaching** – to step back on the individual's coaching practice and reflect upon what's working, what needs to be developed, what patterns and themes are emerging and an inquiry on how the individual can be at their best in a coaching conversation
- **Coaching "Clinics"** – a place where coaches can "meet" to share ideas, resources, success and challenges and to feel supported and engaged as part of a coaching "team" within the organisation
- **Peer coaching** – internal coaches and managers and leaders using coaching skills could engage in a reciprocal peer coaching programme to keep their skills active whilst also benefit from being coached (a win-win)
- **Membership of a professional body** – can offer many opportunities for ongoing development as well as community and networking

Keep your asset:

One problem that some organisations face is that they invest in training people to become internal coaches, but then don't support them in offering this new and valuable skill. This can be partly addressed by the education, marketing and continuous development ideas noted above. However, it is also important to recognise and value the contribution that internal coaches and managers and leaders using coaching skills are making to the organisation.

Additionally, when the organisation goes through a significant change initiative (especially when it implies structural change), this valuable internal resource is often lost through redundancy or personal choice to leave, and not only the investment, but also the value they would add, is unrealised. At times of change, coaching comes into its own and is a vital asset to any change initiative if properly utilised and nurtured.

Accountability:

Good coaching incorporates clear accountability and ownership of taking action and fulfilling commitments.

Therefore, as well as nurturing and developing your internal coaching resources, it is also important to ensure that they are held accountable for delivering a good coaching service. This might be accomplished by including coaching as part of someone's job description or in how their own performance is measured and recognised.

The "Business" of Coaching:

In order for coaching to be a valuable strategic resource in the longer term, a professional approach is needed. To that end, the creation of a coaching "business plan" is recommended. The plan can outline the vision of success, the objectives and measures, the approach, the tactics, the communications plan and the sustainability plan in a 1, 3, 5 or even 10-year timeframe.

AN ASPIRATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE
ATTITUDE IS WHAT IS GOING TO
MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

Aspirational or Remedial?

One of the analogies I use for explaining the place of coaching is sport. In sport, it is the best athletes who get a coach because they show promise and because someone wants to invest in them so that they can be the best they can be.

This same attitude is important for coaching in organisations. When coaching is perceived as a remedial tool, it is unlikely to inform culture or have an impact in the way we have been exploring in this series. An aspirational and inclusive attitude is what is going to make the difference—believing that all of our employees have promise, that they are all a valuable resource that merits being supported to be the best they can be. This is the attitude that will make the difference and will enable coaching to be fully utilised in your organisation.

Coaching "Centre of Excellence":

In order to bring all this together and make the very best use of these elements, I recommend creating a coaching "hub" within the organisation. Organisations that have been the most successful in developing coaching culture tend to have a centralised focal point to coordinate the coaching "business plan". This focal point could be a person, a team or part of someone's role, whatever is

most appropriate for your organisation and your plans for coaching. The purpose of this “hub” could be to undertake some or all of the following:

- Project managing the original initiative to introduce coaching as a strategic resource
- Educating and marketing coaching services within the organisation
- Owning and implementing the coaching business plan
- Ensuring the quality of coach training and development
- Managing the process of using external coaches
- Managing the “magic mix” of blending external coaches, internal coaches and manger/leaders using coaching skills
- Developing and owning the coaching measurement system
- Managing the ongoing development of the organisation’s coaching resources
- Ensuring appropriate accountability measures are in place
- Coordinating and tracking the use of coaching within the organisation
- Developing and managing a sub stem for coaching services to be made available and accessed as widely as possible throughout the organisation (e.g., an intranet platform)

The importance of focusing on sustainability cannot be underestimated. Taking a longer-term view is vital to success! Utilising coaching within your organisation will certainly have some very useful short-term benefits; however, it is the “long game” that offers the greatest positive impact. Culture is not achieved overnight; it is a product of sustained behaviours, patterns, habits, attitudes and themes. With clear intention, planning and commitment, your organisation can reap the longer-term and most impactful benefits that a coaching approach can bring!

So, what does this look like in real life? Next we’ll look at some models of excellence and examples of what coaching culture looks in practice. We hope these stories and examples from real organisations with strong coaching cultures will inspire you as you start your own coaching culture journey.



MODELS OF EXCELLENCE

Up to this point, we've helped you better understand coaching culture, walked through key principles and first steps, looked at approaches and strategies, discussed the importance of measuring ROI and establishing sustainability for your programme. As we start to wrap up this series, I'll be sharing examples of excellence. I hope these will provide practical ideas on how to create your own strategy for developing a coaching culture in your organisation.

Let's start by looking at a global award that recognises excellence in the use of coaching within organisations as well as some characteristics of high-performing organisations.

The International Prism Award

Since 2005, the ICF International Prism Award programme has honoured businesses and organisations with coaching programmes that fulfil rigorous professional standards, address key strategic goals, shape organisational culture, and yield discernible and measurable positive impacts.

ICF based its award criteria on findings from its research with HCI. You can review these findings and how ICF and HCI define characteristics of a strong coaching culture on page 8.

Here is an overview of the scoring criteria for the award, which will give you some great inputs to the

kind of activities and standards that you can be aiming for when fully leveraging coaching at an organisational level. This framework will provide you with a valuable benchmark that will most certainly help give shape and direction for your ongoing coaching culture work, regardless of whether or not you choose to apply for an award.

Scoring Criteria

ICF uses four scoring criteria for the International Prism Award against which judges assign scores for each one on a scale of 1–5. Let's take a closer at each one.

Impact

The Impact criteria refers to any observable and measurable details that underscore the value, influence or effectiveness of coaching. When examining impact, think about the methods your organisation uses to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching. These could include:

- Absenteeism rates
- Coaching recipients' satisfaction
- Employee engagement scores
- Feedback from coaches
- Performance appraisals
- Return on expectations (ROE) for coaching recipients
- Return on expectations (ROE) for the organisation

Return on investment (ROI)

Now, what are examples of observable and measurable details that underscore the value, influence or effectiveness of coaching in your organisation? These could include:

- Integration of coaching, measured by the number of employees/proportion of workforce receiving coaching
- Positive testimonials provided by employees who have received coaching. Ideally, these testimonials demonstrate the breadth and/or depth of the coaching initiative
- Employee indicators that validate increased levels of workplace engagement and well-being (e.g., decreased stress, increased resilience, goal attainment)
- Return on expectations (ROE) measurements provided for non-monetary employee/organizational goals that were identified before the coaching initiative was implemented
- Return on investment (ROI) measurements calculated for areas that emphasized financial business outcomes or for any impacted goal areas that can be converted to a monetary value

Standards

Standards refers to examples of how coaching in the organisation was developed and implemented in a way that would highlight a commitment to rigorous professional standards, industry excellence or best practices within organisational coaching.

One thing to consider is what type of coach training is provided, if any, for internal coach practitioners and managers/leaders using coaching skills. The strong recommendation is that internal coaches and managers and leaders using coaching skills receive some form of accredited coach-specific training. ICF provides a listing of all accredited programs, and some organisations even develop and offer their own ICF-accredited program for their coaches and managers/leaders.

Here are some other things to consider:

- Have individuals offering coach-specific training to employees have graduated from an approved or accredited coach training programme?
- Does your organisation use external or internal coaches who hold an ICF Credential?
- Have coaches been offered mentor coaching and/or coaching supervision?
- Has the ICF Code of Ethics been identified as a resource in coaching agreement with the

organisation? In particular, has confidentiality been preserved in coaching conversations?

- Is your organisation using an evidence-based approach, adopted through coach training and/or delivery of coaching?

Strategy

The Strategy criteria looks at how organisational goals, strategic priorities and workplace needs are being addressed through coaching. Examples could include, but not be limited to:

- Coaching aligns with organisational mission, vision, core values or behaviours
- Coaching can be mapped clearly to current organisational goals/objectives
- Coaching is supported by dedicated allocation of human and/or financial resources
- Coaching has proven to be adaptable/has evolved to serve fast-emerging employee/organisational needs
- Coaching has become a fundamental element to the organisation's team-building processes

Here are some key things to think about when examining the strategy of your coaching programme:

- Do all employees in the organisation have equal opportunity to receive coaching from a professional coach practitioner?
- To whom is coaching offered?
 - Entry-level employees
 - Mid-level employees
 - Senior-level employees
 - High potentials
 - All age groups
 - Remote/virtual employees
- Which of the following factors most impacted the organisation's decision to offer coaching?
 - Improve communication skills
 - Improve decision-making
 - Improve teamwork
 - Increase employee engagement
 - Increase productivity
 - Leadership development strategy
- If the organisation uses internal coach practitioners, what is the average percentage of weekly time that they spend on coaching?
- If the organisation uses managers/leaders using coaching skills, what is the average percentage of weekly time that they spend using coaching knowledge, skills and approaches with their subordinates?

ORGANISATIONS WITH A STRONG COACHING CULTURE ARE MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE HIGH-PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS.

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to how coaching is embedded into the fabric of the organisation, as well as examples of any plans to develop/expand coaching further. Budgeting for coaching in your organisation is key to making your programme sustainable and creating a true coaching culture.

Examples could include, but not be limited to:

- Organisation has coaching champions/advocates in senior leadership position who can communicate the coaching strategy effectively
- Coaching has become positioned as a preferred solution when compared to other modalities
- Coaching is used as modality in forward-thinking areas (e.g., talent management, succession planning, employee development)
- Coaching shows long-term resilience in organisational infrastructure/operating budget
- Organisational leadership styles have changed positively resulting from the coaching

In HCI's *Building a Coaching Culture for Change Management* research with ICF, the above index was used to evaluate the relative strength and weakness of respondents' organisations. Based on this evaluation, 31% of those organisations surveyed were considered High-performing Organisations (HPOs). According to the research findings, organisations with a strong coaching culture were more than twice as likely to be High-performing Organisations. How could you use this index to help inform how you embed coaching within your organisation?

I hope these criteria are valuable as you continue to build your organisation's coaching culture strategy. Next, I will share examples from case studies of organisations who have put many of the things I have outlined in this series into practice.

High-performing Organisations

Some of the items contained within these criteria can provide great input to the development of your coaching culture strategy and its associated measurement system. In addition, HCI has developed the following index of talent and organisational outcomes that may be useful to you.

Talent Outcomes:

- Investments in training
- Internal mobility
- Employee engagement
- Diversity and inclusion
- Quality of hire
- Retention
- Leadership bench strength
- Organizational Outcomes:
- Large-scale strategic change
- Customer satisfaction
- Regulatory compliance
- Talent attraction
- Innovation
- Profitability
- Shareholder value
- Labour productivity

MODELS OF EXCELLENCE: CASE STUDIES

As we wrap up, I am going to share with you examples of what some organisations have implemented towards fully utilising coaching as a powerful resource within their organisations.

One of these examples is a case study developed by ICF to highlight last year's International Prism Award winner.

I'll also share some examples from my own clients. My hope is that it will inspire you to take the plunge and fully utilise the power of coaching in your organisation!

International Prism Award

The International Prism Award is a programme that honours organisations that have achieved the highest standard of excellence in coaching programmes that yield discernible and measurable positive impacts, fulfil rigorous professional standards, address key strategic goals, and shape organisational culture. You can see more details of this in the following example.

National HR Division of Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE) – winner of the 2018 ICF International Prism Award

HSE's HR Division supports more than 120,000 employees to manage the provision of healthcare to Ireland. One of the questions HSE asked themselves

was: How can you encourage people to become creative in a sometimes-non-creative work environment, such as healthcare? HSE introduced coaching in 2011 and set out on a journey to improve patient experiences through stretching and pushing employees to unlock their potential and use creativity and intelligence to solve problems. Here are some of the things they have done to effectively implement coaching:

- HSE developed a governance model for regulating and guiding coaching. The model includes coaching policy, strategy documents, application forms, agreements, process flows, coach-specific training hours, continuing professional development sessions, mentor coaching, coaching supervision, evaluations and ICF Membership.
- All HSE coaches are required to complete accredited coach-specific training, and HSE delivers its own ICF-accredited training for internal coach practitioners.
- HSE maintains rigorous ethical standards. They make sure no coaching client is paired up with a coach in the same role. For example, a nurse who seeks coaching would not be paired with a nurse who is a coach.
- All employees have access to professional coaching, and they're encouraged to consider the service at critical moments for their team or

organisation (e.g., a change management initiative), as well as to sharpen their own personal and professional competencies (e.g., moving forward and getting “unstuck,” conflict management, managing people or teams, pursuing work/life balance, and managing stress).

- Leaders are using a coach approach in meetings, briefings and strategy sessions. Coaching is supported from “hire to retire” at a senior level.
- HSE has invested in a “Leadership Academy,” where they look at and consider what skills and patterns they’d like to see in their employees and use coaching from start to finish within the academy.

Outcomes:

- Because of HSE’s strict standards, other organisations in Ireland are looking at them as a model and resource for building a strong coaching culture.
- Their HR strategy has helped lead over 8,200 employees to transformational coaching.
- Since coaching was implemented at HSE, employees’ use of sick leave has significantly decreased.
- Two-thirds of staff members agree that coaching has enhanced teamwork, and front-line employees (i.e., individuals who deliver patient care) say coaching has left them more prepared to address stressful situations—a critical impact in the healthcare world.
- Patient mortality rates have decreased since coaching was implemented, demonstrating the literal capacity of HSE’s strong coaching culture to save lives.

Looking to the future, HSE hopes to continue to tailor their coaching practices to meet the needs of the employees while supporting and offering robust professional development opportunities for their cadre of coaches.

HSE’s National HR Director, Rosario Mannion said: “Investment in coaching is a key component of our leadership strategy, generating significant benefits for our staff. This, in turn, translates to a better experience for our public and patients”.

Additional Prism case studies can be found on the ICF website.

Our own client stories

Telecommunications

One of our clients is a leading global telecommunications company. We have helped them further develop their coaching culture based on an initiative they first embarked upon many years ago. The main areas of focus have been:

- Accredited coach-specific training:
 - Through simplifying the design, coach training is much more accessible and practical for internal coaches to undertake alongside their busy roles.
 - We made the training highly cost-effective, enabling them to offer the training to a wider audience than previously expected.
- Support for internal coaches:
 - Refreshing their intranet system to allow internal coaches to have easier access to coaching from trained coaches.
 - Supporting internal coaches in developing a coaching “pitch” so that they feel more confident in engaging with coachees.

“DEVELOPING INTERNAL COACHING CAPABILITY IS IMPORTANT FOR AN ORGANISATION AS IT PROMOTES A CULTURE WHERE EMPLOYEES AND LEADERS FEEL EMPOWERED ... “

Our client has been delighted with the results of our work stating: “Developing internal coaching capability is important for an organisation as it promotes a culture where employees and leaders feel empowered to take accountability for their own decisions, thinking for themselves and encouraging others to do the same. By developing the coaching capability in-house there are long-term significant savings compared to the cost of using external coaching suppliers. I’ve seen coaches grow in stature and confidence and be highly motivated to complete their programmes. I have no hesitation in fully recommending Tracy Sinclair Ltd.”

Networking systems, services and software

This client is driven in pursuit of innovation, enabling their clients to flex and adapt within continuously changing circumstances. They have invested in developing internal coaching capability in order to support their goals.

One participant stated: “The coach-specific training has stretched and developed my coaching skills and has built my confidence to be a great coach!”

Human Rights

We have supported this organisation to grow and develop its community of internal coaches providing services across the globe. Here's what some of them have to say:

"A fantastic and comprehensive introduction to coaching that really empowers professionals or those looking to pursue coaching as a core component of their work".

"In just three days, I have grown from ignorance to conscience competence".

Ministry

Another client is seeking to utilise coaching as an integral part of enabling, supporting and developing their community. Speaking of the coach-specific training, he says: "The programme offers a perfect combination of theory, practice, feedback and reflection. It has been transformational—personally and professionally".

Education

Working closely with a school introducing coaching in many ways and on many levels:

- Coaching skills "mini-sessions" for Academic Tutors
- Coaching skills "mini-sessions" for teaching and pastoral staff INSET (development) days
- Coach-specific training for Heads of Year and Heads of Department
- Supporting fully trained internal coach towards ICF qualification.
- Study Buddy – teaching coaching skills to senior students as part of their volunteer work as buddies to younger pupils.
- Coaching skills 3-part mini-series for parents

Here's what some of them have to say:

"I thought it was fantastic. The most useful inset day I can remember in 20 years. The focus on practise allowing a feeling of progression was really useful".

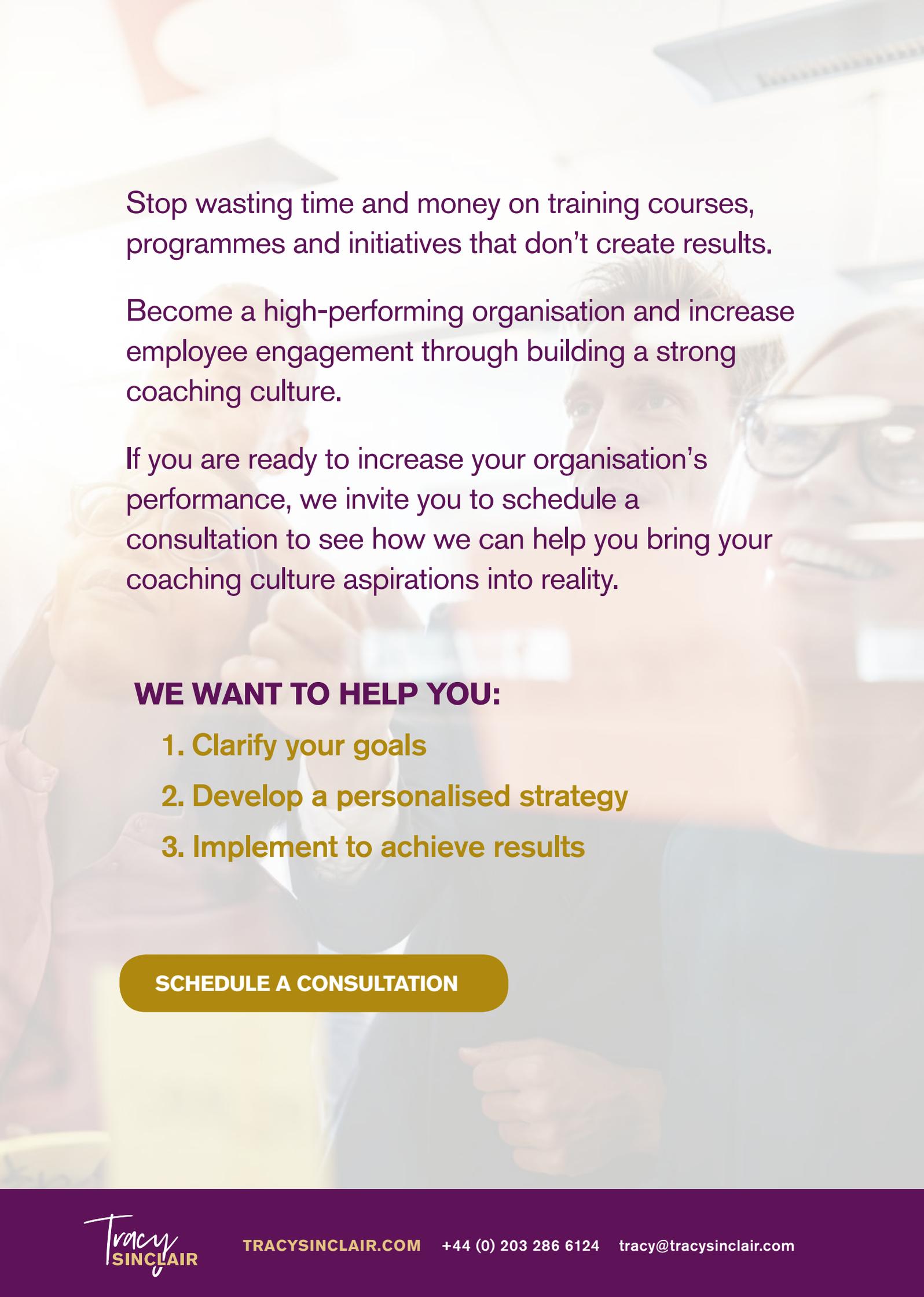
"When people come to me for help, I'll be more careful in the style of questions I pose, and I'll really try to empower them rather than solve their problems".

Part of our ongoing success with our clients is that we also offer complimentary quarterly coaching clinics, where external and internal coaches can come together for support and continuous professional development.

Across this series, we have looked at defining coaching culture, key principles and first steps, approaches

WITH A COMMITMENT TO
STRATEGY, A CLEAR PLAN AND
A CONSISTENT STEP-BY-STEP
APPROACH, THE RIPPLE EFFECT
OF COACHING COULD TRANSFORM
YOUR ENTIRE ORGANISATION.

and strategies, measurement, sustainability, models of excellence and now case studies of some organisations that have successfully integrated coaching into their culture as a valuable strategic resource. As I bring this series to a close, I would like to leave you with a couple of thoughts. One is that "Rome wasn't built in a day" and the other is incrementalism. Albert Einstein said that "compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it, he who doesn't, pays it". I think that both of these quotes are useful when considering utilising coaching more broadly as a resource in your organisation. With a commitment to strategy, a clear plan and a consistent step-by-step approach, the ripple effect of coaching could transform your entire organisation.



Stop wasting time and money on training courses, programmes and initiatives that don't create results.

Become a high-performing organisation and increase employee engagement through building a strong coaching culture.

If you are ready to increase your organisation's performance, we invite you to schedule a consultation to see how we can help you bring your coaching culture aspirations into reality.

WE WANT TO HELP YOU:

- 1. Clarify your goals**
- 2. Develop a personalised strategy**
- 3. Implement to achieve results**

SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION