

How Organization Development Can Help Senior Leaders Embrace Executive Coaching and Deliver Results by Warda Zaman, PHR, ODCC

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The 2013 Executive Coaching Survey done by Stanford University, states that “nearly two-thirds of CEOs do not receive coaching or leadership advice from outside consultants or coaches, and almost half of senior executives are not receiving any either.” This statement is startling given the fact that although executive coaching has become relatively mainstream, it is still in the early-adopter stage at the senior leadership levels.

The survey also states that Senior Leaders prefer to build skills in ‘conflict resolution, leadership/delegation, conflict management, team building, and mentoring’ rather than the soft-skills ‘motivational skills, compassion/empathy, and persuasion skills’. It goes on to explain that this is probably so because the latter skill-set is more complex and harder to accomplish by both the coach and the coachee and they both try to stay away from it.

It is unfortunate that most coaching programs accomplish only half of what they truly set out to do because it is a combination of the hard- and soft-skills that actually make the true difference in the work environment.

This begs the question as to how coaching sessions can be well-worth the time and effort put into them and how both the coach and coachee can develop a meaningful relationship that helps to enhance leadership and results within an organization?

We, at the Institute of Organization Development, think that the solution lies in applying organization development principles to coaching practices.

These principles when applied to coaching sessions --especially with senior leaders-- result in a profound outcome for the coachee who develops a strong sense of self in the process and understands his/her role much better and develops better leadership skills to steer the culture of the organization in the direction of results.

As with all OD interventions, the most important aspect in the coaching experience is trust which is built at the [entry stage through a series of in-depth, open-ended questions](#). With trust in place, the executive coach continues to ask questions to help the senior leader reflect on his/her role in the situation. If trust-building is done correctly, the coach will find it much easier to help the senior leader become more self-aware and subsequently, more effective.

In addition to building trust, executive coaches using OD principles become skilled in collecting data, analyzing data, giving feedback getting agreement on the course of action, and monitoring results. The coach works sequentially and builds upon the results obtained from the previous sessions to build a truly powerful learning experience for the coachee.

Coaches that work with organization development principles, support the coachee in 'connecting the dots' and help build ownership towards resolving the problem in a sustainable manner. Coachees, instead of looking for the problem around them, realize their own role in the situation and through the data they receive from the organization development process, are able to develop action plans to tackle issues within their organizations by using both hard- and soft-skills more effectively.

In addition to understanding their own roles, executive coaching with an OD approach also helps to enhance leadership, culture, and results within an organization. The OD approach in executive coaching assists leadership development by enabling the coach to:

- Help the client build a coaching strategy
- Identify a sustainable coaching process
- Develop senior leadership buy-in and support
- Ensure that the coachee is supported by his or her manager and other leaders to achieve their development goals
- Create a culture of feedback so that leaders can improve their skills
- Create a constructive space to have discussions about development needs
- Help provide opportunities throughout the organization to help others grow, advance, demonstrate proficiency in new competency areas, and be recognized for results.

When CEOs and other senior leaders see leadership development, effective business strategy development and improved business results due to executive coaching based on organization development principles, they will be more willing to embrace it for themselves. They will also view these interventions as more sustainable than the other one-to-one coaching experiences because the OD interventions engage people at a deeper level and involve personal buy-in. We feel that executive coaching conducted in this manner is coaching done right.