

Sustainability Is The Key To Coaching

When delivered effectively, coaching can provide executives and organizations with a results-focused medium for leadership development. Yet, many companies are unsure of how to assess their program's impact or ensure its sustainability.

"Coaching misalignment happens at the outset," says SLG executive coach Karla Leavelle. "To set the groundwork for a sustainable experience, a sponsoring company must work with the coach to set clear expectations and align coaching with the corporate message and culture."

Karla Leavelle adds, "A coaching sponsor must ask, is this coaching remedial, developmental, or something else entirely? Depending upon the situation, a coach will fine tune the message to ensure the employee gets the most value possible from coaching."

Mary Alice Callahan, an SLG executive coach, adds that the "coachee" should want to receive coaching. "Employees must feel comfortable sharing information in a confidential forum with a coach who has credible, relevant experience with that industry, business process, or management issue."

Yet, even with a willing coachee and clear coaching objectives, SLG's Heather Kaye-Jacobs acknowledges that companies find it difficult to assess coaching results. "Companies want happy, inspired, well-qualified employees, but these aspects are difficult to measure." She recommends that companies gauge the tangibles, such as skill set improvements, performance ratings, promotability, team feedback, and overall organizational fit.

For Heather, the fit between coaching and a company's culture ultimately determines the value of coaching. "Organizations should ensure employees have the right envi-

ronment and measures in place to reinforce what they've learned in coaching."

Executive coach Maureen Early expands upon this sentiment, saying, "Coaching should not fundamentally change who the employee is in order to conform to the organization. Instead, organizations must value an employee's potential growth and use coaching to draw out their inherent strengths."

"One size fits all is not a prescription for coaching executives and leaders," says Becky Shambaugh, President and CEO of SLG. "To set the tone, a coach should approach each new coachee with curiosity and a willingness to apply a variety of techniques. The coach should also understand the business environment, the

company culture, and the coachees' background and readiness." Becky adds that our coaching clients deserve "sustainable results, therefore the process must be approached with rigor and must balance the practical with the theoretical, bringing context and outcome focused goals to every engagement."

All of SLG's coaches note that companies should put in place regular practices, such as a post-coaching action plans, debriefs, and/or daily or weekly check-ins on major projects, to assess and reinforce the value of coaching. Concludes Mary Alice Callahan, "True behavior change happens when coaching messages are spread out over time and companies continue to reinforce the message long after coaching has ended."

For more information on SLC's advisory and coaching practice, refer to: www.slgleadership.com

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Maximize Your Coaching Experience

SLG's coaches suggest several strategic and practical tips to increase the long-term impact of a coaching experience:

- **Create a written set of personal values. Check in with them frequently to align your actions and values. Ask yourself, are you living these values authentically in your leadership role?**
- **Identify your blind spots and have the courage to explore and take action on those that impact your leadership effectiveness.**
- **Establish how you learn best. Are you auditory? Visual? Utilize tools that are "sticky" for maximum learning.**
- **Focus on one or two behavioral changes at a time. Use the desired behaviors once a day. Note your experiences and track your effectiveness.**
- **Schedule time for reflection and keep the date with yourself.**
- **Consider using a diary to journal your actions and progress.**
- **Be painfully honest with yourself. Keep on the lookout for challenges and obstacles that keep re-occurring and truthfully ask yourself why that happens.**
- **Let those around you know when you are practicing a new behavioral approach and ask for feedback. Self-improvement and life-long learning is always respected.**