



Gray Matter™

On the Flip Side

Professional Assessment: p. 2
"What it Is & What it Ain't"

NOTABLE QUOTABLE

"If you deliberately plan on being less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you'll be unhappy for the rest of your life."

-
Abraham Maslow

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Executive Coaching: Help or Hype?

Human Resource Online Executive reports that "business coaching is growing throughout much of the world. Experts say coaching is increasingly being seen as an important tool for all levels of the organization, not just executives."

The "Global Coaching Survey 2008/2009," a study by Frank Besser, a German consulting firm, found that coaching is in a growth phase in 33 countries from all continents (though seven of these are in early stages of growth).

But is executive coaching help or hype? Luxury or necessity? Does it add value??

Maurice Duffy writes in Personnel Today that when she first entered the "dark and secretive world of coaching" she was 'underwhelmed by the serious disconnect with business bottom-line value."

Today, the art of one-to-one dialogue without measures has evolved to a more business-orientated engagement anchored in business strategy and measured in deliverables. This has been a critical transformation: Business knowledge and measurable results are what feed the bulldog. About 93% of HR professionals agree

coaching has value.

Harvard Business Review (HRB) reports that "IBM has more than sixty certified coaches among its ranks. Scores of other major companies have made coaching a core part of executive development.

The belief is that, under the right circumstances, one-on-one interaction with an objective third party can provide a focus that other forms of organizational support simply cannot."

5 Rules to Know About Coaching

1. If you're serious, build your coaching engagement on a firm foundation. For example, personality-types tests are popular in business: they can be quick, fun, and helpful. But used alone, they prove to be of very limited use in designing concrete individual or group coaching regimes that maximize results. (See sidebar on Professional Assessments.)
2. Business knowledge must be combined with the right type of coaching that is applicable to the situation. But remember, the job is not for the coach to

be better than you but to help you be better. That's why even top of the heap multi-billion player Jack Welch had his own coach.

3. "Coaching works when it's systematic, and part of a larger leadership development effort." says James Hunt, an associate professor of management at Babson College and coauthor of The Coaching Manager.
4. You get what you measure. Anchor your coaching with a baseline, benchmarks, and goals along with practical metrics processes established at the same time as the goals.
5. Even a clear purpose doesn't guarantee coaching value. You have to be open to feedback and willing to create positive change. If not, coaching may not be the answer.

So where is Coaching Returning Value?

Just like pitchers or quarterbacks, sprinters and distance runners, coaching is often sought for task-specific performance like writing or speaking communication skills, time management, team build-

("Executive Coaching" Continued on page 2)



Professional Assessment

“What it Is and What it Ain’t”

Like *isn't* and *ain't*, testing is not really interchangeable with assessment. And, not all tests are created equal ... any more than a single grade has the same measurement value as a cumulative GPA from across multiple subjects combined with final exams.

Take the ubiquitous IQ test for example. Most think of an IQ test like a cholesterol test— just that it gives a number that quantifies how much smarts you have in you. [100 is the arbitrary standard set as average, give or take 15 standard deviation points.]

Is this true? Maybe a little yes, but mostly no. What we casually throw around as just a number called "Intelligence Quotient" is actually a complex measurement using 14 different sub-tests. Each of these measures different abilities ranging from abstract, quantitative, and analogical reasoning to motor and

mental speed.

These sub-abilities then comprise the four major intelligence capacities of Verbal Comprehension, Perceptual Reasoning, Working Memory, and Processing Speed.

There are Pop Quizzes and there are Final Exams

Professional Assessment is a complex process that uses a variety of normed, reliable, and valid instruments in order to integrate the multiple data points necessary to complete a high-definition "3-D" picture.

A pop quiz—like so many fun personality or leadership style surveys popular in in business training today— does have some value but not exactly the foundation you want for academic career decisions. And while psychological assessments can require considerable interpretation by a licensed professional, researchers have found that they

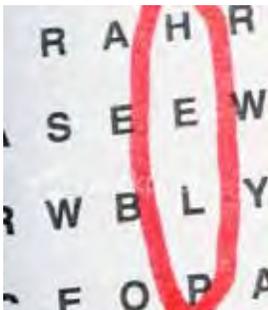
are just as valid as medical tests like MRI, pap test, or EKG in predicting outcomes.¹

For example, Synapse leadership assessment batteries normally include IQ, emotional intelligence (EQ), aptitude testing, interests inventory, projective, and 5-factor personality instruments.

Comprehensive reports integrate the findings of multiple instruments and include specific strengths to be leveraged, weaknesses to be developed, and recommendations for competency based training/coaching strategies.

Report formats can be requested for the individual, supervisor, coach, or even an entire group.

To borrow from the medical world: "Prescription without proper diagnosis is equal to malpractice."



Executive Coaching

(Continued from page 1)

ing, or tactical problems. But the greater potential may not be as obvious.

Coaching can be exceptionally valuable in areas that greatly impact sustainable performance such as burn-out, stress, and life balance. This can be particularly effective in times of change for an executive such as promotions, stretch assignments, and as an independent sounding board in new environments.

Coaching can also help managers and executives

break through a performance plateau, to help challenge limiting beliefs, determine what success looks like for them, and take corrective measures to achieve both leadership objectives and personal aspirations.

While the demands on entrepreneurs, CEOs, senior leadership and rising managers has never been greater, particularly in this economic downturn they feel ever more restrained, isolated, and unable to share their issues in-house for fear of privacy or career derailment concerns.

"For better or worse, many executives can't find this type of conversation partner-- what Harvard Business School professor Thomas DeLong calls a 'truth speaker'-- elsewhere in their companies."



NEXT ISSUE:

10 Tips to Boost ROI on Human Capital