
EXECUTIVE COACHING - A NEW ERA TECHNIQUE TO UP SKILL EXECUTIVES TO COPE UP WITH THE INCREASINGLY DYNAMIC WORLD

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Abstract :

Business Environment is rapidly changing which is accelerated by rapid changes in Technology & other factors. Executives experience tremendous stress since they find it difficult to keep pace with it. They need support to Up Skill them to enable them to cope up with rapidly changing Business Environment. Executive Coaching is considered as very appropriate and effective Learning Intervention to support Executives to face above mentioned challenge.

Researcher has conducted systematic Research to assess effectiveness of use Executive Coaching Engagement (ECE) and level of satisfaction of Executives about the same to address agenda mentioned above. The Study reveals that majority of Executives are satisfied about Learning Intervention of ECE to effectively face challenge of up skilling themselves to cope with rapidly changing Business Environment.

Keywords: *Rapid changes – Business Environment – Executives stressed - Challenge – to cope up with – Executive Coaching Engagement – Satisfaction Level of Executives.*

A) Introduction : -

Change is constant – that was past. Today the thing is – rapid change is what is constant. Reason is simple. The thing that changes other things – technology, it itself is changing rapidly. Who knows by the time the words like Big Data, Data Analytics, and Artificial Intelligence Internet of Things etc., are typed here, those might have become outdated! Technological obsolescence is happening at such a rapid pace that things have become absolutely short-living. If at all some job is there that has become difficult, it is of technology forecasting. What technology will emerge tomorrow and more importantly how much would be its life span, are 2 most difficult things to predict.

Management science is a field that has got no insulation for protecting itself from the effects of these changes. Technology is widely used in management in both forms - the physical technology and the skill (or the soft) technology. Moreover, the business world that is required to be managed is getting so much integrated that a problem with the DOW stock market index has immediate reflection in the BSE & NSE Sensex as well. Dynamism in the business world can be attributed to –

- Growing Urban Population
- Global Warming
- Demographic Changes

- Emerging Markets Gain Power
- Advances in Technology

This is accelerating speed of change beyond comprehension of Executives. In constantly changing business environment, Executives experience unprecedented stress due to pressure of remaining relevant. Many find their weaponry of Old Learnings is just insufficient to fight War for Existence in 'Tomorrow', with eminent fear of Extinction. Such Executive seek help for understanding '**how to Up- Skill themselves to remain relevant in future in such environment**'.

Traditionally the Leadership Population is mostly dominated by Baby Boomers who have nurtured their ideologies based on their experiences of stable technologies, markets and economies. Hence they believe in controlling and contributing Enterprise through better Planning, Organizing & Execution etc. They believe in working in structured segments and Functional silos. They pride in having long foresight and predictions which helps in execution of Plans and mitigates predicted risk. Their approach and responses towards exploiting changes in Technologies and Markets, are tardier. They are slower in innovating and creating different experiences to suit changing test of customers.

However in reality with accelerated growth of Technology and Social Network, choice of customers and employees, is changing fast, beyond comprehension of majority of Decision Makers in Business. Many established business are losing their ground and becoming extinct. New Business Models, Organization Structures and Employee Roles are emerging fast and vanishing faster. Hardly anything can be predicted and planned. Forecasting is hazier beyond few months. Business Leaders find themselves clue less and helpless in such situation. Leaders are required to be light foot, agile and non-assuming to survive. They are required to unlearn fast and simultaneously learn faster, to remain relevant in changing Business Environment.

Many Executives who are already caught up in this tight situation, struggle hard firefighting and damage controlling and wonder how to find time and peace of mind to learn new skills to face future challenges. It is something like repairing/replacing engine of airplane while continuing the flight to reach the destination.

In this context organizations are searching and experimenting with various learning interventions to support their executives to ensure survival of business entity. One of the popular and effective learning Intervention is **Executive Coaching**.

B) How Executive Coaching works:

1. What is Executive Coaching?

Executive Coaching is an individualized developmental process where a Coach, who is an experienced professional, work with Coachee to identify ways in which Coachee can hone strengths and deploy them to their maximum benefit. A Coach helps Coachee to discover path of improvement in Performance Behavior. Executive Coaching takes Coachee from where he/she is, to where Coachee want to be...and the journey is transformational. Executive Coaching is a contractual, time-bound relationship that is non-prescriptive and non-directive in nature. It is a process that allows Coachee to

discover, acquire, develop and use the power within himself/herself to bring about constructive change.

2. How it helps Coachee:

Given its one-on-one nature and the safe space it creates for honest exploration, reflection and change, it has the ability to provide highly customized development like no other intervention. Coaching helps to develop capabilities and new ways of thinking that will have a lasting impact. It is 'learning how to learn' which means developing skills and habits of self-reflection that will ensure that the process of learning continues even after the Coaching engagement ends.

The Executive Coaching Engagement normally deployed for following 3 Broad Agendas:

- Skill Development (Up Skilling)
- Business Development
- Leadership Development

3. What are stages of Executive Coaching Engagement (ECE):

- Awareness - Exactly knowing current 'ground zero' position of Coachee which progresses through Life Story, sharing, Psychometric Test and other Instruments, 360 Degree Feedback etc.
- Visioning Exercise – Clearly understanding Problem and finalization of Broad Agenda and Goal of improvement in Performance Behavior. Clarity in terms of scope, dimension, measurement, time frame, how it will look/test/perceived as and parameters of success etc.
- Developing Action Planning to achieve the improvement in Performance Behavior – Strategic and tactical action planning, capability building, detailing including milestones to monitor the progress, structured reviews and course correction etc.

4. How it operates?

A Coaching engagement could take anywhere from six to eight months and will require Coachee to engage in a series of 'Coaching sessions' with Coach. The frequency of these sessions will be determined by Coach and Coachee but would be at least once a month. A session could last anywhere from 1.5 to 3 hours. In addition, Coachee will be required to commit time to apply learning's from the Coaching sessions in Coachees work and personal life and report back the progress (Home Work).

Coaches engage with Coachee through powerful conversation comprises of Effective and Active Listening, Seeking explanations for proper and clear understanding, questioning/ contradicting and challenging wrong track of thinking process, seeking proof to challenge the wrong beliefs and notions, encouraging rational and adult thinking process etc.

Coach helps/encourages Coachee to achieve personal discovery to identify exact problem and find out solution of change in Performance Behavior and to develop action plan to achieve it. Coach is not expected adopt short and easy route of spoon feeding or offering solution on platter to Coachee, since such short cuts may cause shortage of commitment/ conviction of Coachee to implement Action Plan on his own.

While Coach and Coachee will have a series of conversations over many months (which may appear informal and chatty), but behind the informal setting is a very strong and scientific process that is intended to help Coachee accomplish Coaching goals. To begin with, Coach will calibrate expectations in a three way dialogue between Coach, Coachee & Sponsor. This will ensure that all of them are all on the same page. Coaches also get information about Coachee from additional sources like a 360 degree feedback and psychometric tools. Armed with all this information Coach and Coachee arrive at SMART goals that will make a difference to Coachee. Coach also help Coachee to craft strategies and actions that will help to achieve these goals. Most importantly, Coach ensure that Coachee stay committed to these goals and make visible and sustainable progress. Coach, based on need, may also co-opt experts who can impart skills as needed by Coachee. At certain intervals Coach Reports progress of coaching process to the Sponsor/organization, keeping in mind boundaries of confidentiality.

How Executive Coaching changes Performance behavior?

It will explore dimensions of Coachee personality that may be undiscovered or underutilized and can be instrumental in maximizing potential. Coaching will help Coachee develop new perspectives, acquire new skills or modify styles. Coaching can bring about a dramatic shift in the way individuals approach their lives – from being reactive to being proactive, from being fixers to being preventers and from being followers to being initiators.

5. How Executive Coaching Engagement formally ended?

Coaching engagement formally come to an end when Coachee has achieved Coaching goals with a certain number of sessions with Coach. By this time Coachee would have developed heightened self-awareness and understood the implications of some of his/her typical behaviors and perspectives. Coachee will have discovered his/her blind spots and will have deeper insights into his/her strengths and developmental needs. Coachee should have a clear vision of goals and a clearly articulated action plan for achieving those goals. Coachee action plan could include learning new skills, building competencies, changing behaviors and achieving results. For example, Coachee may become more confident, assertive or learn to say no. Or Coachee may learn to temper aggression and have a more balanced leadership style, or may be able to delegate more effectively or may build gravitas and executive presence, may learn to think strategically, or may develop an international perspective etc. This supports Executives to Up Skill themselves to face challenges of Changing Business Environment.

C) Review of literature –

1. Cindy Wahler (2017) an expert in executive coaching states that there are many objectives for a coaching engagement, which may include building effective stakeholder relations, strengthening executive presence, increasing influence and impact, and enhancing the ability to inspire and motivate teams. These skills are vital to a leader's success.
2. Waldron (2018) experts in EC have stated that they offer ECEs for 2 purposes - systemic application of executive coaching to their leadership development strategies and individual coaching investments made for targeted purposes. Thus,

ECE can be of general leadership development type or a specific targeted purpose types.

3. Douglas LaBier (2013) writing for the Huffington Post has brought out an interesting fact based on global studies that while most of the CEOs and senior leaders say that they want executive coaching, but actually they don't seek it! The writer spells out the reason for this – “I think the answer lies in what they've learned to think coaching provides, in contrast to what they think they need. Both views create a gap between desire and action. Ironically, that gap is unwittingly supported by most coaching programs, themselves.” The writer has stated that most CEOs simply ignore or misconstrue key factors like increased self-awareness, honest self-knowledge, about one's motives, personality capacities and values. These are the core ECE teachings and an ignorance of these on the part of the leaders make the ECE look irrelevant for them
4. Jesse Ryan (2017) has stated the following to be the main challenges for ECE –
 - Difficulty in synchronizing executive coaching with the existing culture
 - Measuring direct ROI
 - “I don't need it” – attitude of the business leaders
 - Perception that the coaching provides something else than what they really need.
5. Mike Myatt (2010) in his post has stated that according to him the biggest problem with Executive Coaching is a widely held belief (at least by coaches) that a good business coach need not have specific business expertise and experience in the same field as the person receiving the coaching in order to provide quality business coaching services. In other words, the generalization done in the ECE's is not acceptable to the author.

D) To validate this premise, Researcher initiated a Study with following Objectives:

1. Whether Executives need support to up skill themselves to deal with agenda of ‘to cope up with changing Business Environment’?
2. Whether Executives are satisfied with use of ECE to address up skilling agenda of ‘To cope up with changing Business Environment’.
3. What are pros and cons of use of ECE as up skill agenda by Executives?

E) Hypothesis

HO – Null - Executives are **satisfied** with use of ECE to address up skilling agenda of ‘to cope up with changing Business Environment’.

HA – Alternative - Executives are **not satisfied** with use of ECE to address up skilling agenda of ‘to cope up with changing Business Environment’.

F) Research Design

1. Population: It is estimated that in Pune Region total population of Executives who must have gone through ECE may be around 20000. As per Statistical Method, the Sample Size will be 380.
2. Questionnaire was prepared to capture feedback of Executives about their first hand experiences and feedback about the ECE Process and their satisfaction Level.

3. The Questionnaire was tested for validation after Pilot Survey of 120 respondents and its statistical analysis. Based on the findings of the Pilot Survey, necessary modifications were incorporated in the Questionnaire.
4. The Primary Data collected through the Questionnaire of Sample Size was statistically analyzed with suitable tools and based which necessary conclusion were drawn about acceptance of either HO or HA Hypothesis.
5. Based on feedback of Respondents and Statistical Analysis of the same – necessary Suggestions and Recommendations will be drawn.

G) Findings from the full study –

The study based on responses from 380 respondents revealed the following –

- a. 95% of the respondents believe that executive coaching can prepare them to cope-up with the ever changing business environment.
- b. 85% of the respondents agree that executive coaching in their organization has been accorded a premier status.
- c. 88% of the respondents believe that executive coaching is looked upon genuine intervention to up skill them to prepare them to effectively face challenges of ever changing business environment.
- d. 87% of the respondents agreed that ECE can address many Objectives and Agenda effectively.
- e. 84% of the respondents agreed that many old theories are presented in the coaching process but in a slightly different way to suit the present Coaching Agenda which genuinely help them to cope-up with the dynamic business environment.

Thus, based on the above findings and data analysis, the **null hypothesis was accepted**. In other words, the primary data clearly reveals a satisfaction among executives about the contribution of executive coaching engagements to support them to cope up with ever changing Business Environment.

H) Conclusion

It is heartening to note that Executives are quite hopeful about the utility of executive coaching. An overwhelming majority of the respondents firmly believe that executive coaching is of great use. In fact, as expected, they have stated that the coaching is genuine learning intervention which positively support them to up skill themselves. Then those who have attended the ECE are satisfied about the contents.

Thus, we can conclude that Executive Coaching Engagement is of a high value, its current state is very appropriate. Hence it is recommended to HR experts to explore use of this effective and time tested Learning Intervention to support more & more Executives to up skill themselves to cope up with ever changing Business Environment.

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