

# A Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching at Improving Work-Based Performance and Moderators of Coaching Effectiveness

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## Introduction

- **Lack of conclusive evidence regarding effectiveness of executive coaching is a frequently cited problem (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010)**
- **Increased understanding of the outcomes that can be expected from executive coaching can inform coaching practice**
- **Little understanding of what design characteristics moderate the effectiveness of coaching**
- **Meta-analysis is particularly useful when studies report disparate results across a variety of outcomes**

## Research Aims

- **To synthesize the existing coaching effectiveness research to gain an understanding of the effect of executive coaching on outcomes**
- **To identify key coaching ‘design’ moderators that impact coaching effectiveness**

## Defining Executive Coaching

- **One to one collaborative engagement between coach and coachee**
- **Concerned with work-based outcomes**
- **Follows a formally defined coaching agreement or contract**
- **Fulfilment of agreement follows a personal development process**

## Moderator variables coded for:

- **Multi-source feedback**
- **Coaching technique**
- **Coaching format (face-to-face, telephone etc)**
- **Type of coach (internal or external)**

## Method

- **Literature Search – extensive literature search was conducted to identified all relevant published and unpublished studies**
- **Criteria for Inclusion:**
  - Focus on executive coaching effectiveness
  - Conducted within an organisational setting
  - Sample size reported
  - Correlation or other statistic that could be converted into a correlation must have been reported between coaching and the outcome variable
  - Dependent variable had to be individual or organisational level

## The Data Set

- **Total of 24 studies (n = 2724 individuals) were identified that met our criteria**
- **Average sample size – 113 (range from 8 to 1361)**
- **Majority of studies conducted in English – speaking countries**
- **Wide range of organisation types/industries**
- **Participants in 75% of studies held management or supervisory roles**

## Results

Variable	k	n	d	% var. acc. for	90% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Overall effectiveness	24	2723	0.35	21.71	0.21	0.50
MSF not used	13	693	0.55	22.46	0.28	0.85
MSF used	6	1599	0.18	100.00	0.13	0.24
Specific technique used	5	237	0.05	72.63	-0.19	0.29
No specific technique used	9	1785	0.20	32.27	0.06	0.34

Notes: MSF = multi-source feedback; k = number of correlations; n = number of respondents; d = sample weighted mean effect size; % var. acc. for = percentage of variance attributed to sampling error and artefact corrections; 90% CI = 90% confidence interval of the d.

## Results

Variable	k	n	d	% var. acc. for	90% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Face-to-face coaching	11	1872	0.27	19.19	0.09	0.46
'Alternative' format coaching	6	295	0.41	56.02	0.15	0.70
External coach	15	2047	0.19	67.84	0.10	0.28
Internal coach	6	209	0.69	100.00	0.52	0.89

Notes: k = number of correlations; n = number of respondents; d = sample weighted mean effect size; % var. acc. for = percentage of variance attributed to sampling error and artefact corrections; 90% CI = 90% confidence interval of the d.

## Discussion – Overall effectiveness

- **Overall executive coaching has a positive impact on work-based outcomes**
- **Effect size is comparable to meta-analysis findings for other types of developmental interventions:**
- **Training effectiveness – effect sizes ranging from 0.60 to 0.63 (Arthur, Bennett, Edens & Bell, 2003)**
- **Managerial training effectiveness – 0.24 (Powell & Yalcin, 2010)**
- **Multi-source feedback – 0.5 to 0.15 (Smither, London & Reilly, 2005)**

## Discussion - Moderators of effectiveness

- **Presence of multi-source feedback may distract from coaching process**
- **Flexibility of coach to tailor approach may increase effectiveness**
- **Alternative/telephone coaching may facilitate confidential coaching environment**
- **Internal coaches may be more effective due to the ‘insider’ knowledge of organisational culture and climate**

## Implications, Limitations & Directions for Future Research

- **Coaching has a medium to strong, positive impact on outcomes**
- **Our findings have clear implications for the design elements of the coaching intervention in order to maximise effectiveness**
- **However, results should be treated tentatively due to the small number of studies in our meta-analysis**
- **Further quantitative research is needed to examine the moderators of executive coaching effectiveness**
- **Clear and detailed reporting in research articles**

**Thank you for listening and any  
questions or comments?**

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