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

Bono, Puranova, Towler, and Peterson (2009)
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- Literature Search – extensive literature search was conducted to identify all relevant published and unpublished studies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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>% var. acc. for</th>
<th>90% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall effectiveness</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2723</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSF not used</td>
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<td>693</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>22.46</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSF used</td>
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<td>1599</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific technique used</td>
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<td>237</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>72.63</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No specific technique used</td>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>32.27</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>% var. acc. for</th>
<th>90% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face coaching</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>19.19</td>
<td>0.09 - 0.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Alternative’ format coaching</td>
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<td>295</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>56.02</td>
<td>0.15 - 0.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>External coach</td>
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<td>2047</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>67.84</td>
<td>0.10 - 0.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal coach</td>
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<td>209</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>0.52 - 0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
• 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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References (4)


