

Executive Summary:

„The Role of Coaching in the Development of High Performance Individuals and the Successful Business / Organization“

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Research Study Designed and Completed by:

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The first Croatian coaching research project was conceived by the independent human resources and coaching professionals Jasna Popadić and Gavin Wallbridge. It was initiated with the intention to assist organizations in gaining greater awareness and better understanding on coaching, through some reliable, experience-based learning source. The research was conducted in cooperation with Cotrugli Business School Research Department. It started in April 2008 and was conducted through several stages over a seven month period using a multi-method approach. The overall goal of the research was to identify and share the existing (best) practice in coaching, and to enable for the results and findings to serve as an input and guidance in further development of high value coaching in Croatia and countries across the region.

Background and Methodology

The constant changes in today's global and local market places, challenges posed by new technologies and innovations, ask for continuous organizational and leadership changes and adjustments. The increasing complexity and diversity of working environments require a more adaptive, flexible and personal management approach. The leadership and management are becoming increasingly facilitated through a *coaching focused approach*.

Coaching has been globally recognized as a very effective tool and learning activity in transition from traditional to more facilitative and collaborating leadership and management style. Viewed from the international context, coaching has today become a critical business development tool for many organizations.

Consequently, change and development demands push for faster learning and adoption of new trends and approaches in many organizations in Croatia and the region.

Considering the very early stage of use of coaching in Croatia and the region, questions that naturally appeared are: How do these trends reflect in Croatian and regional companies and organizations? How is coaching perceived, understood and used? Does it have any role in personal, professional and organizational development in Croatian organizations? What is the level of awareness among the Croatian leaders and top managers regarding the potential and benefits of this learning and development tool when it comes to building healthy working environments and successful organizations?

The methodology used was based on multi-method approach that is described in detail in the full report.

Key Findings:

Perception and Understanding

The early stage of use of coaching and modest educational and information source base in Croatian language have resulted in various interpretations, approaches and often, confusion and misconception on what coaching really is.

The research showed that mentoring and coaching are two most interchangeable, although complementary approaches. Due to its specific helping nature, coaching is also often mixed or associated with counselling. The perception and understanding of coaching in participating organizations does not differ significantly from the generally accepted perceptions and understanding of coaching and its many applications.

The Use of Coaching

The major applications of coaching in organizations are in the domain of performance improvement and the personal and development related issues at work. There are three general groups of needs where coaching is currently seen as an effective tool: 1. To deal with gaps or shortfalls in personal skills and knowledge, and to help management overcome certain business or personal issues; 2. As an integrated part of the HR or leadership development programmes (e.g. coaching skills or some other 'soft' skills training); 3. During the time of organizational change – to help with adjustment to work place changes.

Development or Intervention?

When the initiative comes from the middle and senior level managers (for themselves or their subordinates), it is in majority cases understood as a personal development support. For initiatives communicated by managers/supervisors for their team member, the response goes in both ways, depending on the individual.

When presented as a declaration of person's weaknesses, the resistance is a quite common reaction. Where communication is open and good, most people are open to the coaching experience.

Coaching Practice

The level of integration of coaching in organizations varies from one-time initiatives (e.g. executive coaching) to a more organized and regular activity. In the latter case, it is delivered through trainings in coaching skills or somewhat more comprehensive leadership and management development programmes. Very few participating organizations have established an internal coaching system. The major users of coaching are currently top and senior managers, high and middle management (department, division, line managers), as well as team leaders and supervisors. This mainly refers to coaching for specific skills, trainings or conversations done with

employees by human resources professionals. Still, most organizations rely on external coaches.

Benefits and Impact

Perceived and/or experienced benefits of coaching at an individual and/or team level in organizations can be sorted in several categories:

1. Improved performance, managerial, interpersonal and communication skills
2. Raised self-confidence, self-awareness and enhanced relationships and interactions with others
3. Greater sense of alignment of personal with organizational goals and enhanced adaptability to change

Participating organizations do not use more specific methodology for measuring the return on investment of coaching. Still, most have found some ways and methods of monitoring and evaluating the benefits of coaching interventions and activities such as: feedback from coach and the person coached, business performance indicators or the periodical internal staff reviews.

Conclusion

Traditional learning methods and management styles have become less effective and less able to meet the demands that modern workplaces put on employees, managers and leaders. This has created a space for coaching which is slowly becoming recognized as an effective personal and business development tool.

A need for more educational programmes on coaching, especially for top management and HR specialists is very much emphasized. Top management in most organizations is generally very supportive of modern learning and development tools. What is usually missing is their personal, real-life experience and awareness of benefits and impact of coaching. This makes it difficult for human resources professionals to justify the need and create a 'case' for coaching. Most organizations have established some coaching activity (skills coaching, training in coaching skills for managers). There are, however, very limited experiences with executive coaching and general one-to-one coaching for different management or other levels. Its potential application as an organizational change and development tool is almost completely unknown.

The existing practice indicates that in the environments where coaching has been used, it has contributed significantly to the way management and leadership is perceived, understood and applied. Management culture in those organizations is collaborative, with a focus on guidance, empowerment and engagement of people and less about control. The findings have shown that organizations recognize this positive dimension and benefit from coaching. In synergy with its other applications, especially in personal development of people, coaching is on its way to become one of the most effective and successful organizational and business development tool.