

INSIGHT GUIDE #33

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

How can I develop a coaching culture in my organisation?

Coaching is now widely used across business. But having a coaching culture is more than just using coaching. High-performing organisations successfully integrate coaching into their wider HR strategy. They understand how coaching can be used to leverage improved performance,

through growing high potentials and supporting high performers. In this guide, we explore what a coaching culture is and how organisations can go about developing one in their organisation through a 10-step plan.



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What is a culture?

The term 'culture' is widely used, but like coaching, it has a wide variety of definitions that are applied by different leaders, organisations and sectors. One of the clearest and shortest definitions is by Terence Deal and Alan Kennedy: 'the way things get done around here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). A more academic definition was offered by Ed Schein:

...a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems

(Schein, 2004: 8)

Drawing on this thinking about organisational culture, I define a coaching culture as:

An organisation that aims to maximise the potential of all who work with it, through its use of coaching as the default style of leadership, and where individuals are supported and challenged to become more self-aware, with increased responsibility to deliver organisational goals.

To bring a new culture alive the organisation requires a planned approach; one way of delivering culture change is a three Cs approach (see Figure 1):

- **Common mindset** – this is a shared view about the role of coaching within the organisation from the senior team to supervisors
- **Champions** – it requires a cadre of leaders from across the organisation, who see brining coaching alive as their project
- **Campaign** – finally, it requires an effective campaign to communicate to each and every employee what coaching is, what role it plays in the wider business strategy and how they can use and access coaching

The old style approach to coaching

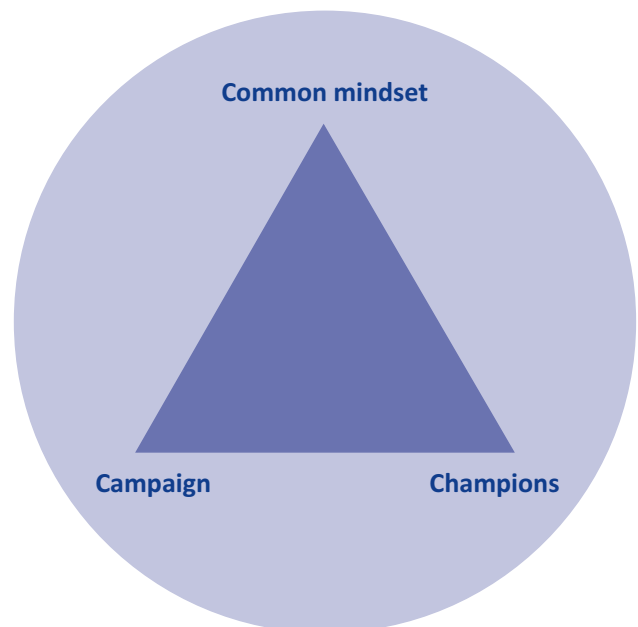
While coaching has been actively used by managers for more than three decades, in many organisations it has remained a personal perk, almost like a reserved parking space: disconnected from the wider organisational activities. This approach to coaching is typified by a number of common features:

1. The 'why' of coaching – the organisation understands that coaching is valuable to its executives, but not how to integrate it into the wider HR or business strategy Individuals in the organisation understand how coaching can help them (i.e. the 'why' of coaching).

2. Appointments – the selection of the coach and their appointment is undertaken by the individual manager, often without due process and frequently based on personal relationships or a recommendation.
3. Assignment focus – the focus of the assignment is decided by the individual manager with little or no reference to the wider organisational perspective.
4. The coach – the coach is seen exclusively as an external contractor, responsible for their own development and standards.
5. Evaluation – the evaluation is based on the perceptions of the manager as to how they felt the coaching went, with little consideration of metrics or alternative perspectives.

It is clear that while 'personal coaching' may suit the individual manager, it offers little to the organisation. Greater value can be gained by linking the coaching process more closely to the organisation's needs and objectives through a coaching culture.

Figure 1: A three Cs approach to a coaching culture

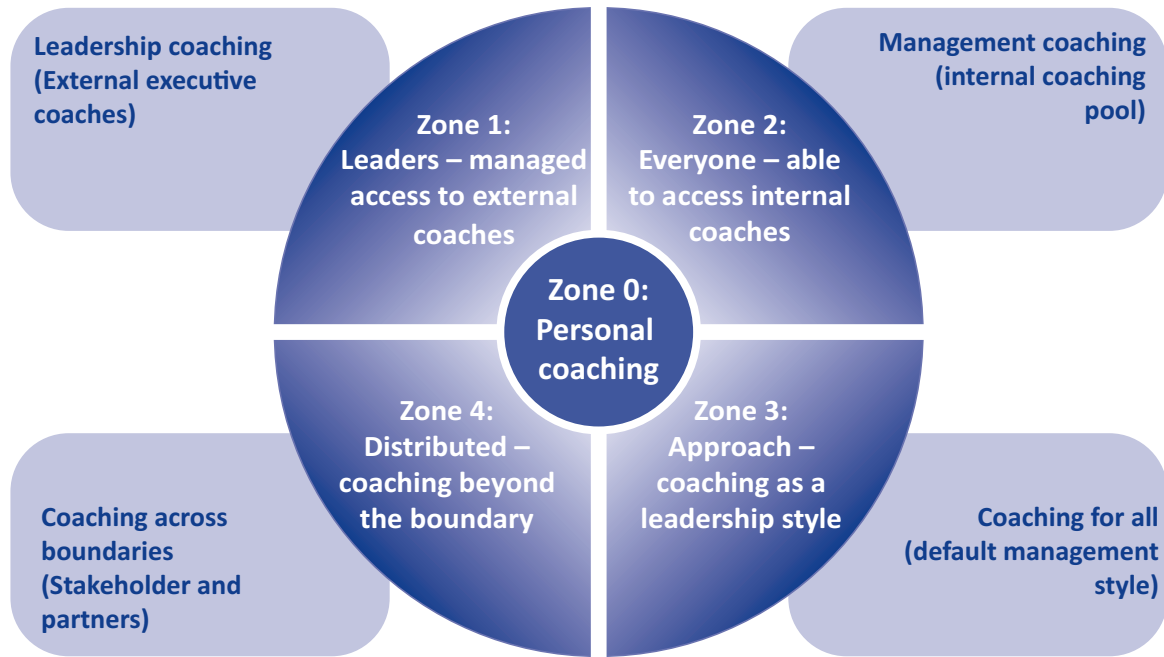


The coaching culture model

The coaching culture model is a framework that can help organisations to move away from the approach of personal coaching to a more integrated approach. The model suggests that to develop a coaching culture, organisations need to consider coaching as containing four zones (see Figure 2). Each zone contains a checklist that the organisation can apply to evaluate its progress towards full implementation of a coaching culture.

- **Zone 1: Leaders – managed access to external coaches**
In this zone, the focus is on how the organisation uses coaches to develop and support its top talent, specifically the board, directors and senior managers. This is usually achieved through the engagement of external executive coaches. The framework suggests ways that executive coaches should be engaged, managed and evaluated to deliver organisational value.

Figure 2: LEAD coaching culture model



(Passmore & Jastrzebska, 2011)

- Zone 2: Everyone – access to internal coaches**
 In this zone, the focus is on how coaching can be extended from the top team to all managers, supervisors and employees. One common way of achieving this goal is through developing an internal coaching team. The framework suggests ways the management coaching pool are selected, trained, managed, supported and evaluated, as well as how employees can access the pool.
- Zone 3: Approach – coaching as the default leadership style**
 In this zone, the focus is on how a coaching style of management can be developed as the default leadership style of the organisation. This requires coaching skills to be an integral part of all leadership, management and supervisor training programmes, helping managers to understand what coaching is, when to use it and how to use it to best effect within a line management role. What also needs to be made clear is that coaching is not a silver bullet for use in all situations to solve all problems. It may be the preferred style, but is one of a number of leading styles.
- Zone 4: Distributed – coaching across organisational boundaries**
 In this zone, the focus is on extending coaching beyond the organisational boundaries. Most organisations now work with multiple partners and suppliers to deliver their services or products. In this zone, the organisation looks for ways to extend a coaching style to these relationships. For a public sector organisation, this may mean creating cross-boundary training and cross-boundary coaching delivery. In other sectors, it may mean adopting a win-win development approach to project delivery, where project issues are worked through using a coaching style that adds value to building long-term relationships with key partners, agents and suppliers.

Ten steps to developing a coaching culture

At a practical level, what can organisations do to move closer to a coaching culture. Here are 10 steps that organisations can consider to help them move forward.

1. Integrate coaching into your HR strategy
2. Commission, manage and supervisor external coaches, not firms
3. Build an internal coaching pool
4. Managers select their coach from the pool
5. Pool reflects the organisation
6. Enable coaching outside line relationships (or the organisation)
7. Train all managers in coaching skills
8. Develop coaching as the default management style
9. Use team coaching to develop team performance
10. Develop a coaching style of working with partners and suppliers – focusing on win-win

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 ...from an organisational perspective,
 much can be gained by linking the
 coaching process more closely to the
 organisation’s needs and objectives.

Henley Centre for Coaching

The Henley Centre for Coaching is a global leader in coaching research and coach training. We are the only triple-accredited coaching provider in the world offering both postgraduate university qualifications in coaching and accreditation from the Association for Coaching (AC), the International Coach Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC).

The Centre provides formal accredited coach training through our *Professional Certificate in Coaching* and *MSc in Coaching and Behavioural Change*, and accredited supervision training through our *Professional Certificate in Supervision*. These programmes are delivered in the UK at our Greenlands campus, and at venues across the world.

The Centre provides continuous professional development for coaching professionals through masterclasses, webinars, conferences, and via online access to journals, ebooks and coaching research. These are all delivered through our online learning platform, meaning coaches can connect from anywhere in the world to engage in professional development.

The Henley coaching team consists of leading practitioners and academics who have shaped the coaching profession since the late 1990s. They have written many of the most popular coaching books and they continue to publish in leading management journals and to contribute at conferences worldwide. Their writing, thinking and research informs our teaching and ensures our programmes are at the cutting edge of coaching practice.

The Centre offers annual membership to all professional coaches, providing a virtual-learning environment where the members shape research and practice in coaching. Check out our website for details on how we can help you and your business come to life.



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Jonathan is a tutor on the Henley Coaching Programmes, and the author of over 100 scientific papers and 30 books on coaching, leadership and change.

References

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