

TOP 10 Criteria for Choosing a Coaching Approach

So you've decided to make coaching a part of your organization. How do you decide which coaching model to choose? Here are 10 criteria to consider when choosing a coaching approach that will work for your organization.

This whitepaper is an expansion of a [blog post](#) based on a buyer's experience purchasing and implementing a coaching program in his organization.

10 Does the approach have personal application?

47% of employees¹ say that problems in their personal lives sometimes affect their work performance. Almost half say it makes it hard for them to concentrate at work. A good coaching mindset acknowledges that sometimes the best way to solve a work productivity issue is to first solve problems outside of work. A versatile coaching framework can help managers coach for solutions at home or at work. And a problem-solving formula that cuts to the heart of how we make decisions can have universal applications.

A senior vice president at a Fortune 500 company once told us: "If you can help our people solve their personal problems, we know they will be better, more focused employees on the job."



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9 How much does it cost?

According to the Human Capital Institute, organizations with strong coaching cultures report revenue 34% above their industry peer group. Direct reports of effective coaching outperform their colleagues by 25% and stay 40% longer². 80% of HR leaders³ see coaching as a key leadership practice.



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We live in the real world, where costs do impact buying decisions; price will always be a part of a buying decision. Coaching is designed to remove distractions and open people up to new options. A popular coaching question is: "If anything were possible, what might you do?" Viewing coaching as a management must-have changes what you see as possible.

Nothing moves the "results and culture needle" faster than coaching. When The Harvard Business Review⁴ interviewed hundreds of coaches, one thing was clear: coaching is an essential tool for achieving business goals. It's more than just a nice-to-have.

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What experience does the potential partner have with coaching?

Coaching works best when it becomes embedded in the company culture. When GlaxoSmithKline invested in creating their coaching culture, coaching increased 2,900% (that's 290x more coaching) and they saw a \$66 million return on their investment⁵.

The Human Capital Institute and the International Coach Federation define a coaching culture as one that meets at least five of these six criteria⁶:

- Employees value coaching.
- Senior executives value coaching.
- The organization has a dedicated line item budget for coaching.
- Coaching is available to all employees.
- Managers, leaders, or internal coaches receive coach-specific training.
- All three coaching modalities (internal coaches, external coaches, and manager coaches) are present in the organization.



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To create a culture of coaching, your coaching framework must be proven across individuals, departments, and ideologies. When you're talking about a culture change, you want a partner that will be with you every step of the way. Make sure your coaching partner has an implementation process in place to help you make the most of your coaching investment.

Also ask: “How long has this company been in business?” “What is their core competency?” “Are they truly a ‘coaching organization’ or just a vendor selling coaching?” “Are they a true industry thought leader?”

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What case studies or testimonials does the potential partner provide from previous clients?

Case studies are a key way to see the business case for coaching. They tell valuable success stories. More importantly, case studies illustrate a breadth of experience. Use case studies to look for organizations that have “seen it all.” No two coaching scenarios are identical, and your business concerns are just as nuanced.



“When it comes to a coaching partner, variety in case studies is just as important as quality and quantity.”

When evaluating a coaching solution, look for a company that has worked with a company of a similar size and industry, or that has solved a similar problem. But more importantly, look for a company whose solution has solved a variety of problems. This will illustrate the versatility of the solution and the dedication the partner will put into solving your specific problems.

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6 How flexible is the content?

Coaching is rarely one-size-fits-all. Look for a coaching partner that can work with you to customize content to fit your needs. Better yet, find a partner that incorporates that customization into their onboarding and into the coaching training itself. This is especially important in an industry or circumstance where priorities change frequently. Make sure your coaching program is adaptable.

A successful coaching culture initiative requires buy-in and adoption from every department in your organization. Make sure the coaching methodology is flexible enough to be adaptable by every department and at every level of the organization.

5 How do the core principles of the model line up with what the field says?

No one wants to be a bad manager. Your people are already researching leadership approaches and implementing what they think will work. Some of them have probably been using the same leadership style for years. The benefit of a coaching partner is to standardize your coaching approach—to create a tide that raises all ships. A usable coaching approach fits in to what managers are already thinking and doing. It doesn't replace all their hard work. It augments their success. Also make sure your chosen program is easily understood so it can be readily adopted.



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A lot of people have a lot to say about coaching best practices. Do some research into generally accepted coaching and problem-solving techniques. Does the basic mindset show up in other schools of thought? Does the core of the course fit with industry best practices? Poll your managers. Does the basic premise make sense to them? Does the approach seem applicable? Does it fit in to what they are already doing?

4 How well does it align with our corporate values and business goals?

All coaching methodologies operate under a basic assumption. At InsideOut Development, we believe that everyone has the capacity to learn and perform at a higher level. They already know how to do great work. But sometimes they get stuck when they go to do whatever it is they do. What is the underlying



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assumption of your potential coaching partner? Does it align with your corporate values and business goals?

We asked 649 HR Managers which department would benefit most from a manager-as-coach program. More than a quarter of them pointed to the executive leadership team. When done right, coaching impacts every corner of the business, including bottom-line revenue. But it can't do that without executive team buy-in. Make sure your coaching partner can illustrate the impact of their program on your key business goals.

3 Does the model/framework have broad application across the spectrum of business conversations?

How many conversations do you have in a day? The core of coaching lies in conversations. It'd be tough to coach without a conversation. The number one reason managers say they don't coach is because they don't have enough time. When we surveyed HR professionals across all industries, almost half said that employees need their managers to have better conversations, not necessarily more conversations.

Can your chosen coaching approach fit in to the conversations your managers are already having? When done right, coaching doesn't mean your managers have more conversations. Instead they can learn how to be more productive in the conversations they are already having.

A good coaching framework doesn't require a different approach for every conversation. Instead, it can be adapted to fit any conversation, any situation, and any timeframe. A coaching mindset should be just as helpful in a simple check-in as it is in a tough conversation or a professional development scenario.

2 Is it practical?

You've sent your managers to a day-long coaching training, or a series of seminars, or a virtual course. When they come back from that experience will they be ready to apply that coaching right away? Or will they need to lug around a 3-ring binder or schedule coaching sessions a week in advance? According to ATD, only 13% of training results in participants learning and applying the material.⁷ And only 3% reached a level where the organization felt an impact.

Overcomplicating their coaching process is one of the top 3 reasons a coaching program fails. The most effective coaching experiences are ones that are simple, timely, and match the readiness of the person being coached.

Is the coaching framework simple and practical enough to be embraced by everyone in your organization? Executives, managers, and employees alike?



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1 Does it get results?

At the end of the day, the best coaching framework is the one that shows results. Can you tie more focused conversations to results in the organization? Sales increasing? Higher levels of performance due to specific and ongoing feedback? Are leaders having the tougher conversations around performance? Is HR getting involved less? Are people making better, faster decisions? Does the approach create a high level of involvement and engagement? Does it get results on the metrics that matter to your organization?

A coaching program should be able to demonstrate results toward business goals. It needs to do more than feel good. It needs to do good.

Learn about the coaching trends HR managers think are most important in this report of original research done in conjunction with HR.com: [Core Coaching Characteristics \(and Why You Should Care\)](#).