Mentorship Isn’t Enough — Leaders Need Executive Coaching, Too. Here’s Why.

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It’s not a secret; no one wants a boss. Over the last two decades, research has confirmed the No. 1 thing employees want from their manager is coaching. People want to work for someone who brings out the best in them. This was demonstrated at Google in 2008 and by Gallup in 2020.

In today’s work environment, the desire for personal growth and fulfillment is even more important, but as employee demands from the workplace have changed, manager capabilities have not. As employees climb the ranks, they find their way into management without necessarily learning the skills and techniques required to lead.

Many new managers turn to a trusted mentor such as a more experienced manager whom they wish to emulate. The problem is, being a mentor is voluntary and is based on lived experience.

Unlike mentors, executive coaches are tasked with improving the performance and capabilities of their clients as their day job.

There is a misconception that executive coaches are for managers who have done something wrong; they have poor communication or are not collaborative. While it’s true that an executive coach could support a difficult employee to become a better teammate, today, an executive coach is a proactive perk that can guide managers along their desired

career path.

Here are six ways an executive coach can level up your organization.

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1. Give the people what they want

Working for a great mentor is up to chance, but having an executive coach is a guaranteed return. Executive coaches ensure that your managers' desires for growth and fulfillment are being met, keeping them satisfied and engaged at work. It's an investment in time and effort that will manifest through their greater responsibilities, helping them grow and evolve from their own profound ability. Coaches hold employees accountable and help them reach their desired potential.

2. Get leaders out of their own heads

A person at any level can get lost in the weeds, but when a leader loses sight of the big picture, it quickly demotivates a team. When leaders work with coaches, it gives them an opportunity to talk through their challenges with an outsider. In having higher-level conversations, coaches guide leaders toward simplicity, lifting them out of the fog.

Coaches don't have the answers. They ask the right questions to evoke awareness and help managers see their challenges with new eyes. With clarity of purpose, leaders can empower their teams to achieve their goals. Employees will be united by a shared vision, reducing spin and increasing efficiency.

3. Uncover the truth

The more senior a leader becomes, the more at risk they are of losing touch with reality. Teams become less likely to challenge ideas and feedback becomes limited. An executive coach is an unbiased third party who won't tiptoe around the truth. Of course, executive coaches are also highly trained in giving feedback and having difficult conversations, and it's their job to do so.

Keeping leaders honest is crucial for creating a positive workplace culture and getting the best performance out of people.

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4. Steady the waters

With mass layoff announcements on linkedin appearing by the day, CEOs are turning over and stepping down before they get a chance to make a real impact. The C-suite are the most important recipients of executive coaching as their attitudes, efforts, and vision affect the outcomes of the entire organization. Even the great Steve Jobs, Sergey Brin and Larry Page turned to trillion-dollar coach Bill Campbell to shape their leadership style and drive effectiveness. Often acknowledged as the most isolating role in business, CEOs need a coach to get out of their own echo chamber and help them steer the ship.

5. Reduce churn

People will stay at a job when they are learning and feel valued. An executive coach accomplishes both by challenging them, acting as a means to self-improvement and supporting career growth.

You might be thinking, why would I invest if they're just going to leave? First, doing this makes them less likely to leave but if they exit, Henry Ford said, "The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay."

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6. Create a cycle of improvement

Giving managers the opportunity to be coached sends a message that leadership is invested in making more leaders. It gives something back to the much-deserving managers who give their time and energy to the good of the business. Working with a coach can make the manager a coach themselves, which we know is the most valuable trait a leader can possess.

With improved ability, clarity, willingness and motivation, trained managers create a cycle of improvement, raising up and training up the next generation of leaders rather than simply promoting them.

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