



Leadership Academy

North West

NHS North West Leadership Academy

Building a Coaching Culture

Research Report

Does a coaching culture work?

From the evidence reviewed as part of a desk top study, a growing number of organisations recognise the value of building a coaching culture.

A coaching culture is seen as offering employees at all levels the opportunity to grow their skills, enhance their value and reach their professional goal. Evidence has been reviewed from different industries and professions globally.

Coaching is described as arguably the most vital part of an organisation's learning and development strategy. Within the NHS, coaching is seen as an essential to inspire and motivate colleagues, especially currently in these challenging times. Coaching enables people to perform to their full potential.

At an individual level, the International Coaching Federation (ICF), reports that "80% of people who receive coaching report increased self-confidence, and over 70% benefit from improved work performance, relationships, and more effective communication skills."

A ripple effect is described wider than the individual receiving coaching that impacts the organisation in which they work. From an organisational perspective, many companies link coaching to improved retention (65%), employee engagement (49%), and revenue (48%) (O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2013).

Coaching and a coaching culture do not sit in isolation. Coaching is a component that is referenced through many organisational development approaches and in different leadership styles.

What are the outputs and benefits of adapting a coaching culture?

It has been difficult to find quantitative evidence that demonstrates the outputs of a coaching culture, due to the multi-faceted nature of organisational development and the inability to identify a direct cause and effect relationship. Impact measures are still variable and underdeveloped.

However, there is a huge body of qualitative evidence, this falls into 8 common themes:

- Increased performance and willing to embrace change at an individual staff level.
- Improvement of staff retention and resilience, leading to reduced recruitment costs.
- Reduction in sickness, absence, and disciplinary procedures.
- Higher levels of staff engagement, through improved communication and the empowerment of staff.
- Unlocking of staff talent and accelerated learning. An increased appetite for learning and personnel development.
- Improved decision making at an individual and team level.
- Improved capability and capacity.
- Improvement in customer satisfaction and increased profits are identified in some industries.

Is there evidence to say it doesn't work?

Through this research, no evidence or publications have been identified that state a coaching culture does not work or that introducing it has had a negative impact. There are common themes describing what prevents successful implementation and reduces the impact of a coaching culture.

There are 7 common themes identified in the resources reviewed:

- Lack of strategic vision and support to enable implementation at an organisational level. Organisations often only provide coaching to senior members of staff.
- Insufficient access to capable coaches, either due to the low numbers of coaches available, the skills set of leaders or insufficient resources to buy-in capacity. Sufficient coaching skills are required across the organisation for full impact to be achieved.
- Coaching requires time and patience; sufficient time needs to be built into job plans, as well as sufficient time to facilitate full integration of a coaching culture.
- Lack of leadership at an executive level, lack of an executive who role models coaching skills.
- The existing culture of the organisation, if the organisation's prevailing style of leadership is that of telling individuals how things should be done in a top-down manner and focusing only on short-term productivity gains, then coaching is unlikely to thrive.
- Lack of understanding across the whole organisation of the value of coaching in the workplace. Coaching may be seen as an intervention where there are performance concerns.
- Lack of detailed evaluation of the impact of a culture, impact matrix is rarely identified.

How to implement a coaching culture within an organisation

The literature was reviewed to identify areas of best practice when implementing a coaching culture. This has been clustered in to three phases:

Phase one

- Identification of senior leaders within the organisation who can act as advocates/ champions. Leaders who can articulate the success of their own coaching and role model coaching in their behaviour.
- Senior management not only believing the importance but practice it visibly.
- Develop an interest and a vision for embedding a coaching culture within the organisation. Bring people together from all levels, to explore the possibilities and potential of this approach.

Phase two

- Build coaching capacity within the organisation, through developing both a team of internal coaches and equipping leader across the levels with coaching skills. Coaching skills for all, moves it from small pockets within an organisation to widespread integration. Keeping it simple, all managers have some coaching skills i.e., GROW, they do not all need to undertake coaching certifications
- Intentional modelling of coaching behaviours by senior leadership.
- Integrate coaching as an expected elements in all leadership development programmes. Make managers accountable for developing employees.
- Fundamental to the creation of a coaching culture is an open dialog with the senior leadership team that invites open feedback and demonstration that feedback is listened to and acted upon.

Phase three

- To sustainably build and continue to develop a coaching culture within an organisation the development of new coaches and new leaders in coaching skills needs to be integrated internally into organisational development teams.
- Barriers to coaching need to be identified and removed. Coaching needs to be integrated into policies and practices across the organisation, i.e., appraisal practices, talent management.
- Evaluate and celebrate success.
- Embed coaching as a habit within the organisation.

Key resources

Note, this not a full reference list or all documents reviewed, but a list of those that are key.

<https://coachingfederation.org/research/building-a-coaching-culture>

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/improving-staff-retention>

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED569180.pdf>

http://www.ewin.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/Building%20a%20learning%20and%20coaching%20culture_Evidence%20Brief.pdf

https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/nhsi_0408.pdf

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/trade-secrets-ten-steps-to-a-coaching-culture/>

<https://www.hfma.org.uk/news/blogs/blog-post/building-a-coaching-culture>

<https://www.strengthscope.com/blog/common-barriers-coaching-culture-overcome>