

SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE COACHING

Customized Coaching Engagements: Exploration, Change, Results



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What is coaching?

Quite simply, SwiftRiver's executive coaching services address the identification, support, and achievement of a leader's specific business, professional, and personal objectives. These objectives are clarified through facilitated exploration at the beginning of the coaching engagement. In pursuit of the objectives and in partnership with the leader, the actual coaching services may employ various assessment tools and feedback, and will focus on identifying and maximizing strengths, exploring and acknowledging areas for development, brainstorming and problem-solving, creating specific plans of action, examining modes of operating in life, exploring personal effectiveness, challenging existing beliefs and assumptions, identifying barriers to success, asking questions to clarify or generate insight, and designing experiments or activities aimed at developing new skills.

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Coaches frequently challenge clients to identify and reflect upon roadblocks standing in the way of achieving their desired results, see things that have not been fully seen, or reflect upon characteristics or circumstances that may hold them back from continued high performance and career growth. As with any change to behaviors or approaches, some of these patterns may be long-standing, or the necessary capabilities may be nascent, and addressing them can at times be quite difficult for the client. The coach is there to support the client through those areas of change and skill building. In addition, coaches work with clients to help identify and maximize their natural talents and strengths, and equally to identify and minimize those behaviors or approaches that limit their fullest potential – in order to achieve great results in their work and life.

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Why have a coach?

An outdated view of coaching is that something's gone wrong or the leader is failing. We have found this is actually a poor use of the investment in coaching. It is our belief that the more powerful use of coaching, with much greater returns for the organization and the individual, is to focus on leaders who have a track record of success, and help accelerate, stretch, and grow the individual's leadership in key areas that will help them perform at even higher levels. The leaders we work with are already successful and are looking for ways to ensure even greater success as they move forward.

When is coaching most effective?

Coaches are particularly helpful at various points in a leader's evolution.

Some examples are:

- The leader has stepped into higher-level role -- perhaps managing former peers, or as part of a new leadership team
- The individual has been identified as a probable successor to move into a broader role sometime in the future, e.g., taking their managers' job or going to a different division in a more senior capacity
- The individual has been identified as high potential and would benefit from early, focused development
- The individual is moving from primarily an "expert" role to a "management/leader" role, and needs to hone new ways of thinking and new capabilities to make a successful and accelerated transition
- The leader is entirely new to the organization, and fast, successful onboarding and navigation is essential
- The business has changed around the individual and there are new or increased demands being placed upon them, and/or they have a new manager
- The leader has been identified as a participant in a company-sponsored leadership development program, with coaching as a component

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Leaders cannot always rely on the same way of doing things and still ensure success in an expanded role or new situation. In any of these examples, it is critical for the leader to quickly understand what approaches which may have served them well will continue to do so....and which approaches need to evolve or grow. Envisioning what success looks like in the new role, what is required of the leader, and what opportunities he or she may have to develop or change in order to have continued success are areas where focused coaching can help.

What does a coaching engagement usually look like?

Although customized to each individual leader's situation, SwiftRiver coaching engagements generally follow these six phases:

At each phase of the engagement -- which often overlap rather than follow a purely linear path -- certain questions are being explored and addressed.



Phases	Examples of what is addressed...
Envision	What is most important for this leader's continued success, overall? How can the leader add the most value? What specifically do the leader and the organization need achieved, and in what time frame – short, mid, long-term?
Assess	What is the current situation or environment? How effective has the leader been up to this point? Is there a new situation (e.g., change of role, change of management, new responsibility, change in performance)? What are the leader's signature strengths? Where are their areas for continued improvement? Do they have any blind spots in terms of their behaviors or results? Specifically, where could their effectiveness benefit from additional focus or support?
Focus	What specific adjustments in behaviors or approaches will support achievement of the leader's desired results? What will increase their effectiveness in their current role, or ready them for a future role? What does the leader really want to focus on and commit to? Are the leader and the organization aligned on those areas of focus? How we will know that change is happening, and having the desired outcomes?
Practice	What interactions, situations, or conversations are best suited to practice the new behaviors or approaches? Specifically, what types of experimentation will the leader try in his or her day-to-day interactions? How can the leader receive ongoing feedback from a trusted source as they put these changes into practice?

Reflect & Learn	What are the most valuable take-aways from the experience of practicing new behaviors or approaches? What works well and should be kept as an ongoing part of the leader's characteristics? What course corrections may be needed? What has the leader learned about themselves in the course of practicing new behaviors or approaches?
Apply & Reinforce	How can the leader best "mainstream" the new or improved approaches into their daily interactions and leadership? What will best reinforce the changes the leader has decided to make? What are the ongoing ways the leader will receive feedback on both their leadership approach and their business results?

SwiftRiver executive coaching engagements are generally nine months in duration (with a minimum of six months). We believe nine months is an adequate duration to see desired results, and to ensure those results are lasting. The stages and timing of the coaching engagement will generally follow this flow (for six month engagements, the flow is generally the same, just compressed).

- Month 1-> Conduct 2-3 sessions to: Establish the coaching relationship; Establish high-level goals for the engagement; Begin assessment of current state; Confirm use of specific assessment tools, if any (e.g., 360° interviews, surveys, self-assessments); Accommodate "situational coaching" as needed
- Month 2-> Conduct assessment(s), summarize findings, and conduct feedback debrief; Co-create specific focus areas for change or growth and refine the coaching engagement goals; Support leader in confirming coaching goals with manager, as applicable; Begin regular coaching sessions
- Months 3-8-> Conduct an average of 2 coaching sessions per month, emphasizing practice, reflection, and learning (focused on the coaching goals); Accommodate "situational coaching" as needed (e.g., preparing for meetings, important conversations, dealing with urgent matters, etc.)
- Month 9-> Focus on applying, reinforcing, and incorporating helpful changes into everyday leadership; Close out the coaching engagement

Additional items could include (depending on scope or frequency, could be additional to this contract):

- Three-way meeting(s) with leader and manager to align on coaching goals and check on progress
- Post engagement re-assessment to measure progress in specific areas over the course of the coaching engagement
- Direct observation ("shadowing")
- Team dynamic facilitation

What is “mindful leadership” and how can it be included in coaching?

Mindful leadership includes a set of tools and capabilities aimed at enhancing a leader’s attention, focus, clarity, presence, and overall well-being. These capabilities increase a leader’s overall effectiveness, ensure achievement of priorities, enhance interpersonal effectiveness, and allow for the crafting of a sustainable work and life pace. We have a specific track that can be included in an executive coaching engagement that focuses on increasing your individual mindfulness and applying that in your work and leadership. Clients often find that these mindfulness techniques act as an accelerator to achieving the lasting change and results they are looking for.

How would we work together?

Client Responsibility

Throughout the working relationship, the nature of coaching is that the coach and client will engage in direct and personal conversations. In the early stages of engagement, the SwiftRiver coach will establish with the client some “rules of engagement”, including an understanding that successful coaching requires a collaborative and candid approach between client and coach. In the coaching relationship, the coach plays the role of a facilitator of change, and it is the client’s responsibility to enact or bring about the change. Lasting change or capability development require practice and focus.

This is a partnership. If the client believes the coaching is not working as desired, the client will be expected to communicate and take action with the coach to return effectiveness to the coaching relationship. Of course, the coach agrees to the same.

Confidentiality

All SwiftRiver coaches will work within the professional ethics and guidelines as designated by the International Coaching Federation (see www.coachfederation.org). Copies of the ethical guidelines are available on the website. In regards to confidentiality in particular, all information about the coach and client relationship will remain strictly confidential except in very rare circumstances where decreed by law, (i.e., where the court might issue a subpoena for the file or information), or in the incredibly rare event that it is believed physical harm may be caused to self or another individual. In addition, the client organization may be updated on a regular basis regarding progress against the engagement phases and timeline, but not the details of the coaching.

If the client wishes for the coach to speak to someone outside their direct interactions, then the client will need give permission to do so. If the client’s organization wishes to have direct access to additional information regarding the client, the organization will need to clarify that with the client and receive permission from the individual.

Logistics

SwiftRiver coaching services are provided through face-to-face or telephone/web-coaching sessions (as agreed jointly with the client), as well as through preparation for those sessions and formulation of specific actions for the client to practice between sessions. The first few

meetings are ideally in person. The design of each coaching engagement is unique and customized, based on the needs of the individual client.

Getting Started

When we start talking about a coaching engagement, one of the first important steps is to meet with the client and see if there is a fit with the coach. It's crucial that the coach and the client "click" and feel comfortable that they will be able to communicate well and work together effectively. This first conversation is a complimentary meeting to determine if things are feeling right for coach and client. If not, the coach can probably suggest another coach who would be a better fit. But if the decision is made to move forward together, the next step is to establish the coaching session schedule and get started.

In Conclusion

At the end of 6-9 months, sustainable and meaningful change and growth is highly probable for those who have deeply applied themselves to the coaching partnership and process. Our clients find themselves with better balance and outlook, enhanced emotional and social intelligence, clarity of goals and how to reach them, improved ability to manage challenging situations, more tools in their toolbox providing versatile skills as manager and leader, and better results from their team -- leading to overall higher performance and deeper satisfaction with work and life.

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SwiftRiver Associates is a management consulting and executive coaching firm whose mission is to empower individuals and organizations to maximize their strengths and transform to their highest potential. We specialize in organizational change, strategic alignment, talent management, and the increased effectiveness of leaders, teams, and individuals. Our services and programs emphasize working mindfully and intentionally as a means to increase each organization's capability to focus, prioritize, balance, and perform while strengthening critical capabilities, culture, values, and engagement.

Contact us:

Andrea Edwards, President

andrea.edwards@swiftriverassociates.com

508.284.8632