



Enhancing Coaching Effectiveness

A GOOD PRACTICES GUIDE FOR LEADERS IN HR, L&D AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

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About CFI

Coaching Foundation India Limited (CFI) is India's first institution dedicated to Executive Coaching. Its founding purpose is to create world class coaching professionals and offer comprehensive training and advisory solutions to individuals and organizations

With businesses experiencing both unprecedented opportunities for growth and competitive pressures in equal measure, many executives now find themselves in new roles and company cultures that require managing more efficiently than ever before. In situations such as these, executive coaching acts as a catalyst to lift individuals and teams alike to their highest potential. Having completed over 250 coaching assignments for leading global and Indian companies, CFI has built deep insights into what constitutes coaching effectiveness.

This good practices guide is a result of these research insights. Through this guide CFI aims to foster an appropriate application of coaching so that its integrity is maintained.

A vertical red bar on the left side of the page contains three stylized birds in flight. The top bird is red, the middle one is white, and the bottom one is white. They are all facing right.

About this guide

This guide is meant to help leaders in Human Resources, Learning & Development and Talent Management who use coaching as a part of their leader development interventions to enhance the effectiveness of such interventions.

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A Coaching effectiveness framework for organizations



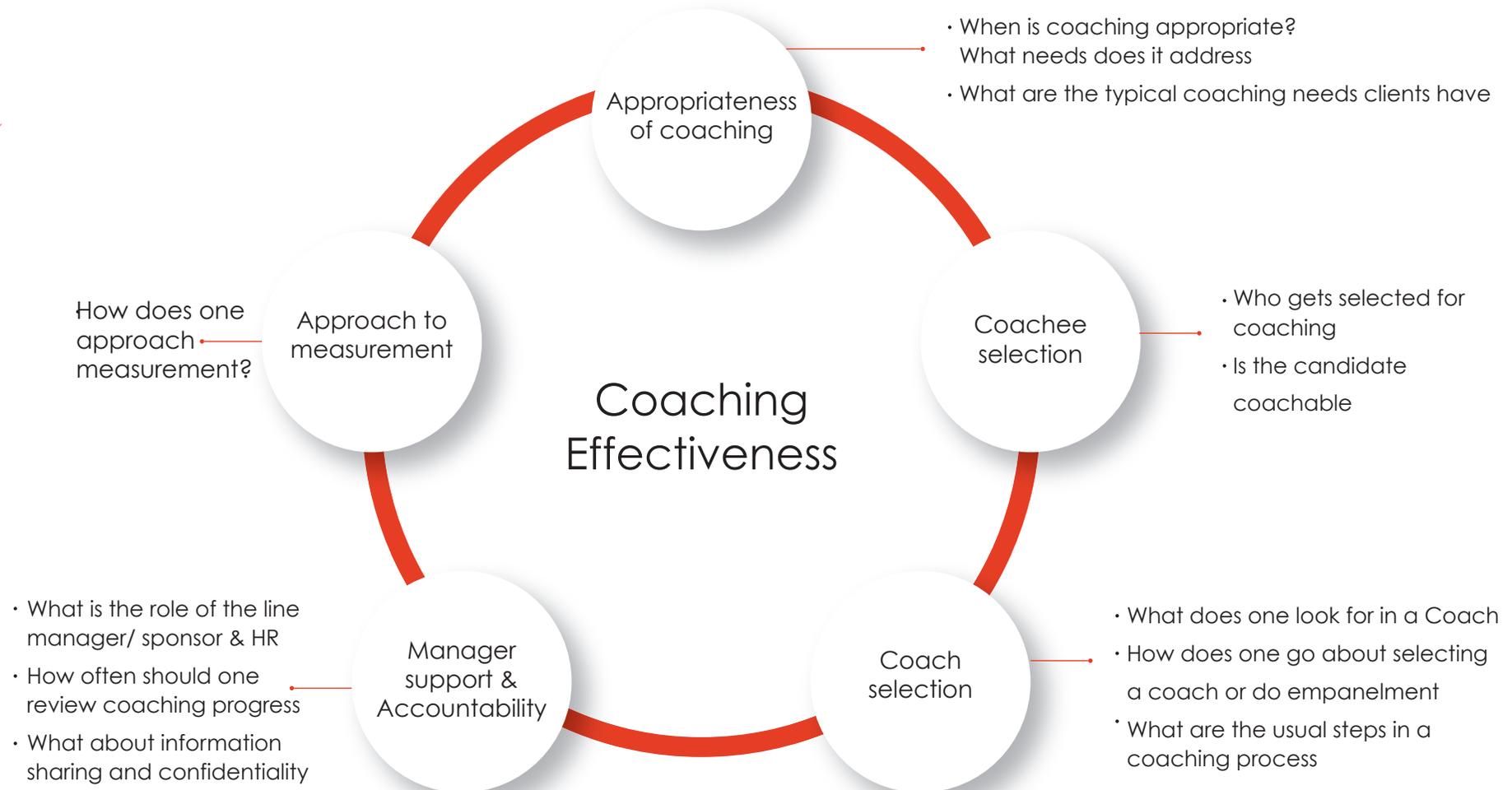
Considering Coaching as part of your leadership development approach? Or perhaps you already have an institutionalized coaching process, and are wondering how to make it more effective. Whatever the stage of coaching evolution in the organization, a question that we often hear is “How do we make coaching more effective from the organization's point of view”?

Organizations who derive substantial benefits from coaching share certain practices in how they approach coaching. In this guide we share these best practices, along with our point of view on what contributes to coaching effectiveness in organizations. While our views are shared from the perspective of the organization engaging with external coaches, you may find many aspects relevant to internal coaching as well.

We have organized these practices around five key areas that impact coaching effectiveness, and each of the areas is explained further in this guide.

Note: In the context of this guide, the word Coaching refers to Executive and Business Coaching. It is an individualized leader development process. It focuses on enhancing the capability of the leader, and is set in an organizational context.

A framework for coaching effectiveness



1. Appropriateness of Coaching

When is coaching appropriate? What needs does it address?

Coaching is a helping relationship. Seen from this lens, we see it being applied to life contexts, parental contexts, business contexts, family contexts and organisational contexts- the latter also popularly known as executive contexts, which is our focus here.

Coaching works best when leveraged to help the individual realize his or her potential. Look at it as one of the many leader development interventions that your organization has. It can be effective on a stand-alone basis, or integrated with other development practices like job rotation, action learning projects, bubble assignments, executive education or classroom training. Remember, coaching is not a silver bullet for every problem.

The needs that coaching addresses in the executive context fall along three interconnected dimensions, shown in the following page.

BEST PRACTICE

Coaching is effective where the need is to help the individual develop an important competency, perspective, a style or new behaviour. It is also extremely effective in grooming leaders for future positions or help them make critical transitions in their careers.

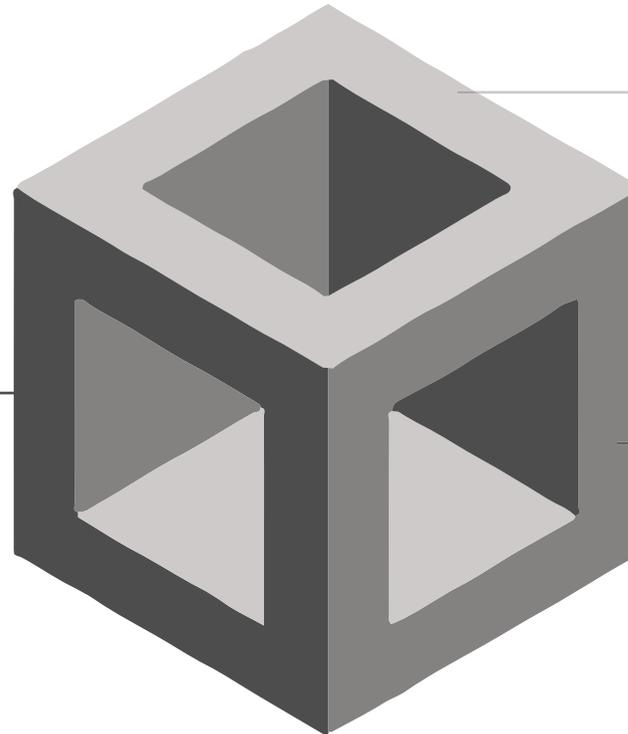
The three dimensions of coaching needs



WHAT

Coaching helps develop:

- Competencies
- Behaviours
- Beliefs
- Perspectives



WHY

- Solve problems
- Untapped Potential

WHEN

- Current Role
- Future Role
- Transitions

WHEN

Organisations offer coaching to executives to enhance their performance and effectiveness in their current role or; Use coaching to prepare executives for future responsibilities or; Help executives who are making major transitions to succeed in such transitions. For people who have been promoted, or are new to the role, coaching can prove to be an extremely effective support mechanism. It can be pretty lonely at the top, and the coach can also operate as a sounding board. During outplacement, Career transition coaching provides support to leaders leaving the organization.

WHAT

The specific areas calling for attention are usually around Competencies spanning across intrapersonal, interpersonal, leadership or business domains. Such needs often need to be addressed through building new perspectives, new behaviours or reframing of beliefs. Partnering with a coach can help leaders increase their level of effectiveness and learn a much more versatile style of leadership

WHY

Organisations use coaching to help their executives solve problems or to realise unused potential. In reality, these are seldom separable. Executives are likely to have a bit of both needs at any given time.

A word of caution: Do not offer coaching to an executive who might actually need therapy or counselling. Coaches are not qualified to offer these services and such a decision might end up causing more harm than good even though coaching might seem more socially acceptable to such a person. Coaching is a time consuming process, with typical coaching engagements spread over 6 – 9 months. So be sure that it is a coaching need you are trying to address.

WATCHOUT

Coaching is not a pre-cursor to deciding whether an employee should stay or leave the organisation. It rarely works when the organisation has already written someone off . Nor does it address problems that are systemic or organisational in nature.

What are the typical coaching needs clients have?



There is a wide variation among coaching practitioners in the way they conceptualise and articulate typical coaching needs that they come across. As global experience with coaching grows, it is understandable that the range of needs to which coaching is applied will grow and more and more people will claim that coaching can address a wide range of needs.

In a 2013 study by Stanford University & TMG, the top areas for CEO coaching were *“sharing leadership and delegation, conflict management, team building, and mentoring. At the bottom of the list: motivational skills, compassion/empathy, and persuasion skills”*.

In India, study of coaching needs by the Coaching Foundation of India (CFI) found that almost half of all Competency linked coaching needs were in the Intra/Interpersonal domain, followed by Business and Leadership competencies. One explanation could be that leaders are naturally or by conscious practice good at business skills but interpersonal competencies can be the difference between good and great. Probably that is why we see them more often in coaching needs.

49.2%

Leadership Competencies

Examples

- Delegation
- Visioning
- Execution
- Developing Others

49.2%

Intra/Interpersonal Competencies

Examples

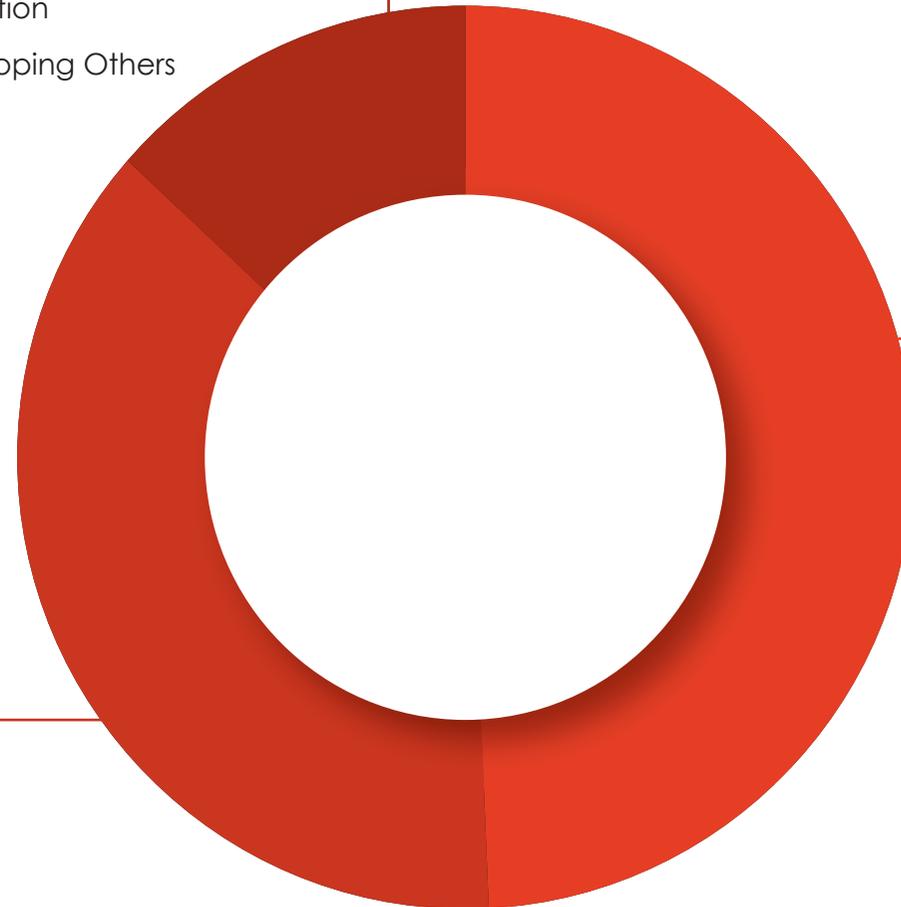
- Emotional intelligence (awareness & regulation, expression)
- Negotiation
- Communicating with impact
- Executive presence

32.2%

Business Competencies

Examples

- Strategic thinking
- Change management
- Business acumen



2. Coachee Selection

Who gets selected for coaching?

Is coaching “privileged development” and reserved only for hi-potentials?
Or does one extend it on a case to case basis? How about coaching
as a standard offering for everyone at a certain level and above?
What should be the organizations policy on extending coaching?

HR and L&D leaders have to establish clear criteria on who gets
selected for coaching in the organization. It is a serious investment,
so why not deploy it where it can give most return? Organizations
who derive high benefit from coaching deploy it for senior or high
potential leader development. It is also very effective in building
the leadership talent pipeline.

A good way to get started is to let all senior executives (CEO,
CEO minus 1 and perhaps CEO minus 2 levels) know that coaching is
available, should they find the need.

If coaching is not well known, you can organize a short seminar to educate your executives about
coaching and what it can do for them. Use the seminar especially to dispel some of their fears and misconceptions.

BEST PRACTICE

Set the context and prepare the Coachee before the process starts.
Be clear on who communicates about the process (HR/Line manager). Explain to the Coachee what they can expect to gain. Design an FAQ/document that can be given to Coachees which provides more information on this.

Since coaches do not offer advice or tell coachees what to do, it is best to limit it to senior executives who are likely to relate to this value of self-responsibility. One must be cautious about offering coaching to middle level or junior executives who are understandably looking for specific expertise, advice and guidance. They might benefit more from internal mentoring rather than external coaching.

If your organization is still new to coaching or in the evangelizing stage, select coaching candidates who will showcase success. Position it as Voluntary and try not to push it on people. At times, putting people who are not motivated or unlikely to change through coaching will create a negative reputation for coaching as an intervention. It is quite understandable that organisations might want to use coaching to remedy a problem situation which could include enhancing performance or correcting certain dysfunctional behaviours. Coaching does help address such situations. However, it is very risky to start your organisation's journey with coaching by attempting to address such needs first. If other executives see that coaching is intended for such uses, they will see it as remedial and view such invitations with suspicion.

Based on your talent philosophy, articulate how you will identify candidates for coaching. Consider making these criteria transparent to employees. Greater transparency about the intended purpose and the selection process would help position coaching as a positive and powerful intervention.

Is the candidate coachable?

Equally important is the need to evaluate whether the candidate is coachable. Review your coachee candidate shortlist with a keen eye on where each person is, on the spectrum of Excellent to poor coachability.

An ideal coachee is highly motivated to grow and will show a powerful commitment to learn and improve. Such a person will have a basic level of Self-awareness and Emotional intelligence. He/she will be open to learning, and look at failures and setbacks as part of the learning process. They will not have severe performance issues or the threat of career derailment hanging over them.

BEST PRACTICE

Design a Coachee selection list.

- Is the coachee ready? motivated? Is it Voluntary?
- Can the coachee articulate a broad but pressing need to fulfill through coaching?
- Is coachee able to give and receive feedback? Willing to be challenged through feedback & share insights?
- Does the current job context give coachee the time and space to experiment new behaviour?
- Is there at least a working alliance with the line manager?

On the other extreme, a poor coachability candidate has little or no interest in coaching, is feedback resistant, believes there is nothing more to learn, and may at times have serious performance issues. The perception of their key stakeholder's is more likely to be filled with negative impressions. People often see them as highly deficient in areas related to emotional intelligence, self and social awareness.

Remember, while coaching operates at a level deeper than training, it is not counseling or therapy. Coaching is not an appropriate intervention when the individual suffers from severe psycho-pathological problems. A person suffering from anxiety, depression, addiction, schizophrenia and personality disorders is best treated by therapists. In such cases, a coaching intervention is not appropriate.

There is no one mathematical formula which will surface the ideal coachees. However, a coachee readiness model provides the guiding points. Then overlay it with your own judgement and understanding of the situation, to identify those who are well suited for coaching.

CFI's Coachee Readiness Model

+	-
Enabling Factors	Inhibiting Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation for Coaching • Self Awareness & Readiness to change • Working alliance with manager • Enabling role & work environment • Ability to invest time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe performance issues or career derailment • Lack of psychological capacity to work on self • Incorrect Career level (e.g. junior level, where coaching style is less effective as the need is more directive or mentoring style)

3. Coach Selection

What does one look for in a Coach?

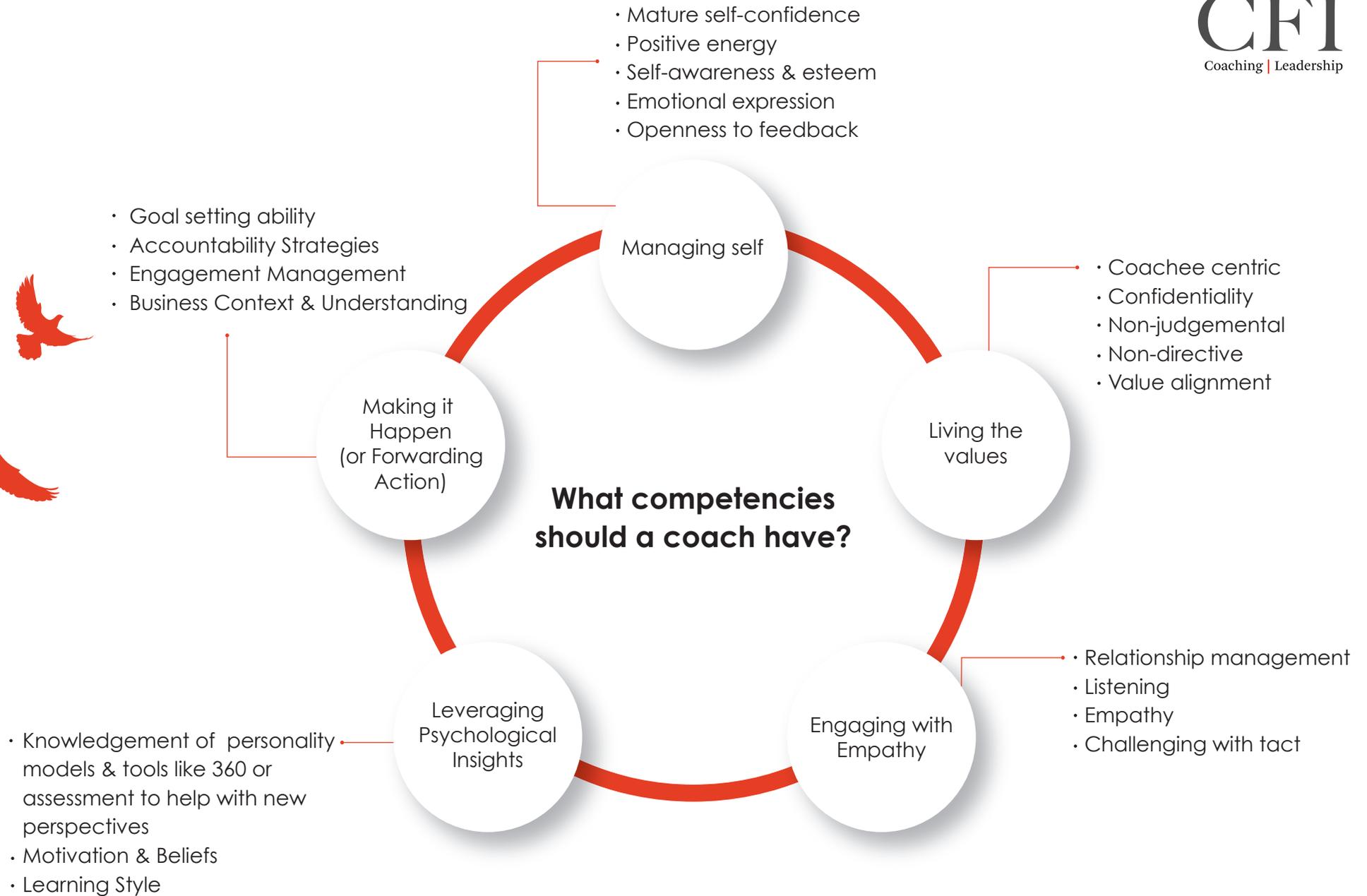
Once you decide to include coaching in your leadership development approach, look for highly capable and experienced professional coaches. The quality, competency and professionalism of the coach are critical to success. Over time, you will build an understanding of what works/ doesn't work & will be able to identify the coaches who are more effective in your organization's context and needs.

While evaluating a coach, the things to look for include:

- **Professional standing:** Strong credentials, and reputation, with relevant conceptual skills. Coaches who have held senior positions in reputed organizations are able to dip into their vast experience, which benefits the coachee.
- **Coaching competencies:** A formal training or certification from a recognized institution usually provides solid grounding on coaching competencies and process. This will of course include the natural ability to build rapport, engage effectively with empathy and so on. We provide an indicative coach competency checklist which you can consider:

You must ensure that the values of the coach or the institution you work with are aligned to the principles of a sound helping relationship which is about being non-directive, non-judgmental and about creating a safe space for the coachee to engage with the coach.

There are various coaching models and methodologies in practice. For sustained change, we believe the approach should allow the coach to focus on changes in observed behaviours and also explore the behavioural underpinnings and beliefs of the coachee. It would be useful to understand the approach that the coach will take to run the engagement, the mechanism that the coach has in place to assure quality, and the ethical boundary that the coach will uphold.



How does one go about selecting a coach or do coach empanelment

You can either work directly with individual coaches or partner with an institution that would provide a panel of coaches.

If you want to work directly with individual coaches, begin by conducting exploratory interviews with them. Select and empanel the coaches who meet your requirements. Over time, such coaches will become familiar with your organization's structure, culture; values etc. and this contextual familiarity will aid the coaching engagement.

If you prefer to empanel an institution, you can select one which provides the service of offering coaches and takes the responsibility of setting it up. You will have an Engagement and Project manager assigned who will ensure the coaching engagement is delivered in a quality way. They ensure that the steps in the coaching process are followed, and will alert you to possible issues.

While both approaches have their merit, organisations needing large number of coaches across locations often find it beneficial to partner with an institution. This will provide for a level of uniformity while ensuring that there are an additional pair of eyes to review and monitor quality. You get diversity in your coaches, along with a certain harmony in their methodology and approach.

A strong compatibility between coach and coachee is as important as the coach's capability in determining quality of coaching relationship. The coach must bring in perspectives and points of view that the coachee needs and trusts. Good professional standards require that every coach is expected to have a peer guide or supervisor. This ensures a mechanism for the coach to monitor his/her own approach and style and be alive to any potential blind spots. Organizations like Coaching Foundation of India (CFI) have a mandatory Peer guide as part of each coaching assignment.

BEST PRACTICE

Chemistry is important. Let the Coachee meet between 2-3 suitable Coaches, and then decide who he/she would like to work with. It also ensures coachee's buy in and upfront involvement in the process.

What are the usual steps in the coaching process

Generally speaking, once you have identified the coachee and the coach Empanelment is done, the actual coaching process will start. There are usually 6-9 sessions (of 1.5 to 2 hours each) between the coach and coachee, spread over 6-9 months. This can get extended for another 3-4 months, if needed. The broad steps in the coaching process are given below:



Pre-Engagement, Sponsor Brief & Contracting: This is the phase where you get things in place, before the coaching starts. Once you decide to go ahead with coaching, you will speak with the coachee to explain how it works, what they can expect to gain etc. In parallel, you would have agreed on the broad terms with the coach or the institution.

Once a coach has been identified, you will sign a formal coaching agreement, which covers the terms and conditions applicable. This will also include items like the number of sessions, time duration, methodology, fees and confidentiality terms.

While most coaches will talk about number of sessions, it is best to work with coaches who are focused on the outcome, rather than just engage for a fixed number of sessions. Coachees vary in their ability to make changes and therefore being rigid about the number of sessions does not help. Good coaches and coaching institutions display flexibility and might be willing to go beyond the typical six to nine sessions and do more if there is a need. By the same token, it is best to pay for a coaching engagement rather than pay by session.

The engagement kick off session is with the Sponsor (can be the line manager or a different leader) and HR, L&D person, who provide the brief from which the coaching agenda would emerge.

Coachee Assessment & Feedback: In order to form a composite picture of the coachee and the context, the coach may select from a variety of assessment instruments covering personality, leadership style, strengths & values, observation and 360 Feedback interviews/survey. If the organization has information like Assessment centre reports, Psychometric reports etc. these can be made available to the coach. The feedback gathered is shared with the coachee. These inputs will be key to shaping the goals as well as the subsequent coaching discussions.



Co-creating Goals & Action plans: Based on the feedback received, the coachee evaluates what goals will provide the most leverage, and co-creates those with the coach. These goals are then broken up into concrete action plans, with timelines. When coachees set their own goals, there is a higher level of buy in and commitment as compared to goals being thrust down from the top. Of course, you want to ensure that the goals are shared with the supervisor, and signed off.

For helping coachees meet their goals, coaches may utilize an array of strategies like practicing new behaviour, reframing of self-limiting beliefs, building perspective, reflection, journaling and bibliotherapy.

Implementation, Support & Accountability systems: With the goals set, the remaining sessions focus on how the coaching is progressing, provide positive reinforcement, and explore what's aiding or hindering action plans progress. The coach will drive solution focused conversations, where the coachee goes within to reflect and comes up with insights and solutions. In order to ensure progress on goals, the coach will utilize accountability systems like regular updates, checklists, public accountability to execute the action plan.

Closure- Review and evaluation: In addition to the mid-point review, there is an end of the program review and feedback sought from the coachee as well as the sponsor. Some coaches may also do a pre and post 360 feedback to assess impact. In order to sustain the new learning's, the coachee must have learnt self-reflection, which is one way to ensure that the learning continues even after the coaching ends.

4. Manager support and Accountability

What is the role of the line manager/ sponsor? What about the role of the HR , L&D person?

Our experience is that involvement of the line manager and HR, L&D manager is important. In addition to the coachee, these 2 roles are key stakeholders in an individual's development and must stay involved way beyond the empanelment process.

Here are some ways the sponsor/ line manager and HR stay involved and provide support:

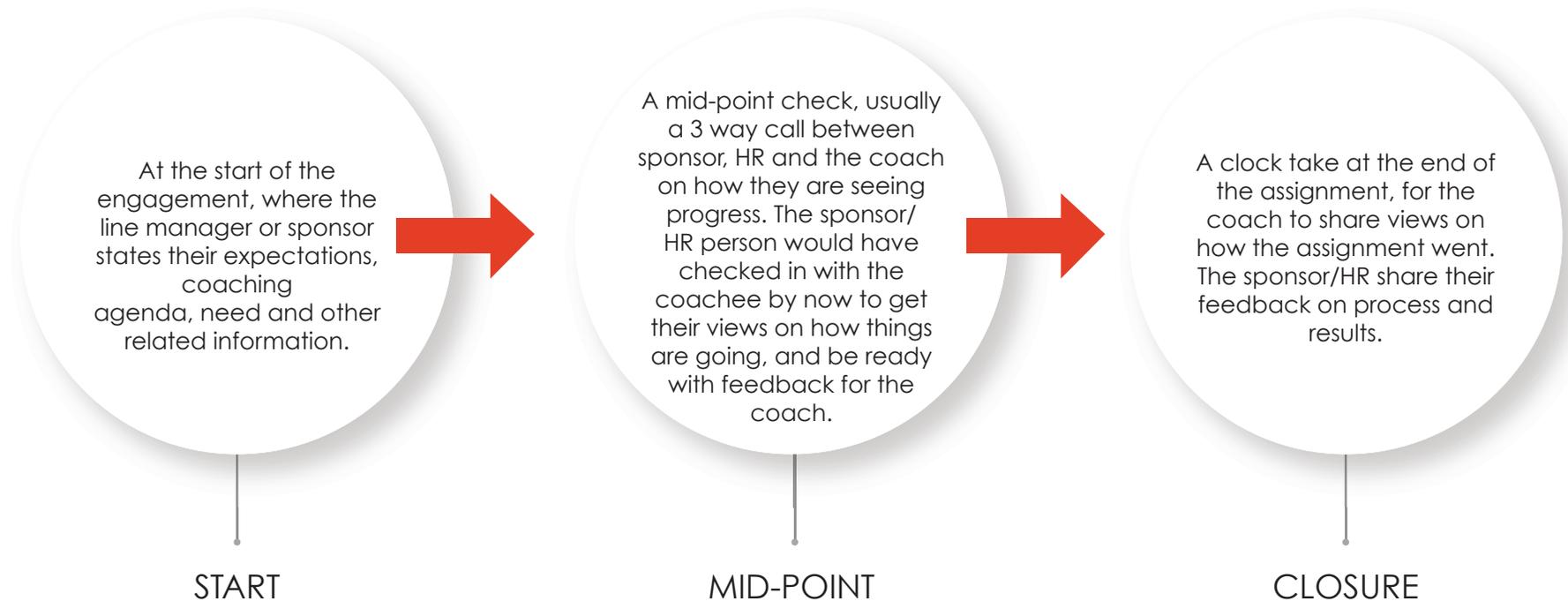
- At the start of the assignment, the Sponsor or the Line manager (who may be the same person or different) are expected to share their expectations and outcome from the coaching assignment. By articulating the business impact, they validate and confirm that the coaching goals are aligned to the business need. They also participate in the mid-point & closure sessions.
- Line manager supports the new behaviours the coachee tries out. Imagine if the manager makes snide or dismissive comments when the coachee is trying new ways of connecting with the team, or being assertive!
- Praise and provide positive reinforcements (with no disparaging comments) to create a nurturing environment for the coachee.
- The manager / HR can provide challenging assignments, learning and development opportunities or any other suitable platform for the coachee to practice and develop their new skills.
- HR would provide the coachee with the required information about the program, and be a sounding board. They also run the governance on the overall process.

WATCHOUT

A working alliance between the coachee and the line manager is essential. Where this relationship has broken down, or where the coachee's manager (or sponsor) and the coachee do not see eye to eye on substantive issues, coaching as an intervention is most likely to fail.

How often should one review the coaching progress?

We recommend having specific check points for review slotted in at the start of the engagement itself. In addition, the coach or the organization can also schedule additional review sessions, based on how the coaching progresses. E.g. in a 6 month process, there are usually at least 3 touch points to connect with the stakeholders, as shown below:



What about confidentiality & Information sharing in a coaching engagement?



Establish a contextually appropriate view of confidentiality, and write these guidelines upfront in the coaching agreement. Make it clear to the coach, coachee and line manager on what will be shared, how much, with whom and when, as any breach will have serious impact on trust in the relationship. Having built the trust with coach, the coachee should feel confident that he/she can share information with the coach, without it being passed on inappropriately, or without approval to other stakeholders.

The purpose of confidentiality is to create a safe space where the coachee can freely discuss his/her situation, issues and concerns without being judged or having fear of consequences. To that extent, all the details discussed within the coaching setting are completely confidential. However, the coachee's manager and others including HR/ L&D person must have visibility into certain key milestones of the engagement to ensure progress is happening. If the coaching process gets delegated down, a mid or junior level HR person can get awed by the Coach's seniority and stature, and hesitate to seek this info.

BEST PRACTICE

Stay engaged. Remember, it is fair for the sponsors and HR to seek visibility of the milestones from the Coach and Coachee and intervene, as needed.

Coaching doesn't have to be shrouded in any type of unnecessary confidentiality.

Some of the key checkpoints in the engagement which CANNOT BE confidential are:

- Does the Coach have enough assessment data about the Coachee to zero in on areas needing attention?
- Has the Coachee arrived at concrete coaching goals? Has it been shared with the sponsor?
- Have the goals been translated into specific action plans?
- Are the action plans being acted on, with results being seen on the ground?

5. Approach to measurement

How does one approach measurement of coaching effectiveness?

It is natural for organizations to measure the outcome of any investment they make. In the still evolving area of coaching effectiveness, it is akin to the HR / L&D head being asked questions regarding the effectiveness of any training that involves behavioural change. In executive coaching, it appears easier to measure effectiveness at the first two levels of “reaction” and “learning” (as defined by the four level Kirkpatrick model of learning evaluation). The next two levels of measuring change in “behaviour” and “results” are harder, as it is difficult to translate behavioural changes into a financial number. And to add to the complexity, there is a view about a fifth level called “Return on Investment”. ROI aims to answer the question of how does your cost of investment do as compared to financial results. While we provide examples of the first four levels of effectiveness, you can take your pick regarding the level you want, based on your organization’s stage of coaching evolution.

Broadly speaking, Organizations may choose to measure the changes at the level of personal development of coachee, as well as at the level of organizational impact. Some thoughts include:

- In the initial stages, when you are seeding coaching as a leader development intervention, think of it as an experiment. Get the basics right, and look for directional success.
- Establish upfront what will be the criteria for success, and then see if they are met.

- 
- Feedback forms (with qualitative and quantitative criteria), given to the coachee & coach provide insight into the immediate satisfaction levels. You get to know what the coachee thought of and learnt from the engagement, i.e. the first two levels of evaluation which are “reaction” and “learning”. In successful coaching assignments, coachees report a heightened sense of self-awareness, ability to reflect, discover possible blind spots, get deeper insights into strengths and development areas and build greater confidence- all of which they are able to leverage to make positive, lasting changes.
 - A pre and post coaching 360 survey is very effective. All the key stakeholders are asked feedback on a set of parameters before and after the coaching. This tells us the impact of coaching at the higher level of “behaviour”. In turn, the top management can articulate how the changes have translated into business “results”.
 - Once you institutionalize coaching in the organization, you can look at hard measures of success, where coaching delivers the specific, desired goals. Metrics to consider include:
 - Increase in retention percentage of new hires (in case of transition coaching)
 - Succession process - % of Ready now candidates from the coachee pool
 - % of High performers from coachee pool

Simply put, has the coachee become more capable, relevant and impactful after the coaching? If yes, you have your answer. We believe that instead of just measuring success at the end of the coaching assignment, you can design it for effectiveness by getting each of the stages right.

You will find that done right, practices in each of these areas will contribute to the overall success of Coaching.

THE “KEY” FACTORS

While all the factors in the framework shared are important, there are a few that are more deterministic. Focussing on areas like Coachee motivation, quality of Coaching relationship, Goal clarity, and Line Manager Support & Involvement will provide a substantial lift up to the overall success of the coaching engagement.