



David Meggison & I explored the concept of organisational coaching cultures in our book 'Making Coaching Work' (first edition published 2005). The subject has fascinated me ever since & continues to be a major ongoing theme.

Based on multiple case studies, we were able to identify four stages that organisations went through in creating a coaching culture. It's fair to say that we didn't find any organisations that reached the final stage, where coaching was firmly embedded in the whole organisation – and it is very hard to find examples even now in 2024. What we did find was pockets of excellence within larger company structures.

Instructions:

- Each of the 6 clusters of dimensions below may – in theory – be at any of the four levels Nascent, Tactical, Strategic or Embedded
- Determine for each element where you think the organisation is centered
- Add up the total number of Nascent, Tactical, Strategic and Embedded ratings
- This will give you an overview on where the organisation is on the journey towards a coaching culture – and where the biggest areas of concern are.

A Nascent	B Tactical	C Strategic	D Embedded	The level we are at now
1A Coaching happens without reference to strategy and process	1B Coaching is referred to in strategy documents	1C Managers are measured on the effects of their coaching	1D Key organisation performance measures include coaching outputs	
2A Coaching is used to correct poor performers	2B Coaching is used to contribute to performance of all	2C Coaching is used as the main driver of performance	2D Coaching is the way of performance managing individuals, teams & the organisation	
3A A coach is seen as 'nice to have'	3B Coaching is compatible with core business drivers	3C Core business driver articulated and coaching is the means of delivering it	3D The more urgent/ important/ mission-critical a project, the more coaching is used	
4A Coaching is a specialist activity separate from normal managing	4B Coaching is used by bosses 1-on-1 to improve performance	4C Coaching is widely used as a way of working in teams and projects	4D Coaching is used in all settings from shop floor to boardroom	
5A People are coached only if their boss is keen on it	5B Coachees are coached as part of performance management processes	5C From induction to retirement people expect to be coached	5D Staff seek coaching internally and from customers/ suppliers/ outside benchmarks	
6A Staff accept it if their bosses can't or won't coach	6B Staff frequently ask for coaching	6C The right to be coached is accepted throughout the organisation	6D Coachees will coach their coaches in coaching if they need it	
7A Learning to be coached comes from being lucky to have a coaching boss	7B Training of coachees has as much attention as coach training	7C The coachees' drive to learn & perform stimulates coaching	7D Coaching seen as one of many alliances to be managed by coachees	
8A External coaches used as the stage before outplacement	8B External coaches widely available to support a range of development issues	8C External coaches support supervision/ development of senior managers as coaches	8D External coaches work with internal leaders to steer coachee-led development agenda	

9A Managers do a range of coach training or none at all	9B Coach training is widely available	9C Different coach training offerings are integrated	9D Coach training pervades development opportunities and agenda	
10A Coaching is a private concern, not noticed or commented upon	10B Coaches get feedback from staff on whether they coach	10C Coaches get on-going feedback from coachees on how they coach	10D All managers get 360° feedback on how they coach	
11A Once trained, coaches are left to their own devices	11B Coaches get follow-up support from tutors after training	11C Coaches get feedback between and after training workshops from peers, coachees & tutors	11D Coaches have on-going supervision of their practice from peers and tutors	
12A The organisation does not recognise or certificate coaches	12B Coaches are recognised for their contribution to the performance of others	12C Coaches have opportunities to deepen their learning through certification	12D Accreditation widely used as part of CPD of coaches	
13A Knowledge is used as a source of power	13B Knowledge sharing is common from experienced staff to new colleagues	13C Knowledge sharing is used, recognised and valued	13D Knowledge sharing upward, downward and between peers is a way of life	
14A Having a coach is seen as a fashion accessory	14B Coaching helps to improve performance	14C High performing team members coach one another	14D Coaching is widely used to develop a high performing organisation	
15A Top team members who are coached don't talk about it	15B Top team members talk about their coaching	15C Top team talk about challenges in their coaching/ being coached	15D Top team seek and use feedback on their coaching	
16A Coaches encourage coachees to take responsibility	16B Coaching is led as an HR/Development project	16C Line people take significant leadership of the move to coaching	16D Dedicated line staff are committed to developing coaching	

17A Coaches focus on plugging skills gaps as seen by the coach	17B Coaching begins from development goals of coachees	17C Coaching is fuelled by learners' dreams or aspirations	17D Coaching integrates individual dreams and shared organisational vision	
18A Coaching starts from individual needs	18B Coaching involves shared learning and dialogue	18C Networks of coaches develop together, using co-coaching	18D Learning agendas and aspirations are widely shared throughout the organisation	
19A There are several different initiatives on coaching that are not connected	19B Coaching initiatives have their own life and are linked to each other	19C Coaching is used to develop an enquiring stance towards organisation agendas	19D Autonomy and co-operation equally valued in widespread coaching between divisions/ functions	
20A Coaches are often blunt and abrasive	20B Coaches are often candid and forthright	20C Mutual dialogue about tough issues – coach and coachee open to learning	20D Organisation blind spots and weaknesses addressed in coaching relationships	
21A Coaching is an HR/Development initiative	21B Senior group endorse the move to coaching	21C Senior group demonstrate the use of coaching in achieving goals	21D Senior group integrate development of organisation with use of coaching style	
22A Some individuals are enthusiastic about being a coach	22B Line managers lead coaching initiatives in their own areas	22C Line managers take responsibility for coaching throughout the organisation	22D Coaching is used to manage projects and in a wide range of meetings	
23A Coaches are conscious of the need for culture change	23B Coaches use coaching to advocate culture change	23C Coaches make the link between management style, coaching and culture	23D Coaches <i>live</i> the link between management style, coaching and culture	
24A Coaches encourage coachees to take responsibility	24B Coaches provide or create opportunities for coachees to perform	24C Coachees and coaches actively manage mutual support & challenge between them	24D Coachees take responsibility for their own performance accountably and in a no-blame way	

Scoring

This diagnostic aims to provide insight into the many factors involved in creating a coaching culture. There are no fixed benchmarks, but you can use year on year scores to assess progress over time. For best results, input from multiple observers reduces rater bias.

At the *nascent* stage, an organisation shows little or no commitment to creating a coaching culture. While some coaching may happen, it is highly inconsistent in both frequency and quality. Top managers present poor role models and coaching behaviours tend to be abandoned in the face of more urgent, if less important, demands on managers' time. Any executive coaching provided is uncoordinated and typically the result of severe performance problems with a few individuals or a status boost for senior managers incapable of (or unwilling to engage in) self-development. People tend to avoid tackling difficult behavioural or ethical issues, out of embarrassment, ineptitude, fear, or a combination of all three.

At the *tactical* stage, the organisation has recognised the value of establishing a coaching culture, but there is little understanding of what that means, or what will be involved. Top management sees the issue as primarily one for HR. There are systems in place to train coaches and/or mentors, and there are numerous discrete HR systems such as succession planning and appraisal, but the links between these and the coaching process are at best tenuous. There is a broad understanding among individual contributors and managers of the potential benefits of coaching, but commitment to coaching behaviours as integral to management style is low. People recognise the need to tackle difficult behavioural or ethical issues, but will only do so in environments where they feel very safe.

At the *strategic* stage, there has been considerable effort expended to educate managers and employees in the value of coaching and to give people the competence (and therefore confidence) to coach in a variety of situations. Managers are rewarded/ punished for delivery/ non-delivery of coaching, typically linked to formal appraisal of direct reports. Top management have accepted the need to demonstrate good practice and most, if not all, set an example by coaching others. They spend time getting across to employees how coaching behaviours support the key business drivers. However, while the formal coaching process works well (in part because it is measured), the informal process creaks at the joints. There are plans to integrate coaching and mentoring with the wider portfolio of HR systems and, at a mechanical level, these largely work. People are willing to confront difficult behavioural or ethical issues on an ad hoc basis and there are good role models for doing so with both resolution and compassion.

At the *embedded* stage, people at all levels are engaged in coaching, both formal and informal, with colleagues both within the same function and across functions and levels. Some senior executives are mentored by more junior people and there is widespread use of 360° feedback at all levels to provide insights, into areas, where the individual can benefit from coaching help. Much, if not most, of this coaching and mentoring is informal, but people are sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled to avoid most of the downsides to informal mentoring. Coaching and mentoring are so seamlessly built into the structure of HR systems that they occur automatically. The skills of learning dialogue are sufficiently widespread that people are able to raise difficult or controversial issues, knowing that their motivations will be respected and that colleagues will see it as an opportunity to improve, either personally, or organisationally, or both.

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