

**Addendum from**  
**Center for Executive Coaching Textbook:**  
Eight Keys to Creating a  
World-Class Internal Coaching Group



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## Addendum Two

### **Eight Keys to Creating a World-Class Internal Coaching Group**

As coaching has become an accepted tool to develop talent, many organizations have created internal coaching groups. Internal coaches usually work with leaders just below the senior level, while senior leaders work with external coaches to ensure confidentiality about sensitive initiatives. In our experience at the Center for Executive Coaching, there are eight keys to success when creating an internal coaching group.

**Make sure that senior leadership supports the internal coaching group.** Senior leadership must view coaching as a crucial function in the organization. Ideally, every senior leader should have a coach to demonstrate how important it is to be coached. If senior leadership doesn't respect coaching or the internal group, neither will others in the organization.

**Choose great people to be internal coaches.** The U.S. Marine Corps chooses top marines to train new recruits. For a top-tier internal coaching group, insist on only the best people. Some organizations shift mediocre performers to the role of coach. As a result, they lack credibility, and employees don't want coaching from them. Whether you hire coaches from outside the organization or from within, make sure that they are highly respected.



**Free up internal coaches to have the time to coach.** Too often, internal coaches are given multiple responsibilities, from working on employee assistance to recruiting new candidates. Sometimes this is because it takes the coach time to transition to their new role from their previous job; unless employees make a clean break, they are often stuck straddling two different job descriptions. At other times, the organization doesn't give coaching enough respect and layers on multiple responsibilities. Regardless of the reason, these other obligations often crowd out the coach's ability to coach. If you are going to create an internal coaching group, free up internal coaches to coach full-time.

**Don't include progressive discipline or employee assistance under the umbrella of coaching.** Coaching is a privilege. It is an approach to make good people better. When organizations combine leadership development with such areas as progressive discipline or any other interventions for struggling employees, they do a disservice to the profession of coaching and what it can accomplish. Separate coaching from other activities. Coaching should focus on helping good people get even better.

**Pick a few focused initiatives that are tied to the organization's strategic priorities.** Don't set up your coaching group to be a call center to take a call and try to answer questions. Don't dabble in too many initiatives. Coaching should support major organizational initiatives in a focused way. Identify areas where the organization can make key improvements or accelerate progress, especially with strategic priorities. Perhaps certain employees need to develop new competencies to benefit the organization. Perhaps there is a key strategic initiative that has gotten stuck. Or, maybe specific types of people, such as high-potential managers, could make major improvements in their effectiveness that would drive stronger results and competitive positioning. Use coaching to advance these initiatives. That coaching is then tied directly to providing value as defined by the organization.



**Use a consistent approach.** Some internal coaching groups hire coaches who have been trained in many different ways, which leads to inconsistent results and impact. Choose a coaching methodology and approach, and insist that all coaches use it. At the same time, be flexible enough to test and incorporate new tools, assessments, and methodologies.

**Tie coaching to other approaches for developing talent and strengthening the organization.** Coaching, training, mentoring, and professional development should all fit together and work toward common goals. Sometimes coaching alone is the best approach. Coaching can often reinforce training programs or other organizational development initiatives. In some cases, a full-court press with multiple approaches is needed to get results.

**Measure and track results, and hold the coaching group accountable for having impact in the organization.** Coaching is always about getting results, the same as any other function in the organization. Each coaching relationship should start with a clear intent and outcome. From there, track results of every relationship. Tracking results means more than asking clients about whether or not they were happy with the coaching. Specific, measurable improvements should show up in the organization from each coaching engagement. Results can range from tangible financial improvements to how confident and competent the client feels about using a new skill. Regardless, coaching should be as accountable as any other function in an organization.

