

Executive Coaching Intervention and its Impact on Leadership Competencies and Leader Behaviour

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Abstract

India, poised to thrust deep into a global economy, it has been imperative for organizations to understand, develop and establish a sustainable leadership. The new leadership role is focused at increasing need to work with other stakeholders, leading change across the business and beyond the business boundaries. With a pressure to showcase the return on investment, the organizations of today have more interest in the integrity, character and behaviour of the leaders. After careful consideration of need of the business, company XCart Limited, with a vision of achieving INR 2000 crores of revenue by 2021, have identified to impart executive coaching to two of its critical senior leaders, namely head of IT and head of Operation. With a proper plan in place, XCart want to see the change in the behaviour, change in the leadership competencies and impact on the business by those chosen leaders.

Keywords: *Executive Coaching, Leadership Competencies, Leader behaviour, Impact, organization, India*

Introduction

Rapid change in the workplace are leading to aggressive behaviour, sensualities, disconnection with peer groups and families, stress and anxieties among the leaders. The leaders know on their improvement and strength areas but are unaware of the possible course of actions. Psychological costs due to loneliness at the top may be dangerous and have a direct impact on the organization's profitability. The more prominent challenges are coming from those leadership competencies that are quickly becoming obsolete. Hence, today's leaders are facing an ever-steep learning curve. Putting a right coaching agenda shall bring down the challenges faced by the leaders.

Literature Review

Coaching Definition

ICF defines professional coaching as “an ongoing

professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance and enhance their quality of life” (ICF, 2002, Code of Ethics section, para. 2). Another definition by ICF was about clients on "deepen their learning" (ICF, 2005, Code of Ethics section, para. 2).

Laske (1999) described coaching as “the multidirectional ability to observe executive organization interaction in two related mental spaces called the Professional House and the Company House, for the purpose of bringing about not only adaptive but transformative change” (p. 152). Hargrove (1995) referred “transformational coaching” with the constituents of awareness and clarity.

Kilburg (1996) defined coaching as to "achieve a mutually identified set of goals" whereas Belf

(1996) emphasized on action and improvement in performance. Frisch's (2001) differentiated it from the other advisory roles.

Moving forward with future course of actions were the main focus of coaching. Coaches have also been referred to as change agents in the corporate culture (Katz & Miller, 1996).

Importance of Coaching in Leadership Perspective

In today's scenario, executives are taking the higher hierarchical positions faster and need to build up the required leadership skills. So executive coaching is being used as a strategic tool. Any developmental agenda till date used to be reactive. Organizations are understanding the benefit of coaching in a proactive manner to keep their executives prepared for any circumstances in future. Retention of the executives are need of the hour. Interpersonal skills along with EQ are being looked upon by the organizations as essential behavioural traits. Exit of the executives may also drastically affect the mentoring agenda of the organization. Also, as executives are constantly watched for their success and failures, they do want to find someone for "straightforward counselling" (Lukaszewski, 1988).

Different Models of Executive Coaching

Team Approach Models :

Saporito (1996) presented early model of coaching having four stages viz., foundation, identifying strength and improvement areas, developmental planning and support. Peterson (1996) listed five strategies namely partnership formation, inspiring commitment, support development of skill, helping persistence of client and shape environment. Kilburg's (1996) also presented five component multi-dimensional model.

Leadership Development Models:

This model which talks about the leadership skill development were presented by a lot of researchers (Brotman et al., 1998; Katz & Miller, 1996; Witherspoon & White, 1996). Skill-based external model of coaching was presented by Katz and Miller (1996). Among other researchers, Day (2000), differentiated leadership development from leader development.

Human Development Models:

Following a constructive development theory, Laske (1999) model discussed about first and second orders of coaching where he defended the executive coaching as adult development tool. Another human developmental model was suggested by Wasylyshyn, (2003) on self awareness and introspection.

Other than these, Integrative Model was discussed by Rotenberg, C. T. (2000) and Compliance model was presented by Kilburg (2001).

GROW Model:

Whitmore (1996) was the first to publish GROW in his book Coaching for Performance; which is now acknowledged as the most popular coaching model globally. (G)oals, (R)eality, (O)ptions and (W)ill are the four stages of GROW model. It points out "confidence and self-motivation, leading to increased productivity and personal satisfaction. Will relates to volition, desire and intention".

Summary of Models:

From the different models stated above, it may be stated that Coaching model can be divided into four major stages. Firstly, Partnership relationship is discussed. Secondly, expectations in agreement are set. The third step commonly deal with awareness

and clarity on the emerging thoughts. And finally, accountability and commitment toward self-initiated change take place.

Moreover, when we talk about the methods of evaluation of executive coaching following take the front seat:

- Skills/performance improvement
- Change in competencies
- Observable, measurable and critical behavioural improvement
- More on micro-level outcome based on positive psychology

The Company – XCart Limited

XCart Limited is an FMCG company owned by the renowned SB Group and having its corporate office at Mumbai, India. Founded in 1972, today's XCart Ltd is one of India's leading FMCG companies with major brands in personal care category. It is one of the oldest business houses in the country and is known for creating widely respected brands in personal care category and generating loyal base of consumers. XCart is an INR 1120 Crores company, listed on BSE and NSE and have employee strength of 2500+. XCart Ltd. is currently fueled by the vision to emerge as one of the leading FMCG Company having turnover of INR 2000 Crores by 2021.

Current Challenges faced by XCart Leaders

Currently the company XCart Limited is challenged immensely by the following parameters. HR Head of the organization has discussed the same with the Managing Director.

- Lot of Bureaucracy and getting approvals from different levels takes lot of time & slows down many things specifically in the operations

function.

- Supplies are quite skewed towards the month end because of no proper inputs, or packaging issues or break-down.
- The system is in place to deliver results of next 1 Or 2 years but not for 5 years.
- There are limited opportunities within the organization that facilitates open and cross functional communication.
- Also there is a lack of trust, empowerment and change readiness is very low.
- Competitors are much ahead of XCart Ltd. in terms of IT infra.
- Much of the IT automation programme has been started without yield.
- The current competency levels of the leaders are quickly becoming obsolete. Thereby, the current leaders are facing a steeper learning curve. Many of the leaders are recognizing their weaker areas but do not really know what they can do about them. They may be aware of their specific strengths, but hesitant to capitalize on them.

The Managing Director is of the opinion that in terms of getting the Vision Achieved, there is a crucial need to deal the following two areas and specifically to the leaders who are leading those areas and vested the responsibilities to HR to implement Executive Coaching to be imparted to the following leaders

1. Operations - Head Operations
2. Information Technology - Head IT

Objectives

- To describe the impact of the Executive Coaching on the Coachees of Company XCart Ltd. and to recommend the way ahead.
- Whether executive coaching can be used as a

strategic tool to improve XCart's performance by linking Coaching interventions to the corporate imperatives.

- To find out the factors what makes executive coaching Work for the organization.

Methodology

Framing, implementing and concluding the executive coaching process and its impact study in XCart limited by the author.

Brief profile of the Coachees

Profile Head – Operations

Is with the organization since last 4 years. Has a rich experience of over 15 years in FMCG sector in the areas of Production, Supply chain, Planning and Costing, Projects and Operations, Process Improvement and New Product Development. Before Joining XCart Limited he assumed the responsibility of Strategic Planning, supply chain initiatives, Culture building and CSR, Technical operations, Operational control and Projects on companies like Dabur and Emami. He is a Graduate Engineer in Mechanical stream and also a certified 6 Sigma Green Belt. In this role, he is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate systems for measuring necessary aspects of operational management and development; Planning, developing and implementing strategies for operational management and development so as to meet agreed organizational performance plans within agreed budgets and timescales (covering relevant areas of operation – e.g. manufacturing, distribution, and administration).

Profile Head IT

Is with the organization since last 3 years. He has pursued his Bachelor of Engineering and then

Diploma from NIIT. He has also pursued Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management from IMT - Ghaziabad. Has over 17 years of experience in IT. Prior to joining XCart, he was associated with Emma Research and Life sciences Ltd (part of Emma Group) He has also served other companies like Moot India Pvt. Ltd., X Retail Ltd, Siksha Trading, HL Computers Ltd. in the early years of his career. In this role, three vertical heads of IT report to him.

Coaching Process

Organizational Culture were mapped and improvement planned

HR Head along with other stakeholders was trying to make a Shift from departmental and regional silos to open communication and best practice sharing, top down approach for instilling culture and values, Employee connect and engagement; Recognition and reinforcement of positive behaviors.

Organizational Strategy conducive to coaching was looked upon

- Pre empt and project competency and skill needs
- Decide on Executive Coaching as the chosen L&D Methodology
- Believe in Executive Coaching
- Getting Top Team buy in
- Identifying the top talent
- Identifying and fixing individual development plans

Structured HR Roles and Responsibilities towards coaching were defined

- Selling the executive coaching process to the prospective coaches

- Source high caliber coaches
- Facilitate creating the right ambience
- Brief executive coaches
- Help choose coaching approach
- Coordination and Facilitation logistical support
- Track Progress / Review and evaluation
- Input to top team on movement in employee learning
- Evaluate and Review Intervention
- Post Coaching Integration (Planning, preparation and deployment)

From a list of the coaches available, structured approach was taken to choose a coach

- Should maintain Ethics and standard
- Should establish the belief and closeness with client
- Should be spontaneous and make his presence felt by attention
- Should listen actively and display poised nature
- Should be able to create awareness
- Facilitate to design action plans
- Review progress and establish accountability
- Maintain confidentiality and exercise empathy when needed.
- Asking powerful questions to expand awareness, clarity and stimulate new ways of thinking.
- To facilitate positive behavioural pattern

Following Characteristics were satisfied with that of the Coaches

- Committed and willing to stretch
- Open and receptive to accepting and offering feedback
- Able to share and honestly communicate
- Self-aware and able to reflect on his/her own behaviour

- Open to new ideas
- Desirous of learning and evolving
- Proactive and action oriented
- Able to see the big picture
- Possessed Empathetic listening
- Value Trusts and building partnerships
- Focus on Results
- Looking for possibilities
- Personal accountability

Coachee's Mental Status

- Aspirations, Dreams and Desire
- Value system and beliefs in the existing scenario
- Possible opportunities available with them and
- The plan of actions to accomplish their individual and organizational objectives.

Executive Compensation system

Benchmarking their compensation in the context of having a fair idea whether they are rightly paid and with an eye to retain them in the organization, so that with the new learning from Executive Coaching, they stay and be engaged in the organization till the vision is achieved.

HR department had chosen The GROW Model of Executive Coaching

Leadership competencies which were evaluated pre and post executive coaching process are:-

- Leading and deciding
- Supporting and cooperating
- Interacting and presenting
- Analyzing and interpreting
- Creating and conceptualizing
- Planning and Organizing
- Adapting and Coping

- Overall satisfaction with the leader

Duration

It happened over a period of 6 months having total of 9 sessions. There were two reviews: one at the end of 3 months and one at the end of 6 months. After six months, a necessity was felt to extend the coaching duration for another 3 months to support the coachee for another 3 sessions.

The process suggested by the coach and HR and the sessions implemented are discussed in Exhibit B. The highlights of the discussion Coach had with the senior stakeholders of the organization along with Human Resource department are given in Exhibit C.

Impact of Executive Coaching in XCart Limited

360 degree appraisal of the coachees' on the leadership competencies were done before the coaching process started. Scores thus obtained for the selected coachee (pre coaching). At the end of the coaching session, giving a gap of 3 months another 360 degree feedback on the same leadership competencies were done and scores were measured. Comparison between pre coaching score and after coaching score on the leadership competencies are given in Exhibit A.

For both the coachees, competency scores increased as compared to the previous year. Overall satisfaction was also measured for both the coachees. This has given an idea on the Behaviours other than the competency from the other stakeholders perspective. Overall satisfaction of both the coachees were enhanced reflecting that they became more acceptable by their peer groups, subordinates and the superiors.

One coachee – being a specialist, had tremendous

operational functional capabilities. He was insightful and quick speculation with a sharp explanatory way to deal with issues, respected knowledge in others and accepted that he would be appraised profoundly by his line administrators on the off chance that he ceaselessly exhibited his very own skill - regardless of whether this implied putting others down. He was bigoted of individuals who thought more gradually than himself and this bigotry was reached out to increasingly ranking directors just as to individuals from his very own group. There was additionally an issue with his line supervisors as he didn't see the need to give them provides details regarding his advancement, anticipating that they should confide in him to continue ahead with the activity. Through executive coaching process, he came to comprehend the origin of this unaccepted behaviour beyond tolerance and to understand the impact that it was having on his vocation. He came to see that while individuals respected his mind, they dreaded his sharpness and that his utilization of mockery made doubt among his group. He built up an increasingly kind way to deal with others. He additionally set aside the effort to account for himself unmistakably as opposed to just expecting that individuals had comprehended and his relational and individual broad abilities had improved fundamentally.

The improvement program dramatically affected the business. The changes were felt over the entire organization, explicitly to the coachees chosen for the Executive Coaching. In both the cases, the coachees affected his staff and also to the staff who had recently been saved begun stepping up to the plate. These progressions started showing reflection in meeting the respective departmental objectives, be in the production norms specification, quality improvement, giving shape and completing the unfinished IT projects and proactive problem solving.

The level of executive coaching offered were transformational instead of value-based as felt by two coachees selected for this coaching intervention. Heretofore, coaching used to be viewed as something that occurred in secret, and inquiries were being posed about the outcomes picked up. In the meeting of the board of directors, this result was shared through a presentation and board readily approved further coaching intervention in the organization. While taking the decision, the board offered to consider the critical positions across hierarchies and not only the senior executive level positions.

One coachee reported that the coaching process had helped him to overcome certain psychological and mental challenges, in absence of which, he reiterated that, he would not have been able to take up the project challenges more effectively.

One coachee expressed that the coach had helped him to determine and take corrective actions in relational or intergroup clashes.

Both the coachees concurred that the program could make a mutual mentality, energize a disposition that adds to evolving conduct, train for other capabilities, and appreciated the effort of the group who helped them to feel the accomplishments. One of the coachee referred that the coaching programme has bolstered his creativity and innovative quotient.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It remains a fact that coaching is proved to be successful only when it is effective in helping senior executives and high potential staff develops leadership competencies that are sustainable.

- 1) Coaching were more effective because the coachees could practice their new acquired behaviours in the organizational environment.

- 2) Obstacles for coaching were seen in degree of openness and lack of rapport building.
- 3) Benefits considered were as: build-up of confidence, well-being, increased motivation, opportunity to reflect, development of competency to manage ambiguity.

So, there is a tremendous need to sensitize and even educate the industry leaders before carrying out anything real time. The Indian Organizations need to identify the specific areas where they would like to impart Executive Coaching. Though Executive Coaching is in the nascent phase in India, there are few organizations who are using this practice very diligently and understanding the criticality of this practice. This necessitates to develop an approach or model to the Indian Coaching industry as such. Also the Indian organizations who have implemented the practice of Executive coaching , requires to be sustained over a period of time so that the other organizations can take their examples and try to implement the same , which will in turn will increase the scope of Executive Coaching and make it a lucrative profession .

The aim of this study is to contribute to the further professionalization of executive coaching, gaining a better insight into how effective executive coaching can be and what can lead to these outcomes in the context of Indian Organizations.

This is aimed to help the HR professionals and CEOs to understand the impact of Executive Coaching and bring in Executive Coaching as a strategic tool to improve firm performance by linking Coaching interventions to the corporate imperatives.

This will definitely contribute to understand the success factors contributing to Coaching Effectiveness and choose and focus on those factors specifically in the areas of Succession Planning.

This particular study may create culture of Executive Coaching by giving scope to the internal employees to become coaches.

Indian organizations who have implemented the practice of Executive coaching, requires to be sustained over a period of time. Ernst & Young LLP in their study on “Effectiveness of Executive Coaching in India – People and Organization” stated “.... before launching their coaching programme, organizations should have clarity of purpose. They should identify and position coaching as a development tool through constant internal communication.

Significant attention needs to be paid to the processes of selecting coaches and goal-setting in order to ensure the success of coaching programmes. Coaching programmes deliver expected results only if organizations focus on these details.....”

This is aimed high of creating a platform for the empirical study to be done in an Indian context and will give leverage to the other researchers to find and explore the other avenues of finding the more profound correlation between Coaching and Firm / Organization interface both for the practitioners and academicians.

EXHIBIT A

360 Degree Appraisal Summary Report -2016-2017 and 2017-2018										
Coachee	Year	Leading and Deciding	Supporting and Co-operating	Interacting and Presenting	Analysing and Interpreting	Creating and Conceptualising	Planning and Organising	Adapting and Coping	Overall Satisfactio	Average
Head	16-17	3.67	3.78	3.81	4.26	3.89	4.04	3.56	4.00	3.86
IT	17-18	3.95	3.82	4.02	4.25	4.13	4.43	3.89	4.23	4.07
Head	16-17	3.82	4.19	3.97	4.21	4.05	3.95	3.46	4.08	3.95
Operations	17-18	4.05	4.15	4	4.32	4.34	4.01	4.12	4.2	4.15

EXHIBIT B

Session No	Activity	Outcome	When
1	Meeting with stakeholders /HR	The vision of company. The current challenges. The expected outcome performance and learning outcomes. The prioritization of outcome. The areas to focus on individual and team challenges. Getting the concurrence on approach and commitment of stakeholders in supporting the coachee in the coaching journey. The stakeholders also share their perspective of the coachee on his strengths and some of the important aspects of his personality	Week 1 on sign off
A	Psychometric test and feedback plus incidents	Coachee takes a psychometric test to understand his traits and reasons for behaviour.to understand his areas of strength and areas of improvement. Feedback to understand the enabling and limiting attributes.	Week one on signoff
2	First meeting with coachee	First meeting to break ice, build rapport, debrief on test results, co create the IDP and the coaching process	August
3	Second meeting with coachee	Refine the overall outcome after coachee had opportunity to reflect and put to practice	September

B	Briefing of stakeholders/HR	Sharing of the kick start of approach and the final outcome, the milestones defined and the review mechanism and review parameters	September
4	Third meeting with coachee	Coaching	September
5	Fourth meeting with coachee	Coaching	October
6	Fifth meeting with coachee	Coaching	October
7	Sixth meeting with coachee	Coaching	November
C	Briefing of stakeholders	Briefing of stakeholders as sufficient leading and lagging indicators will be available	December
8	Seventh meeting with Coachee	Coaching progress	December
9	Eighth meeting with Coachee	Coaching progress	January
10	Ninth meeting with coachee	Coaching final review	February
11	Presentation to management	Share the outcome and learning of the coaching program	February

(*) This programme was further extended for another 3 months having one sessions each per month and ended in May 2018.

EXHIBIT C

Points from meeting with Senior management:

- Changing scenario with automation adoption
- More visibility of data
- Working in silos
- Identification and solving bottleneck
- Building the big picture
- Managing reportees
- Correcting inconsistency in processes
- Organizational transformation
- Build the IT infra to handle next three years
- Optimum utilization of all available resources

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