

Strategic HR Review



"promoting excellence & ethics in coaching"

Measuring Value in Coaching – Darren Robson

The world of coaching continues to gain a pace, with growing momentum and credibility in the eyes of corporate purchasers of talent, L&D and Leadership solutions. We have seen in the past 10 years the steady increase of coaching as a critical people, talent and leadership intervention. But the corporate landscape isn't the entire picture: increasingly the tentacles of coaching are moving beyond just the corporate landscape and out into society and the world at large. As we do so this challenges the overemphasis on financial metrics as the most important form of success measure.

In society, do we place the same level of significance and financial value on the coaching when we are working with under-privileged young people who are looking to find their first job, a more meaningful existence or simply some sense of personal confidence in their future? Of course the answer is no, why would we be interested in measuring such an arbitrary set of measures when a real life is at stake? So this begs the question, do we need to think what it truly means not just to value an employee and their personal values, but also the values of the organisation.

There is no doubt that the recent financial, political, ongoing ecological disaster(s) and human crises are merely a sign of more to come. We need to be able to start looking at our world from a fresh perspective, and one that doesn't place all value on short-term shareholder and financial metrics (although these are important as a form of value exchange).

Due in part to a combination of our human psychology, a need for external validation and our past industrial age, many of our organisations are still left with a predominance of measures that are growth-focused, logical and masculine in their emphasis, and financial. In my opinion there is a shift that needs to happen and fast. We need organisations that measure their global and social impact in a more balanced and rounded way, and this will mean increasingly more human/humane feelings, values and feminine measures must emerge to balance out the masculine energy.

Organisations will increasingly need to become a force for good in our world. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) will stop being a nice brand exercise and instead will become part of an organisation's DNA reinforced by its culture, leadership/management behaviours, the measures it uses to see the value that it brings and ultimately in the behaviour of its people, and us more broadly as consumers of its products and services.

This isn't a utopian vision, and we still need to maintain a focus on the numbers in order to ensure that we create value and a sustainable organisation that is able to support its multiple stakeholders' needs. I fundamentally believe that we need to move beyond a short term emphasis on hiking up shareholder value at the long term cost of people, resources and ultimately our home (earth). It's a practical and pragmatic response, as currently we are consuming more resources than this earth is able to withstand, our human population continues to expand at unprecedented rates, CSR is no longer sufficient, and we need to reach out to ensure as individuals we are taking Individual Personal Responsibility (InPR) to make a sustainable, lasting and positive impact in our world. A good place to begin may be something like <http://www.strategyforsustainability.com> a great initiative that has been started by Adam Werbach of Saatchi.

So how does Coaching play its role?

For me coaching is a profession that is focused on supporting individuals, communities, organisational and political leaders in going deeper to unearth their meaning and purpose, to explore who they really are and what it means for them to be on this earth. This level of deep personal enquiry is much needed in our world, especially in a corporate setting.

As a coaching community we have access to the gifts of closely listening, holding the space for deep enquiry, supporting an individual or group to consider their meaning, purpose, values and the value that they bring to their customers/clients, shareholders, stakeholders, community and society as a whole. It's time that, as a community, we challenge ourselves to be bolder and to see our influence, impact and reach beyond simply short-term financial goals and instead begin to broaden our measures out.

How to measure value and success of coaching?

- Measure how engaged the individual person is before the start of the coaching, during and at the end of the coaching. Employee Value Proposition solutions are coming to support organisation and individuals to understand their likelihood of leaving and how engaged they are.
- Measure how often a person uses their talents, gifts and strengths on a daily basis to complete their role. All of Gallup and Marcus Buckingham's work highlights that people who do this are more productive. Coaching can enable people to do this.
- Measure how engaged an individual is as a leader or manager, and go deeper to explore how engaged team members are. All of the research highlights that typically, people tend to leave bad managers rather than bad brands.
- Conduct live 360s with the leader/manager's boss, peers and direct reports to build up a picture of what is working, what is not, what could be better and what people say about them when they aren't in the room.
- Use Emotional Intelligence (EQi, ECI) related tools to measure a manager's and leader's emotional literacy at the start of the coaching, at the end and then go back in another 6 months or a year's time to see what impact it's continuing to have to ensure stability.
- Check the individual's physical health, stress levels, weight and dietary control to ensure that they aren't part of the increasingly stressed and under-performing management and leadership population, where poor diet leads to poor decisions. We need to get better at regulating our food and exercise intake. The statistics speak for themselves. You only have to watch Jamie Oliver on TED Talks to hear how we are moving into an epidemic of obesity, diabetes and heart disease due to poor diet and exercise, and working excessively long hours. This is unsustainable and must be addressed.
- Measure how clear the person is before they start the coaching on their personal legacy, meaning, purpose, life vision and values. In my experience there is no greater transformative experience than for a person to really connect with their deepest needs, wants and values. If organisations want a deep shift in performance it's not through working with a human being on a superficial behaviourist level by using external levers. It is by tapping into who they truly are and drawing from within and helping people to get clear on their intrinsic values, drivers and motivation.

About the Author

Darren Robson is on the Global Board of the Association for Coaching, and is Director of Strategy, Innovation and Partnerships. He is also the Global Social Innovation lead, championing coaching-led socially responsible initiatives that are making a positive, lasting impact in the world. He is the Director of Innovation for Penna's Board and Executive Coaching practice. For further information visit www.associationforcoaching.com and www.darrenrobson.com.