



The Power of Both: What Organizational Change Can Leverage from Professional Coaching

Executive Summary

The proven power of the professions of both change management and coaching have been long respected. Change Management professionals support implementation success with organizational change initiatives by addressing the people and culture dimensions of the change – with key focus on the leaders who sponsor the change. The Professional Coach helps individuals, teams and groups manage the personal side of change and ‘who’ a leader must be to lead themselves, others and change. The opportunity for leverage and enhancement of change efforts by adding a professional coach, and the enhancement of the professional coaching with the practices of the change standard have been examined by a joint taskforce formed by the headquarters of the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP) and the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

The joint relationship began with research in the field of creating a coach culture for change management. Presentations at mutual conferences solidified the interest in the joint venture. Some of the biggest insights in the research demonstrated the activities most practiced for change management success such as classroom and web-based training were the least effective, while coaching individuals, teams and groups by both professional coaches and leaders using coaching skills were the most effective.

The two professions shared common client goals including changing from one state to another, improving effectiveness or performance, improving relationships, managing, and overcoming resistance, sustaining change and building accountability.

Because of these shared goals, the initial investigation began by examining the overlap of core competencies between the two professions. This highlighted the differences in the fields as well. Complications ensued as change management is a standard of doing, while coaching is a practice of being. The Change Management profession has a Standard for Change Management that is process-oriented. The Coaching profession has a set of competencies that are knowledge and skill-based. Coaching also included a component of confidentiality not found in change management. The professions proved both different and complementary.

The investigation then pursued integration of the two professions working side by side. While integrating a coach throughout the change effort was ideal, inserting a coach into the Change Management effort was deemed particularly beneficial at seven key inflection points of the change standard.

The key inflection points were determined by dozens of interviews with change professionals who held a coaching credential or practiced coaching within their change efforts. The inflection points

were then presented at two key conferences with professionals in both change management and professional coaching to test confirmation.

Change is difficult. It is costly, complex, complicated, and lengthy. Research shows the largest impediments to successful change are leadership, communications, and employee resilience. If these obstacles are addressed both at the individual level and the system level chances of success increase dramatically. The benefits to clients include adherence to deadlines, budgets, and productivity. If coaches and change professionals are jointly helping individuals adapt to change at the individual and system level, they are sure to be more effective in overcoming resistance – personally and systemically, adopting new perspectives and shifting paradigms, and adopting the personal identities, mindsets and behaviors to ensure long-term success.

Change is constant. The nature of organizational change requires a proactive and robust plan to address organizational trends and inherent challenges. Often the change is unexpected and requires a fast pace. Disruptors such as technology, economics, generational differences are always present. The ability to respond is key. Addressing unproductive reactions such as skepticism, uncertainty, doubt, and overwhelm is key to commitment and action. The success of organizational change depends on the collective individuals' behavior and mindset. Key stakeholders impact change success with their commitment levels. Often change professionals and professional coaches are brought in only after deadlines have been missed, expenses exceeded, and talent lost.

Recently published research from Gartner shows only 43% of employees trust their organizations leaders to act in employees' best interests. (*Reimagine HR*) This same report states the top five priorities for HR include at number one – Leader and Manager Effectiveness. Professional Coaching can help leaders develop a new approach, including being more authentic, empathetic, and adaptive- in essence a people-centered approach.

Professional coaching can help mitigate the biggest change management challenges. Helping them be more effective leaders, overcoming stakeholder resistance, speeding adoption of new mindsets, behaviors, processes and tools, and building employee resilience and change readiness.

Professional coaching can be strategically applied throughout the change management process to overcome resistance, and people-related risks at all levels of the organization. This accelerates buy-in by applying risk management principles and simultaneously building the capacity of 'change muscle' in organizations to adapt more effectively to future change.

While many professionals hold credentials in both spaces due to their complementary nature, it is strongly recommended that these roles are kept separate and distinct. The profession of coaching clearly states that while one may be capable in many areas, the coach will coach; not mentor, advise or consult. By definition and charter, the change professional advises and consults, hence the separation of duties. This significant difference demands a standards foundation and education in the professions about the distinctions and best practices.

Simply put, change management best practices are prescriptive and process oriented. They focus on engaging with sponsors, leaders and teams with proven best practices to drive collective individual behavior change in organizations to achieve overall organizational goals. Professional coaching focuses on engaging with sponsors, leaders and teams on a personal level to help them leverage their own experience and wisdom to find their own answers create change.

Leaders will find the benefits of integrating coaching and change management in their change efforts will speed implementation, reduce rework and cost, drive an intentional focus on

cultivating the critical mindsets and behaviors required for success and put an empathetic spin on the impact to people in the implementation process.

1. Professional Coaching and Change Management Professionals, working better together, will significantly improve the success of (large scale) organizational change initiatives.

Recommendation: Incorporate Change Management and Professional Coaches as strategic members of the change team. Engage these professionals and the Project Team at the beginning of the change management process.

2. Professional Coach and Professional Change Manager are complementary and distinct in the value they provide to the organizational change process.

Recommendation: Maintain separate and distinct roles for each. Distinct roles important for maintaining integrity of the process.

3. There are seven inflection points in the change process where professional coaching can be integrated to improve the outcomes and sustainability of organizational change initiatives.

Recommendation: Identify and incorporate professional coaching earlier, more often, at different levels and more broadly including individual, group and teams.

4. While there is a growing core community of professional coaches and change professionals that recognize the power and synergies of integrating coaching and change management, there is significant opportunity to expand awareness and engagement of both in organizational change.

Recommendation: Continue to build awareness and education of the power of the coaching and change management partnership and build a network across the professional communities to promote and drive this partnership forward.