

3 Critical Keys for Organisational Coaching Success

No matter what type of organization you are in, in my experience there are 3 critical things that need to happen for organisational coaching to be successful.

However, they are often the 3 things that many coaching projects miss completely, both organisational key stakeholders who engage coaches and coaches themselves. And why in many cases, coaching has sometimes been seen as a ‘cosy chat’ rather than getting the real, very powerful results it can manifest for an organisation.

These 3 critical aspects all need to happen to ensure the most successful outcome to a coaching program. None is more important than the other as such: I see them as equal sides of what I call the Triangle of Coaching Organisational Success (Figure 1).

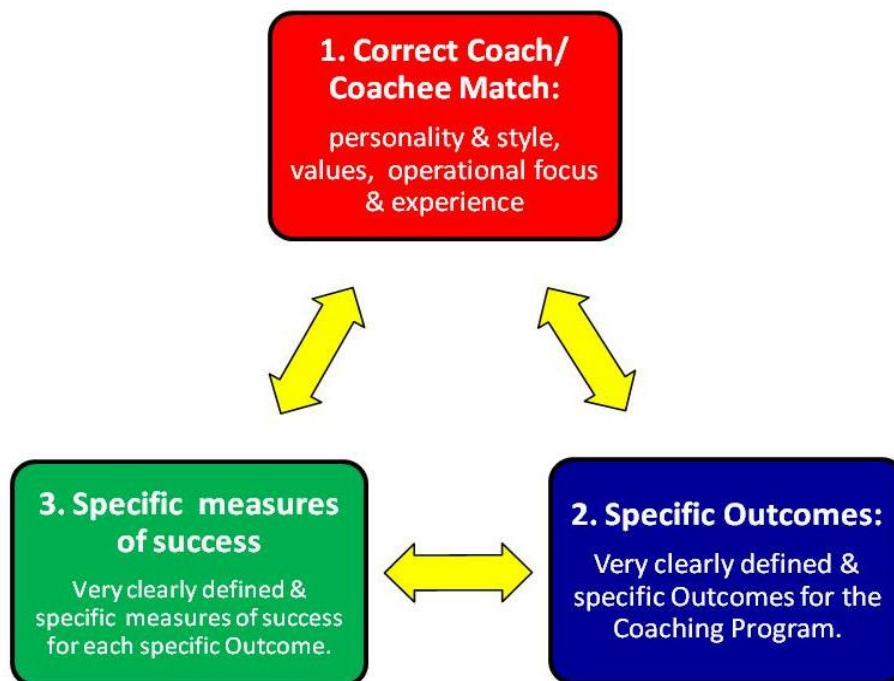


Figure 1: The Triangle of Organisational Coaching Success

If any one of the three is out of balance, at best the sides of the Triangle will not fit together properly and the coaching program outcomes will be adversely affected: at worst it may collapse and break down entirely.

This can result in significant damage to the organizational development culture, even the organization itself. And will almost certainly reduce the effectiveness of future coaching in the organization - even total loss of faith in the coaching process entirely.

Each of these areas is a topic in itself, which are covered in more depth in other articles, but to briefly cover each one:

1. Correct Coach/Coachee Match

In a 2008 American Management Association and the Institute for Corporate Productivity survey, participants were asked to what extent their organizations used certain criteria to match coaches with coachees. Almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) said matching decisions were either frequently or a great deal based on finding a coach with the right expertise to address specific issues.

Expertise in itself is important, of course, and must be a factor in selecting a coach match. However, to be the sole deciding factor in matching a coach & coachee is like expecting an employee to be the right match for your organization based purely on their skills & not taking into account personality, cultural fit, working methodology, values, etc. Unfortunately many organizations do this with their staff too, which explains why many hires don't work out (but that's a topic for another article!).

Many organizations leave the choice of coach to the coachee, which means the coachee gets the coach they want. That can be ok if the coachee is very self aware & critically self-appraised about their development... but many aren't (which is why they often need coaching!).

To ensure maximum success from a Coaching Program, the coachee needs to have the coach they *need*... as opposed to *want*. The two may be very different. Also, the coachee must have the coach the *organisation* needs for the coachee, to ensure maximum success for the organization and hence the individual.

2. Specific Outcomes

I learnt very early on in running organisational coaching programs that without very clear outcomes for an organisational coaching program (i.e. where the organization is engaging a coach to coach an employee) things can go horribly wrong!

When I say clear outcomes, I'm not talking about goal setting here - that's usually part of the coaching itself. What I mean is when the organization is paying for coaching to develop an individual or team.

In this case, the organization usually has a reason for engaging the coach & usually has a particular outcome or outcomes in mind they want the coachee to achieve. There are unlikely to be cases where there aren't specific requirements: even if a coach is engaged for an Executive, say, purely as a sounding board, there are still usually outcomes required as a result.

Getting very clear on what these outcomes are is critical - for the success of the organization, for the success of the individual, and for the reputation of the coaching industry as a whole.

Otherwise the coaching can again end up as just a "cozy chat" - which anecdotal evidence I hear says many "Executive Coaching" programs seem have been. And research indicates similarly: in a 2010 Executive Coaching Survey by The Conference Board (<http://www.slideshare.net/ledak/2010-exec-coaching-survey-the-conf-board>) research showed on average only 37% of organizations formally evaluated the effectiveness of the coaching engagement.

Those "Executive Coaching" programs may have benefited the individual, but that benefit often may not be evident to the organization that has invested in the Executive Coaching.

In my opinion, a lot of damage has been done to the coaching industry because of the lack of clarity of organisational outcomes for the coaching, so the perceived value of the coaching has not been evident.

Calculating a bottom line return on investment for any coaching is difficult enough, especially as a great coach will be getting the individual to “learn how to fish” rather than “give them fish”, so the part a great coach plays in the development may be masked.

Getting clear on the outcomes the organization wants so there is a clear and visible outcome is therefore crucial for everyone.

3. Specific Measures of Success

I’ve already stated that getting clear on specific outcomes is critical. However, the next foundation part of the Triangle of Organisational Coaching Success is specific measures of success for those outcomes.

Clear outcomes are great, but how do you know those outcomes have been achieved without a measure?

This sounds obvious, & on the face of it, sounds quite easy. However, when it comes to the nitty gritty of it, this is probably the toughest area of all to nail down.

Ask an organisational Executive how he/she will know the coachee has achieved the agreed specific outcome, & often the answer has more wool than New Zealand!

“I’ll see that the coachee is doing it/doing well/achieving it”... Or “my customers will be happy”.

“Ok, what is the specific measure of that?” “How will you actually see/measure the coachee achieving it?” “How will you know your customers are happy?” “What is the measure of that happiness?” are usually my responses. And they can be difficult questions to answer, and often take a lot of thinking about.

Measures of success are not easy things to get out of a client in an organisational coaching situation. It often takes considerable coaching skill in itself to tease the answers out of the stakeholder engaging the coach - especially when that stakeholder isn’t expecting to be held accountable & to do a lot of thinking themselves, which is quite often the case.

However, it’s worth the effort. Once these measures have been set, the coachee, the coach & the organization know what they are aiming for, & the coaching is a lot more targeted and hence a lot more effective.

In summary, Organisational Coaching can be a real minefield for the coach, the coachee and the organisational stakeholder engaging the coach if things aren’t done properly.

There are, of course other factors the come into the equation, but the key foundation of an organisational coaching job has to be the Triangle of Organisational Coaching Success.

If any one side of that triangle is not there, then the coaching is at best likely to be more ineffective than effective, and at worst, a disaster that could undermine & damage the coachee, the reputation of & confidence in future coaching and even in learning & development support in general in the

organization. Not to mention the damage done to the coach, and worst of all, the coachee, who often comes out of things very badly.

So, next time you are doing any organisational coaching, whether you represent the organization, or you are the coach or coachee, make sure you've built in all sides of the Triangle of Organisational Coaching Success.

Simon Smith founded & runs Southern Cross Coaching & Development Pty Ltd.

*Southern Cross Coaching & Development (<http://www.southerncrosscoaching.com.au>) has a rigorous process to develop clear coaching outcomes and measures of success. We also have a unique, proven Coaching Matching Matrix to match coaches to coachees - and **we have never got a coach match wrong since we started business in 2006.***

*Southern Cross Coaching & Development has a team of 15+ qualified coaches & trainers and is one of the very few organizations that **offers a 100% money-back guarantee**[^] around their coaching & training. And we have never had to refund any money since we started in business in 2006.*

Southern Cross Coaching & Development (<http://www.southerncrosscoaching.com.au>) has been coaching in Public & Private Sector organisations and SMEs since 2006, so has in-depth experience of organisational coaching (Career Coaching, Executive/Leadership Coaching, Emotional Intelligence Coaching, Resilience Coaching, Business Coaching, etc). And prior to that, the Founder, Simon Smith, was Business Development Manager for a national coaching organisation.

[^] *The only conditions are: providing participants attend voluntarily, our invoice is paid on time, & in-depth feedback is given if the guarantee is invoked as to what we could do better next time.*