The effectiveness of Strength Based Executive Coaching in Enhancing Full Range Leadership Development – D. MacKie, 2014

Aim of study:

To investigate the impact of strength-based leadership coaching on transformational leadership using a full range leadership development model (FLRM)

Background:

Challenges involved in conducting coaching research in organisations:

1. No universal coaching methodology - difficult to establish consistency in the delivery of executive coaching
2. Range of outcomes is vast – difficult to conduct cross-study comparisons
3. Coachees engage in coaching with a variety of motivations, abilities and capacity to change – difficult to ascertain which coachee variables predict coaching outcomes
4. Coexistence of several initiatives in organisations makes it difficult to attribute change purely to coaching

Evidence for the effectiveness of coaching on workplace performance and leadership – examples:

- Theeboom et al., 2014: meta-analytic study into coaching effectiveness, very few studies used between-subject designs and collected other data than self-reports. Limited evidence for generalizing results
- Grant et al, 2010: used a cognitive behavioural solution focuses approach to examine effectiveness of executive coaching in the education sector. Results of a randomizes controlled trial showed significant increase in goal attainment, well-being and reduction in stress. No evidence pointing to changes in constructive leadership were found.
- Bozer et al., 2012: Quasi-experimental study of executives’ performance and job satisfaction after receiving executive coaching through the use of self-rating scales and supervisor rated scales for performance. Career satisfaction was increased in coaching group, and so was supervisory rated job performance.

Tools:

Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) as an outcome variable for coaching:

- Comprehensive leadership model that encompasses transformational and transactional elements of leadership, as well as laissez-faire leadership behaviours
MLQ – a questionnaire that measures nine elements of the FRLM:
1) Influence attributes
2) Influence behaviours
3) Inspirational motivation
4) Individualized consideration
5) Intellectual stimulation
6) Contingent reward
7) Management by exception active
8) Management by exception passive
9) Laissez faire

Strength-Based Coaching as an effective methodology in leadership coaching

- Offers a coherent theoretical framework, empirical validation and well developed and reliable psychometric assessment tools
- Standardized inventories have been developed to measure strengths in coachees – Realise2:
  o Development tool that assesses 60 different attributes or strengths
  o E.g., curiosity, authenticity, action
- Asking coaches to follow a defined, written protocol and track coachee behavior within that framework was used as a way to operationalize coaching interventions.
- Operationalization also offered the opportunity to be specific and consistent about what is meant by strengths development.
- Strength-based leadership coaching protocol – Used in all coaching sessions as a model for delivery of strength based coaching:
  o Strength awareness – taking Realise 2 and MLQ and applying strengths to performance issues
  o Managing potential overuse of strengths - arrogance
  o Pairing strengths with other complimentary competencies – technical expertise
  o Aligning strengths with broader business goals - innovation

Process

Methods used

- 37 senior managers from a non-for-profit organization, with managerial responsibility for a number of direct reports
- Research design: nonequivalent control group design with two cohorts – coaching group and waitlist group
- Coaches: external and highly experienced
- Procedure:
  o Using the strength-based coaching protocol to set strength based objectives for participants
Participants completing Realise2 and received feedback from coaches with the aim of identifying existing strengths and areas for development

MLQ 360 tool used to provide multirater feedback on participants scores on the FLRM dimensions – transformational, transactional and laissez faire leadership styles

Coaches track coachees progress on 3 selected goals using the principles included in the coaching protocol

Results

- Significant increase is shown in MLQ 360-rater feedback after strength-based coaching is completed. This indicated that participants' transformational leadership style improved via coaching
- Significant increase in leadership outcomes for participants – other perceived them to be more effective, reported greater satisfaction with their leadership and were willing to provide extra discretionary effort
- Adherence to the coaching protocol used showed significant positive prediction of transformation leadership scores. This suggests that a structured strength-based methodology can be highly effective at enhancing transformational leadership
- FLRM is recognised as an effective model that can be used as a coaching outcome criterion when it comes to leadership coaching effectiveness