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Survey of Current Themes in Coaching Research with a Methodological Critique

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Coaching is a profession that is rapidly becoming popular among both organizations and practitioners, yet there is little empirical evidence linking the results to the process. This leaves a rapidly growing industry (now $1billion annually) without universally accepted standards or guidelines. Practitioners are left to decide for themselves which approach is best. Organizations have no conclusive evidence on appropriate qualifications to use when selecting a coach. This article surveys some of the current research on coaching and critiques the methodologies in an attempt to provide insights and suggestions for future research.

Introduction

Organizations are being battered by successive waves of change. Today's executives must manage globalization, the growing demand for services, advances in technology, and the ensuing acceleration of business processes. These overwhelmed executives are expected to lead leaner, faster-moving organizations to ever greater success while relying on employees who no longer have a strong loyalty to the organization. To accomplish their goals, executives must demonstrate a more subtle set of competencies, which include the communication and relationship skills that influence and energize employees, generate adaptability to change, and reflect a respect for people of diverse backgrounds.

To overcome the gap between what is expected of today's executives and the capabilities they possess, many of the world's most admired companies, from GE to Deloitte & Touche, invest in executive coaching. In fact, last year it was estimated that companies would spend $1 billion dollars on coaching.[1] The Corporate Leadership Council study in May 2003 found that the average cost of an executive coaching engagement was between $12,000 and $15,000. In fact, they found one organization's bill was $155,339 or an average of $25,890 per executive.[2] Coaching is reportedly responsible for bringing new success to executives and organizations, yet reliable information on the subject is scarce. In 2003, the directors of coaching psychology at the University of Sydney, Australia, surveyed research on coaching of all kinds. They located only 128 peer-reviewed studies published since 1937. Of these, just 55 were empirical, and few met the standards of reliable methodology.[3] This dearth of research has prevented the coaching industry from establishing authoritative guidelines for its practitioners. It also has resulted in a lack of clear standards for the qualifications of its practitioners, something that troubles organizations faced with selecting the appropriate coach.

In a 1996 *Newsweek* article, Thomas Leonard, one of the fathers of coaching, estimated there were 1000 coaches nationwide.[4] By the end of 1999, authors Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck cited the number of executive coaches to have grown to tens of thousands.[5] In 2002, the *Wall Street Journal* estimated the number to exceed 25,000 worldwide.[6] According to a study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 88 per cent of employers in the United Kingdom use internal coaching.[7] According to a Harvard Business School study in 2004, IBM had more than 60 certified coaches on their staff.[8] With this explosion of coaches, it seems not only timely, but imperative, to explore the need for more research on coaching with the purpose of contributing to setting appropriate industry standards on qualifications and process guidelines.

Survey of Current Themes In Coaching Research

Several themes were identified in the coaching research surveyed. One theme was whether internal or external coaching is preferable. Some research looked at what works well and what does not in coaching engagements. There was a small amount of research on peer coaching. Other research looked at diversity in coaching. Another important theme that arose was how effective was coaching, as perceived by the client. Lastly, the topic of return on investment sparked a lot of interest.

Internal Versus External Coaching

A research study sponsored by Boston University's Executive Development Roundtable[9] provided data that indicated executive coaching, both internal and external, was a highly cost effective way to deliver executive career development geared toward the specific strategic objectives of an organization. This study consisted of interviews with over 75 executives in Fortune 100 companies, as well as interviews with 15 leading executive coaches. The study looked at the advantages and disadvantages of internal versus external coaches in the organizational setting.

The findings showed that external coaches were preferable when extreme confidentiality and anonymity were required, where a coach with experience in a wide range of businesses was needed, or when someone was needed to say what no one else would. Internal coaches were preferable when knowing the company culture and politics was critical, when availability was desired, and when personal trust and comfort were important. The study found the value of coaching to be greatest for the most difficult issues – those involving the executive's relationship with the boss and in implementing downsizing. The study found one of the major reasons for the rise in popularity of the coaching practice was that it allows busy executives to address the types of issues that often go unattended. During coaching, these issues take center stage and become important work.

The Boston University study sought to determine what works and does not work in coaching engagements. They determined trust to be one of the most important issues for coaches to address, whether the coaches were internal or external. Although internal coaches may seem to have the edge since they can develop a high level of trust over an extended period of time, the coachee may be aware that as an employee of the organization, the internal coach may be required to pass on information to top management.

Executives often feel they have to monitor their words because they aren't sure exactly how the information will be used by the organization. Some executives in the study said they were more likely to trust an external coach because they would protect the information as being privileged client communication. The fact remains that some external coaches do provide assessments of executives to top management. In such cases, a clear separation of the coaching role and the assessment role is vital.

What Worked Well and What Did Not

Executives and coaches do not always see results in the same way, as reported by the Boston study. The executives they interviewed believed that good coaching was results-oriented. They went on to say the two most important factors in coaching are honest, reliable feedback and actionable ideas. Coaches often said the process was the product. They stressed the value of connecting personally with the client to ensure a good fit. Some external coaches were perceived as trying to sell more consulting time or sell a model of management that did not match the organization's or the executive's goals. Other examples were given of what does not work in coaching engagements including coaches giving negative feedback, being too "touchy-feely", and giving unrealistic or impractical action ideas. Coaches and executives agreed that good listening and solid action ideas were important. Executives suggested that peer and group coaching were valuable and could enhance organizational communication, provide better organizational information, and generate good ideas.

Peer Coaching

While the bulk of research on coaching revolved around executive coaching, there were a few studies that discussed the value of peer coaching. In research conducted by the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) in 2002, the Benchmarking Committee identified "best practices" in human resource development. One of the best practices identified was peer coaching. According to the IPMA study, peer coaching circles have been helpful in assisting new supervisors to develop strategies to resolve real-life supervisory issues. The study featured evaluation per the Kirkpatrick Model levels 1 - 3.[10]

In the Harvard Business Review article, *The Young and the Clueless*, the authors cited many examples of up-and-coming organizational leaders who did not have the emotional skills to accompany their business acumen. They stated that peer coaching has helped rising executives see that their personal style can interfere with their subordinates' growth and therefore the success of the company and their own career. The authors advocated "a peer group of up-and-coming mangers who meet monthly to share experiences and offer advice to one another."[11] Another study showing the value of peer coaching in knowledge transfer (KT) and knowledge management (KM) was produced by authors Lahti and Beyerlein in 2000. Their qualitative study of management consultants in the KT and KM fields showed that peer coaching was one of the key strategies to enhance long term productivity and provide a competitive advantage.[12] Peer coaching was also advocated by authors Cloke and Goldsmith who advised that peer coaching "dramatically increases communication skills and understanding regarding organizational conflicts. [Peer coaching also] help[s] employees own the resolution process."[13]

Diversity in Coaching

One emergent theme that was topical and deserves more interest was diversity. In a study by O'Neil and Lamm of a two-year team coaching program involving 250 participants and 4 coaches, conducted by one of the nation's largest gas and electric companies, it was found that diversity in both the teams and the coaches contributed positively. In the team setting, diversity of age, gender, and experience provided a range of perspectives. Diversity in terms of learning styles and personality types presented the biggest challenges, at times creating interpersonal issues. For example, someone with an "activist" learning style might have less patience for debriefings, while a "pragmatist" might focus on nailing down the details.

Similarly, within the Myers-Briggs personality type, friction occurred mostly between "judging" coaches, who seek closure, and "perceiving" coaches, who prefer to keep options open as long as possible. Judging coaches, who normally like to work in a planned, settled situation, sought stability in their interactions with the other coaches to balance the ambiguity found in their team settings. In contrast, the perceiving coaches, who preferred to leave things open and fluid when coaching their teams, were content to allow the teams to work in this manner. The program manager-learning coach acted as a facilitator to resolve issues resulting from these differences. If not addressed, issues of diversity could create conflicts in team dynamics which would jeopardize the learning outcomes.[14]

In analyzing the coaching of individuals, the Boston study of 75 executives and 15 coaches showed little indication that gender made a big difference in coaching relationships, with the exception that when combined with age or position, some women coaches reported that coaching an older, high-level male executive felt like a more difficult assignment, especially with regard to giving negative feedback. The study produced less information on race issues. The U.S. sample consisted of predominately white men and women with the exception of four Hispanic men. The international interviews included six executives (three Asian men and three Asian women) and three Asian internal coaches.

Most issues raised were cultural, including eye contact, speaking up, being assertive, or having a problem-solving orientation. For example, in the Anglo culture, avoiding eye contact is interpreted as lying. In Latin and Asian cultures, looking down in the presence of authority is a sign of respect. Asian managers are usually coached to make eye contact in order to "look tougher". Latin managers are typically coached to be less emotional and more factual in their communications. For managers that diverge from the dominant culture, coaching was found to have a positive effect, helping them to understand, fit in, and thrive in the social, cultural, and political environment.[15]

Client Perceptions of Effectiveness

An important theme in much of the coaching research was effectiveness. Overall, the Boston research study reported executives scored the coaching experience as a 4 (very satisfactory) on a 5-point scale. They stated they found the coaching process to have added value because they acquired new skills, abilities, and perspectives that they did not have before and which helped them to accomplish things they could not have done before. Internal coaches reported that coaching executives was an excellent way for them to learn more about the business they were serving.

Confirming the findings and expanding one aspect of the Boston study, one of the most recent research studies examined the effectiveness of executive coaching from the client's perspective. From this study of 12 executives who had undergone successful coaching engagements, Dr. MaryWayne Bush[16] identified six key elements that are essential for effectiveness in executive coaching engagements. These key elements are:

- a committed client participant (motivated, open to coaching, and willing to do the work)
- the coach's contribution (background, experience, personal qualities, tools, and resources)
- a structured development process (time-limited, using standardized assessments)
- including others in the process (for support and 360 degree feedback)
- rapport between executive and coach (built on trust and credibility)
- personal and business results that benefit the client and the organization

The study concluded that coaching was a shared responsibility of three constituents: client, coach, and organization. According to Dr. Bush, organizations can increase the chances of an effective outcome by giving their executives a role in coach selection. Ensuring that Dr. Bush's six factors are included in each coaching engagement can help coaches, clients, and organizations assess and improve the quality of their coaching outcomes.

A study by Paul Michelman supports Dr. Bush's conclusion that coaching is a shared responsibility between the executive, the coach, and the organization. He also stresses that an agreement must be reached between the three-way partnership on specific goals and parameters for the coaching engagement.[17] Michelman questioned several dozen coaches and executives who had received coaching. From this input, he developed a framework to describe the role of effective coaching in organizations today. He noted that one increasingly common use of coaching is to help senior executives better understand the challenges of leading younger workers whose work ethics and values are quite different from their own.[18]

In a bold step away from what most executive coaches are doing, world renowned author and executive coach Marshall Goldsmith has a policy that he is paid only for results, not on how much time he spends with a client or on how much a client likes him. Goldsmith believes that neither is a good metric for achieving the kind of positive, long-term change in leadership behavior that a client expects or deserves. To facilitate long-term behavioral change, Goldsmith secures agreement on two key variables before starting his coaching engagements. First he finds out what the most important behavioral changes that are needed and then he determines the key stakeholders who will judge the outcome at the end of the coaching engagement. With these two variables determined at the outset, he then moves on to qualify the executive to ascertain whether he is ready and willing to change. In the fall of 2004, Goldsmith completed research on changing leadership behavior which involved 86,000 respondents. Goldsmith found that the key variable for successful long-term change is not the coach, but the coaching client and their co-workers. He believes that involving team members and stakeholders from the beginning can exponentially increase the value of the coaching process.[19]

Return on Investment

One reason that research studies on coaching are important is to document the benefits of the investment by quantifying a return on investment (ROI). According to authors Sheila Maher and Suzi Pomerantz, "There is an increasing need to document the specific and quantifiable benefits of our service as we enter the market maturity stage."[20] They believe coaching is a service industry that has reached the mature phase of its life cycle due to the impressive growth that has occurred. The authors state that "no market is infinitely expandable" and that now is the time to "design interventions that will forestall decline, such as refining and relaunching the product to better meet the changing needs of the market."

Maher and Pomerantz borrow the product life cycle model to explain that coaching must be refined to add additional value and make coaching more responsive to changing client needs. They stated that this will restart the life cycle and hold off the decline stage, where it is possible that many coaches would be forced to leave the profession due to the decreased level of activity. Maher and Pomerantz recommend that more be done to credential coaches, internationalize the profession, and demonstrate a return on investment.

Stroud, a Senior Vice President with Right Management Consultants, reports that 93 percent of executives who have undergone coaching would recommend it to others. They acknowledge personal benefits that range from improved interpersonal skills and cultural sensitivity to a personal development plan and managerial effectiveness. Stroud states, "According to research, the coaching process delivered an average return on investment of nearly 600 percent." She also states that "Seven out of ten individuals put the value of the return to the company at more than $100,000." Stroud also found that the organizations reported measurable improvements in productivity, quality, organizational strength, customer service, and shareholder value.[21]

Another study of ROI conducted by Manchester Consulting of 100 executives supported the Stroud findings on benefits, citing average ROI of nearly $100,000 or 5.7 times the initial investment in coaching.[22] While it appears these studies may have been conducted by firms that had an interest in the outcome, they do agree with the Boston study that executives found a positive correlation between coaching and improved results in their organization. The Manchester Consulting Study did use an independent advisor for the methodology of their study, ROI guru, Jack Phillips. In addition, two independent contractors were recruited to gather the data. Although the executives in the study came from 56 different companies ranging in size from large to small, the end results were very similar. To help standardize the executives' estimates of the value of coaching, the study developed a total value scale that was compared with the ROI results. It was found that those executives who were able to quantify the benefits of coaching also scored higher on their total value score.[23]

One reason quantifying return on investment has been difficult is the lack of a validated instrument to assess coaching and the feedback process in organizations. With their research, Steelman, Levy, and Snell validate an instrument that assesses the multifaceted feedback environment. They note there has been surprisingly little empirical research in this area and conclude by saying "Use of this instrument is an ideal way to diagnose organizations and to improve the 'coaching of coaches' that is instrumental to employee success and development."[24]

Jack Phillips, improving on the 4-level evaluation model (reaction, learning, behavior, and results) developed by

Donald Kirkpatrick which has been the standard evaluation framework for over forty years, added ROI as a fifth level to allow organizations to analyze the costs of the program under evaluation. Phillips stated he would "like to see more people shifting towards a more proactive posture regarding evaluation. Try to understand what your … program might add to the business by starting to think about results and RO[I] up front."[25]

Donald Kirkpatrick provides an example from his work at Intel that shows how they used the model. "Let's take your four levels, start with the last one, and work backwards. What results are we looking for? What behaviors are needed to accomplish those results? What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do people need in order to behave in that way? And how can we do it in such a way that they'll react favorably?"[26] "At level 1, participants' satisfaction with the program is measured… At level 2, measurements focus on what participants learned during training. At level 3, the measures assess how participants applied learning on the job. At level 4, the measures focus on the business results achieved by participants when the training objectives are met. The fifth, and ultimate, level of evaluation is the return on investment. It compares the monetary benefits with the costs."[27]

Phillips and Phillips warn that resources are required and barriers exist to calculating ROI. They advise only implementing level 5 evaluation when the coaching program is of a long-term duration, has visibility within the organization, impacts strategic objectives, involves a significant cost, and has management's interest. In addition, a needs assessment should be conducted and a link established between the business need, the objectives of the coaching engagement, and the metrics chosen for the ROI analysis. "This approach ma[kes] the evaluation much easier because the data were clearly defined with the objectives."[28] Phillips notes that the cost of an ROI evaluation can run between 5 and 10 percent of the total project costs.[29]

One of the barriers to evaluating ROI is establishing a metric that captures observable behavior. Three techniques can be used to create such a metric. One assessment that works well for this is a 360 degree evaluation. The difference between a baseline assessment and one taken after coaching can produce a metric that can be weighted and calculated as an economic benefit. Another way to assess improvement based on the effects of coaching would be to conduct a role play, case study, or demonstration of the new behavior and then translate the scored value into economic terms. Forecasting can also be used to project the financial benefits of a coaching program.[30] Another barrier to measuring ROI is how to quantify intangibles such as improved employee morale, more competent employees, or more satisfied customers. These benefits definitely provide added value to the business but cannot be easily quantified. Intangible value must be considered along with ROI by organizations when deciding whether a coaching program has merit.[31] One of the most difficult and challenging issues involved in measuring ROI is isolating the effects of coaching from other factors in the benefits observed. Phillips believes it is always possible, even if estimates are used. Sophisticated and credible processes include using control groups, trend-line analysis, and forecasting models. Other techniques are expert estimation and customer input. Phillips notes "Always strive to carve out the amount of data directly related to the program or project."[32]

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) gathered 30 case studies of how organizations measured ROI. From these cases, two common formulas for calculating impact predominated: benefit/cost ratio (BCR) and ROI. To find the BCR, divide the total benefits by the cost. In the ROI formula, the costs are subtracted from the total benefits to produce the net benefits, which are then divided by the costs. For example, a coaching program producing benefits of $225,861 with a cost of $23,575 would yield a BCR of 9.6. For every $1 invested, $9.6 in benefits were returned. The net benefits are $225,861 - $23,575 = $202,286. ROI is $202,286 divided by $23,575 x 100 = 858 percent. Using the ROI formula, for every $1 invested in the program, there was a return of $8.58 in net benefits. ASTD found that "most organizations conduct evaluations to measure satisfaction; few conduct evaluations at the ROI level. Both are desirable. Evidence shows that if measurements aren't taken at each level, it's difficult to show that any improvement can be attributed to the training."[33]

The Corporate Leadership Council study found that maximizing returns on executive coaching involves several key factors. First, greater rigor is needed in the management of both coaching engagements and professional coaches. Also necessary is standardizing coach management procedures and clearly allocating accountability for actions. This can provide benchmarking opportunities. Another critical factor is extending the coaching mission beyond the needs of the individual to an initiative that will benefit the business needs of the organization. This means the direct manager and the business are the ultimate customers of the coaching engagement.

The Corporate Leadership Council found that it takes a staggering amount of effort to manage "every aspect of coaching engagements from assessing requests for coaching to finding coaches to ensuring that coaching engagements progress against specific and measurable goals."[34] Lastly, the Council found five key challenges in maximizing the returns on professional coaching. These were: "(1) difficulty finding 'best fit' professional coaches; (2) unfocused coaching engagements; (3) poor matching of coaching resources to executive requirements; (4) disconnect of coaching engagements from the organization; and (5) inconsistent delivery and quality of coaching."[35] The Council's six-month investigation of the variability of ROI in coaching found the main problems to be guaranteeing a positive relationship between the executive and the coach, and the challenge of linking the engagement with the needs and goals of the organization.[36]

An interesting study by Dr. Otto Laske of the Interdevelopmental Institute[37] sought to determine if evidence-based coaching could increase ROI. This study followed the mental-emotional growth of six executives coached over a period of 14 months. Dr. Laske posited that in the past, coaching was seen as part of the self-help movement and anecdotal evidence that it worked was acceptable. However, now organizations are looking for explicit proof of coaching effectiveness. One of the challenges with evaluating ROI is that changes in human behavior can take time, often an unpredictably long time. Another challenge is that developmental shifts are often nonlinear, occurring in stages. Dr. Laske's approach to measuring ROI combined both facets to give not only a measurement of how many coachees improved but also an assessment of exactly how they improved in both behavioral changes and developmental shifts. In his study of the six executives, Dr. Laske's findings showed all six improved to varying degrees, with three showing a large improvement.

Methodological Critique

The important methodological approaches to social science research include qualitative, quantitative, and a combination of the two. While quantitative analysis may seem superior to qualitative analysis, "quantitative data are more influenced by outside factors...Also, the appropriateness of quantitative or qualitative data depends on an evaluation's purpose…"[38] Much of the research on coaching falls into the qualitative category. While the amount of research is increasing, it is still far behind the needs of a burgeoning coaching industry that wants to set appropriate standards on qualifications and process guidelines. While some of the research is produced by academics and their institutions, much of it is funded by private foundations, corporations, and professional associations.

Qualitative

Since the purpose of qualitative research is to gain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective[39], this has been the most used type of research conducted in the field of coaching. Since this type of data is not easy to quantify, this method is usually used to report on themes and trends, instead of statistics. It is useful in emerging fields where few evaluative tools exist. As an example, the Boston University study consisted of interviews with over 75 executives in Fortune 100 companies, as well as interviews with 15 leading executive coaches.[40] This approach worked well with the subjective nature of exploring effectiveness. Themes involving the coaching experience were identified from which recommendations were developed. Another example of a good qualitative study is by Dr. MaryWayne Bush who identified six key elements that are essential for effectiveness in executive coaching engagements based on themes that appeared during her interviews with 12 executives who had undergone successful coaching engagements.[41]

Some authors have written articles based on their own observations and experiences as coaches. These articles usually are more anecdotal than based on theory and few have met the standards of reliable methodology. A case in point is the Harvard Business Review article on peer coaching entitled *The Young and the Clueless.*[42] The article discusses many examples, presumably from the authors' coaching experiences, but does not provide any detailed analysis, leaving the evidence to remain anecdotal. Case studies have been used by some practitioners to document their successes, in an attempt to share their knowledge and methods with other practitioners. However, it is still difficult to find case studies that show specifically what organizations have done in measuring ROI. The ASTD used case studies to develop their evidence on ROI; however, the ASTD study was not done on specific coaching engagements, but rather on training programs in general.[43]

One of the best examples of reliable methodology is the study undertaken by Lahti and Beyerlein. In their article, the authors used subsections for each important research criteria and systematically described the purpose of their study, the participants, the procedures, the results, and their implications. They started the article with a literature review to ground their study in theory.[44] This is one article that does a solid job of describing the research study in such detail that any reader could replicate it.

Quantitative

For most of the twentieth century, quantitative research has been the dominant method in the social sciences.[45] However, quantitative research with its numbered variables analyzed with statistical procedures has not been used much in the research of coaching. To date, most research has fallen into the qualitative realm. Authors Sheila Maher and Suzi Pomerantz quote several quantitative studies showing the estimates of return on investment in coaching to diverge more than 500%.[46] Authors Talkington, Voss, and Wise cite several quantitative studies to make their case in favor of executive coaching.[47] According to Dr. Anthony M. Grant, "It would be useful to see an increasing emphasis on objective quantitative outcome measures as well as investigating the relative efficacy of different approaches to coaching."[48]

Mixed Methods

Some researchers have combined both methods in an attempt to give a multi-dimensional facet to the results. In his unique approach to determine if evidence based coaching could increase ROI, Dr. Otto Laske used a multiple assessment strategy he called "action science". First he gave cognitive assessments to the executives and coaches, followed by interviews of the executives conducted by the coaches. This study follows the mental-emotional growth of six executives coached over a period of 14 months and correlates the coaching outcomes with the developmental level of the coaches and the participants.[49]

Some research never clearly states what method was used to produce the findings. This is fairly common in articles found in the popular press. At times, the authors allude to a study but never really explain the procedures they used to gather their data. In other instances, the author will mention statistics from a study done by another author but does not provide the reference for the reader. Such an example is found in the article *What an Executive Coach Can Do for You* by Paul Michelman which quotes a 2004 study by Right Management Consultants that stated 86% of companies are now using coaching to develop future organizational leaders.[50]

Without access to the methods of the research, we do not know for what population the 86% is representative. For example, was the study population a nationwide group of organizations or a small regional sample? Did the companies polled encompass more than one industry? "It is important to examine the theoretical perspective and method of each study, looking for overt and covert assumptions, beliefs, and values that contributed to the researcher's perspective, questions, selection of hypotheses, and interpretations of results."[51] There are also issues of validity and reliability to consider. While much of what has been written is aligned with the peer-reviewed research, without knowing the specifics of each author's data collection methods, in-depth critique is not possible. Clearly, future research should address the use of standards of reliable methodology.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research is desperately needed to help coaches, clients, and organizations understand what is realistic to expect from the coaching industry. Coaches would benefit from additional research that highlights methods that have worked for others and factors that must be effectively attended to for desired results to be produced. The coaching industry would benefit from more research so it can confidently set standards to help guide the industry and certify coaches. This will allow organizations to select more appropriate coaches and to monitor coaching engagements. Clients will benefit from a more regulated industry, one with recognizable standards and safeguards.

There are issues that have barely been touched by current research, such as issues of gender, race, and cultural diversity. There is a need for research involving longitudinal studies, following coaches, coachees, and outcomes over the long term. Additionally, more research should be conducted using pre- and post-testing and control groups. This would help to neutralize the effects of other factors.[52] There is also a need for more research conducted in countries other than the United States. This would help control the bias of ethnocentric analysis. Research to develop and pilot test measurement tools or to standardize methodologies would allow for an easier, more reliable calculation of return on investment. Also, managing the growth of demand, the proliferation of coaches, and controlling costs can be addressed in additional research studies.

The rapid growth of the coaching industry has left many unanswered questions that additional research can solve. Coaching results must be linked to the processes being used so that both organizations and clients will be able to understand the benefits and quantify the return on their investment.

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