



## Improving the Value-Add of Executive Coaching

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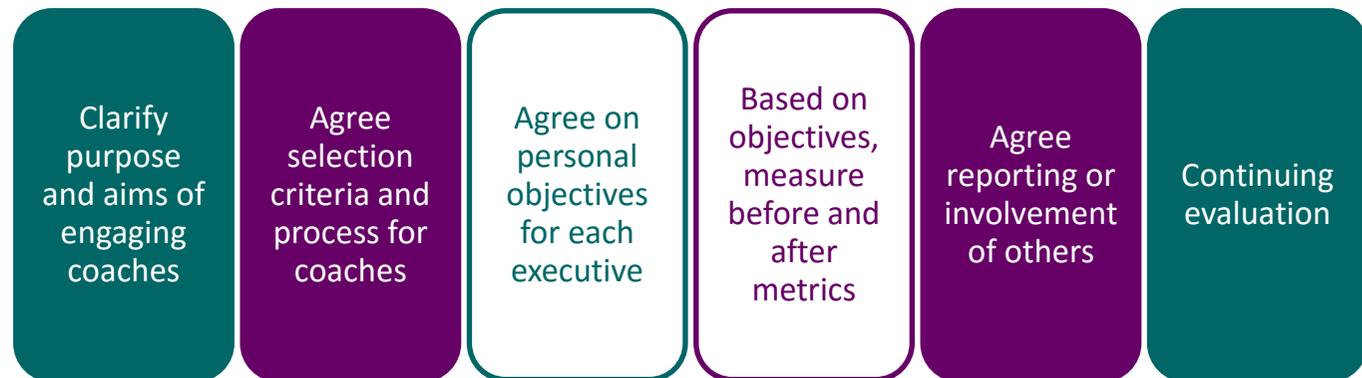
## Improving the Value-Add of Executive Coaching

**"The company is spending far too much money on too many different coaches, with no process in place to check whether the coach is any good or the coaching is adding any value."**

Sound familiar? We're hearing stories like this a lot at the moment, so we thought we'd share our top tips with you on making your approach to Executive Coaching more effective and efficient.

Whether we're coaching one senior executive in a firm or a whole leadership team and whether we are the sole coaching provider or one of many, there are some consistent ways of working that help. We have laid these out in order to give you something of a process to follow, in case that helps.

Just to give you a quick summary we'll be covering these key six elements to successful executive coaching:





### Clarify purpose and aims of engaging coaches

Why do you want to offer your leaders a coach? For some organisations it's about thinking space: as we pay our leaders to think and strategise, let's give them the tools to do their best thinking. For others it's about personal development that is more tailored to the individual than a workshop or online study.

We see in particular many people wanting to work on their emotional intelligence, personal brand and impact, which is often better developed in a 1:1 setting than a group workshop.

### The question of why you want to offer coaching is critical to helping you search for the right coach.

If for example you want personal impact development, then you need a combined skillset of coaching and how to develop someone's gravitas.

Whereas the thinking space option would lead you to search for a coach who asks challenging questions, but adds little of their own knowledge and experience.

Then of course you get the situations where what is wanted is more of a mentor

**"Here is someone who has achieved what you want to achieve, in our industry or similar, so they can advise you on how to do it and be a sounding board for your ideas."**

Work out what it is you're after so you can find the right coach or mentor to help, or build up a preferred list of coaches for people to use.





### Agree selection criteria and process for coaches

Now you know what you're looking for, you can ask the right questions to find the best coach or coaches for your executive team.

The trap many people fall into is asking about industry experience, as this is what is familiar, but unless you're looking for an industry mentor, this is unlikely to be the most important ingredient the coach brings.

Yes, it can be helpful if the coach understands the specific challenges of the industry and company, but it would be more important for their quality of challenging questions, observations and practical skills they can develop in others to be evident.

**“Ask for testimonials from previous or current coachees, who can give you an insight into the value of coaching they have experienced and describe how the coach works with them.”**

### Agree on personal objectives for each executive

Ask each leader what they want or need from the coaching on offer. It might be helpful for you to give them the examples described earlier - from thinking space, to specific skills development, to more classic mentoring from someone who has been there and done it before.

Many people want a combination, so allow the coachee's responses to help you agree personal objectives for the coaching - and match them to the right coach.

You might find that not all your senior leaders want to talk so openly about what they are looking for, so if you hit that stumbling block you could offer them chemistry meetings with 2 or 3 coaches. That way the executive can work out for themselves who might best support them.

Some companies choose to be more forceful about clarity of personal objectives, suggesting that without these, a coach cannot be provided. It's your choice to make, but be aware that without clear objectives, you could be back to square one, not knowing what value coaching is adding.



### Based on objectives, measure before and after metrics

How does the COO know they have had good thinking time, to strategise and plan for the future? How does the Sales Director know they have improved their people leadership skills and habits?

**“Putting a number to things makes it far easier to get a sense of value”**

If your Sales Director were asked to rate their skills and confidence with people leadership, before and after a coaching programme, what difference might you expect to see? What if employee engagement surveys or 360 feedback were used to add further insight and measurement of improvement?

One Operations Director we worked with had a success measure of moving from a self-rated 4 on gravitas and personal impact to an 8. She added to that measure by asking a few trusted peers to rate her as well, which boosted her confidence at the start and close of the coaching programme.

What will the COO have achieved by having time and space to think? The success measure here could be the level of clarity on strategy, or the outcomes of that.

A Product Leader told us he would know the coaching had added value if his whole team could articulate the vision and strategy, then explain their part in delivering it. This was such a clear outcome and it gave a pinpoint focus to the thinking time that both the Product Leader and then his team put into this.

They all added a number to help measure success, stating that they wanted to move from a current confidence level of 2 to a 7 in delivering the strategy.



### Agree reporting or involvement of others

“We thought coaching for the senior leadership team was a good idea, but then word got out that the coach was feeding back concerns to the CEO. Now all trust has been lost and coaching is a dirty word here.”

This is sadly a story we hear all too often and it usually comes down to a lack of clarity on who feeds back to whom about what. Whereas junior leader coaching can benefit from involvement of a line manager, it is usually the case with senior exec programmes that conversations are kept entirely confidential.

### Agree upfront with the coach, coachee and any other interested parties what will be shared and what will not be shared.



We often find it helpful for the coachee to be involved in preparing some kind of report to anyone evaluating the value-add of coaching, explaining the outcomes and impact – if this is required and agreed upfront.

Avoid getting into difficult situations by clarifying all of this at the start of a coaching arrangement, possibly exploring some classic “what if” scenarios as well.

You might want to explore how the situation would be handled if the coach had concerns about the coachee’s commitment to the programme, or if the coachee thought the coach was not adding value.



**Continue evaluation of coaching value throughout and review all of the above every 12 months**

With all of these suggestions, the key is to keep reviewing things and learn from your experience. Now you have clarity on why you offer coaching to your senior leaders and you have set success measures for each individual coaching programme, you can monitor success over time.

Keep a record of the success measures you have agreed for each coachee, so you can compare before and after feedback and numbers. By reviewing all of this regularly and comparing the value-added by each coach, you can start to build a picture of which coaches are working best for you.

In turn, that might lead to a re-working of the purpose of coaching or your selection criteria.

Examples we often see are that companies have initially set out looking for mentors to offer the “been there, done that” advice, yet find that what they really need is coaching and skills development.

**It is only through seeing some things work well and other things not work at all, that you can build your own company approach to engaging with and evaluating executive coaching.**

By being crystal clear on the overall purpose and aims of you engaging coaches as a business, then having processes in place to ensure and evaluate this value-add, you can feel confident that you can avoid the awkward situation of paying money for something you cannot measure.

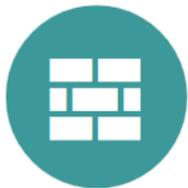
# about Totem

## People at their Best

### build:

We support you in uncovering your vision, mapping talent and developing end to end processes to manage talent within your organisation.

Focusing on profits through people



### engage:

We help you to engage individuals and teams—supporting change, gaining commitment to your vision and retaining your highest performers.

Making sure you get the best from your people



### assess:

We provide you with tools, techniques and assessors to help you map the talent and potential of individuals in your organisation and/or in selecting new talent.

Helping you recruit people who fit and deliver results



### develop:

We design and deliver exceptional, focused and blended development, allowing each individual to grow in their role, capability and motivation.

Maximising potential and personal contribution



## What our clients say about us:

### We're nimble

*"What sets Totem apart? It is their ability to be very thorough in their approach whilst at the same time willing to offer innovative suggestions that can be implemented in a time and cost effective way. Would I recommend them to others? Without question!"*

HR Manager, Pulse

### We get them

*"I'd definitely recommend working in partnership with Totem – I say partnership, as this is exactly how they operate. They seize every opportunity to learn more about your business and by doing so are able to support projects with this insight, often going above and beyond the original scope. "*

Resourcing Manager Carphone Warehouse

### We inspire confidence

*"Always engaging conversations with plenty of coloured pens, we found the insights from every meeting invaluable, and asked Totem to run various workshops for our L&D team.*

*Totem have taken the time to understand our business and deliver learning that really sticks and challenges people's thinking.*

*Global Head of Talent, World Duty Free Group.*