

# EXECUTIVE **eye**

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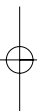
**Business and Personal Impact Special:**  
What difference does it make?

Coaching

Mentoring

Potential Evaluation  
Programme

Outplacement



# AND NOW FOR SOMETHING...



Anne Isaacs

...completely the same! Isn't that what real difference is – not just saying that you are different, but proving it by continually challenging expectations?

This Spring is full of new initiatives at Executive Action, but each builds on what we do best – making a difference. In this issue, we take a fresh look at coaching and development and ask the question that every organisation and individual wants to know the answer to: 'What difference does it make?'

Coaching has become very much the 'in thing' and yet many people are still hazy about what it actually involves and what impact it can have on the business.

Some confusion also surrounds mentoring – in what way is it distinct from coaching and what are the business benefits? For outplacement, people's expectations have been so lowered by the mass-market approach that they

question whether they really need it at all. And for programmes like our PEP, what people really need to know is whether it will bring a return on their investment or whether it is like the superficial change processes that they have been burned by in the past.

In each case, the point is proven through the testimony of those who've been there and know the true value or through hard figures showing that the return on investment is real. 'People issues' will always have an element of ambiguity, but we demonstrate that the importance of proper people development cannot be overvalued.

This has been my belief since I first joined Executive Action twenty years ago, and it is the same today. The only thing that changes is the way we develop people and this changes everyday, for every different person.

**Anne Isaacs**

# COACHING:



Some people mistakenly believe coaches are there to advise on issues like whether to landscape their garden at home, but the best coaches focus on growing the business.

In a climate where coaching services are proliferating and their impact varies wildly, Joy Wilkinson asks what makes an effective coach and what can the business get out of it?

"There is a conspiracy of silence around coaching. Although the company pays the bill, because of client confidentiality, the company never gets to know from the coach what is going on," said Geoff Tudhope, whose coaching roles have encompassed purchaser, as Group Vice President HR for ICI, and provider, through Merryck & Co. "This links to a second tension: as business goals get shorter and sharper and impatience levels rise, the company as 'banker' is looking for a return on its investment. So what can be done?"

This question cuts to the heart of the coaching conundrum. According to the CIPD, there has been an 'explosive growth' in coaching in recent years with over four-fifths of the organisations they surveyed using coaching services. This is clearly a recognition of the value that coaching brings to companies'

# WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

“It is crucial that coaching is all about the business.”

## Sonia Inniss

competitiveness, yet because of the points Geoff raises, and because the explosive growth has led to people offering services for which they may not have the necessary depth of experience, there is also deep-rooted scepticism about coaching's ability to deliver results.

To an experienced coach, however, the answer is perhaps more straightforward.

Sonia Inniss began to offer coaching as a service as part of her work in organisation and management development in the mid-1980s, around the time that Anne Isaacs began coaching with Executive Action. Both were peers at the pioneering stage of coaching, when the current explosion

was too distant to be dreamed of. Back then, the scepticism was overwhelming. “It was a completely undervalued skill, confused with training and seen as irrelevant at high-level,” said Sonia. Yet, like Anne, she quietly made the case for coaching time and again by proving coaching's ability to deliver a marked difference in performance. The secret, she says, is to be uncompromising in its pure business focus.

“It is crucial that coaching is all about the business – the executive's effectiveness as a leader and manager within their business role, not in their wider life. Good coaching is not about someone's personal life choices. You have to make the boundaries clear from the start so that all

the work you do has a pay-off for the organisation.”

Geoff agreed: “All discussions, reflections, options and choices must be rooted in what the individual wants and needs to achieve and how they get things done in their business. It does also involve deep reflection for the individual but it is in the context of finding balance and being productive.” And Anne echoed both: “Whilst outplacement and other forms of executive development may deal with the whole person, coaching is strictly business.”

Elementary as this may seem, it is a fundamental point that is often missed by inexperienced coaches, and by some executives. Said Sonia: “In the past, I have been asked to deal with all kinds of issues that have nothing to do with the business – whether the person should move house or even have their garden

## COACHING: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

continued from page 3

landscaped! I quickly set them straight: the company does not pay my fee to resolve such matters. Coaching is all about their business performance and we are not friends, therapists or marriage guidance counsellors."

The confusion of the coaching role has been amplified in the last five years as the market has flooded with coaches entering the profession under commercial pressure.

"If someone has been providing training services to a company for ten years and suddenly the company needs coaching services, the trainer has to adapt or lose business," said Sonia.

"This lowers the standards as they may well lack the qualities that make an effective coach."

These qualities, she explains, include a strong commercial acumen and well-formulated theories of management, organisation and leadership. Values are also critical.

"Coaching must have properly defined outcomes aligned to organisational needs."

Paul Jones

"You must have strong views about how people learn and develop that have been proven over time."

With all these in place, the outcomes of coaching can be powerful. "There may not be a linear relationship between the input of coaching and its business output, but there is a real qualitative difference," she said.

"As a result of coaching, the leader's decision-making is clearer, their focus on their role is sharper and their ability to deliver results is greatly enhanced."

This return on investment is invaluable. Although the company paying the bill may

never know the detail of the coaching sessions, the effect on the business will be evident.

Paul Jones, a Director of Executive Action, said: "The impact can be as tangible as adding millions to the bottom-line and it can also have far-reaching cultural impact, improving talent retention, productivity and the organisation's ability to handle change.

"Countless surveys identify leadership behaviour as a key differentiator for a company's performance and the cost of failure to improve leaders' capability is high.

"Coaching is the way forward, but it must have properly defined outcomes aligned to organisational needs. Only then will its unique effect be clear for all to see." ■

■ For details of Executive Action's coaching services, please call us on 020 7299 2900.

# MENTORING: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

What do businesses and individuals get out of mentoring? Three business leaders drawn from Executive Action's diverse pool of mentors give both sides of the story.

**Ann Cormack has 19 years' experience of leading businesses and global change for Shell International.**

"I was one of the first wave of people to be trained as a mentor in Shell and have also benefited from having an external mentor myself. It is a great reality check and calibration. A problem that might rock your confidence is suddenly put into perspective when you talk to someone who has been there before. You realise that other people

have solved the problem – or even not solved it, yet still moved forward, which really boosts your confidence in your ability to deliver.

Everyone needs role models, especially women at senior level who at least can benefit from knowing that they are not the first to face tough issues and grow from them.

It can be lonely for people near, or at, the top. As they report to someone very senior, there's rarely time to talk in-depth to them about

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# MENTORING: WHAT DIFFERENC

“Formalising mentoring through an external provider is a smart move.”

**David Hollywood**

all kinds of issues, so mentoring is vital. One of the lessons that I've learned and pass on to mentees is to make sure that others see and recognise your successes which is, again, particularly important for women who are perhaps less inclined to shout about their achievements. Whilst modesty is a commendable virtue, it mustn't hold you back in the business jungle. And a piece of general advice is to always aim high and keep the end in mind. Insights like this, gained from years' of experience and adapted to specific business situations, help people to focus and excel .”

**David Hollywood's 40-year international career in industry includes 14 years as a PLC main board director.**

“Over the years, businesses have cut back so much that most people are at full stretch and the unofficial mentoring that once went on is disappearing. No one has much time to watch out for others and help them

develop and prosper in the business. Formalising mentoring through an external, expert provider is a smart move.

There are many benefits to having an external mentor. For example, if you have been around as long as I have, you've been through fluctuating business cycles several times, whereas the people in a company may well have only managed in one climate. Lots of managers have no experience of an economic downturn which demands different skills so they need the insight of someone who has been there before and knows what to do. It can be difficult for those in a company to accept that the decline in their market is permanent and to know how best to use their core skills to open up new markets.

It can also be impossible to say to someone in your own company: 'I don't know how to do this'. There's a reluctance to raise such issues internally so a mentor from outside can really add value.

# ICE DOES IT MAKE?

What I've learned from my career is that business is all about people. It doesn't matter if you have a great business model, if you don't have good people, it won't be successful, and if you have a bad business model, good people can fix it. This is where mentoring can really make a difference."

**Ian Owen has over 20 years' experience of running financial services businesses including MD and CEO positions with Eagle Star and Zurich.**

"There is a big difference between coaching and mentoring and both have a part to play in developing people to perform more effectively in business.

Whilst a coach can help someone improve their game – their behaviour, interactions and performance – I believe that a mentor is there to challenge the game they are playing.

It's not for a mentor to give people all the answers, but because I have been in

similar situations to those my mentee faces, I am able to raise hard issues related to the market and operations and impart the lessons I've learned. This helps the mentee to see the bigger picture and find new ways to resolve problems.

Mentors are valuable for business leaders as it is difficult to open up to someone within the organisation because of concerns about corporate agendas. The mentor is completely free of politics and can help to put the situation in a broader context.

Mentors bring a truly objective perspective and are not afraid to ask the difficult questions. Often what the mentee thinks is the issue is just on the surface and a good mentor can recognise that then dig deep to find the real issues and deal with them.

The skill is to listen and ask questions that guide the mentee to question themselves so they better understand the situation before formulating appropriate options." ■



Ian Owen, one of our many mentors.

"Mentors bring a truly objective perspective and are not afraid to ask the difficult questions."

Ian Owen

■ For details of Executive Action's mentoring services and of the many mentors available, please call us on 020 7299 2900.

# PEP:

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

### The Potential Evaluation Programme

is straightforward – seven sessions comprising one-to-one work with a consultant, inputs from relevant experts and tools, and three-way discussions to feed results back to the sponsor – yet the range of applications is vast. Whether unlocking potential in a current role, developing potential for progression within an organisation or helping an individual to make the move to a new employer, one theme is constant – change.

A year on from its launch, Joy Wilkinson looks at the different ways organisations have used the PEP and the impact it has had.

“One of the main reasons why change fails to happen for organisations is that it does not happen on an individual level,” said Senior Consultant Elizabeth Reddish. “Even though HR teams take steps to involve people in change programmes, these can often amount to just pushing

people through processes, sending them off to assessment centres and hoping that somehow that will do the job. But effective change means engaging with people on an individual level, helping them understand what change means to them, realign their own goals with that of the organisation or

### PEP: Return on Investment

If a company invests in PEPs for 10 people over the course of a year, the cost of the combined programmes is £75,000 plus VAT. This will give a 140% return on investment in hard figures

and a further incalculable return in terms of performance, as:

■ Half of the people will change companies, saving an average of £106,000 in remuneration.

■ Half of the people will be retained, more motivated in their current role or capable of redeployment to a role where they can be more effective.

PEP: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

mutually acknowledge that their goals are incompatible and both would be better off parting."

**Retention**

Over the past year, of the 47% of people who stayed with their organisation as a result of the PEP, 27% remained in their current role. However, while their business card stayed the same, the change in them was significant as they at last had an incisive understanding of why they were in the role, were alerted to their true capability and catalysed for future change.

**Progression**

The remaining 20% of those retained changed their role within their current company after undertaking a PEP. This was a direct result of both themselves and their sponsors getting a better understanding of their capability, potential and where it could be used to greater effect to help the organisation progress.

**Moving on**

In a 21st Century twist on outplacement, the PEP can



See the difference: standardised processes can't deliver real change like the PEP can.



be used in situations where both the company and the individual feel that a move should be made but neither is sure when, how or why. This is especially relevant in the public sector where forcing someone to leave is less of an option, but is also used by companies who value clarity on their people

over just cutting headcount. Of the 53% of people who made a decision to leave their organisations, the effect of them leaving was positive for both parties.

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■ For further details of the PEP, please call us on 020 7299 2900.

# OUTPLACEMENT: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

**Colin Wrigley, Head of  
SME Sales with Lloyds  
TSB Autolease.**

"When I first came to Executive Action, I was sure about what I wanted to next in my career. Leaving Bank of Scotland after 19 years, my aspiration was to find an equity share in a small business. I thought I would enjoy the control aspect of part-ownership, but I didn't give enough credence to the downsides of that kind of set-up.

"My consultant, Leonard Magrill, was resolute in supporting my aim, but he also persuaded me to keep my options open and he let me know gently that he thought a corporate environment was quite probably the right place for me. Together, we went through the process of understanding my strengths and my goals, but instead of pushing me to chase after the

first opportunity that arose, he ensured that I held back from speaking to headhunters and recruiters until my strategy was decided.

"I quickly realised the truth of what Leonard had already worked out: that the security of a big employer, the buzz of a strong, established brand and a big team are all things that I really enjoy. We decided that my ideal working environment was with another major player in financial services, but in a new marketplace, and preferably a growing one. We focused our discussions on dynamic areas of growth within established businesses, and

"Where I am  
now is exactly  
where I want  
to be."

the Executive Action team tailored the research and CVs accordingly.

"The process of approaching the market, mainly through networking, led to several options, and again under Leonard's guidance I held back from snapping one up straightaway. Understanding my value and what I needed from a job, I was able to be choosy and consider the different opportunities on offer. We agreed that the position with Lloyd's was a great fit.

"Where I am now – driving ambitious growth in an underexploited area, but with serious corporate muscle behind me – is exactly where I want to be. Executive Action's assistance, in terms of long-term perspective and practical support, enabled me to make of redundancy a positive experience with an excellent outcome."

Zoë Blake talks to Colin Wrigley, who thought he didn't need outplacement – until he came to Executive Action, and to Sandra Verkuyten, for whom the tailored approach facilitated a much needed 'grown-up gap year'.

**Sandra Verkuyten, portfolio career including CEO of the Hearing Aid Council.**

"I had absolutely no ideas and no preconceptions about what to do next. I'd enjoyed my role as Corporate Development Director of Remploy, but events in my personal life left me badly in need of a real break, so I decided to take a year's sabbatical.

"Almost everyone who heard what I was planning to do thought I was crazy, but further discussion always seemed to reveal that they would do it too if they could.

"I started working with Executive Action in a fairly relaxed way, talking with my consultant more about the things that I didn't want to do, defining the kind of company that I didn't want to work for.

We concluded that an operational or full-time role was not for me, and that the values of the organisation were critical. At the same time, I travelled, learnt Dutch, spent lots of time with my family – I even spent a week in a monastery – and thought hard about my strengths and ambitions.

"Unfortunately, mid-way through my break I suffered two bereavements in swift succession and my new husband became ill. If I hadn't already given up my full time role, I would probably have had to do so anyway.

"A few months later I was ready to really focus on my career again, and things started to come together very swiftly, with Executive Action's support. Despite being in the market for a new job, I felt very robust about my new approach. I was determined

"I felt very robust about my new approach."

to be completely upfront about my values and personality, calculating that the right organisation wouldn't be put off by an unusually direct candidate.

"When I met the Hearing Aid Council's interview panel, they asked for a presentation on my plans for the future of the body. I said what people might often want to say, but rarely do: no, I can't, because I haven't yet spoken to the numerous stakeholders involved or got a real grip on the important issues – they were certainly taken aback, but I got the job!" ■

Like many senior executives, Jane Toogood wanted to 'put something back'. She's now inviting others to do likewise through a placement with the development charity International Service.



# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Jane's ambition to achieve a better life balance drove her from the corporate world to her current portfolio of activities. She is now MD of a new marketing and strategy business, NED of a primary healthcare trust and a board trustee of International Service.

International Service (IS), founded in 1953, concentrates its programmes on three themes: HIV/AIDS, Human Rights and Sustainable Livelihoods. All of its programmes are created to work in areas of the greatest need, selecting as local partners organisations representing the needs of the most disadvantaged groups in society, in particular

disabled people, indigenous people, women and children.

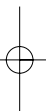
The charity recruits qualified, experienced and motivated professionals for long-term placements with development projects in Latin America, West Africa and the West Bank/Gaza Strip. It recruits professional people for 70 posts each year on behalf of local organisations that have identified a need for specific skills in a very wide range of disciplines.

Recruits have to demonstrate that they are adaptable and

flexible, resilient and tenacious, open to sharing and learning, and above all, committed, because – as IS very honestly states – 'none of the projects for which we recruit is perfect (if they were, they wouldn't need you)'.

Lots of organisations use the language of values when they are recruiting ('mutual respect', 'cooperation', 'integrity' and 'transparency', from a quick scan of the *Sunday Times* appointments section) – but few allow successful candidates to put those values into action in quite such a direct and meaningful way. ■

■ To contact IS, call 01904 647 799 or visit [www.internationalservice.org.uk](http://www.internationalservice.org.uk)



# EXECUTIVE **eye**

## Editor

Joy Wilkinson

## Contributors

Zoë Blake  
Anne Isaacs  
Karen Wooding

## Cartoons

Tekura Maeva  
tekura\_maeva@hotmail.com

## Design & production

Angela Milton  
ask\_angm@yahoo.co.uk

## EXECUTIVE **action**



THE CAREER CONSULTANCY  
*for senior managers and directors*

London office:  
6 Porter Street  
London W1U 6DD  
t: +44 (0)20 7299 2900  
f: +44 (0)20 7487 4525  
www.executive-action.com

Leeds office:  
2nd Floor, 1 City Square  
Leeds LS1 2ES  
t: +44 (0)113 300 2549  
f: +44 (0)113 300 2020  
e: info@executive-action.com