

Awareness Coaching



The modern economy is changing more and more rapidly than ever before. Companies depend on their leaders to guide them through this turbulent marketplace, making the availability of savvy, well-developed leaders a crucial part of business success. However, a recent survey found that although the majority of HR directors identified high-potential leader development as their most important focus, more than 80% of those surveyed expected their HR budget either to shrink or stay the same.

This leaves many HR managers struggling to answer an important question: In such a cost-driven business atmosphere, how can companies still provide critical professional development opportunities to their leaders? By combining the powerful science of personality assessments with a limited number of coaching sessions, companies can provide a highly impactful, cost-effective experience for their high-potential employees.

Skills vs. Awareness

Over the past two decades, executive coaching has evolved into a sophisticated, highly involved process. These programs can span more than a year, during which the coach plays a central role in helping the participant develop skills and augment behaviors necessary for success in his or her future role. These engagements are commonly known as skills coaching.

Awareness coaching, on the other hand, uses assessment results and a series of short coaching sessions to heighten a participant's strategic

self-awareness – the understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, and behavioral tendencies, and how those strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies compare to those of others. In awareness coaching engagements, the burden of development is placed squarely on the participant's shoulders, with the coach offering suggestions for behavior changes geared toward increasing workplace performance and acting as a sounding board for progress.

The obvious advantage of awareness coaching over skills coaching is that, because coaching engagements are limited in time and number, awareness coaching costs much less than skills coaching. It is therefore more scalable and can be used to reach a broad spectrum of a company's leader population.

Awareness coaching holds several less obvious advantages:

1. Awareness coaching offers participants sufficient time to build rapport with a professional coach.
2. Awareness coaching maintains scientifically valid personality assessment as its driving force.
3. Most importantly, participants overwhelmingly cite awareness building, the central focus of awareness coaching, as the most helpful part of any coaching engagement.

Awareness Coaching at Work

A leading manufacturer of health and personal care products with more than 114,000 employees operating in 60 countries relies on its international recruitment and development program to identify and train its high-potential leaders. Selection into the program involves a rigorous, multi-stage interviewing process and assessment using Hogan tools configured to predict performance along several company-specific leadership competencies. Once accepted, participants are given local, regional, and international assignments along with structured training interactions with company leaders.

build participants' strategic self-awareness and improve leader performance.

Under the new program, participants engaged in a three-part onboarding process during their first year:

1. Assessment – Participants complete the Hogan Personality Inventory, Hogan Development Survey, and Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory and receive reports describing their normal personality, potential derailers, and core values.

The company observed improved performance in participants after a simple one-on-one feedback session during which participants discussed their assessment results with a Hogan coach.

The program achieved considerable success, and served as a benchmark for the company's other onboarding and leadership development programs. However, program leaders wanted to increase the program's impact. The company observed improved performance in participants after a simple one-on-one feedback session during which participants discussed their assessment results with a Hogan coach. This increased performance sparked significant interest in using professional coaching as part of the program, but with more than 200 participants per year, skills coaching was cost prohibitive. Hogan partnered with the firm in 2009 to design an awareness coaching program that used available assessment data and limited coaching engagements to

2. Development planning – Participants complete a feedback session with a Hogan coach to discuss assessment results and prepare a development plan that targets key strengths and areas for improvement with the ultimate goal of improving workplace performance in their first year.
3. Professional coaching – Each participant works with his or her Hogan coach at four points during his or her first year (0 months, two months, six months, and 12 months).

This process is representative of a typical awareness coaching engagement, and is one Hogan replicates at several companies.

The results support the impetus for awareness coaching – that a greater understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses leads to improved performance.

Strong Results

After two years, Hogan surveyed participants, the participants’ supervisors, and the coaches to gauge the program’s impact. The highlighted results provide a unique three-sided view of the process and its effectiveness:

Participant View

- 83% said the assessments accurately reflected their personality characteristics.
- 85% said the process raised their self-awareness regarding behaviors that impact their job performance.
- 78% said the process provided them with valuable information including actionable development suggestions.
- 81% said they would recommend the process to others.

Participant buy-in is important for the success of any development program. Survey results indicate that the accuracy of assessment data helped participants engage in the process and proved a valuable tool for extending development beyond the program.

“The reports are very useful,” said one participant. “I find that I go back to them now and then to assess and improve my performance when tackling different job areas of my position.”

Supervisor View

- 66% said participants were more actively engaged in their development.
- 64% said participants had a better understanding of their strengths.
- 66% said participants had a better understanding of their weaknesses.
- 56% said participants were more aware of their impact on others in the workplace.
- 64% said participants had taken steps that would likely result in performance improvements.
- 62% saw improvements in subordinate performance and development after Hogan coaching.

Supervisor survey results were influenced by the degree to which the supervisor was involved in the participant’s development. Supervisors that were more involved tended to rate the impact of the program much higher in comparison to those with little or no involvement. Still, the results support the impetus for awareness coaching – that a greater understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses leads to improved performance.

Coach View

- 86% said the participants were engaged during the feedback session.
- 69% said the participant regarded his or her feedback favorably.
- 81% said the participants were accepting of their feedback.
- 73% said the feedback was likely to have a positive impact on the career of the participant.

Coaches' survey results support the fact that more accurate assessment tools – reflected by participants' favorable regard for their feedback results – led to more engaged participants.

Three Keys for Success

Taken together, the data above highlight three keys for successful awareness coaching programs:

1. Valid Assessment is Key

Valid assessment tools are the engines that drive successful awareness coaching. By using Hogan's assessments as part of the selection process, the company acquired a wealth of performance data that could be used later in the development process, saving the company a considerable amount.

Awareness coaching builds on powerful assessment data to incorporate the most useful elements of more involved coaching programs into a cost-effective package that produces outstanding results.

2. Strategic Self-Awareness

Second, participants, their supervisors, and the coaches agree on the importance of self-awareness for personal and job success. Personality is composed of two parts, identity – how we see ourselves – and reputation – how others see us. For most people there is an important disparity between identity and reputation that can cause them to ignore feedback and derail. Strategic self-awareness is about achieving a realistic view of one's strengths and weaknesses, and how those strengths and weaknesses compare to those of his or her peers.

3. Knowledgeable Coaches

Finally, participants and their supervisors agreed that Hogan's talented coaching staff played a significant role in the program's success. One supervisor said, "It is clear from the anecdotal feedback that participants valued the knowledgeable coaches that could provide feedback and coaching advice beyond what is offered by the assessments and reports alone."

Conclusion

In this cost-driven business environment, finding economical, yet still impactful methods of leadership development is an important key to success. Awareness coaching builds on powerful assessment data to incorporate the most useful elements of more involved coaching programs into a cost-effective package that produces outstanding results.