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The Business Case for Executive Coaching

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT · TEAM DYNAMICS · WORKSHOPS · FACILITATED REVIEWS

Well-designed coaching, team development, and leadership training can materially improve how leaders and teams think, act, and execute. The strongest evidence is for capability, behavior, and performance — not universal ROI promises.

ONE-TO-ONE EXECUTIVE COACHING

50th to 72nd

Across 37 randomized trials and 2,528 participants, coaching produced a moderate, reliable improvement across leadership and personal outcomes — roughly equivalent to moving a typical participant from the middle of the pack to the 72nd percentile.

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS & DEVELOPMENT

50th to 79th

A review of 335 leadership-training samples found strong gains in applying learning on the job and positive effects on measurable results. The most effective programs used needs analysis, feedback, active practice, and sessions spread over time.

TEAM ASSESSMENT & DYNAMICS

About 2 in 3

Across 51 controlled studies and 8,439 participants, targeted teamwork interventions improved teamwork and performance. After unusually large studies were removed, a trained team had about a 66% chance of outperforming an untrained team.

FACILITATED REVIEWS & DEBRIEFS

20–25% lift

Across 46 research samples, properly conducted team or individual debriefs improved performance by roughly 20% to 25% — support for facilitated reviews, offsites, and after-action routines that turn experience into better execution.

Percentile and “2 in 3” statements are approximate translations of standardized research effects, assuming comparable groups and normally distributed outcomes.

WHERE THIS CAN CREATE VALUE

- **Executive transitions:** first 100 days, expanded scope, succession
- **Leadership behavior:** judgment, communication, influence, accountability
- **Assessment:** 360 feedback, development planning, blind-spot reduction
- **Team dynamics:** roles, decision rights, trust, conflict, alignment
- **Execution:** operating rhythms, follow-through, reviews, adaptation

DESIGN THE ENGAGEMENT TO WORK

- 1 **Diagnose the actual need.** Use interviews, data, observation, or validated assessment.
- 2 **Tie the work to real outcomes.** Define observable behavior and one business measure.
- 3 **Make it active.** Combine feedback, practice, reflection, and accountability.
- 4 **Measure change.** Capture baseline, follow-up, and manager or team perspectives.

THE CREDIBLE BUSINESS CASE

The science does not support a universal 5× or 8× ROI claim. It does support targeted investment in the leaders and team behaviors that shape performance. Financial return should be measured against the specific organizational outcome the engagement is built to change.

Research base: de Haan & Nilsson (2023), *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, DOI 10.5465/amle.2022.0107; Cannon-Bowers et al. (2023), *Frontiers in Psychology*, DOI 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1204166; Lacerenza et al. (2017), *Journal of Applied Psychology*, DOI 10.1037/apl0000241; McEwan et al. (2017), *PLOS ONE*, DOI 10.1371/journal.pone.0169604; Tannenbaum & Cerasoli (2013), *Human Factors*, DOI 10.1177/0018720812448394.



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