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# Coaching challenges in a time of cutbacks

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# Coaching challenges in a time of cutbacks

Coaching initiatives are now particularly vulnerable at a time of cutbacks and reorganisation. Yet coaching is a vital part of what an organisation needs when consolidating and is particularly important for those who remain in the organisation as it allows them to adjust quickly to new roles and conditions.

So, in a time of economic scarcity, how can HR professionals sustain, grow and harvest the return on coaching investment in their organisations?

Bath Consultancy Group has been working with public and private sector organisations to develop coaching strategy and practice. In the private sector this includes Unilever, HSBC, and Ernst and Young. In the public sector we have worked with the NHS, local and central government, as well as the Armed Forces.

Our engagement has been at global, institutional and regional levels, including those umbrella agencies who have a strategic role to develop best practice such as the NHS Institute and the West Midlands Local Government Association. With this range of client experience we have a unique vantage point to see the common challenges faced by those who have developed coaching initiatives (see right hand panel).

## The challenge and what to do about it

Our experience suggests that whilst individual organisations may be excelling at one aspect of coaching strategy they rarely encompass all the elements that need to be in place if they are to maximise their return on investment.

### Common Coaching Challenges

Coaching is often introduced by HR departments in a professional manner but without top level championing and integration.

There has been significant investment in training of internal coaches and a growing demand for supervision of coaching practice.

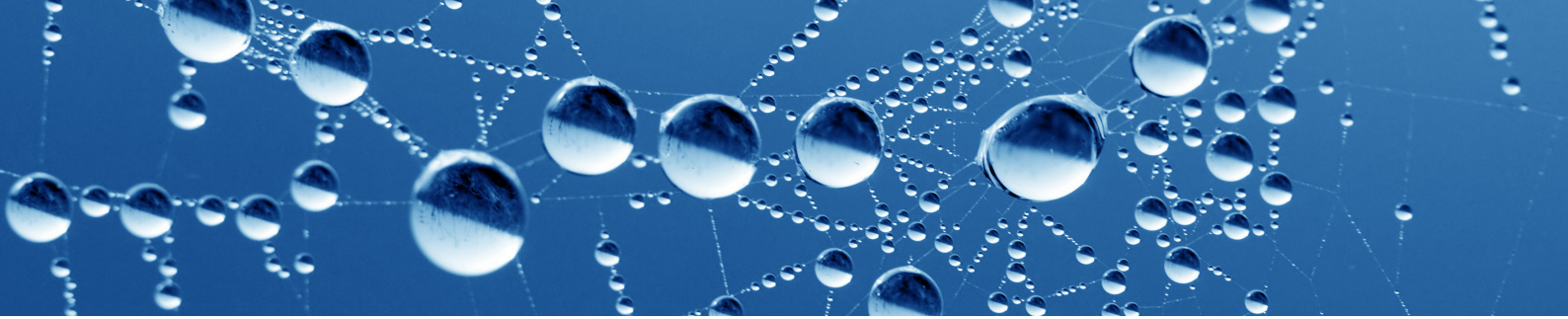
In a few cases, despite an intention to focus on those who are already competent, the coaching offer is still associated with remedial action for underperformers.

Coaching initiatives are not always integrated with the wider Organisational Development or culture change agendas, thereby remaining an HR offering for a selective few rather than a strategic shift towards a coaching style of management.

Business goals are at best only loosely attached to coaching contracts, therefore this means that the value of coaching remains an individual rather than organisational benefit.

Few organisations make the link between coaching staff and a better end user/customer experience.

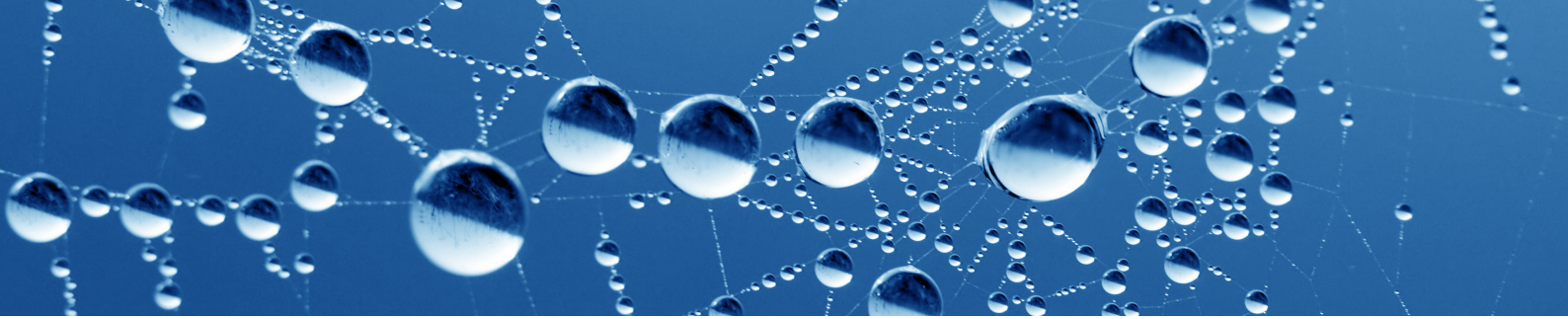
The content of coaching sessions is often focused on careers rather than performance.



## Key areas to address

We've put together the following key challenges and examples of organisations that have put these successfully into practice.

- Embed coaching within a specific and compelling service challenge which saves costs. Focus an intensive coaching investment on a geographical site, led by the top, and build in evaluation of the difference it makes
- Identify line manager champions, or those who could become champions and agree specific goals with them
- Coach your fast trackers so that the next generation of leaders improves their performance faster
- Use transition coaching to accelerate the speed with which managers in new roles following re-organisation or merger become effective successful
- Focus your coaching investment on top leaders who need to work effectively together
- Invest in the development of your internal coaches and supervisors through master classes and learning exchange gatherings with external coaches
- Require people who want to receive coaching to prepare the business case as part of their application
- Ensure that every coach is engaged in identifying the systemic patterns that inhibit or accelerate learning
- Include in the contracting a person who is responsible for organisational learning and can seed the learning elsewhere
- Take responsibility as a commissioner to know when to move from individual Show that you take the cost reduction agenda seriously by ensuring your training and supervision arrangements are cost efficient
- Insist on a skills transfer so you reduce your reliance on external consultants



## The need for coaching supervision

Increasingly, supervision of coaching is being used not just to ensure good practice by individual coaches but to help strengthen the coaching strategy so that it is seen to make a direct contribution towards the achievement of business goals. In the current climate, cost reduction should be at the heart of that strategy.

Bath Consultancy Group's research for the CIPD into coaching supervision identified a wheel of good practice which describes the industry standard:

