

The impact of leadership coaching on leadership behaviors

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Abstract

Purpose – Leadership coaching has received increased popularity over the past decade; however, there is a paucity of research that has examined its impact on leader behaviors within organizations. Drawing upon transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this paper is to understand the benefits provided to followers when leaders experience leadership coaching.

Design/methodology/approach – This cross-sectional study collected data from 75 mid- to senior-level organizational leaders and 188 followers.

Findings – The results of this study reveal that leadership coaching is positively associated with leaders engaging in individualized consideration toward their followers, and in turn, leaders engage in constructive leadership behaviors (i.e. more delegation and less close supervision).

Research limitations/implications – While this study contributes to our understanding of leadership coaching for organizational leaders, it, however, focuses on a specific set of leadership behaviors and does not examine the practices embedded in the coaching process.

Practical implications – Leadership coaching facilitates the leader's aspiration to provide their followers with more individual support. Organizations, in turn, need to promote more opportunities and practices for this interaction to continue.

Originality/value – This is the first study to empirically demonstrate the relationship between leadership coaching and constructive leadership behaviors.

Keywords Coaching, Executive, Individualized consideration, Leadership behaviours

Paper type Research paper

In 2010, *Businessweek* published an article examining the top 20 companies for developing leaders. The 20 organizations highlighted in the article invested 300-800 million dollars toward the development of their leaders to promote organizational sustainability and growth (O'Connell, 2010). By focusing on leadership development, these organizations aspired to improve their leaders' competency with leading through economic downturn and surpluses, as well as, creating an organizational environment of collaborative innovation and creativity. For which, organizations can only achieve these goals through the relationships that organizational leaders develop with their followers. Fortunately, one way that leadership development assists with enhancing the relationships organizational leaders have with their followers is through leadership coaching (Baron and Morin, 2009; Ely Boyce *et al.*, 2010).

Leadership coaching is a one-on-one partnership that focuses on strengthening the self-efficacy and performance of the individual, and consequently, improving organizational effectiveness (Baron and Morin, 2009; Day, 2001; Ely *et al.*, 2010). In essence, it aims to improve the leadership skills, decision-making processes, and overall leader behaviors that will assist organizations with being more successful and competitive in an evolving marketplace (Bono *et al.*, 2009). As part of their commitment to leadership development, organizations are becoming more aware of leadership coaching as a best practice for the leadership development process (Ely *et al.*, 2010; International Coach Federation, 2009, 2013), thereupon, garnering much consideration and scrutiny.

Although limited with empirical support, previous studies suggest that leadership coaching improves a leader's productivity and social awareness, and subsequently, making them more adept with their interpersonal relationships and the development of others. (Bono *et al.*, 2009; Day, 2001; Ely *et al.*, 2010; Feldman and Lankau, 2005;

