

Reliance on Coaching May Have Peaked

By Michael Laff

Coaching is still prized in many circles, but a sense of buyer's remorse is striking some organizations.

According to a recent survey, the crest of coaching is beginning to taper off. Novations, a Boston-based consultancy, found that 33 percent of American organizations are relying less on coaching than they have in the past. The survey, which included more than 2,000 employees in human resources and training, marked the first indication that coaching has reached a saturation point.

"Many organizations hired a coach and walked away with a negative outcome, specifically when noting that the behavior of the individual receiving coaching remained unchanged," says Michelle Knox, executive consultant at Novations.

Knox placed the blame on what she terms "commodity coaching," whereby a consultancy offers 30 days of coaching to multiple leaders or a cafeteria-style approach of a specified number of hours for \$100,000. Such offerings are a marketing tool that ultimately dilutes the value of coaching.

"A lot of organizations sign on for this, and it's not really coaching," Knox says. "It's one-on-one training."

A generation ago, the word "coach" called to mind an old man in a vinyl jacket with a whistle. Today it refers to a button-down corporate consultant who helps executives cope with the rising demands of leadership positions.

Coaching has become especially commonplace over the past five years as organizations aim to polish the

rough edges of promising leaders or groom a potential junior executive.

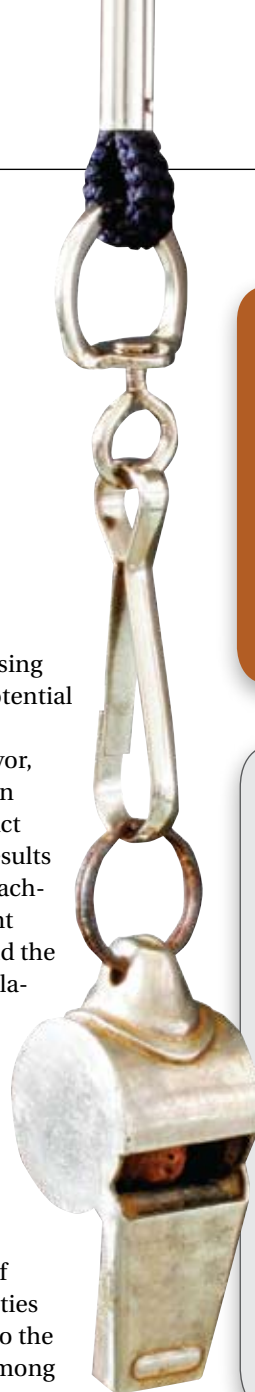
As with any endeavor, organizations are often impatient with contract services and expect results quickly. Successful coaching requires time spent between the coach and the subject to build the relationship. The concept of one coach for one person is more likely to change behavior than assigning a coach to multiple individuals in a short time frame.

The proliferation of coaches for all specialties may be contributing to the growing skepticism among clients. Knox advises organizations on the lookout for a coach to pay attention to a coach's years of experience and not focus exclusively on his certifications.

"Just as everyone once had a real estate license, now everyone is a coach," she says.

While coaching is embraced much more than it was a decade ago, its acceptance is still skewed. Knox noted that half of major organizations never bought into the coaching boom.

"A large number of organizations just aren't familiar with coaching," she says. "They're not sure how to differentiate between different providers, and they're not sure if it is a wise investment."



The BIG Number

33%

of organizations say they will rely less on coaching than in the past.

Use of Coaching

>> **Which of the following best describes your organization's use of coaching?**

We increasingly rely on coaching. **19%**

We rely on coaching at about the same rate as in the past. **48%**

We rely less on coaching. . . . **33%**

Source: Novations

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