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CHAPTER FIVE – WHY HAVE INTERNAL COACHES?

“The leader of the past was a person who knew how to tell. The leader of the future will be a person who knows how to ask.” Peter Drucker

What this chapter is about

An internal coaching resource can bring a huge number of benefits to an organisation. It is, however, not without its challenges. This chapter discusses the advantages and highlights some of the drawbacks with the aim of improving your awareness of the issues and enabling you to decide whether internal coaching would be a good fit for your organisation.

The chapter explores:

- The advantages of internal vs. external coaches, examining a number of factors to take into account when assessing the costs and benefits to your organisation
- Potential challenges of using internal coaches:
 - Status/credibility issues for internal coaches
 - The increased scope for ethical dilemmas
 - Issues associated with being part of the same culture
 - How reciprocal arrangements with other organisations can work

Every organisation that wishes to use coaches has to weigh up the pros and cons of bringing in external coaches as against developing their own internal coaching service. Many organisations deploy a combination of internal and external coaches to deliver their coaching needs. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages of each.

The factors in the following table are drawn from work by Carter (2005), Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999), and Mukherjee (2012). They are corroborated by many practitioners, though the importance of some factors will depend on context. This chapter expands upon them.

Advantages of using external and internal coaches (Table 5.1)

External	Internal
Experience in a variety of organisations gives credibility, particularly with senior managers	Knowledge of organisational culture, politics and internal dynamics

More objective and balanced view; more independent	Increased availability and easy to contact
More flexible resource	Less expensive
Clear role definition, no additional responsibilities	Can gather feedback more easily
Will not already know the coachee	Model for other managers
May generate more commitment from coachee	Responsiveness to organisation's needs
Can offer more challenging perspectives; wider range of ideas	Can coach further down the hierarchy
Experience in political nuances	Can have well resourced office on hand
Can say the 'unspeakable'	Can use assessment tools and techniques (e.g. 360 tool) specific to the organisation
Safer space to discuss sensitive issues	Awareness of the coachee's specific context
	If already successful managers, easier to gain the respect of the coachees and build rapport
	Easier to gather organisational learning
	Do not have a financial imperative for maintaining or prolonging a coaching relationship
	The organisation gets the benefit of development that the coach receives, as well as the client
	Strengthening internal networks across the organisation

Advantages that internal coaches have over externals

Lower cost

There are many good reasons for training internal coaches that are not about cost savings. However, most commentators would say that cost is an important driver in the increasing popularity of internal coaching. The Ridler Report (2013), in which 145 organisations participated, reported that cost efficiency continued to be a significant driver. Economic pressures mean that organisations have been tightening their belts in recent years but there is little evidence that external coaches are lowering their fees in response (ICF survey, 2012). Many businesses are therefore seeking ways of providing coaching at lower cost.

While there is little doubt that cost savings will be driving some organisations' decision to develop a cohort of internal coaches, it should not be seen merely as a cheap alternative to using external coaches. As Hawkins (2012) puts it: "The journey towards creating, building and maintaining a quality community of internal coaches requires investment, long-term commitment and support, and careful planning. It should not be undertaken lightly." (p61). So if cost is your main driver, bear that in mind.

Familiarity with the organisation and culture

For many years, surveys of the preferences of clients procuring external coaching services showed that familiarity with the sector was at or near the top of the list. However much external coaches gnashed their teeth and expostulated that knowledge of a particular sector was neither here nor there in an effective coaching relationship, this has represented a comfort factor for coaching purchasers. By extension, you can see the benefits for clients of having an internal coach because the client has the confidence that the coach knows what is going on within it and the types of issues with which executives in the organisation struggle. As Yedreshteyn (2008) puts it: "This level of familiarity can help create a trusted relationship more quickly and give internal executive coaches more credibility than when working with an external executive coach who is new to an organisation and its idiosyncrasies." (p29) And as one internal coach noted:

"Being an internal coach can mean that you can quickly become effective in helping people as you know the organisation and culture and can quickly build credibility and rapport because of that, so although occasionally ethical issues arise, in general there are quite a few advantages."

There is something about having a shared knowledge of the environment, history, people, culture, and internal politics that can help internal coaches to build a trusting relationship fast. And the fact that they are familiar with the prevailing management styles and organisational structures means that they are very well placed.

Hunt & Weintraub (2006) also note that an internal coach, by being part of the same organisation, should be in a good position to understand the business strategy within which the client operates. I would argue that you cannot necessarily assume that all internal coaches will be familiar with the business strategy, however. If it is important that they do, then make sure that they have regular briefings (although some of your internal coaches may well work in positions where this knowledge is part of the day job). Much will depend on the purpose for which the coaching scheme was set up and the seniority of the client. If the purpose is to help a middle manager work out what their personal development plan might include after a 360 feedback exercise, or how they might improve a difficult relationship with a colleague, or how they may enhance their ability to delegate then knowledge of organisational strategy may not be imperative.

The multiplier effect

The principal aim of most coach-client relationships, irrespective of whether the coach is an internal or external coach, is for the client to get to where they want to go and make the changes that will be beneficial to them. However, there is an additional benefit to your organisation in using a trained internal coach because the client will not be the only one learning in the coaching relationship: the coach will be learning a great deal too. Internal coaches have reported numerous benefits ranging from learning more about how the organisation worked and how to tackle internal politics to being more effective in their own day jobs (Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999).

Mukherjee (2012) too showed that internal coaches derived benefits from their coaching relationships. His research, carried out in large state-owned oil and gas exploration company in India with more than 15,000 regular employees, found that working as internal coaches helped the managers to improve their interpersonal skills, listening capability, work-life balance and self-confidence. The benefits cited by forty internal coaches (all senior managers themselves) involved in delivering a specific coaching initiative were significant and varied.

This data came from asking the coaches “What do you think you have gained personally and how will it benefit you in your professional and personal life?” Responses were:

- Improved personal skills 60% felt that they had become more effective at dealing with their subordinates, peers and seniors.
- Better listener 39% reported that they had become listeners, and calmer. One said he was able to concentrate more and comprehend better.
- Increased confidence Almost 25% experienced this even though they were already senior managers. Leedham (2005) mentions that confidence is the widely recognised ‘inner personal benefit’ of coaching.
- Better work-life balance 33% reported that their work-life balance had improved. When they used the Wheel of Life with clients they realised their own low levels of satisfaction on family and personal fronts and started to give more attention to their personal and social lives.
- Sense of achievement 13% felt “immense joy in contributing to bringing various changes in the personal and professional areas of the coaches”.
- Broader vision 15% reported that their overall vision had broadened and they could understand better their role as a manager in building organisational capabilities.

Mukherjee notes: “From these findings it can be argued that when an organisation develops high-quality internal coaches from successful leaders or managers within the organisation, besides addressing cost containment pressure, the organisation develops their leadership competences and confidence.” (p85)

There is a strong case for saying your organisation would achieve even more of a multiplier effect from investing in internal coaches since the beneficiaries can be the client, the coach, the coach’s team, the client’s team and the organisation more widely.

Benefits of being ‘on hand’ and flexible

Some researchers (Carter, 2005; Hunt & Weintraub, 2006; Yedreshteyn, 2008) have commented that one of the advantages that internals have over externals is that they are more easily contactable and more available. They may also be in a position to observe the client in their day-to-day activities such as attending a meeting or presentation involving the client to observe and then provide feedback in real time or at a later date. Or just the fact that they are ‘around the place’ can act as a prompt to the client to remember any new behaviours they may be experimenting with. However, others have pointed out that this argument can be overplayed: if care has been taken (on the grounds of reducing the potential for role conflict) to ensure that the coach and client work in different parts of the business this benefit is less likely to be realised. Also, if your organisation is large then the coach and client may not work on the same site or even in the same country. However, for some internal coaching relationships there is the potential for real added value from being on the spot. The idea of internals being more available, however, is very much a moot point. An internal coach with a busy day job might be no easier or more difficult to reach than an external coach.

A further potential advantage mentioned is flexibility, in that if a client has to cancel at short notice then the internal coach can simply get on with their day job where an external coach would probably charge a cancellation fee. However, I am a little wary of mentioning this as a benefit because internal coaches can be rightly sensitive to any suggestion that their time is any less precious than that of an external coach. Most of them are juggling very busy jobs and

changes at short notice can be wearisome. On the other hand, having an hour or two freed up in one's diary unexpectedly can also be a boon.

Networking/breaking down barriers

Internal coaching provides the opportunity for the coach to deepen connections across the organisation and strengthen internal networks. In Chapter Two I refer to this as being one of the personal benefits that internal coaches say they get from coaching people in other parts of the business. There are clearly also organisational benefits from this.

Most large organisations have a concern about internal communications. They refer to the 'silos' or 'baronies' that can be created in different functions. These silos often have to compete with each other for resources and may fail to communicate to each other very well what their priorities and activities are going forward. This can result in organisations where employees do not fully understand how the different parts fit together resulting in poor consultation or joint working – simply because of that failure to comprehend who else might usefully be involved. Organisations try a multitude of ways get around this problem whether it is full matrix working or a series of one-off project groups involving people from across the business. Having internal coaches with a day job in one part of the business working with clients in other parts of the business can play a very positive part in breaking down these structural barriers.

Developing a coaching community

The benefits just described of coaches working across departmental boundaries can be greatly amplified if care is taken to build a coaching community of all the coaches working in your organisation. The principal benefits of investing time and energy in building this community are the support that the coaches can offer each other, the additional development that they get from training together, being supervised together and undertaking CPD together, and the contribution they can jointly make to developing a coaching approach within the organisation. However, a further benefit is learning from each other what is going on in other parts of the organisational forest. That bit of time spent on bringing the coaches together at intervals, say for a 'brown bag' lunch, to update them on organisational strategy, discuss a new coaching book or other informal development activity, can be time very well spent. So the networking benefits of training a pool of internal coaches will then include not just the relationships between coaches and clients but also between coaches and other coaches.

This idea of a coaching community is important. I have interviewed a lead coach in a Government agency who did not actually know how many active coaches they had or who they were. The coaches operated independently and informally and were never brought together. It felt like a big missed trick to me – so many potential benefits not being realised. I would also lay odds that some of those coaches will have been feeling pretty isolated on occasion.

Many organisations actively foster their coaching community and bring the coaches together at regular intervals. Some organisations have gone further by involving their external coaches too and arranging annual or biannual events such as a one-day conference or workshop when all the coaches can learn from each other and share their experiences. Some external coaches might seek to charge for their time attending such an event but many would view it as a development opportunity and make no charge.

Contribution to organisational learning

One of the benefits of an internal coaching resource is the opportunity that it offers for feeding back into your organisation generic themes that emerge in coaching sessions to

contribute to organisational learning. Hawkins (2012) writes about how he asks CEOs and HR Directors of companies that have many coaching conversations going on in them the excellent question: "How does your organisation learn from these thousands of coaching conversations?" (p3). The learning does not happen by itself. Failure to set up a mechanism for extracting systemic information from the coaching conversations is a missed opportunity.

My survey suggested that 50% of organisations had a mechanism for feeding back organisational learning. Arrangements included:

- Co-ordinated by the lead coach
- Picked up via supervision sessions or facilitated action learning sets
- Ad hoc or described as 'informal routes'

There was also a variety of destinations for the information, once gathered. These included: the OD team; the L&D team; the HR Director; the organisational sponsor for the coaching or the CEO. In Chapter Six I devote more space to how organisational learning can be harvested.

An integral part of developing a coaching culture

Much attention has been given in recent years to the idea of building a 'coaching culture' in organisations and the benefits of developing leaders' and managers' coaching skills. Hawkins (2012) defined a coaching culture as follows:

"A coaching culture exists in an organisation when a coaching approach is a key aspect of how the leaders, managers, and staff engage and develop all their people and engage their stakeholders, in ways that create increased individual, team and organisational performance and shared value for all stakeholders." (p21)

However many external coaches you introduce into an organisation to work with staff at all levels, they cannot make as big an impact on an organisation's culture as people working within it can. The ideal might be a virtuous circle that involves the coach being trained to coach; the client experiencing the coaching so learning how to coach too; then the coach and client both role modelling the coaching approach back in their day jobs. If you add into that mix external coaches being brought in to coach specific people or for specific types of assignment and an active programme of training managers in a coaching style of management too you can see how a 'coaching culture' could become a reality. Some would claim that even internal coaches alone can have quite an impact on the system:

"Teaching managers to coach is not only cost-effective for sustainable long term organisational benefits, but there are deep benefits in terms of their personal and professional gains. Focusing managers on their coaching skills and making them deliver formal coaching ... has a broad systemic impact across the board" (Mukherjee, 2012 p85).

The opposite view, however, is voiced in Snape's (2012) research where she quotes a company that has decided against introducing internal coaching: "We are building a coaching culture using a coaching style in conversations, rather than going to see someone for a session (during which people would not be working – is that productive during a recession?)". The company talk about their aim of building a coaching culture "that can benefit everyone rather than limiting the availability of coaching to a targeted few" (p34). In my interviews with coach trainers, I too have encountered the strongly held view that the best way forward to build a true coaching culture is to train all the managers at every level in how to use a coaching style. As ever, different approaches will suit different organisations – no one size fits all. So if your

primary objective is to build a coaching culture within your organisation, as opposed to providing a high quality internal executive coaching resource, then you will need to think carefully about whether internal coaching is a vital part of the mix for you.

Potential challenges of using internal coaches

Chapter Three outlined some of the challenges of being an internal coach from the perspective of the coach. But what about the downsides of using internal coaches, as opposed to external coaches, from an organisational perspective? Status/credibility

In the course of the past three years I have met and talked to very many internal coaches and have never failed to be impressed by their levels of commitment and professionalism. A number of them had been coaching for many years and even those who were fairly new to it were fired up with enthusiasm and clearly giving it their all. I therefore feel a little wary of raising the issue of credibility but it is important to do so because:

- It is often mentioned in the literature; and
- It has been raised too by some of my interviewees as an irritant.

Frisch (2005), Jarvis, Lane and Fillery-Travis (2006) and others have mentioned that one of the key challenges for internal coaches can be their potential lack of credibility with senior managers. Yedreshteyn (2008) expresses it like this:

“External executive coaches come into organisations with advanced degrees, training and broad coaching experience, which is likely to afford them immediate credibility, something that internal coaches may not receive.” (p29)

Wrynn (2011) raises a related idea that coaches can be perceived by some as a status symbol and that an internal coach confers less of that status than an external coach does. The issue from the coaches' point of view is that there can be a perception among potential clients that external coaches are 'better' and this can be bound up, for some coaches, with the notion that they are not always appropriately valued and their services properly recognised. This was expressed by one internal coach as: “The organisation does not recognise internal excellence, but appears to see external coaches as more professional.”

Given how experienced some internal coaches are (and the fact that 10% of the internal coaches that took part in my research coached executives in the top team) one can readily see how galling this must be. It is a known phenomenon that prophets are not always honoured in their own land and that more credence is often given to the utterances of external consultants than to executives who have been saying the same thing for years. It is something that you need to be aware of and to take care to position internal coaching as a high quality service, to provide your coaches with excellent training and continuing professional development and to ensure that there are champions within the business who can market the coaching service with enthusiasm and authority.

Increased scope for ethical dilemmas

Chapter Three described the numerous varieties of dilemma that can arise for internal coaches. Frisch (2005), Wasylyshyn (2003) and others have drawn attention to the fact that some managers have concerns and negative perceptions around a possible lack of confidentiality if they have an internal coach. Internal coaches themselves acknowledge the difficulties that can flow from coaching someone who is not sufficiently distant from them in the organisation:

“Internal coaches provide a value for money form of coaching. However, there are more potential dilemmas, particularly for those coaches like myself who sit at the centre of the organisation.”

“I prefer to coach people from outside my own department, as it is easier to remain objective if I do not know the people or the situations personally.”

“I feel I do my best coaching when I know nothing about the individual or their area of work”

This is something that you can address as part of the matching process for coaches and clients (or ask the coach to check out in any chemistry session if it is a client-led system). On the confidentiality front, though, the evidence suggests that while some very senior leaders may decide that they would prefer to discuss their personal and professional issues with an external coach rather than an internal one, the actual issue of confidentiality is not something that most managers have serious concerns about.

Despite the challenges that exist for internal coaches relating to the ethical dilemmas, as Hawkins (2012) says, all problems for internal coaches “can be addressed by an organisation that is willing to invest in the appropriate training, development and supervision of internal coaches” (p62).

One approach that can alleviate potential problems on the confidentiality and role conflict fronts is to explore reciprocal arrangements with other organisations. At the end of this chapter I give some examples of successful collaborations.

Being part of the same culture

Being part of the same system as their coaching clients can be a two edged sword for internal coaches. There are some significant benefits but also challenges. As Hunt & Weintraub (2006) put it:

“... the internal coach does swim in the same political and cultural waters as the coachee, at least to a degree. While this can be informative, it can also represent a trap for the unprepared.” (pps 2/3) Or as an internal coach expressed it:

“In some ways we can be less objective, as the issues that affect all staff also affect us. It can be more difficult to step back and take a third party view about an issue that also causes concern for you as an employee.”

The restructuring that many organisations have been forced to implement in the world recession can really test internal coaches’ ability to put their own concerns to one side and give their full attention to the client. Below is an extract from *The Listener*, a coaching journal developed by Ken Smith, who used to be an internal coach in a Government department before setting up his own coaching practice. It illustrates the real difficulties that internal coaches can find themselves in, by virtue of being part of the same system as their clients. Smith is a very experienced coach with a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics. Less experienced practitioners might be less aware (or unaware) of how their own feelings about their organisation being in turmoil may be playing out unhelpfully within the coaching relationship – particularly if they do not have access to supervision.

“Internal coaches are of course caught themselves in the change net. It may easily be that our own futures are very uncertain and we must deliver a professional coaching job while at the same time knowing that we are at risk of redundancy. So how good are we at recognising our own emotions and managing them productively

within the coaching session, drawing on them only in a way that enhances rapport and avoids a parallel process of distress? We need to learn from the emotions we ourselves experience in uncertainty that can deepen our self-knowledge and so help build our practice. The challenge of this can be compounded when the psychological contract we have as employees within our organisation is broken. When this happens, how then can we, as internal coaches, congruently represent our organisation to our clients, no matter how directly or indirectly we are asked to do so? We need to ask ourselves honestly: 'Where is my own energy right now and where do I want to put my energy?' and from the answer conclude whether we can take the coaching assignment." (Smith, 2011) Issues when using external coaches

It is no part of my brief to talk at length about external coaches. As an external coach myself I believe of course that there are many excellent external coaches who do a great job. However, two issues were mentioned time and again by internal coaches so should at least get a mention.

Financial imperative

Internal coaches often mentioned that there was one variety of ethical dilemma peculiar to external coaches: the conflict of interest inherent in the fact that their livelihood depends on attracting and keeping clients. This could mean, for example, that they might be tempted to encourage clients to purchase additional sessions that they do not need or to take on ethically dubious assignments such as coaching the direct reports of someone they are already coaching. This issue also appears in the coaching literature (e.g., Maccoby, 2009).

Dependency issues

The sorts of ethical dilemmas that arise for internal coaches, associated with knowing many of the people in the organisation, can also arise for external coaches if they work for a significant amount of time in an organisation and become familiar with the key managers. Some coaches may also be leadership consultants or OD specialists and find themselves working in an organisation over a number of years and in a variety of capacities. Internal coaches point out that in these cases such individuals will be subject to the same sorts of boundary and confidentiality issues as internal coaches encounter. One of the internal coaches who took part in my research wrote:

"Most of the dilemmas the research seeks to explore can be found in the life of an external coach. I have come across external coaches who work only with one or two organisations and can have unhealthy dependency issues with them."

Reciprocal arrangements

Given the downsides in terms of potential role conflicts, confidentiality issues and the coach being part of the same system as the client, an increasingly popular alternative approach is to set up reciprocal arrangements with other organisations, sometimes termed "coach trading".

The reciprocal arrangements work as networks of organisations that pool resources; share training, supervision and CPD arrangements; and release their coaches to coach in each other's organisations. In the UK a number of regional networks have been set up. The initial drive has come from the public sector, particularly local authorities: for example, an early network was the West Midlands Coaching Pool Partnership established in 2007 involving thirteen local authorities. There are now a number of networks around the country including the North West Employers Coaching Network, the Suffolk Coaching and Mentoring Partnership and the Kent Coaching and Mentoring Network. Companies in the private sector are now also setting up informal networks that may develop into something similar.

Below are two case studies that illustrate different approaches to running a coaching network – one was informal and the other is formal with both operating across central Government so offer interesting alternative models.

Case study 5.1: Coaches in Government Network

One afternoon in December 2006, Ken Smith (then Head of L&D in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport) started wondering why, in spite of the strong reputation his team had for one-to-one work, more people were not taking up the offer of coaching. Perhaps one reason was that they were reluctant to be coached by a colleague in the same organisation? So he sent an email to a few L&D practitioners in other Government Departments, asking them if they were wondering the same thing - and the Coaches in Government Network was born. Five years later there were 227 members from over 50 organisations.

It worked very informally. To be a coaching member of the Network: that is, to work with a client in another member's organisation, a coach had to have a coaching qualification and complete a simple coach profile, giving information to prospective clients on their experience, credentials and approach. Members managed their own development and made their own arrangements for supervision. Each coach could decide how much coaching they wanted to or could contribute.

Ken himself managed the informal brokering system with most referrals coming from L&D managers in Government bodies or self-referrals. Clients chose their own coach from profiles sent to them. Ken describes the process of coaches and clients finding the Network as "viral marketing" because people became aware of it through word of mouth and through occasional references in coaching publications. In the five years of its life the Network provided nearly 1,000 hours of coaching.

The Network was a community and not an initiative: an example of how something can grow organically and emergently. With minimal structure, it gave members the freedom to choose how to develop their practice, autonomously and in line with their own interests. And by not charging each others' organisations for the coaching provided, the coaches removed a barrier to access, achieved a substantial saving in fees, avoided adding an unhelpful administrative burden, and maximised the available coaching resource.

The Network also offered CPD: a journal called 'The Listener' was published regularly with contributions from members and the wider coaching community and Ken also organised occasional half-day conferences with speakers who donated their services. Katherine Tulpa, Chief Executive of the Association for Coaching Global, came to the launch of the Network. Speakers at later conferences included Dr Alison Whybrow, past Chair of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology of the British Psychological Society, who ran a session on Cognitive Behavioural Coaching and Wendy Sullivan of the Clean Change Company talking about Clean Language. Later, Ken and Elizabeth Crosse, Head of L&D at the Legal Services Commission provided pro bono supervision for individuals and groups.

Two dilemmas hovered around the Network: whether to insist on a common framework of coaching standards for members; and whether to secure senior sponsorship. The first might have added to the Network's credibility and given its clients additional assurance; but it would have worked against its community ethos and was anyway unfeasible given that the Network was run by Ken voluntarily around his day job. Similarly, carrying out systematic evaluation, though highly desirable, was not practicable: there was no time to do this and it would to a degree have worked against the preferred light touch coordination of the Network. In retrospect, not routinely calling in evaluation data feels to Ken like a lost opportunity. The second, securing sponsorship, would have raised the Network's profile across members'

organisations and perhaps have brought additional resources for CPD but although sponsorship was sought early on, it was not forthcoming.

A number of things made the Network possible and unique but two critical features stand out: a committed and active person at its hub who understood the organisational culture within central Government and found a way to work 'underneath' it, in order to create a new community; and the presence of widely distributed, independent nodes of expertise and interest, in the form of the L&D practitioners located across the multiplicity of Government agencies across the UK. The Network closed late in 2011 when Ken left the Civil Service, at a time when the L&D function in the Service was radically redesigned and centralised.

Case study 5.2: Civil Service Learning

The summer of 2012 saw the launch of an innovative internal coaching scheme across the UK Civil Service, developed by Civil Service Learning (CSL) - part of the UK Government. Available to any civil servant in a leadership role, up to 120 internal coaches are listed in an online coach management system that permits potential coaching clients across government to search for a coach by several criteria, including region and type of coaching required (e.g., holding difficult conversations; career development; transition coaching) and allows a chemistry meeting to be set up. The coaching scheme is led by James Pritchard, a learning consultant in CSL, who has designed and implemented the scheme in partnership with a group of stakeholders from across government. It has a number of interesting features:

- The coaches are already qualified, experienced coaches with a range of qualifications up to Masters level. CSL did not get involved in training them – they invited applications from coaches who already had a track record and put them through a rigorous validation process
- Internal coaches who are existing civil servants are listed in the same database as 'approved' external coaches. The biographies detailing approach, qualifications, experience and so forth are presented in identical formats, the only difference is that the external coaches' fees are quoted whereas the internal coaches are free for clients to use
- The scheme is technology enabled. CSL does not get involved in any matching – potential clients contact a coach directly (or maybe two or three for comparison purposes)
- The coach management system, which was developed specifically for the scheme, includes a personal area for each coach to list their clients, which department they work in, the dates of coaching sessions etc. While the names are confidential, the data about numbers of coaching clients, numbers of sessions and departmental usage feed into a management information system which Pritchard and his team can analyse for return on investment purposes
- Departments register and pay an annual sum to CSL in order to have access to all the learning services CSL provide, including internal coaches. At the outset some departments already had a cadre of trained, experienced internal coaches while many others did not
- Two supervision days per annum are offered to the coaches (a morning of CPD and an afternoon of group supervision) plus two 1:1 telephone sessions with an external supervisor
- The coach management system automatically sends an evaluation questionnaire to the client when the coaching programme is completed. It is in two parts: a) a report by the client on achievement of aims/goals and an assessment of the coach and b) an assessment of progress by the client's line manager (which is discussed with the client)

who then submits the line manager's comments). The client knows that their comments will be shared with the coach as part of the coach's development

Pritchard has a high opinion of the standard of the internal coaches and has taken care to position them as of comparable quality to the external coaches that have been approved by CSL. This driver is behind the decision not to differentiate between the internal and external coaches on the database. He is also careful with language, describing the internals as "internal executive coaches".

His confidence in their quality is underpinned by the rigour of the half-day 'validation process' (run by Oxford Brookes University) that successful applicants for the scheme had to successfully negotiate. Applicants had to satisfy four criteria:

- Knowledge and understanding Could candidates articulate their coaching model, show an understanding of other models and explain their choice?
- Coaching competence Candidates held a half hour coaching session with a colleague. They were assessed on whether a) they worked in a way that reflected their espoused coaching model and b) they were effective
- Psychological mindedness Interviewers assessed this through questions around candidates' awareness of their own biases/values/appreciation of boundary issues etc.
- Developing coaching capability Assessors looked for candidates' attitude to learning and the extent to which they were constantly looking for opportunities to develop their skills.

Time will always be an issue but there is an expectation that internal coaches will have around three clients at any one time and have their manager's agreement, to release them for their coaching work for around one day a month. This ensures that they keep their skills fresh and justify the investment in them.

And the future? Pritchard also hopes to hold an annual conference where internal and external coaches exchange stories, share experiences and see what organisational learning emerges.

Summary

There are distinct advantages to organisations in using internal coaches. They provide good value and, in addition to providing a coaching service, internal coaches become better managers and leaders themselves and make a significant contribution to the development of an organisational culture that fosters high performance. As long as care is taken to address the challenges around confidentiality, boundaries and role conflicts, an internal coaching service can provide many benefits. Becoming a member of a coaching network can provide more flexibility of resource as well as reducing some of the downsides associated with the coach and client being part of the same system.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

Factor to consider	What are the implications for your organisation?
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<p>Advantages of internal v external coaches</p> <p>There are a number of factors make internal coaching an attractive option. Are they sufficiently compelling? How can one ensure the benefits are optimised?</p>	<p>In thinking about whether internal coaching is the right path for my organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a financial benefit from using internal vs. external coaches when training, on-going support, time away from the day job etc. are taken into account? • What value do we place on our coaches having a shared knowledge of the environment, people, culture, internal politics etc.? • Can an internal coaching resource add value to other business initiatives that are going on in our organisation? • How can the business 'leverage' the investment in the coach's development as a manager and leader which comes about as a result of training and working as a coach? • What mechanisms do we need to create to ensure feedback from internal coaches contributes to organisational learning? • How could the matching process be used to improve communication and understanding between different business areas?
<p>Potential challenges of using internal coaches</p> <p>How might the following potential downsides be minimised?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status/credibility issues for internal coaches • The increased scope for ethical dilemmas • The challenges associated with coaches and clients being part of the same culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we need to do to ensure that our coaches are as seen as professional, credible, and on a par with external coaches? • What do we need to take into account when matching coaches to clients to set our coaches up for success when coaching senior personnel? • How do we see the disadvantages of our coaches being part of the same organisational culture as their clients? Are there any aspects of this issue that need to be addressed in the
	<p>training and support we give our coaches?</p>

<p>Reciprocal arrangements</p> <p>Collaborative arrangements where organisations that are geographically close pool resources, share training, supervision and CPD arrangements and 'trade' coaches are becoming popular</p>	<p>Would our organisation benefit from a reciprocal arrangement? If so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How could we find out more about the pros and cons?• Who would our natural partners be?• Is there already a local network that we could join?• What needs to be in place to ensure that the costs to our organisation are reflected in the benefit gained?
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Extract from *'Internal Coaching: The Inside Story'* by Katharine St John-Brooks. Published by Karnac Books and obtainable from Amazon (www.amazon.com), Waterstones (www.waterstones.com) Karnac Books (www.karnacbooks.com)