



Building a Strong Coaching Culture for the Future of Business



"Culture eats strategy for breakfast"

Legendary management consultant
and writer Peter Drucker

At the core of every organisation is its culture — its identity, its people and heritage. Not only building, but maintaining a strong company culture has become even more challenging since the beginning of COVID-19. Remote working, tough decision-making and uncertainty of this period added more stress to everyday operations — and to every level of the workforce. Therefore, any initiative that keeps the company culture alive is vital more than ever.

94% & **88%**
of executives of employees

Consider a distinct workplace culture important to organizational success. Deloitte Survey (1)

One of the important assets an organisation can adopt is the coaching mindset, in order to create motivation, adapt to the challenging circumstances and empower teams to reach business goals. However, this coaching mindset **needs to seep into the company culture in order to drive engagement and productivity**- and yet many companies aren't seeing the benefits of the coaching programs they want. The disconnect? Implementing a coaching culture throughout the entire organisation.

Coaching can improve communication skills by **42%** and increase productivity by **39%** ICF Consumer Awareness Survey



THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A COACHING CULTURE, THE ESSENTIALS & THE CHALLENGES

WHAT EXACTLY IS COACHING CULTURE?

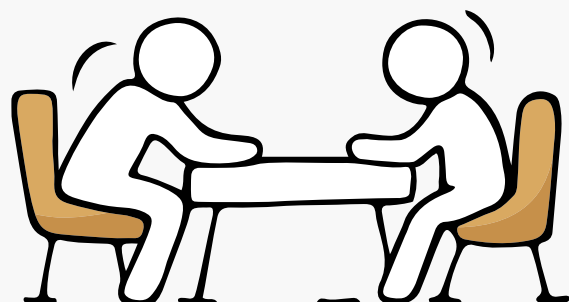
Coaching is not just a learning and development tool but it's **a strategic mindset for employee engagement, productivity, and high business performance**. And coaching culture basically means adopting this mindset in an organisation—at every level and in every conversation.

So, it's an organisation where continuous learning, regular feedback, and opportunities for growth is emphasized.

The main features of a coaching culture are:

- Leaders facilitating a learning environment
- People trusting each other and having open, honest and supportive conversations with one another
- Employees having the ability to question the status quo regardless of their role
- Teams willing to co-create together and working with clear vision and goals
- Leaders coaching team members to help them develop rather than micromanage
- Organically formed peer coaching and mentoring relationships
- Individuals having a growth mindset and willingness to grow with each other
- A collective focus on contributing to the organisation for the long-term success of the business

In other words, trust, willingness to learn, cooperation and a growth mindset are all combined in a successful coaching culture.



WHY IS COACHING A VERY IMPORTANT AREA TO INVEST IN - ESPECIALLY IN THIS VUCA WORLD?

In order to better understand the business value of coaching (culture), it is important to first acknowledge the benefits gained by the other stakeholders: employees and HR professionals.

From an employee perspective, a strong coaching culture:

- Helps employees setting and working towards goals
- Enables them to learn new skills
- Makes them see that their contributions do matter
- Supports career development
- Adds a higher purpose to their work

62% compared with **50%**

International Coach Federation's global survey shows that organisations with strong coaching cultures report significantly higher engagement HCI and ICF study (2)



From an HR perspective, coaching:

- Increases employee engagement and job satisfaction
- Develops a growth mindset in the organisation
- Builds company-wide trust
- Nurtures talents, closes existing skill gaps and helps HR to discover new talents.

The collective results of the benefits mentioned above create businesses many advantages. We can sum up the reasons why business leaders should invest in coaching as follows:

From a business perspective, coaching:

- Adds greater talents to the company to keep up with competitors
- Creates a high performing organisation
- Builds greater customer satisfaction
- Ensures revenue growth

especially in the VUCA environment, amplified by COVID-19.

Growth

51%

with strong
coaching culture

Vs

38%

without
coaching culture

**Organisations with strong coaching
cultures report revenue growth well
above their industry peer group**

HCI and ICF study (2)

Sales

107%

of their performance target

**Sales representatives who consistently
received more than three hours of
coaching/month achieved 107% while
those who received less than two hours
underperformed.**

Ceb Global Sales Executive Council Study (3)

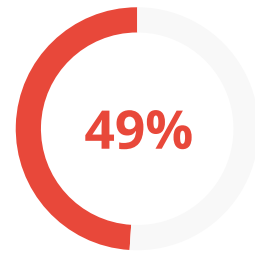
Organisations' top three reasons for investing in coaching activities:



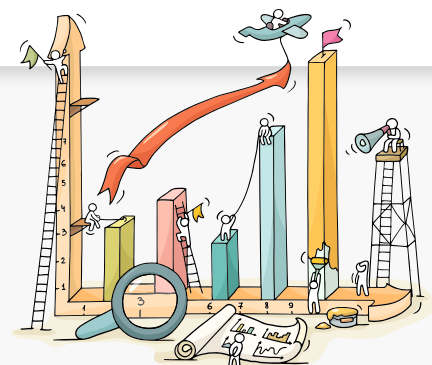
Leadership



Talent development



Performance



THE FUNDAMENTALS & THE CHALLENGES OF BUILDING A STRONG COACHING CULTURE

For a coaching initiative to work and truly drive results for any business, it must be implemented throughout the entire organisation, regardless of company size.

Three fundamentals of a strong coaching culture

- **The Reach of Coaching Must be Scalable:** Coaching isn't effective when it is only accessible to managers. Organisations should be able to apply coaching at larger scales.
- **A Coaching Initiative Must be Measurable:** Organisations should be able to prove the return on investment (ROI) and the correlation between their business success.
- **A Coaching Culture Must be Sustainable:** Coaching should be an ongoing process which needs to be acknowledged as a company strategy, ingrained in the company culture and it needs to create business value.

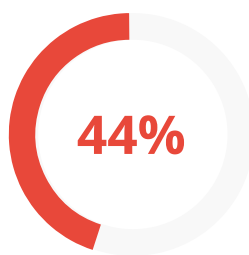
Obstacles to building a strong coaching culture

On the other hand, coaching culture is easier said than done. Based on the International Coaching Federation (ICF)'s 2020 survey among 22,457 respondents from 161 countries, **the top three potential obstacles to building a strong coaching culture** inside an organisation are:

Organisations' top three reasons for investing in coaching activities:



Limited support from senior leaders



Lack of budget for coaching activities



Inability to measure the impact

(2020 ICF Global Coaching Study: Final Report)

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO SCALE COACHING TO THE WHOLE ORGANISATION?

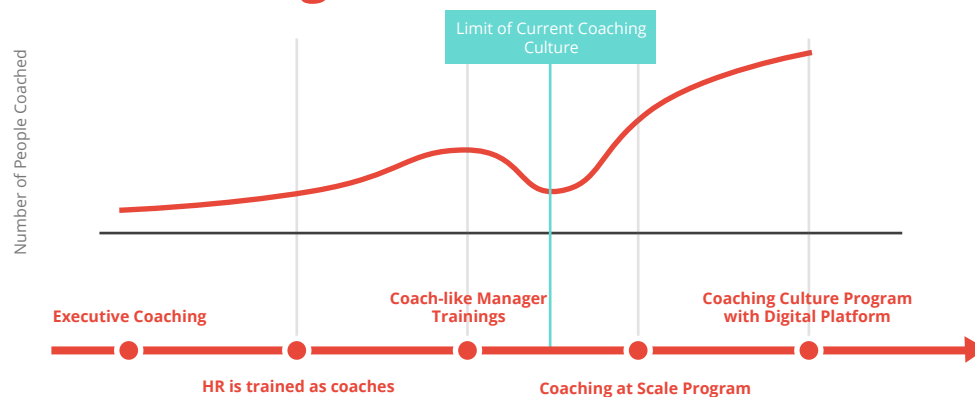
The early stages of a coaching initiative usually start with an external support/coach, coaching selected people, usually the management team. However, the limited-time training (mostly in traditional approaches) ends at some point and the coaching culture can't be implemented due to the reliance on external support.

The Limit of Coaching Culture

At SparkUs, we have encountered over the years that organisations which want to build a coaching culture could not go further from **“the limit of Coaching Culture”** (see the graph below). They start with **coaching only for their top management or for a selected few people**.

In order to turn coaching into a culture rather than just providing a tool to develop someone or solve a problem, **there should be a second level where HR starts being a coach or selects some people to be internal coaches**. This way, organisations begin to understand the value of coaching and plan to extend it to more employees. A coach-like manager training comes into play here, where managers are trained to become coaches.

Reach of Coaching



Traditionally, this is where the coaching culture efforts are stuck - mainly because right after organisations train managers, they expect them to be perfect coaches immediately. However, after their training, managers tend to easily fall back into their old habits of telling their teams what to do, instead of taking time to process what they've learned and apply their learning to their work.

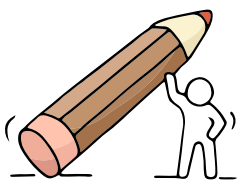
Most importantly, the people they are asked to coach do not have any knowledge of what coaching is, so they also resist the coaching process.

ROAD TO COACHING CULTURE: A STORY OF TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN TOUCH

With the mixture of a successful approach and technology, making coaching a part of the company culture is possible.

So, how can organisations pass “the limit of coaching culture” and provide coaching to everyone in their organisations?

Digital coaching is one of the best ways to understand the value of coaching and to scale it across the organization. With a wide range of tools, **digital coaching can cater to every learner’s needs – even for large organisations, while requiring a lower budget** than the traditional coaching approaches. Here we compiled the SparkUs proven success methodology: combining technology with the human touch.



Designing the coaching strategy

Organisations have their own identities, values, strategies and business models – and all of these impact the way a coaching culture looks like. Therefore, identifying the expectations and the vision for the coaching strategy is the first important step. A clear framework and a roadmap should be determined for organisational learning and cultural change.

SPARKUS APPROACH

At SparkUs, we design the coaching strategy and create the framework including all stakeholders- and most importantly, with the contribution and direction of the top management. At this point, we eliminate the #1 obstacle to building a strong coaching culture according to the ICF Survey, which is “limited support from senior leaders”.



Coaching training for the executives and managers at scale

The coaching process should start with managers or team leaders. This means they need to experience receiving coaching at first hand and be trained to gain coaching skills. This enables managers to;

- Practice how their team will experience the coaching process
- Understand the benefits of coaching first hand & truly believe in the process
- Coach their employees better.

Traditionally, leadership development programs rely mostly on either short-term training or long term but expensive development processes. In either case, coaching support is usually reserved for a limited number of leaders due to a high ticket price.

Due to the developments in HR technology, digital coaching enables organisations to apply leadership coaching programs on larger scales, with affordable prices.

SPARKUS APPROACH

Providing leaders with coaching and tools/ resources to be effective coaches is key to facilitating the development of a coaching culture.

Our **Leadership Development Program** is designed to cover two topics:

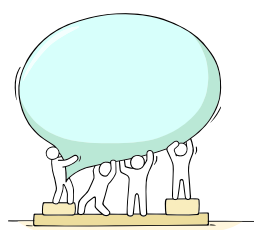
- 1 Coaching leaders at scale, and**
- 2 Developing leaders as coaches**

In our **Coaching Leaders at Scale Program**, we support leaders with our digital coaching journey on the SparkUs platform, backed by in-depth coaching sessions from our coaching pool. We are also able to integrate our program easily into companies' professional/internal coach pools. Sessions supported by a digital coaching journey helps the coach to focus on the matters most. Therefore, more is achieved in less time, helping you coach more people within the same budget.

For instance, **in a recent project with HSBC; we ensured that over 100 senior and mid-level managers have gone through digital coaching exercises** that were fit with the bank's leadership development strategies and **received 3 professional coaching sessions per leader**. Leaders personally experienced the benefits of coaching for their own development. **Similar initiatives in the industry generally take 6 to 12 sessions and are delivered to a much-limited number of leaders, thus creating less impact on the overall leadership of the organisation.** The HSBC project is a perfect example of using the SparkUs platform to coach more leaders at a lower cost, with the same personal impact and even a greater organisational impact on the leadership culture.

Our **Leadership as a Coach Program** is designed to train leaders in the fundamentals of coaching as well as to provide practical experience on 'when and how' to coach. It provides training and supervision via the SparkUs platform and our skilled team of coaches. Our platform supports leaders with pre-generated, themed coaching content for their employees to serve as a basis for their coaching dialogue.

Our training also includes **peer coaching** so that leaders learn by doing, as well as **hands-on supervision** by professional coaches. Our customised content helps leaders see the big picture and handholds them on how they can practically implement their training in the workplace.



Bringing the coaching to the whole organisation

As mentioned before on the “Reach of Coaching” graph, the limit of coaching culture starts right after the training of managers - when they are unable to apply the new mindset and skills to the whole organisation.

At this point, the use of technology is crucial to scale the coaching programs and provide a sustainable coaching culture.

SPARKUS APPROACH

We design the online and diverging exercises for different personas within the organization. This enables all employees to be coached on a certain standardised level suitable for their needs.

As the first stage, professional coaches kickstart the cascading process by coaching, training and supervising the upper management. Then in a chain structure, managers coach their teams based on their digital coaching journey. This step by step process develops the overall dialogue between managers and employees.

Moreover, employees access the SparkUs platform ahead of their coaching sessions with their managers, which ensures they gain a basic “coaching literacy”, understand and start to trust the coaching process, and become ready to address issues and take action. This enables organisations to bring a real coaching experience to all levels within the organisation and results in higher employee engagement.

CASE STUDY: Discover How AXA Adopted a Coaching Mindset Amidst the Pandemic

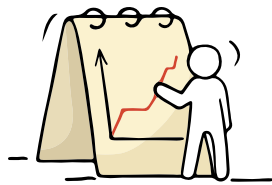
AXA was aiming to foster a sustainable coaching culture within the organisation, which was challenging due to the prevalence of traditional leadership approaches.

- Shift the conventional leadership mindset from the “quick-fix” or “shortcut” solutions approach to a coach-like approach.
- Implement the coaching culture not only to the executives but to the overall organisation

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic added more challenges to the company due to remote working. Managers who were accustomed to directing through detailed and daily instructions, started experiencing difficulties such as not being able to make immediate interventions remotely. A change in culture suddenly became an urgent issue to be fixed.

Download the success story and discover how AXA Turkey built an ecosystem of learning and initiative-taking through a mindset change.

ACCESS THE CASE STUDY



4 Tracking the coaching performance and measuring the ROI

Many companies face the challenge of gathering concrete metrics and tangible results about the effectiveness of a coaching initiative because most of the traditional coaching programs can't clearly demonstrate their return on investment.

SPARKUS APPROACH

Digital coaching allows organisations to measure and interpret data for actionable insights. The SparkUs platform allows the stakeholders (HR managers, coaches, program managers, etc.) to monitor the coaching process in real-time. This ensures all necessary outputs to be transformed into tangible insights and measurable results, as well as unbiased, fact-based evaluation.



The platform makes it possible to:

- Monitor the coaching program in real-time
- Identify and track coaching ROI based on the strategic goals of the organisation
- Make on-the-spot interventions and provide support where necessary
- Understand who are committed to their own development process (monitor who are engaged with the digital coaching journey, measure the frequency of coaching sessions, number of actions taken and progress on the platform)
- Understand who are committed to developing others (monitor logs data of internal coaches, mentor and managers, evaluation ratings, frequency of sessions)

all without violating the confidentiality of the sessions.

CASE STUDY: Discover How HPE Achieved Effective and Measurable Coaching Conversations at Scale

The Success Story of HPE's Journey Towards Bringing Coaching to its Employees

The Hewlett Packard Enterprise Company (HPE) needed to foster effective Technical Career Path (TCP) coaching conversations with its technologists. HPE already had an internal TCP coach pool composed of senior technologists. However, it was still a challenge for HPE to bring coaching to a large corporate audience because of three main reasons:

- 1 Coaching at a large scale is costly and time-consuming, especially considering that internal coaches were senior technologists, whose time is extremely valuable for the organisation.
- 2 It is difficult to periodically analyse, optimise, and report on the coaching process.
- 3 Usually, there is not enough data to measure and report on employee progress to ensure maximum coaching ROI.

Download the success story and discover how HPE achieved effective Coaching Conversations at scale with SparkUs.

[ACCESS THE CASE STUDY](#)

CONCLUSION

The pandemic brought more challenges to the already unpredictable and complex business environment. Therefore, providing an environment that will unlock the talent of the workforce, achieving high-performance and turning this into business value is crucial for staying in the competition. At this point, **recognising the value of a strong coaching culture is undeniable.**

Luckily, with the significant help of technology, understanding the value of coaching has been more widespread within organisations since technology allows;

- HR professionals to measure and prove the coaching ROI to business leaders
- Entities to coach everyone in their organisation at much lower costs
- Organisations to see results in shorter periods of time.

The previous months clearly showed us that organisations have to be equipped better for the VUCA environment. To achieve this, we believe business leaders should include coaching programs onto their strategies and build a strong coaching culture for the future of their business.

Resources

(1) Core Beliefs and Culture Chairman's Survey:

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-core-beliefs-and-culture.pdf>

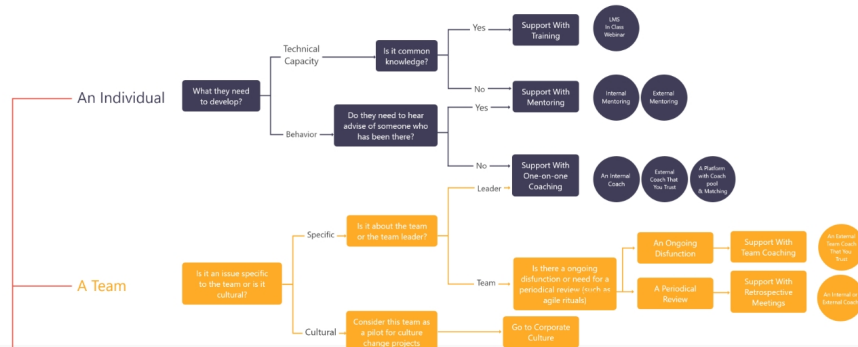
(2) Human Capital Institute and the International Coach Federation (ICF) Study cited in an ATD article: <https://www.td.org/magazines/td-magazine/the-case-for-a-coaching-culture>

(3) Ceb Global Sales Executive Council Study <https://www.cebglobal.co>, <https://bit.ly/30ZbdY5>



BONUS CONTENT: WHAT KIND OF COACHING/ MENTORING SERVICES DOES MY ORGANISATION NEED?

One Point Intervention



Systemic Intervention

Who / What do I want to develop?

