

How Does Coaching Actually Help Leaders?

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Leadership Strategy

Coaching with leaders and within organizations is often cited as a highly valuable tool for developing people and businesses. The [Institute of Coaching](#) cites that over 70% of individuals who receive coaching benefited from improved work performance, relationships and more effective communication skills. They also reported that a huge 86% of companies feel that they recouped the investment they made into coaching plus more on top. Studies show that coaching is effective at [reducing procrastination and facilitating goal attainment](#) and there is a growing body of empirical research that supports the findings that business coaching really does [facilitate goal achievement](#). In an interesting new case study published in the [International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring](#) researcher Sally Bonneywell explores precisely how coaching supports the development of female leaders in particular, within a global organization.

Bonneywell shines a light on coaching and demystifies what can sometimes seem like mysterious work. The research reveals how one to one coaching and group coaching was experienced by the clients. In this piece, we'll look at the results of the one to one coaching for leaders and in a follow-up article, we'll explore the outcome of group coaching for the female leaders.

Bonneywell breaks down the individual changes the coaching clients experienced into two groups:

Coaching Changes In Relation To The Clients Personally

Self Awareness - The majority of leaders reported experiencing an increase in their level of self-awareness. They also reported feeling better able to understand themselves and their self-concept and also felt they had more insight into how they impact others.

Self Confidence - The leaders also reported an increase in self-confidence. This was also coupled with a decrease in self-limiting thoughts and beliefs.

Self Leadership - Leaders reported that as their self-development, knowledge of themselves and self-confidence grew so did their awareness of their own self-leadership. How they lead themselves and the expectations they set themselves were highlighted through the coaching work and explored within it. For some participants, unrealistic expectations were uncovered and through coaching they were able to develop their ability to lead themselves with more compassion and self-acceptance.

Coaching Facilitated Change In Relationships With Others

Leadership Style - Coaching directly impacted how the leaders thought about their leadership behaviors. It developed their awareness of their leadership style and gave them the opportunity to reflect on it and be more thoughtful going forward with regards to their approach to tasks and goals.

Relationship To Line Manager - Coaching appeared to help clients explore their existing relationship with their line manager which had many benefits. Some clients were able to identify things they were not satisfied with within this relationship and change it. For others, coaching offered a place to explore what they were satisfied with and what within that relationship they valued and found helpful. The quality of this relationship appeared to impact the “micro-climate” of the female leaders and influenced their perceived career outcomes.

Relationship To Conflict - Many of the female leaders within this study found their relationship to conflict interesting and coaching enabled them to explore the topic. Some leaders were comfortable with conflict and others felt that it was an area of concern and one they needed more learning in. During coaching, many of the participants discovered that conflict was something they were avoiding. Coaching allowed them to explore negative beliefs around conflict, to challenge and ultimately change them.

Relationship To Power - The case study found that some female leaders rejected the concept of power and had quite strongly negative feelings towards it. Coaching supported shifts in insight and perceptions for clients around power and how it could be used. Through the process of coaching some views and thinking moved towards seeing power as a positive and constructive force connected to strength and confidence and one which they had choice and influence over how it was used.

Relationship To Personal Life - The coaching space offered leaders the chance to explore and reflect on their work/life balance and their responsibilities, particularly regarding family. Coaching supported some leaders in making links within work to parts of their life outside of work adding a seemingly helpful holistic aspect to the work. Coaching in this way helped clients find insights around how things in their lives connect.

Of course not everyone's experience of coaching will be the same, however, this illuminating research shows how coaching can be valuable to female leaders in particular. If you're a leader or someone working within an organization and think this kind professional development may be helpful either personally or to those you work with then coaching may be an intervention worth considering.