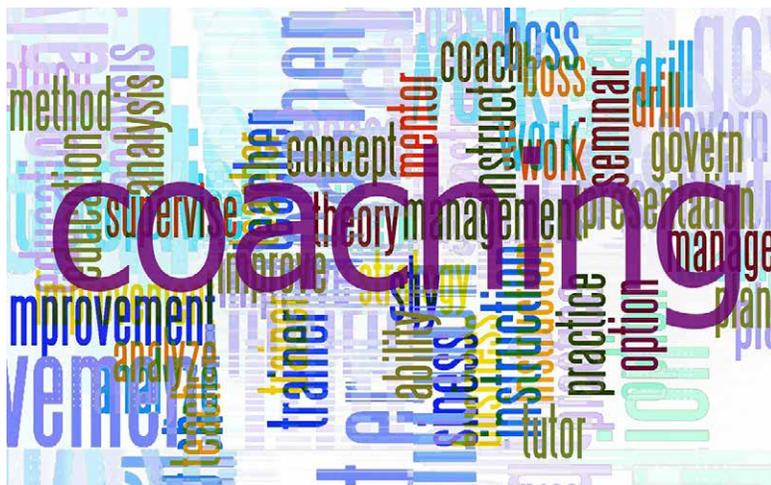


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# THE VALUE OF COACHING IN ACADEMIC MEDICINE



Source: [Pixabay](#)

utilize coaching for executives as a way to support healthcare leaders at various stages of development.

Coaching offers leaders a valuable set of benefits, including a structured focus on their development, a reflective sounding board, and critical individualized advice applied to their specific leadership challenges and overall development. Coaching also helps leaders define their professional trajectory and the skills needed to be successful, both in their current role and into the future. In contrast to other leadership training approaches, coaching provides advice over an extended timeframe and skill-building based on the actual, real-time challenges encountered by leaders in their roles. Indeed, there is initial data that indicates coaching can help alleviate clinical burnout and turnover.<sup>1</sup> Although the benefits of coaching and leadership training more broadly can be difficult to rigorously evaluate, there is a growing body of data that indicates a positive impact of coaching for leaders in healthcare overall.<sup>2</sup>

Yet our experience has revealed many barriers that limit the positive impact of coaching, including:

- **Concerns about cost and the return on investment.** Coaching for individuals and groups of leaders requires significant investments — in resources, time, and energy. How can leaders be sure their investments in coaching will be worth the expense?
- **Individual vs. systemic views.** Focus on individual development without a complementary focus on the group or unit may limit the impact of coaching.
- **Active engagement.** When coaching is recommended for struggling leaders as remediation, the coachee may agree to appease a supervisor, while privately declining to actively engage with the work. Even in these cases, it is critical to orient the coaching towards goal-setting, organizational needs, and active involvement of the leader being coached.
- **Generational differences.** Emerging and current leaders may demonstrate differing degrees of interest in coaching overall and in the type of coaching desired. Younger leaders may be less apt to engage in one-on-one coaching and be more interested in peer support.<sup>3</sup>

Effective leadership development often requires multiple approaches, guided by organizational priorities, the different needs of individual(s), and their respective motivational levels. Below are some ideas to consider in how to effectively build an organizational approach to executive coaching:

- Build reflection and measurement into an approach to coaching, ensure that coaches and coachees are setting both short-term and longer-term goals, and monitor and reflect on progress in support of these goals. Measures of leaders' self-efficacy before and after coaching interventions, such as meeting individual and organizational goals, as well as 360-degree evaluations can also demonstrate outcomes.
- The relationship between a coach and coachee requires good chemistry, which can be difficult to anticipate. Ask mentees to consider multiple coaches before reaching a final decision and encourage consideration of different styles and approaches.
- Coaches should be screened and carefully selected by the organization to ensure they have the requisite skills and experience to effectively and consistently engage mentees.
- Longer-term impact can be measured in leaders' career trajectories and in their satisfaction with their work, though this data can be tricky to collect.
- Avoid taking a one-size-fits-all approach to coaching. Leaders can and should be offered different coaching options to meet their needs and preferences, including peer group coaching and virtual sessions.
- Coaches themselves can also be informed in ways that best support the needs of leaders in that particular organization, thereby providing a better understanding of the culture and organizational challenges.
- Combined leadership development and coaching programs can be highly impactful, both for individuals and for cohorts in a health system, as it combines a focus on individual behavior with the experience of group learning.

In conclusion, there are many factors to consider for executive coaching to maximize its impact for leaders in academic medicine. The needs of leaders and organizations at this moment are particularly salient, and coaching is a vital component of a holistic approach to leadership training in academic medicine.

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