

The Age (Reinvent Your Career - special lift out) - July 2008

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Change and move up

Do you feel you have it in you to move up a peg? Can you see yourself in your boss' seat or managing the team you are part of? Maybe you do have what it takes, just not the skills to apply that ability. Executive coaching is a growing field, says Aaron Dodd of the Mindset Group (formerly Odin Consulting). "A large part of that is driven by the skills shortage, employers are preferring to invest in their staff rather than let them move on, it is a way of retaining staff.

"A typical example is a sales rep moving into their first sales management role. The traits and skills that make an effective sales person are often the opposite to being a sales manager. We coach them through the transition process, into focusing less on themselves and more on getting the best out of their team, A year or so down the track, they are looking at the next step and they will come back to us to be coached again,

"Executive coaching makes up maybe 25% of our business," says Mr Dodd. "It is about getting more out of the people already in the business. We look at what the 'coachee' is trying to achieve. There is skills coaching, remedial coaching if there is a problem with that person's performance or management style. There is strategic coaching, which is about teaching people how to deal with a particular situation and transformational coaching which is about changing entire behaviours to suit a role."

Changing behaviour may sound scary, but it is logical and scientific, based on a century of research.

"We look the personality first" explains Mr Dodd, "and how it fits with the role they are trying to achieve or are being considered for. Everybody has a defined personality and different roles require different behaviours, so we look at where the mismatches might be and coach people to change their behaviours so that there is a better fit for the role."

Behaviour is not personality, says Mr Dodd. "The behaviour that you have is the result of your personality filtered through your attitudes, values and beliefs. It is easier to change people's behaviour if you can give them insight into their personality. A lot of psychologists will say that your core personality traits are set from about the age

of four. But your attitudes, values and beliefs can change. Behaviour is what people see on the outside, by giving people insight into their personality and making it easier to understand why they behave the way they do, it makes it easier for them to understand why they need to change."

Coaching at this level is not a soft option. "Sometimes we have to be blunt," says Mr Dodd, "and it can be confronting. Sometimes it is more subtle. But it is face-to-face, showing people that we are not basing our information on hearsay, that there is actual science behind it."

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