

E-Coaching for V-Managers- The Wave of Future

Shalini Vermani

Associate Professor, Apeejay School of Management

Sayak Bhattacharjee

Officer-Scale1, Federal Bank

ABSTRACT

In today's world, all the organizations are talking about making their workplace much more flexible, i.e. employees can work from wherever they want, whether they are sitting in a café and enjoying his/her coffee, or they are in their chauffeur-driven car, going to close a deal with their client. Even some employees can also work while feeding their children in their home. Most of the changes are initiated with the managers in any organization as they can cope up with any sort of change very rapidly. The managers, in today's time frame, are getting transformed into V-Managers (Virtual Managers), as they are handling their team from sitting in a remote place. But with this growing demand of flexible workplace, companies are facing another problem, problem of coaching the under-performing employees. Though the workplace can be made flexible, but coaching is very difficult to make flexible.

The main motive of this paper is to throw some light on the E-Coaching technique which is becoming a new trend among the corporates and how this methodology of coaching is going to help the corporate to resolve the problem of flexible coaching methodology and infrastructure

Keywords: *Flexible Workplace, E-Coaching, V-Managers*

I. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The concept of E-Coaching is very new in the corporates. This methodology of coaching is still in its initial phase i.e. none of the organizations have tried it yet in their corporate head-quarters. The research currently done is purely exploratory and with due course of time, as the methodology gets highly practiced one in the organizations, we will be able to establish empirical credibility. The purpose of our study will be to understand the behavioural challenges and preferences of e-coaching in all types of organizations and the satisfaction rate of their employees regarding this methodology of coaching

II. INTRODUCTION

Coaching is a methodology that has been designed for assisting a motivated individual in making changes to develop their professionalism. In today's point of time, coaching has been used extensively for helping an individual to achieve his/her personal and organizational goals. With the increased popularity and practice of empowerment of an employee and as well as with a deep understanding of how people learn, the performance benefits of coaching are getting more widely known and accepted. Instead of being peripheral, coaching is seen as having a clear and unique advantage and it establishes itself beside its related activities like mentoring and counselling as a key development technique.

For an individual to be a good coach, one must believe in the thing that people want to perform well, they want to please their managers and grow professionally. The role of an individual aspiring to be a good coach is to help the people to gain those skills, attitude and knowledge required to increase their potential and improve their performance.

Each and every developmental procedure follows a cycle. Without a proper-defined cycle, no developmental program can become a successful one. Coaching also follows a coaching cycle (Fig 1)

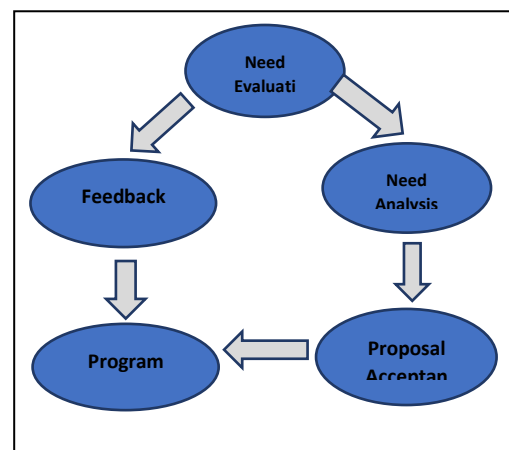


Fig 1: - Coaching cycle

In today's point of time, there is a drastic change in the working environment in several organizations. In recent times, Work from Home is in high demand.

Today's youth wants a job which give them the freedom to work from home as for today's youth, work-life balance is the most important parameter of their corporate life and with these sorts of profile, they can maintain the balance.

III. CONCEPT OF E-COACHING

To define E-Coaching, we can say that it is a form of coaching an individual that takes place with the usage of electronic media and that's also with or without any sort of input from the real coach.

Today, professional coaches are introducing e-coaching as one of their methodology of their service portfolio, either as a standalone program or in such a way so that it can add certain value to the existing programs.

There are several real-time methodologies of providing E-Coaching which are: -

- Instant Messenger Service
- Skype
- Webinar

The salient feature of E-Coaching is that it can be started at any point of time without waiting for any sort of formal procedure, but the main requirement of e-coaching is the availability of coach and coachee at the same time. Talking about written-mode of e-coaching using e-mail, it is much more complicated to implement than visual e-coaching using skype, though in both the formats, the answers of the questions asked by the coach gets submitted fast, but in written-mode, most of the times the coachee is unable to understand what action plan the coach is suggesting him regarding his pitfalls due to the inability of the coach to understand the mood, motivational factor and language preferred by the coachee which is drastically eradicated by online visual coaching where the coach can talk with the coachee and can feel the mood and the level of motivation of the coachee. Moreover, in visual coaching method using Skype and all other video chat options, if coachee wants any sort of links regarding their skill development or doubt clearance, the coach can provide that using the chat box option available there.

IV. CONCEPT OF V-MANAGERS

In most of the top-notch companies, the top and the mid-level managers are given the option that they can do their work by sitting at any remote distance from the head-quarter, e.g. if we take the example of companies like Google and Amazon, most of their line managers are preferring to work from home as in today's time frame, the top-most priority of each

and every youth is "Work-Life Balance" and they believe that if they get the option to work from home, they will be able to give time to their family also as in such job roles, the employee can log-in to the server of the organization and can perform his/her work at any time and any place. These sorts of jobs ensure that wherever the employee travel, he/she cannot miss a day in their work as their attendance in the office gets marked with their frequency of log-in in the organization intra-net or inter-net portal.

Moreover, in these sort of job roles, a manager gets the full autonomy about choosing their workplace which gives them the feeling that they have the power of selecting their workplace which, in turn, motivates the employee to stay with the organization and to deliver with his full potential. These managers also ensure that the wastage of time is getting reduced as whenever the top management wants any sort of information, wherever the manager is sitting, he will be able to send the information as soon as possible by logging in to the organization's internal portal. Managers who are deputed in the job profile having the facility of work from home are supposed to manage a team who is sitting in a remote place and is deputed in the frontline operations, handling the queries of the customers and clients, i.e. they are handling a virtual team who is present in different location and for that team, the manager is a virtual manager or a V-Manager. In recent studies, it has been observed that most of the Millennial managers aspire to work in such profile where they are supposed to handle a virtual team and they are given the full autonomy to choose their work place and worktime (chart1 and chart 2), as in these job roles there is no presence of managerial biasness which affects the performance review of any of the associates.

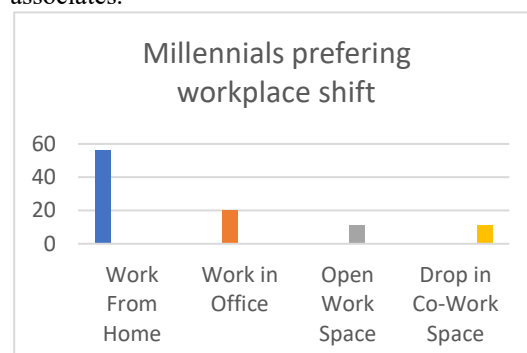


Chart1: - Percentage of millennials preferring workplace shift

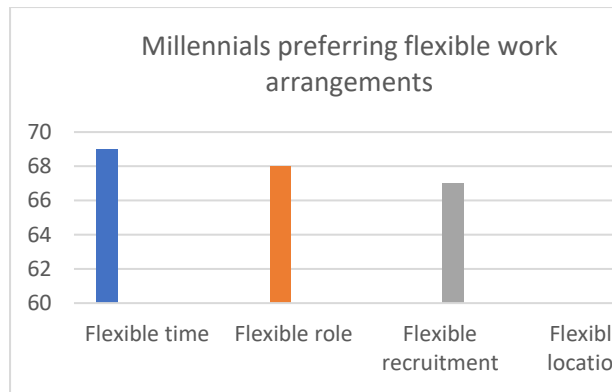


Chart2: - Study on Flexible work arrangements for Millennials (Source: - Delloitte Millennial Survey)

V. INCREMENT IN PREFERENCE OF V-MANAGERS

In recent times, it has been observed that several top-notch companies (Enlisted in Fortune 500) are preferring v-managers and they are even expanding the span of virtual employees by giving work from home profile to their non-managerial employees also. Companies like Amazon, Apple, American Express, Dell, etc. are the pioneer of providing the “Work from Home” facility to their managers and even to their frontline non-managerial employees. The main reasons for this rapid growth in the demand of V-Managers and V-Employees in the companies are mentioned as follows:

- **Control over the schedule:** Being in charge of the working day on self is the biggest reason for the growth of this profile. Here, one can customize his/her work hours to meet their personal and family needs. If one manager works best in the night, he/she can schedule his/her work in the night only to give high input in the increment of the company’s productivity.
- **More Personal time:** If an individual thinks that the job is taking away too much of his/her precious time in which he/she is supposed to take care of his/ her elder parents, infants and ailing spouse, then there will be a feeling of dissatisfaction in the mind of the employee which will finally lead to a situation where the employee will leave the organization and the organization will lose one of their precious talent which was able to put them much forward than their competitors.
- **Making Money while doing what they love:** If an employee is given the full autonomy of doing his/her work from home, that employee will get a chance to follow his/her passion and in today’s timeframe, it has been observed that the employees who are able to follow their

passion beside doing their day-to-day office job, they are the most happy and satisfied employee of the organization and they gradually build up a loyalty for the organization which ensures their retention in the organization for a long time.

- **No More Time-Consuming Commutation:** In a profile like work from home, if an employee has the full authority to perform his/her daily job by sitting at home and not regularly coming to office, the time an employee consumes in commuting from their residence to workplace gets reduced and at that time slot, the employee can either perform some of his/her job-related task or can devote that time to take care of their ailing spouse, elderly parents and infants. Moreover, this profile also reduces the propensity of late-coming as the employee’s attendance gets marked when he/she login in the company’s internal service portal.
- **Control over Work Attire:** Among most of the millennial employees, it has been observed that they want a very good career path but they are not ready to sacrifice their self-being and self-identity while getting that job. Most of the millennials aspire to be a part of those organizations who have no dressing code and the employees can come wearing those attire which they themselves find to be comfortable. With jobs where there is a provision of working from home, there is no bindings about the dress code an employee is supposed to maintain as they are not sitting in a brick-and-mortar office where they are supposed to be under continuous surveillance of the boss and have to meet their clients in business attire only. Thus, companies like Amazon, Dell, Kronos Inc. are much more popular among the millennials as they provide their employees the facility of not wearing business attire always as they will be working from home.

VI. REASON BEHIND E-COACHING FOR V-MANAGERS

As in today’s corporate world, most of the frontline and middle managers are opting for the work from home and most of the organizations are making contract with the top corporate tycoons for coaching their frontline and their middle managers who are deployed in foreign countries and can’t make it out to take any formal coaching sessions, companies are going for implementing e-coaching in their organization due to the following reasons:

- Receiving someone’s commitment for a formal coaching session is becoming challenging with

due course of time, irrespective of he/she working with any in-house coach or with any out-house coach as both the coach and the coachee are separated by a vast time zone gap. Moreover, as there is a craze among the married woman managers to choose virtual office as their workplace, they get time for coaching and getting coached only after finishing their household chores and sending their siblings to school. In case of woman managers who are in a position of expecting her baby, they can also provide coaching and receive coaching by using the e-coaching platform which will imbibe a feeling among them that their organization is not alienating them due to their physical condition and is providing all sorts of facilities.

- In case of e-coaching, it is much easier to find out the right coach for the managers as the platforms which are used for e-coaching also gives the aid about the proper coach for a manager. Moreover, the locational issues can also be eradicated with the usage of e-coaching platforms, thus curtailing the cost of giving the top-notch corporate coach the reimbursement regarding his travelling and lodging in the home or in the host country. Moreover, an e-coach can handle multiple coachee in a single point of time which happens in the case of team e-coaching.

VII. SHORTCOMINGS OF E-COACHING

With evolution of new methodologies to solve any problem, our mode of operation becomes easier. But all new methodologies come with certain shortcomings which creates a roadblock in the successful implementation of that methodology in solving any sort of problem. Similarly, E-Coaching, being a new methodology of solving the problem of coaching those managers who are sitting and operating from a remote place, comes with the following shortcomings: -

- **Lack of human interaction:** In all sort of coaching methodology, human interaction is one of the vital ingredients of making that methodology a successful one as with face-to-face human interaction, coach can always keep a track about the improvement level of the coachee and can understand that what sort of motivational factor will work best for him and accordingly, the coach can decide the action plan to improve the performance of the employee. Though in video e-coaching

methodology, here is a scope that the coach can see the coachee and can talk over video conference, but video conference is not possible each and every time as both the coach and coachee belongs to different time zone and seldom they can find out a common leisure time.

- **Dissimilar learning ability of coachee:** Each and every individual have different learning ability. Someone can learn only by observing certain visual infographics only one or by having an interaction with the coach and gaining insights only once, while someone will only learn if the coachee and the coach spends a long time interacting with each other and then sorting out the problems and their solutions and the procedure is supposed to be a continuous one. Thus, for the second set of employees, the methodology of e-coaching is not the best fit one and if provided, the main agenda of providing coaching will go in vain.
- **Technological upgradation:** in the generation of lightning fast development and drastic changes in technology, no one can assure that whatever technology we are using will be available in the near future. Most of the organizations are using cloud computing to store a large quantity of data in a single place from where anyone belonging to the organization can have the access of the data with ease, which was difficult to think in past five years. Keeping this thing in mind, one can anticipate that the tools the organizations are using today to provide e-coaching today will become obsolete in the coming six years and the new system which is to be installed are going to be more expensive than the tools used today as their data security aspects will be much more complicated, the makers of those tools have to use complex algorithms to make the usage of that tool simple. If an organization is spending a hefty amount on buying e-coaching tools, then they can invest that amount on bringing the coach in their organization and it will be much more helpful and cost-effective as the cost of internet data used by the coaches to interact with the coach using those advanced tool will not be in use in case of physical interaction.

VIII. CONCLUSION

E-Coaching, though a growing trend, is much needed in present scenario as most of the managers and in the near future, it can be expected that e-coaching will become one of the most used technique of coaching. But one should keep in mind

that there is no substitute of face-to-face coaching, whether it is individual or team coaching, as in physical technique, the coach can keep a continuous track of the performance metric and can discuss with the coachee about his/her feelings and motivation factor at different time frame which may not be possible if the coach totally relies on the e-coaching platform. In short, e-coaching is best fit for giving a technological support to the traditional coaching program.

REFERENCES

- [1]. M. E. Berg, J. T. Karlsen, Mental Models in Project Management Coaching; Engineering Management Journal, Vol 19, Issue 3, 2007.
- [2]. S. Bloch, Coaching Tomorrow's Top Managers, Employee Counselling Today; The Journal of Workplace Learning, Volume 8, Number 5, pp. 30–32, 1996.
- [3]. S. Bowles, C.J.L. Cunningham, G.M. De La Rosa, J. Picano, Coaching Leaders in Middle and Executive Management: Goals, Performance, Buy-In; Leadership & Organization Development Journal, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 388-408, 2007.
- [4]. R. Lesonsky, Millennials Are Rewriting the Rules of Work and Entrepreneurship, 2013. Available at <https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/millennials-work-and-entrepreneurship.html>
- [5]. M. Lilyquist, 9 Reasons Why You Should Work from Home, 2019. Available at <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/should-i-work-from-home-10-reasons-you-should-1794195>
- [6]. A. Lisa, R. Boyce, J. Jackson and L. J. Neal, Building Successful Leadership Coaching Relationships, Examining Impact of Matching Criteria in a Leadership Coaching Program; Journal of Management Development Vol. 29 No. 10, pp. 914-931, 2010.
- [7]. C.O. Longenecker, Coaching for Better Results: Key Practices of High Performance Leaders; Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 42 No. 1, pp. 32-40, 2010.
- [8]. H. McNamara, The Rise of E-Coaching; Training Journal, PP 67-70, 2011.
- [9]. S. Milovanović, Opportunities and Challenges of Electronic Learning; Facta Universitatis, Series: Economics and Organization Vol. 7, No 2, pp. 191 – 199, 2010
- [10]. R. Philips, Coaching for Higher Performance; Management Development Review, Vol. 7 Issue: 5, pp. 19 – 22, 1994.
- [11]. A. Rossett, G. Marino, If Coaching is Good, then E-Coaching is; Journal of Training & Development, Vol 46, 2005.
- [12]. D. Ulrich, Coaching for Results; Business Strategy Series, Vol. 9, pp. 104 – 114, 2008.