



# Coached to perfection

Mentoring and coaching programmes are strategic tools to attract and retain top talent

TIGER Woods can beat his coach any given day. But the golf superstar pays Hank Haney a handsome sum every year to help him improve his already near-perfect game. Why? Because the only person who can't see Tiger play real-time is Tiger himself.

All professional sports athletes have a coach, so why not executives who are determined to race up the corporate ladder?

In a nutshell, coaches help their charges enhance their professional and/or personal lives by making them more aware of their "blind spots", such as limiting beliefs that may be hindering them from progressing.

Coaching is a journey of self-discovery that aims to bring about real sustainable change that will ultimately lead to greater enlightenment and increased fulfilment and happiness for the coached individual or team.

## Invest in employees

Mentoring and coaching have become buzzwords in human resource (HR) circles in recent years for their role in attracting and retaining top corporate leaders.

Executive coaching, in particular, has been one of the fastest emerging industries in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom in the past decade.

Prospective employees have also become more sophisticated in their job searches and their own selection process. They want to know upfront what they will gain in both the short- and long-term before accepting an offer from an organisation.

Thus, offering a planned approach to their career development, such as a formal mentoring programme, will enhance an organisation's attractiveness to prospective employees. It can also give your organisation an edge over your competitors.

Internally, such mentoring and coaching programmes help to retain employees, which is good for the company's bottom line. Investing in employees helps to develop a sense of loyalty in

them and hence they are likely to contribute more effectively to the company's overall goals.

## Be proactive

In the past, coaching was traditionally initiated by the organisation. However, these days, the idea to engage a coach or seek a mentor can also originate from proactive executives.

Experts say coaching can be particularly effective in times of change for an executive such as

promotions, stretch assignments and other new challenges.

While you may be confident in your abilities to take on new tasks, you may feel that an independent and objective sounding board would be beneficial in helping you achieve a new level of performance, especially if former peers and close confidants are now reporting to you.

Additionally, your success in a new role may require skills you may not have needed in the past

and a coach can help you sharpen those skills.

Executives should also seek coaching when they feel that a change in their behaviour will enhance their performance and make a significant difference in their ability to advance within their organisation as well as impact the long-term success of their organisation.

But for it to work, you have to be open to feedback and willing to do what it takes in order to bring about positive change.

In seeking out a mentor, factors to consider would be the neutrality, objectivity and experience level of the person. There must be a certain chemistry between yourself and the mentor or coach as you will need to establish a good working relationship built upon trust and openness.

It is only when there is trust that you feel safe to open up and bare the real issues at play. For those who embrace the journey of self-discovery and commit to change, the mentoring and coaching process can truly be an exhilarating one.

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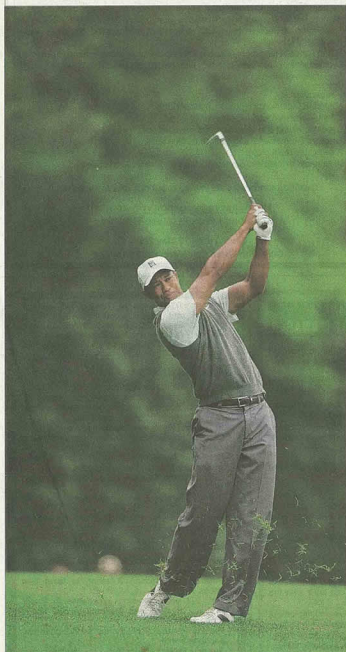


PHOTO: AP

Tiger Woods may be the world's top golfer, but even he needs a coach to improve his game.

## Coaching vs Mentoring

COACHING	MENTORING
Relationship is often finite and short-term (3 to 12 months)	Relationship is often long-term, on-going (1 to 2 years)
Coaches are more frequently external to the organisation	Mentors are often found within the organisation
Coaches are most often paid for their services	Mentoring is seen as a benevolent and goodwill gesture
Goals are clearly defined	Goals are not always clearly defined
Action-oriented	Process- and relationship-oriented
Results-oriented	Outcomes are often oblique
Relationship is like a partnership	A mentor is usually higher in the organisational hierarchy
A coach may be the same age or younger than the person he is coaching	A mentor is usually older, more senior than his mentee (although peer and reverse mentoring are also gaining momentum)
A coach may not necessarily be an expert in the area he is coaching but he is an expert at getting the best out of people	A mentor is usually an expert in the area the mentee is aspiring to achieve in but may not be an expert at bringing out the best in people
A coach is not necessarily a mentor	A mentor will usually have good coaching skills
Coaches are most often formally trained in coaching	Mentors are not necessarily formally trained although many may be naturally good advisors