



THE INSTITUTE OF
LEADERSHIP
& MANAGEMENT



Don't Tell; Coach

Contents

Our research: why now?	4
Research highlights	5
Other key research findings	8
Conclusion	12
Methodology	14
References	15

The Institute of Leadership & Management is the professional membership body for leaders, managers, coaches and mentors. We believe inspirational leadership holds the key to personal fulfilment, social wellbeing and economic prosperity. By connecting like-minded people, we aim to influence and inform and be the source of pioneering thought leadership and commentary in our field.

 @InstituteLM

www.InstituteLM.com

Our research: why now?

Coaching is a very popular way for organisations to develop their people. This is because, among other benefits, it helps people to set and work towards goals, take greater responsibility for their actions, communicate more effectively, work better with others and derive higher satisfaction from their work. At an organisational level, coaching also contributes to a culture that is defined by active listening, constructive questioning, individual empowerment, the building of rapport and an emphasis on holding real two-way conversations.

The Institute of Leadership & Management recognises the importance and role of coaching within organisations. Furthermore, we have specifically identified coaching as a component of Achievement, one of our Five Dimensions of Leadership. For these reasons, we have carried out a series of research projects into coaching and how organisations use coaching to influence company culture, dating back to 2011.

As well as looking at the impact of coaching approaches on management success, we have explored what makes a great coach and what happens when high-achieving leaders have coaching conversations. In our 2017 research, *Successful Coaching: Demonstrating its value*, we focused on how the effectiveness of coaching can be measured. This is extremely important given the large-scale investment that both individuals and organisations make in coaching interventions, in terms of both time and money.

In this report, we publish the results of our latest research into the impact of coaching on organisational culture. Specifically, we are looking at the issue of whether managers are using coaching approaches to develop and motivate their staff? And if they are using these approaches, do their teams perceive that this is what their managers are doing?

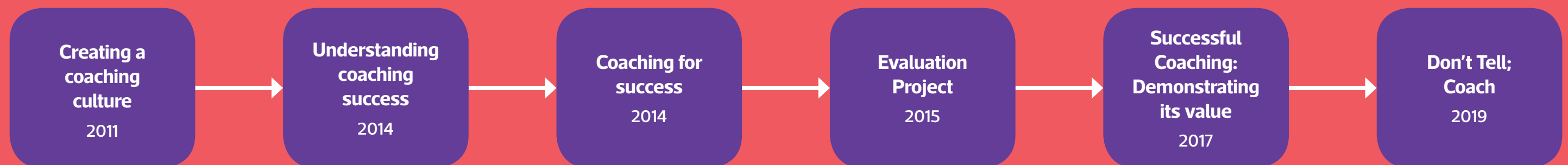
Research highlights

More than 1,000 line managers and staff who are managed were surveyed for our research. The message that emerged is that there was a clear difference of opinion between managers and managed staff as to whether managers use coaching approaches.

When asked, managers either agreed or strongly agreed that they:

- Assist individuals in setting their goals
- Encourage individuals to find their own solutions to problems
- Listen to their staff more than they speak to their staff
- Take responsibility for continued staff development

Managed staff, on the other hand, did not share their managers' perceptions that they are taking a coaching approach. For example, while managers agreed or strongly agreed that they assist individuals in setting their goals and finding their own solutions, managed staff only slightly agreed with these statements. Similarly, while managers agreed that they listen to their staff more than they speak to their staff, managed staff only slightly agreed with this statement as well.



All charts:

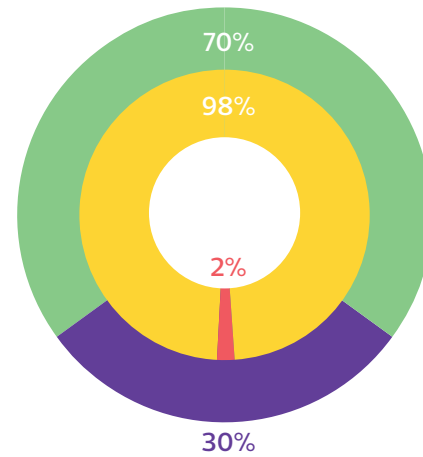
Managers about themselves:

AGREE **DISAGREE**

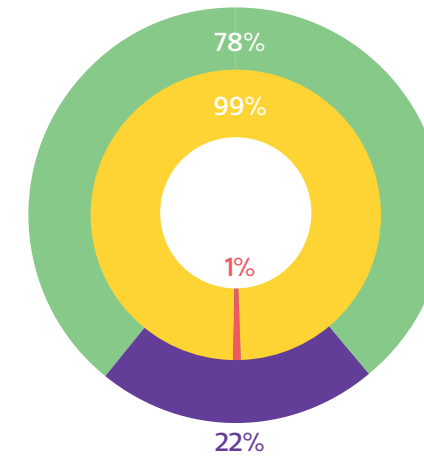
Staff about their managers:

AGREE **DISAGREE**

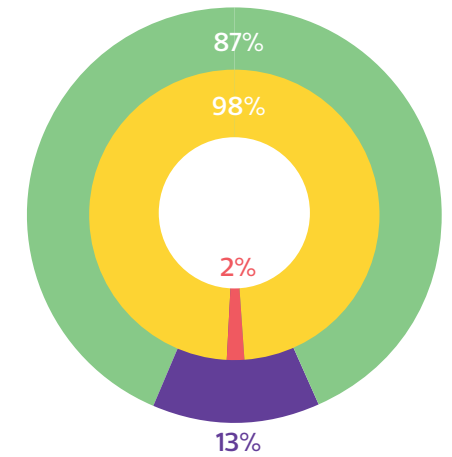
The manager takes responsibility for the continued development of staff



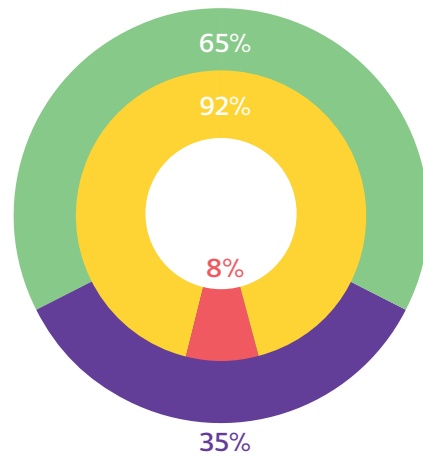
The manager sets individual goals



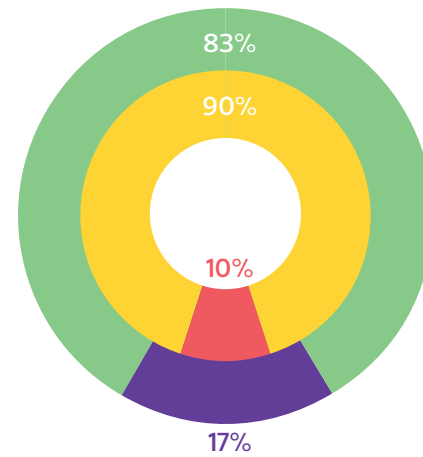
The manager encourages staff to find their own solutions to problems



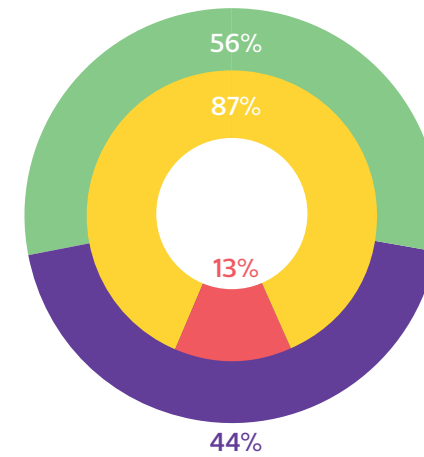
The manager listens more than he/she speaks



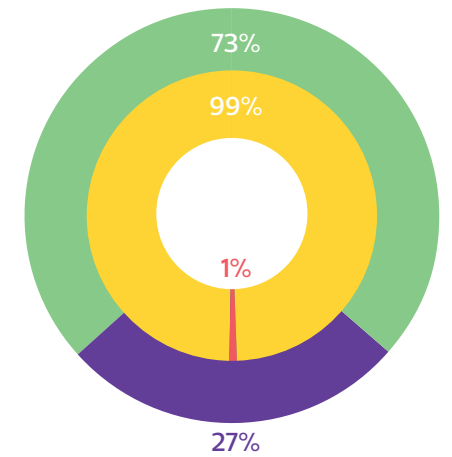
The manager asks questions when he/she doesn't know the answer



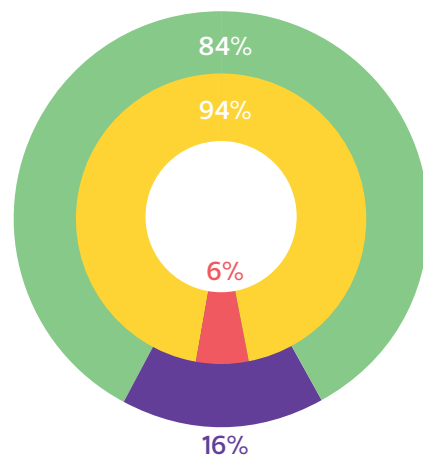
The manager provides feedback on the performance of staff at least monthly



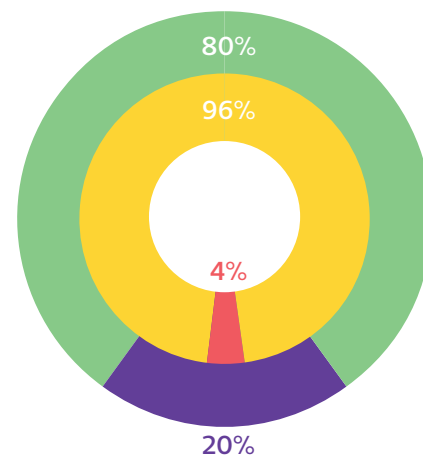
The manager seeks to understand the values of members of staff



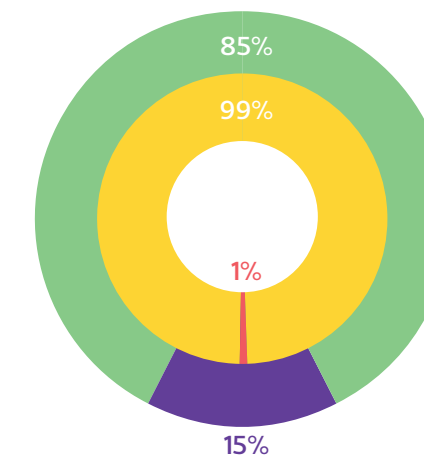
The manager understands what it is like to do the job that their staff do



When allocating work, the manager focusses on the strengths of individuals



The manager engages in informal conversations with staff



Other key research findings

A divergence of opinion between line managers and managed staff also emerged when they were asked to respond to statements that were less directly associated with coaching. For example, managers agreed or strongly agreed that they take responsibility for continued staff development, whereas managed staff either slightly agreed or slightly disagreed with this statement. Similarly, managers tended to agree or slightly agree that they give individuals feedback on their performance on a monthly basis at least, while managed staff were inclined to slightly agree or slightly disagree.

Managers also agreed that they ask staff questions that they don't know the answer to while managed staff only slightly agreed with them. Managers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "It is important for me to understand the values of my staff" while managed staff agreed or slightly agreed.

When allocating staff, managers strongly agreed or agreed that they focus on the strengths of individuals, but managed staff only agreed or slightly agreed. The same pattern occurred when managers were asked if they engage in informal conversations with their staff.

There was one area where line managers and managed staff agreed, however. This was in relation to the following statement: "When it comes to assigning a task, I always imagine what it is like to do the job."

What can we learn?

The research underlined that managers have a high sense of awareness of the importance of coaching their staff. They want to believe that they are taking a coaching approach to developing their people, as is evidenced by them reporting that they assist individuals to set their own goals, solve their own problems and that they listen to their staff more than they speak to them.

The fact that managers understand the importance of coaching their staff is encouraging, given that people's expectations around development continue to evolve as new generations enter the workplace. In our 2011 research into Generation Y, undertaken in conjunction with Ashridge Executive Education, Hult, we established that managed staff no longer expect a manager to have all the answers, to tell them what to do and to give them feedback on how well or otherwise they have met the targets that have been set for them.

Today, people have greater expectations of their managers in terms of their own development. They also want to bring more of themselves to work, to use their initiative and to grow and develop in their roles. Managers who coach have a big role to play in helping people to realise these expectations.



In future, good leadership and management will increasingly be defined by the adoption of coaching approaches. So, while it is good to see that there is a high degree of awareness around the value of coaching, it is disappointing that managers have a lack of self-awareness as to whether they are really using coaching approaches in practice. Of course, the only way they will be able to find this out is to ask – which is a brilliant coaching technique. They should ask the question, reframe it and ask it again, and ask the member of staff to describe what they understand a coaching approach to be.

One of the most revealing insights from this research is, that if managers are asking people to solve their own problems and set their own goals they do need to listen more than they speak. If people are asked how much they think they are speaking compared with how much they are actually speaking, they will probably underestimate how much they are dominating the conversation.

It is not surprising that a disparity exists between what managers think they are doing and what they are actually doing, or indeed how they are being experienced by the people whom they manage. Many research findings show that people very rarely describe themselves as below average at whatever skill or capability they are being asked to assess. In fact, social psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger have identified a cognitive bias whereby people mistakenly assess their cognitive ability as greater than it is. This is known as the Dunning-Kruger effect.

So, what should managers take away from this research? Firstly, they should never assume that their coaching approach is sufficiently honed. There is always room for improvement. Managers should therefore view these findings as a wake-up call and ask themselves the following important questions: Am I really doing this? How do I know I am doing this? What evidence can I get to support my view that I am using coaching approaches?

Secondly, managers should potentially look at adjusting their coaching style. While some people on their teams may enjoy challenge, others may respond to any sort of challenge with anxiety. So, managers need to adapt the way they talk to team members to suit the individual style of the person they are speaking to.

Finally, it is important that managers recognise the power dynamic that exists between them and their team members. How genuine, open and transparent can they really expect a team member to be in a coaching situation given that their manager-coach is the same person who allocates work to that team member, does their appraisal and signs off their annual leave? In light of this power dynamic, coaching approaches are often a more effective practice for managers to employ when developing staff, rather than formal coaching sessions.

FIVE WAYS TO CREATE A COACHING CULTURE

1

Make it OK to challenge. When an individual is spoken to by a colleague or manager in a manner that seems autocratic, directive or patronising, it must be OK for that person to point it out and ask for the request to be repeated in more of a coaching-type style.

2

Identify a simple coaching model. Make sure that everyone in the workplace is familiar with it so that there is a shared understanding of the language used.

3

Acknowledge, celebrate and reward questions rather than answers.

4

Encourage conversation rather than electronic communication. It is hard to coach by email.

5

Appreciate that there are differences in how receptive people are to coaching approaches. Then adapt your style accordingly.

Conclusion

Coaching underpins personal development at every level of an organisation. This is because it recognises that every employee – regardless of their level of seniority – is always a work in progress. We all have areas that we can improve on; we can all learn from listening and talking to others. At the same time, we are all operating in a constantly changing landscape that requires us to continually develop in order to adapt. We should never forget that the experiences, mindset and personal qualities that made us successful in one place yesterday may not necessarily enable us to thrive in a different place tomorrow.

By giving and receiving coaching, managers can enhance their self-awareness and better understand the people around them. They can also use coaching as a channel for solving problems and seizing new opportunities. The real power of coaching is not unleashed when it is simply used as a framework for setting goals and objectives. It comes when it is used to help people find their true sense of purpose, strengthen their relationships with others, and even fulfil their personal ambitions and dreams.



Methodology

The Institute of Leadership and Management surveyed 1080 people in October 2018 about approaches to managing staff. It gathered data from 927 line managers and 153 staff who are managed.

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with 10 statements about how they approached the practice of line managing staff, or how their line manager approached managing them. Responses were graded on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree through to strongly disagree. To determine statistical relevance of differences between answers given by the two populations (managers and managed staff), we undertook statistical analysis using the "Mann-Whitney" non-parametric test at a 95% confidence interval, powered by XLSTAT software.

The survey was conducted in line with the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct. All responses were anonymous, but respondents were asked if they would be willing to be contacted for PR purposes and were also incentivised to take part in the survey.



References

Institute of Leadership & Management (2011) **Creating a Coaching Culture**, available from www.InstituteLM.com/resourceLibrary/creating-a-coaching-culture-2011.html

Institute of Leadership & Management (2011) **"Great Expectations: Managing Generation Y"** available from www.InstituteLM.com/resourceLibrary/great-expectations-managing-generation-y.html

Institute of Leadership & Management (2014) **The key ingredients for coaching delivery and coaching recruitment**, available from www.InstituteLM.com/resourceLibrary/coaching-for-success-the-key-ingredients-for-coaching-delivery-and-coach-recruitment.html

Institute of Leadership & Management (2017) **Successful Coaching: Demonstrating its value**, available from www.InstituteLM.com/resourceLibrary/successful-coaching.html

Institute of Leadership & Management (2017) **Workforce 2020: Managing millennials**, available from www.InstituteLM.com/resourceLibrary/workforce-2020-managing-millennials.html



THE INSTITUTE OF
LEADERSHIP
& MANAGEMENT

Inspiring great leadership. Everywhere.

**We're on a mission to
inspire great leadership**

Join us by:

**Collaborating on our research activities
Connecting with like-minded people at our events
Becoming a member**

www.institutelm.com/join

For more information, contact our Research Team: research@institutelm.com

The Institute of Leadership & Management is a company limited by guarantee (Reg No 601049) and registered as a charity in England and Wales (Reg No 248226) and in Scotland (Reg No SC039693)

Published by the Institute of Leadership & Management September 2019 © Institute of Leadership & Management
Institute of Leadership & Management, Pacific House, Relay Point, Tamworth B77 5PA www.institutelm.com +44 (0) 1543 266886