

# The Five Myths about Executive Coaching

By Thomas J. Ucko

When it comes to executive coaching, myths and misconceptions are common. Here are the five most often heard, and the reality behind each one.

**Myth #1:** *Executive coaching is only for executives in trouble.*

**Reality:** While it's true that executive coaching is often seen as a remedy for poor executive performance, organizations increasingly are using coaching to develop executives who are already performing well and will benefit from some guidance in preparing themselves for higher-level assignments.

**Myth #2:** *Executive coaching is very expensive.*

**Reality:** Executive coaching is not cheap. On the other hand, various studies have demonstrated a substantial ROI for dollars spent on coaching. A study by Manchester, Inc. examined the impact of coaching with 100 executives in 56 companies. They estimate that coaching resulted in an average return of 5.7 times the initial investment. Coaching improved productivity 53%, quality 48%, work relationships with direct reports 77%, and overall job satisfaction increased 61%.

**Myth #3:** *If I get coaching, my staff will think I'm in trouble and lose respect for me.*

**Reality:** Quite the contrary. Most staffs see their boss receiving executive coaching as a positive step. They recognize that it demonstrates the company's commitment to the individual and to his or her development. They also give credit to the boss who has the courage to take in feedback and respond to it.

**Myth #4:** *Executive coaching is too much like therapy, it's too touchy-feely.*

**Reality:** Unlike therapy, executive coaching does not delve into the client's past, explore unconscious motivations, or seek to change personality. Executive coaching is a structured process that starts with feedback about the executive's leadership behaviors, and involves the executive in determining goals for more useful behaviors and in designing a plan for achieving these goals.

**Myth #5:** *Executive coaching is only for executives.*

**Reality:** While executive coaching was originally designed for executives, many organizations now offer coaching to directors and even middle managers, either where there is a specific individual need, or where one or more high-potential directors or managers are being groomed for increased responsibilities.