

# Why digital coaching is the key to your company's growth strategy




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# COACHING AND THE NEW WAYS OF WORK

## What is digital coaching?



In a world where technology is heavily entrenched in our day to day lives, it is not surprising that even coaching has gone digital. Digital coaching has gained in popularity with organisations over the past few years particularly due to its convenience and ability to scale. Digital coaching is a service whereby coaching sessions between two parties (coach and coachee) are conducted virtually. These sessions can be conducted via desktop or mobile device. The learning and reflection process is conducted both in a practical setting (on the job) and in the coachee's everyday environment (analogue). This learning and reflection process is facilitated by using the internet. This approach enables the client to practice new skills in relevant real-life situations.

The scientific definition of digital coaching is "a non-hierarchical developmental partnership between two parties separated by a geographical distance, in which the learning and reflection process is conducted via both analogue and virtual means (Ribbers and Waringa, 2012)." The lack of a hierarchical and advisory relationship is a characteristic of digital coaching, which intrinsically distinguishes it from e-learning and e-therapy.

## Digital coaching vs. traditional coaching

We have seen a global adaptation to the use of video calling as a method to keep in touch with friends and family, but what does the research say about coaching? A study by Berry et al. (2011) shows that there is no significant difference between face-to-face coaching and coaching over the phone, in terms of building relationships and finding solutions. This shows that it is indeed possible to establish a sustainable and trusting relationship via technical communication formats, as well as to achieve individual coaching goals.

In addition, further studies (Geißler et al. 2013, 2014) showed that initial scepticism about whether it was possible to establish a trusting relationship via digital coaching, was proven unfounded by personal experience. For 93% of the participants, trusting their coach was an essential criterion for successful coaching. Before the start of digital coaching, 36% of participants were quite sceptical and 14% very sceptical with regard to establishing a relationship of trust digitally. After three months of digital coaching, this scepticism declined, with only 14% of



participants still having reservations. Furthermore, 62% of the participants surveyed were very confident and 38% of them were rather confident that digital coaching encourages constructive self-reflection – a criterion that was also very important to all participants.

"To be able to focus on my personal tooling and having the ability to dive even deeper into individual growth has been a much welcome experience among all the successes and challenges here at SoundCloud."


– CoachHub Coachee at Soundcloud –

## The key coaching trends of 2020

### Democratisation of coaching

Many of those who hold senior leadership positions, who have received coaching, often report how much they wish they had been coached earlier in their career. Therefore, it was perhaps foreseeable that the democratisation of leadership development through coaching, would





become a new norm in learning and development. Today in 2020, this is one key trend we are seeing (Forbes, 2020; Human Capital Institute, 2020). Traditionally, senior executives are given coaching for elite leadership programmes, seminars and retreats. New managers, on the other hand, are given initial coaching to accelerate their leadership. Middle management is often forgotten. In this new era we live in, every person who manages a team, needs to demonstrate the skills, in particular the soft skills needed to successfully manage their people. Coaching is thus becoming a standard element of every manager's experience.

The everyday worker too seeks career development. Coaching on an even wider scale, going beyond management, is creating more productive and engaged teams. In fact, research from City & Guilds Group (2018) reported 64% of companies who have embraced coaching across the organisation, said that coaching is becoming crucial in facilitating intergenerational working. Offering coaches to the entire workforce, is an integral element of fostering a company culture that is driven by learning and development, which according to Globoforce and the Society for Human Resource Management, is a shared attribute of more than 90% of award-winning workplaces. Furthermore, as HR Technologist (2017) stated, organisations need to give their employees, especially the younger generations who are much more likely to "job hop," a reason to stay and increase company retention. In fact, a poll conducted by the Harris Poll (2019) found that 70% of workers were "somewhat likely to leave their current company" to work somewhere with a bigger focus on employee learning.



"Everybody needs a coach. One thing that people are never good at is seeing themselves as others see them. A coach really, really helps."

– Former Google, CEO Eric Schmidt –

## Coaching the soft skills

In today's world, the importance of soft skills is ever-increasing. Accenture's 2019 study, found that 77% of managers reported soft skills as the biggest weakness, despite training. Whereas 85% of managers who received coaching, outperformed their peers in soft skills. Both Harvard Business Review (2019) and PwC (2017)'s research concluded that **the fastest and most effective way to develop soft skills is through executive coaching**. Furthermore, according to a recent LinkedIn Learning (2020), the majority of business leaders believe soft skills to be more important than hard skills.

"At Share we believe that coaching provides invaluable space for personal development and growth, which in the end makes us stronger and better, both in our private and professional lives. The model of CoachHub is great, as it offers an individual approach and solutions tailored to personal needs! We are grateful to have a partner like CoachHub, especially during these dire times where addressing topics, such as personal well being, and developing soft skills like managing stress, remaining agile and leading through crises, are more important than ever."

– Elena Kirova, Director Operation at Share –



## Digital coaching

Of course, technology continues to revolutionise the coaching business. Location-based coaching was already losing its relevance, but 2020 has highlighted the value organisations can gain from a remote solution. As the New York Times put it, the corona pandemic is a “transformative global event” requiring businesses to adapt quickly to the new ways of work. Experts have also said that this pandemic will not be unique, stating that more crisis situations will follow and when businesses are in crisis mode, the importance of time and resources becomes even greater. This paves the way for digital coaching from a coach perspective, removing all logistical costs associated with time, travel and booking rooms for coaching sessions. From a corporate client perspective, organisations are turning to solutions that are affordable and flexible enough to deliver coaching at scale throughout their organisations.

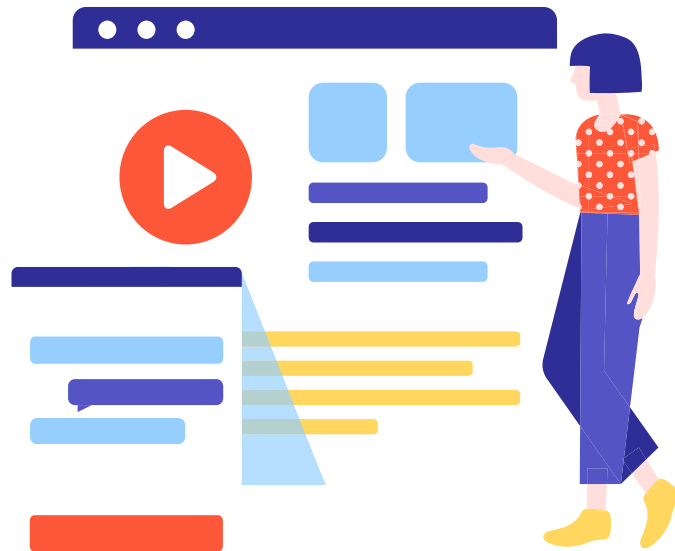
It is evident that the present-day coaching vision is resonating with buyers:

“One of the main reasons for the partnership with CoachHub is that we are introducing a new coaching culture in the organisation, which supports us on our way into the digital future of learning and development.”

- Generali -

## The impact and relevance of remote tools

As the Covid pandemic threatens many businesses, those who have built resiliency into their organisation through digital transformation, are much better equipped to endure disruption. In fact, BDO’s 2020 Digital Transformation Survey involving 600 C-level executives, found that 100% of participants have or are in the process of implementing a digital transformation strategy. At the forefront is remote working. Remote tools, despite advances and steady growth over the past decade, have remained a minority with only 3.4% of the workforce working remotely, a 2019 FlexJobs study found. Until now. Remote working is now ubiquitous. A 2020 survey from Glassdoor even reported that 67% of employees said they would support the decision for their employer to enforce a work from home policy indefinitely, due to the coronavirus outbreak.



Fortunately, organisations were preparing for a much more flexible and digital workplace pre-pandemic. This is thanks to millennials now dominating the workforce. It is now estimated that millennials have surpassed baby boomers as the largest population. In fact in the U.S. millennials consist of more than 83 billion people (PEW Research Center, 2020). With technology dominating every aspect of millennials' lives, it's perhaps not surprising that 74.4% of UK millennials prefer digital communication over face to face (LivePerson 2017).

When it comes to coaching, digital is expected to become the preferred delivery method, due to the reduction in logistical costs (Coach Training World, 2020). Furthermore, Forbes (2020) have confirmed that companies are increasingly relying on technology to make coaching flexible and scalable.

**Figure1. Hays (2020) Lifelong Learning Report**

**Used learning tools and methods**





Whilst we turn to a more digital world, however, we must not forget the importance of the human aspects of working. With AI and machine learning assisting with HR processes, more time should be focused on the wellbeing of your workforce. In this area, the human element cannot be replaced. Leading with empathy and cultivating a culture centred around the human element means you can focus on what really matters – your people.

"I think one of the biggest learnings from the pandemic and remote tools is that it brings the focus back to a human-centered approach. This varies from flexible working to emphasis on health, safety and wellbeing. Not only do companies want to find solutions that support the practical and logistical elements of working remotely, but also foster and cultivate the human aspects of working, which are ultimately what make work meaningful and fulfilling."

– Rosie Evans, Senior Behavioural Scientist at CoachHub –

When you combine the importance of the human element of working with the demand for remote solutions, sparked by the millennial way of working and catapulted by the coronavirus pandemic, the case for digital coaching, now, speaks for itself.



# THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL COACHING TODAY

## The impact on managers

### New management skills are needed in this new reality

There is a fundamental need for behavioural change in management. McKinsey (2019) found that 70% of transformation programmes fail, identifying management behaviour as a key barrier. The managers of today are having to cope with a new reality and simply cannot have all right answers. Companies are therefore moving away from traditional command-and-control practices towards a more collaborative and supportive management style where guidance, over instructions, is offered. This way, their teams can remain agile in ever-changing environments. Soft skills such as empathy, communication, adaptability and creativity are increasingly cited as the top desired skills (eLearning Industry 2018, CNBC 2020, Forbes 2020). Google even found that among the eight qualities their top employees have in common, hard skills such as coding, were ranked last. Coaching was also among the top skills.

"Today, the qualities that leaders - and organisations - need to survive and thrive are different to the past. Success increasingly depends on innovation, entrepreneurship, and other forms of creativity that rely not just on skills, but also on innate capabilities, such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and collaboration."

– Deloitte 2020 –

Coaching is the most effective way to equip management with the soft skills necessary for this new way of working (Harvard Business Review, 2019, PwC, 2017). And as more and more companies embrace a more flexible approach to working from home, coaching must too be location-independent. Digital coaching is the solution.



2016

2018

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| • | • | <b>1 Willingness to be flexible, agile, and adaptable to change</b>     |
| • | • | <b>2 Time management skills and ability to prioritise</b>               |
| • | • | <b>3 Ability to work effectively in team environments</b>               |
| • | • | 4 Ability to communicate effectively in business context                |
| • | • | 5 Analytics skills and business acumen                                  |
| • | • | 6 Technical core capabilities for STEM                                  |
| • | • | 7 Capacity for innovation and creativity                                |
| • | • | 8 Basic computer and software/application skills                        |
| • | • | 9 Ethics and Integrity  |
| • | • | 10 Foreign language proficiency   |
| • | • | 11 Fundamental core capabilities around reading, writing and arithmetic |
| • | • | 12 Industry - or occupation - specific skills                           |

**Source: IBM Institute for Business Value, Global Survey 2016.** Executives now point to behavioural skills as the most critical for members of the workforce today

## Psychological safety for your managers

As Ben Wilmott, Head of Public Policy CIPD (2020) said on the topic of the workplace during and post Covid-19, "Employers have a fundamental duty of care for physical and mental wellbeing under the Health And Safety At Work Act," - and the reality is much of the fulfilment of this will be at the hands of management. Management will be under pressure to respond to conflicting demands and attending to every team member's needs could quickly exhaust the capacity of managers. Thus, as well as giving support, management must also be supported. Coaching has been cited by experts (Harvard Business Review, 2020; Association for Talent Development, 2020 ) as a powerful tool to help provide management the support they need, in particular to remain resilient and agile.

## Performance and engagement with team members

In his book *Accountable Leaders* (2013), leading author Vince Molinaro, states that **73% of employees spend a significant amount of time dealing with problems caused by ineffective managers.** He stresses that mediocre leadership has the power to destroy employee engagement entirely. Gallup (2014) research supports this, concluding that poor managers are one of the key drivers for disengagement - reporting that the net effect on the business is estimated to cost organisations **\$450-\$550 billion a year.** More recently, Chief Executive (2018) reports that a management-level employee making \$68,000 in annual salary would cost the company more than \$800,000 if terminated within 2.5 years of hiring. Surprisingly, this does not account for the cost of recruiting and hiring a replacement.

Using the latest research and technology, CoachHub collaborates with organisations to accelerate leadership development. We do this by supporting the transfer of learning through digital coaching. CoachHub also encourages transformational leadership, which focuses on the positive development (transformation) of followers. Transformational leadership has been more sustainable and successful in achieving goals than other leadership styles. The approach also promotes satisfaction, engagement, and creativity in followers and encourages their performance (O'Connor & Cavanaugh, 2013).

## Impact on employees

### An increase of employee engagement

In 2017, Gallup released a study called "State of the Global Workplace" which reported that the most productive companies were those with high employee engagement. However, this study estimates that only 34% of employees are currently engaged at work, meaning that **66% of employees are not engaged or actively disengaged** which is detrimental for organisations. Moreover, only 30% of employees are loyal to their company.





Employee engagement is determined by factors such as a clear understanding of your role, having the opportunity to do what you do best, strong working relationships and having career opportunities.



**76%**

**of employees want career opportunities - HR Exchange, 2020 -**

Coaching helps organisations to work on employee engagement in several ways. Firstly, it brings new perspectives on the development of one's career. Coaching will enable these employees to take responsibility for their tasks so that they can subsequently acquire new ones. It then promotes emotional intelligence by working on soft skills and regulating reactionary behaviour. Managing one's emotions is essential today in a world in constant transformation. Human Resources must therefore seriously consider individual coaching for all employees. Finally, setting up a coaching programme will ensure that the employee feels supported by his or her hierarchy, particularly through a system of continuous feedback. When an employee feels valued by their work and the efforts they have made to achieve their goals, their commitment to the company increases.

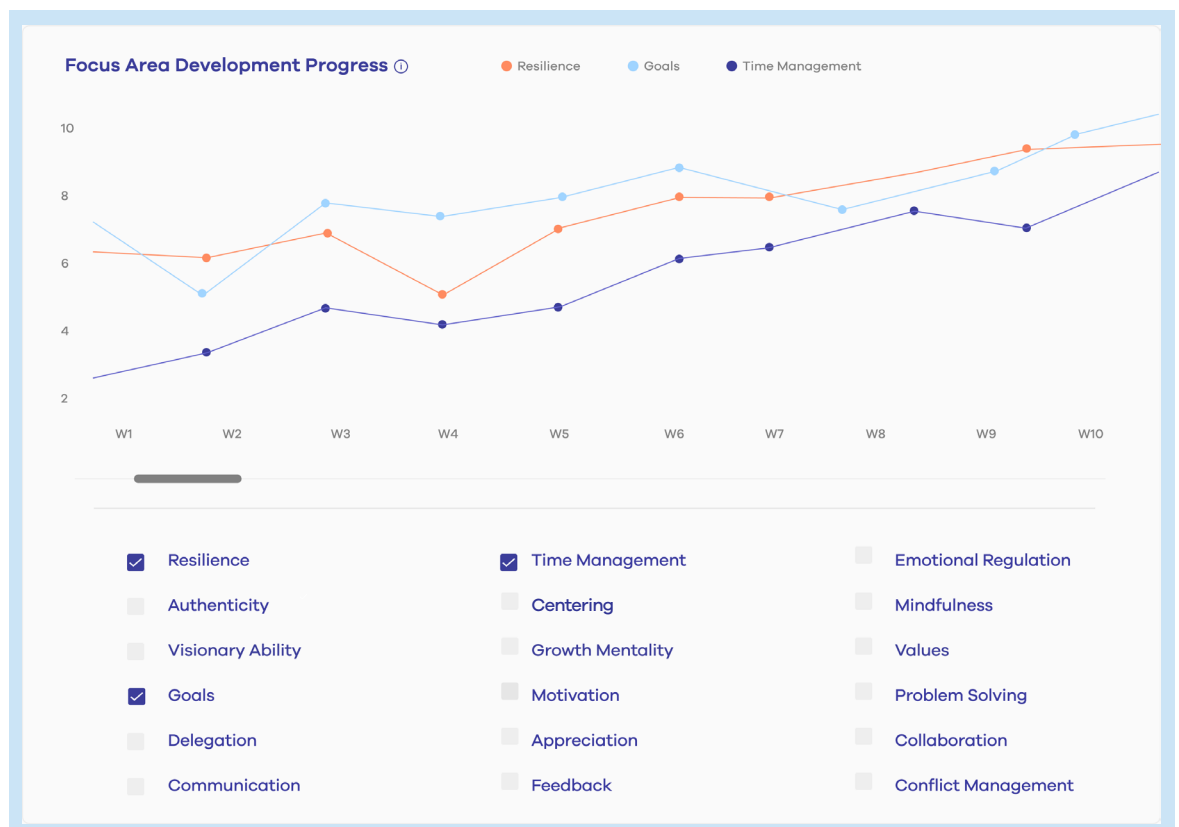
When it comes to engaging with learning platforms, digital coaching comes out on top. In fact, only 30% of employees are engaged with current e-learning platforms (Redthread, 2017), whereas **96% of CoachHub users are engaged** (CoachHub 2020). Furthermore, companies that can foster a growth mindset, (use stretch assignments, and openly discuss mistakes to support learning) and embrace the digital transformation of learning and development, are three times more profitable (Deloitte, 2017).



## An increase of performance with clear expectations

Coaching has a beneficial effect on the performance of employees in that it allows them to set clear and attainable objectives. 71% of employees feel that their managers do not spend enough time discussing their goals with them on a regular basis (Santiago Iñiguez de Onzoño, 2016). As a result, employees don't really know which direction to go in, creating a loss of productivity and a drop in performance. Clearly communicating short and long term goals helps employees get involved in their tasks, take responsibility and keep up the pace. Coaching enables employees to set their own objectives in relation to their activity and to work on their personal motivation. With the coach, the employee will set up an action plan adapted to their situation and will be able to get regular feedback in order to correct any problems encountered.

When we compare classroom training to digital coaching, only 15% of employees report an increase in performance and attainment after one year of the training (Armanu et al. 2020), whereas **88% reported goal attainment through CoachHub** (CoachHub 2020). Furthermore, 90% of employees forget the content of classroom trainings within 14 days (Axonify, 2013) whereas over 70% of individuals who receive coaching report improved productivity and collaboration (Knowles, 2018). Another revealing figure from McKinsey (2010) is that only 25% of organisations report their training programmes having a positive impact on performance. What's more, only 8% of organisations measure these programmes. Being able to report ROI of learning and development is fundamental. At CoachHub, we provide measurable results against individual focus areas and company-wide learning and development objectives.



## Improved communication with managers and teams

Communication is also improved in companies that have used a coaching programme. According to an ICF and PwC study, there is a 71% improvement in communication skills in teams that have benefited from coaching. Indeed, coaching has several positive effects on employee communication. It allows a better listening between the manager and the employee who will share their difficulties more easily. It also encourages mutual aid within teams by improving empathy capacities. Coaching also helps to build trust within teams by freeing up speech and improving speaking methods. Moreover, it helps to understand its mechanisms and to reduce impulsive reactions. By understanding how it works and working on themselves, employees are better able to describe their feelings and communicate them sympathetically to their manager and colleagues.

## A secure environment for better psychological safety

We've been hearing a lot about psychological safety at work in recent years, and there's no denying that 2020 has brought its share of anxiety and doubt. According to a survey by the firm Stimulus, in 2017, 24% of employees felt in a "state of hyperstress", a very worrying figure since stress is responsible for long-term depression at work. More recently, HR Executive (2020) reported that there has been a:

**36%** increase in depression amongst males

and even more shocking, an:

**86%** increase amongst women.

Psychological safety is the feeling of being able to come to work just as we are, to speak up without any negative consequences for our work or without fear of being rejected or mocked by other employees. Creating a safe environment for employees is paramount. Employees must feel accepted and trusted by their peers and by their manager. And it is the employer's responsibility to guarantee this psychological safety at work. Psychological safety also fosters creativity and innovation, and if we are not careful to keep our employees safe, then psychological safety will drop drastically, according to recent research at the Rotman School at the University of Toronto (2019). Coaching will help employees to gain self-confidence, to have an attentive ear to confide in, while at the same time encouraging the expression of feelings. It also allows employees to come back to situations that it are not always possible to analyse with the manager afterwards. Coaching also promotes empathy which according to a Google study conducted in 2012, is the secret of successful teams.

# Impact on the company

## A safer and stronger company culture

According to a study by Columbia University, payroll turnover is 48.4% for companies with a weak organisational culture. This figure drops to 13% for those that have developed a good corporate culture. Having a strong corporate culture helps to increase employee engagement, company performance and revenues as well as attract and retain talent. In fact, **60% of employees in organisations with strong coaching cultures were rated as highly engaged and report higher levels of revenue** when compared to other organisations (HCI/ICF, 2015, Mazars, 2017).

Coaching has a very positive impact on corporate culture. Implementing a coaching program in its structure will help to define or even reaffirm a company's values. Coaching will encourage values of trust, listening, loyalty and commitment within the company while developing transparency, psychological security and communication. According to a survey from Tolero Solutions from 2017, 45% of employees say lack of trust in leadership is the biggest issue impacting work performance. Clearly working to develop the values of trust, loyalty and relationships between leaders and employees, is now essential for companies.





Future candidates will also be attracted by the development opportunities of a company that offers coaching programs to their employees. This is an important competitive advantage since a company with a good culture will attract and retain the best talent (ESC Clermont, 2020). A strong coaching culture in the organisation will also help foster a leadership based on trust, where feedback and goal setting will be easier. In this way, employee engagement is fostered and turnover is reduced.

"CoachHub has unbelievable potential and a real added value for our employees. In a very short time - 45 minutes - you learn a lot about yourself and get tools to develop yourself further."

– Juliana K., Director People and Culture, d.velop AG –

## A measurable impact on productivity and results

In 2018, HRD advised employers that if they do not offer to coach their employees, they would risk their employees' performance and productivity capability. Two years later in 2020, Buffer's State of Work in 2020 found that 40% of remote workers reported lack of collaboration, communication and loneliness as their main struggles. If these current issues are not addressed properly with a long term solution, these problems will begin to fester and a loss of engagement and productivity will be the result.

Companies like GSK are seeing the benefits of democratising coaching for all career levels. The establishment of their Coaching Centre of Excellence, which makes coaching available to their employees around the globe, resulted in a return on investment of \$66 million. Additionally, according to the ICF's Global Coaching Client Study of 2016, the vast majority of companies (86%) say they have had a very positive return on investment on coaching programs. One in five companies (19%) achieved a return of 50 times their investment, while 28% achieved a return of 10 to 49 times their investment.

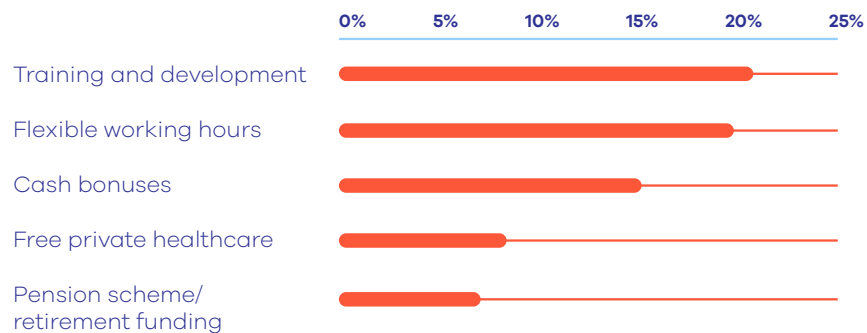


## An increase in employee retention

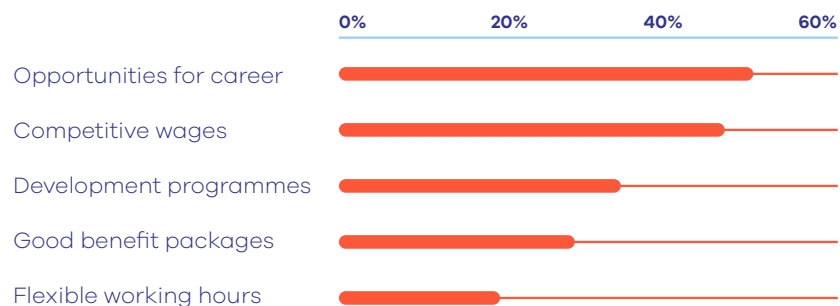
There is a strong correlation between retention and engagement. Simply engaging employees is one of the most effective employee retention strategies (Gallup 2016; Business2Community, 2019). O'Reilly et al. (2014) actually found that employees who are ignored and neglected in the workplace are more likely to quit their jobs, shockingly, even compared to those who are actively bullied. In particular, when employees are not given clear guidance for skills or career development, they are far more likely to become disengaged and leave the company (Business2Community, 2020). Thus, engaging employees through methods such as coaching, is fundamental for building a high performing workforce and strengthening retention.

Career development is increasingly cited as one of the top reasons why employees leave an organisation (Work Institute, 2019.) In fact, a CareerAddict (2020) study found that 82% of employees would leave their company due to lack of career development. As previously mentioned, career development is particularly important for the younger generations. PwC (2012) reports that development and flexible working are the two most valued benefits an organisation can offer to millennials. Digital coaching is one of the only solutions that addresses both of these simultaneously. Thus, by offering an individual and personalised digital coaching experience, your retention rates will increase considerably.

### Which **three** benefits would you most value from an employer?



### Which of the following things do you believe make an organisation an attractive employer



Source: PwC Millennials at Work Report, 2012

# DIGITAL COACHING AS PART OF A GLOBAL GROWTH STRATEGY

## Coaching is not a fixing tool

Quite often, coaching is perceived as a remedy for the lack of performance of a team or an individual, which can only be used after the damage has been done. However, as we have already discussed, coaching is a powerful tool for career development for all employees. In particular, coaching is the most effective way to unlearn old patterns and build new ones sustainably. This is because coaching is a long-term measure and is therefore part of a long-term approach. Theeboom (2013) found that at least 10 coaching sessions need to take place for coaching to be effective.

You may have heard “there is nothing wrong with me, I don’t need coaching” - this is because using coaching as a reactionary tool often receives a reactionary response. Assigning coaching to a refractory person will not have the desired effect. This is because coaching is a measure that must be agreed upon between the coachee and coach, in order to make coaching effective both on an individual and organisational-level. The coachee must be fully engaged in their development process and the coach cannot dictate solutions, tell their coachee what to do or fix problems... The coach is there to guide the coachee in the exploration of possible solutions or to help them create a new solution. Under no circumstances can the coach intervene directly in the process of resolving conflicts or problematic situations. The coach supports the coachee on their journey but the coachee remains the expert of their own evolution. The coach will keep the coachee in action by bringing rigor and a permanent listening. The coaching process cannot be done without commitment from both parties in the long term. Coaching must therefore be used proactively and not reactively.

“We work in agreement with our client on concrete objectives that are always anchored in the reality they are living in the here and now. The quality of the alliance between a coachee and their coach also makes it possible to overcome their brakes more quickly.”

Florence Soustre-Gasser, business coach, Administrator EMCC France and SIMACS

## Future proofing your organisation with digital coaching

Coaching is one of the most effective tools in any company's armory during times of transition or upheaval. It's been well established that coaching can have a significant favourable influence on psychological well-being in stressful situations, while also having a positive effect on coping mechanisms, such as resilience and mindfulness. What'smore, using coaching to lead an agile culture is correlated with greater confidence in employees' capabilities in planning and executing change (Human Capital Institute, International Coach Federation (2018)). Therefore we can confidently conclude that when you consider the implications of new ways of work (e.g. remote working) and desired company benefits (e.g. flexible working), digital coaching prevails as a powerful tool to future proof your company.

It is also important for organisations to consider solutions that are scalable. If you invest in a solution made for a fixed amount of people, you could run into problems when you hire more employees or if you want to extend the offering to others in the organisation. If the solution you choose doesn't scale, you are traveling down a dead end road. Moving for too long in the wrong direction will cost you a lot of money, time, and effort. Digital coaching's ability to scale is one of the key features that can help future proof a company and prepare it for growth.



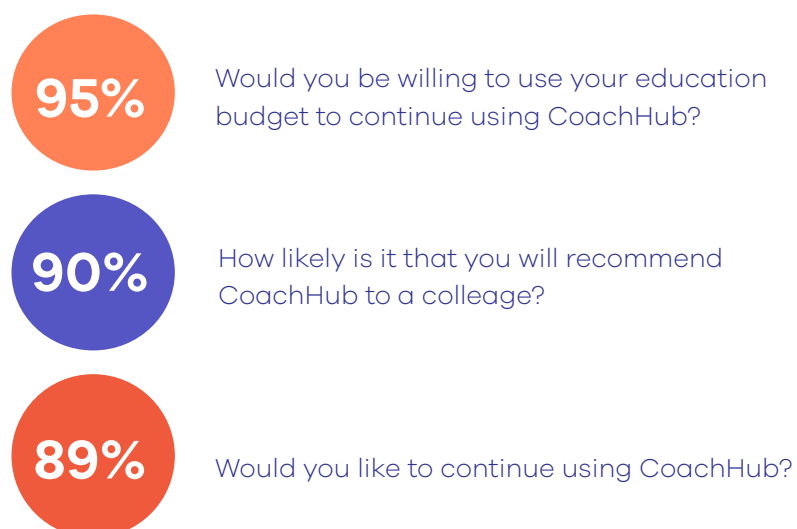


## How coaching can impact growth

As little as one in ten businesses make it to their five year milestone (Entrepreneur, 2014). This figure highlights the importance of the plan to grow from day one. From a business perspective, when we think of the term growth strategy, we may think of market penetration, product diversification and product development - however there is one fundamental step that many organisations forget or do not put enough emphasis on; people development. A concrete growth strategy must start with your people. With people at the heart of your growth strategy, innovation, creativity and all the other areas we have listed previously in this whitepaper will result as a ripple effect. This is where digital coaching and its ability to scale will have considerable impact for your organisation.

Most methods of online training do not take into account long-term knowledge retention. For long-lasting results, organisations have a responsibility to ensure that information not only becomes a skill, but an innate habit. Coaching however, is not a training programme. Coaching is the most effective way to ensure long-term and sustainable behavioural change. Avey et al. (2011) found a significant positive relationship between coaching and desirable employee attitudes, behaviours, and performance. Furthermore a McKinsey (2011) study found that there is a significant impact between excellent leadership and business growth. One of the key recommendations McKinsey made from this study, was to tailor talent strategies to growth priorities. Almost a decade later, we now see the power and the potential of democratising coaching. If there is a significant correlation between leadership coaching and business growth, imagine the growth potential if your leaders and their teams were also coached. Therefore, if you want your company to grow, you must start with your people - and not just senior management, your entire workforce. Only then can you achieve a collective vision and prosper.

### Percentage of clients who responded affirmatively in our CoachHub Customer Survey, 2020



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## About CoachHub

CoachHub is the 'mobile coaching cloud' that enables personalised coaching for employees at all career levels. A pool of top coaches from all around the world and an application for web and smartphone allow live coaching sessions via video conferencing.

We turn managers into inspiring leaders, boost team performance, and help employees grow personally and professionally.

Our vision is a personal coach for every employee, accompanying them as a guide to measurably advance their accomplishments.

For more information visit

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