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Everyone's at it, but are they doing it right? 83% of British businesses use coaching, but only one in five give any training to the coaches

Coaching and mentoring are still essential tools in developing skills and knowledge within organisations. 83% of organisations use coaching and 73% use mentoring, but this widespread popularity is not reflected in giving training to those coaches and mentors. Only 21% of organisations in the survey, for the Coaching and Mentoring Managing Best Practice guide, always provide guidance or training to their coaches and mentors.

Both coaching, which is broadly focused on current performance issues, and mentoring, which tends to develop long-term skills and career prospects, trickle down through organisations. Senior managers work with middle managers, middle managers with their juniors.

64% of respondents used coaching to develop job-specific or technical skills, followed by 50% for management development and 47% for leadership skills. This clearly shows that coaching is seen as having practical, well-defined, job-related applications. In contrast the most popular use for mentoring is familiarising new recruits with the organisation (45%), but no one reason really stands out. This reflects the longer-term, more nebulous benefits of mentoring.

The criteria for becoming a coach centre on appropriate experience (55%), good communication skills (50%) and the ability to act as good role model (43%). Similar attributes are sought in mentors with 55% of respondent organisations looking for experience and 47% for the ability to act as a good role model. Significantly, both activities are not used to help break either the gender (6%) or ethnic employees (8%) glass ceiling.

"It is encouraging that so many organisations are recognising the benefits of coaching and mentoring", commented Stephen Bevan, Director of Research. "What is worrying, however, is that so few are prepared to invest in competent practice. A good coach or mentor can make a massive difference to individual and organisational performance. But a bad one can be an 'unguided' missile and do considerable damage."

The guide also provides best practice case studies from Autoglass, BT, the Inland Revenue, Microsoft UK and Peugeot Motor Company on how each used these techniques to create business advantage.

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Notes to editors:

- The Work Foundation continues the tradition set by The Industrial Society to improve the quality of working life in the UK, with a unique fusion of research, consultancy and advocacy. The Work Foundation is wholly independent and holds not-for-profit and Royal Charter status.
 - Press copies of Managing Best Practice No 111 Coaching and mentoring are available from The Work Foundation press office.
 - This study is based on responses from 221 HR specialists.
 - Managing Best Practice is The Work Foundation's monthly report on achieving excellence in key areas of managing people. Copies are available from The Work Foundation on 0870 165 6700, price £65 plus p&p. An annual subscription to the Managing Best Practice series costs £550 and covers 12 issues.
 - Myles Downey and Tricia Bey from The School of Coaching are available for interview.
 - The School of Coaching develops business coaching skills in managers and those who want to be business coaches to help them transform the performance and learning of others.
 - The School of Coaching run certificated programmes which lead to a Certificate of Professional Development in Executive Coaching from the University of Strathclyde.
- For more information, visit www.theschoolofcoaching.com