

# The Effectiveness of Workplace Coaching among Line Managers in the Irish Civil Service

## Abstract

- This study examined the effectiveness of workplace coaching among 111 Irish Civil Service line managers that have received coaching skills training versus line managers that have not, in terms of their intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Furthermore, it examined if organisational commitment was a predictor of those variables.

## Introduction

- Research has not kept pace with the growth of workplace coaching in practice, and the lack of conclusive evidence regarding its effectiveness is one of the most frequently cited problems in the field (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010).
- This study incorporated Whitmore's (1992) GROW coaching model, underpinned by the principles of Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990). The GROW model has wide appeal in leadership programmes worldwide (e.g. Grant, 2011) and is at the heart of the two leadership programmes used in this study.
- Clutterbuck (2015) is probably the best-known critic of the GROW model and strongly argues that anyone serious about being an effective coach needs to grow out of GROW and accept that people often need time and reflection to work out what they want and why.
- A key criticism has been the lack of rigorous design methodology included. Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen (2014) included 18 studies in their meta-analysis examining the effectiveness of workplace coaching. However, only 4 were identified as truly rigorous.
- Where employees feel positive about their relationship with their line managers, they're more likely to have higher levels of commitment and loyalty to the organisation which correlates with their job satisfaction and motivation within the workplace. (CIPD, 2017).

## Hypothesis:

- H1:** There will be a significant difference in intrinsic motivation between line managers who have received workplace coaching training versus those that have not.
- H2:** There will be a significant difference in extrinsic motivation between line managers who have received workplace coaching training versus those that have not.
- H3:** There will be a significant difference in job satisfaction between line managers who have received workplace coaching training versus those that have not.
- H4:** There will be a significant difference in organisational commitment between line managers who have received workplace coaching training versus those that have not.
- H5:** Organisational Commitment is a predictor of job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

## Results

- H1:** One-way ANOVA tested the difference between **intrinsic motivation** and the three coaching groups. This test reported **no significant difference** between the three groups ( $F(2,106) = 0.68, p = 0.510$ ).
- H2:** One-way ANOVA tested the difference between **extrinsic motivation** and the three coaching groups. This test reported **no significant difference** between the three groups ( $F(2,109) = 0.13, p = 0.878$ ).
- H3:** One-way ANOVA tested the difference between **job satisfaction** and the three coaching groups. This test reported **no significant difference** between the three groups ( $F(2,98) = 1.00, p = 0.372$ ).
- H4:** One-way ANOVA tested the difference between **organisational commitment** and the three coaching groups. This test reported **no significant difference** between the three groups ( $F(2,102) = 0.26, p = 0.774$ ).

## Discussion/Conclusion

- Few coaching programs have been formally evaluated within organisations (McDermott, Levenson, & Newton, 2007) and, until recently, little academic research has examined workplace coaching (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). This study is the first to be completed using the Irish Civil Service as a sample group. The findings from this study prove a deeper insight for Civil Service HR practitioners when measuring the effectiveness of workplace coaching for line managers
- Over 400 correlational and experimental studies have provided support for the validity of the goal setting approach (Latham & Locke, 2007; Locke & Latham, 1990). The current study had a clear coaching framework (GROW model) underpinned by Goal Setting Theory built into both coaching programmes. This provided clear learning outcomes for both groups which have practical benefits for HR practitioners when designing future leadership coaching programmes.
- However, there were differences between the two groups. Executive Leadership participants availed of three, 90 minute one-on-one coaching sessions with an external coach and this could have impacted on the findings.



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## Method

- A quantitative cross-sectional design was deployed for this study.
- An email, approved by the Head of HR was circulated to middle and senior grade line managers serving in the Irish Civil Service.
- Participants from two Civil Service leadership programmes that contained a coaching skills training module were invited to participate in the study.
- Each participant completed one demographic and three online self-reported questionnaires which were designed to identify their level of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.
- Work Preference Inventory** (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey & Tighe, 1994)
- Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire** (Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1967)
- Organisational Commitment Scale** (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993).
- A **ONE way ANOVA** tested the first four hypotheses while a **multiple regression** testing the fifth.

- The proposal for this research was passed by an ethics board of Dublin Business School and was compliant with the Civil Service Code of Ethics.
- Following completion of the questionnaires a debriefing sheet was provided to participants that contained helpline numbers to certain volunteer groups and the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service.

## Participants

- 111 Civil Service Line Managers** completed the survey ( $F=68, M=43$ ).
- The largest cohort had over **20 years of Civil Service experience** ( $N=43, 38.7\%$ ).
- Participants represented **12 Public Sector Departments/Agencies** with **Department of Public Expenditure and Reform** representing the largest group ( $N=68, 61.2\%$ )



## Future Directions

- Investing in longitudinal research could provide a much richer analysis into the effectiveness of workplace coaching, allowing organisations to benchmark its impact over time using the same cohort. Over 21,300 employees took part in the 2017 Civil Service Engagement Survey and it would be interesting to track these findings for organisations that participated on either coaching programme and measure if either one had a positive impact on employee engagement.

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