# How to Choose The Best Coaching Skills Solution For Your Organisation



#### **Foreword From Notion**

Coaching has become increasingly popular as a learning and development strategy in organisations, with many rating it as the third most commonly used tool. This suggests that coaching is being embraced by organisations and is perceived as playing an important commercial role. Indeed, carefully embedded coaching skills should bring about enormous benefits for organisations, however, in terms of effectiveness, CIPD reports show that coaching still falls behind *in-house development programmes and on the job training.* 

It seems that despite its popularity, organisations are finding it really difficult to translate the practice of coaching into tangible outcomes. So what is happening?

In part one of our whitepaper, we start by exploring some of the obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of coaching in organisations. In part two, we provide top tips to help organisations make the best choice of coaching skills training based on their own specific needs. We put all of this into context in part three, by presenting some of our client case studies, each representing a different way of bringing coaching skills into their organisations and demonstrating the fantastic results they were able to achieve by following our top tips. In response to the many frequently asked questions we receive, part four will address the issues that are commonly raised by organisations wanting to make the right decision. Lastly, in part five, we offer our final thoughts about what really makes coaching skills training effective in organisations.

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Laura Ashley-Timms
Director of Coaching, Notion





#### Part 1: Introduction

#### **Too many cooks**

The first thing anyone will notice when considering coaching skills training is how busy an industry it is. Flooded with institutions, training providers, and independent consultants, the array of choice is staggering and can cause a lot of confusion. Akin to trying to find a needle in a haystack, people who are tasked to find coaching skills training in this crowded market may decide it is easier to opt for any 'reputable' coaching skills training, rather than waste time searching for the needle. Unfortunately, not all coaching skills training is made equal, and some will simply be unable to deliver the results that are desired by the organisation.

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## Over reliance on anecdotal evidence instead of hard commercial results

Of course, many coaching skills training providers will be quick to provide anecdotes about the fantastic results that can be achieved through coaching yet few training providers can really demonstrate any noticeable return on investment, in hard commercial terms. In the absence of tangible results, it is little wonder that organisations largely use coaching as an 'accessory' to the business - a support tool - rather an integral way of doing things. However, a superficial approach is unlikely to have the impact needed to render any noticeable effect in the organisation.

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Undoubtedly, there is a plethora of training companies out there that will 'teach' coaching skills but finding coaching skills training that is capable of transforming organisations, is far more difficult. This is critical. The inability of coaching skills training to demonstrate its impact at an organisational level has got to be a key reason why coaching is perceived as less effective than some other learning and development strategies.

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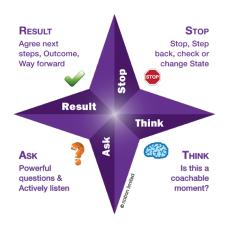
#### Only reaching the 5% instead of the 95%

Most coaching skills training is based on some derivative of Whitmore's GROW model, which is an executive coaching model, that was never designed to deliver behavioural change on a wide scale. For organisations that want to provide 1-to-1 coaching for people in their business, executive coaching is a good solution. But, when coaching happens behind closed doors, on a 1-to-1 basis, the effectiveness of the coaching is limited by the individual's coaching goals. Even though executive coaching can have a transformational effect at an individual level, that may 'rub off' on the performance of the people around them, it is unlikely to exceed their sphere of influence, i.e., the 5%.

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However, if organisations want coaching to happen in the everyday operational life of the business, so that it becomes part of the way leaders routinely manage, then the executive coaching model is unlikely to deliver the results desired. In these circumstances, a different coaching strategy is needed that can reach far and wide. Notion describes this everyday, 'in the moment', mode of coaching as 'Operational Coaching'.

These different mindsets about what coaching actually is, and how it can add value to the business, is probably at the centre of much of the confusion experienced by HR and L&D specialists when they try to source coaching skills training. Getting clarity about this is a critical starting point. But, what it all comes down to is this - what is it that the organisation is trying to achieve?







#### Part 2: Top Tips For Choosing The Best Coaching Skills Course

At some point 'thinking' about coaching has to evolve into 'doing' something about coaching. Unfortunately, because of the sheer volume of coaching skills training offered, 'doing' something about coaching can quickly become a chore. This can lead to procrastination or hasty decision making which can have a damaging impact on the effectiveness of the coaching programme. With this in mind, the following top tops give pragmatic advice about how to choose the BEST coaching skills course.

#### 1. Know what you want

**Start with the end in mind** and make sure you choose a solution that delivers it! What would be different about your solution if you asked yourself:

- What do we want to achieve?
- What will good look like?
- How will we know when we have been successful?
- What will have changed in the organisation?

When organisations say that they have already invested in high levels of training yet still haven't achieved a coaching culture, typically, whilst the training was very good, it was not necessarily focused on any specific strategy or outcome.

So, it is also worth knowing whether you are looking to develop everyday coaching skills to change the culture of your management or whether you want to train coaches to operate formally as internal executive coaches.

For example, training people in formal coaching skills is a perfect solution if you want to create an internal coaching function but this in itself will not change the culture of an organisation. A more pragmatic approach that helps people adopt a coaching style in their day to day interactions would have the greatest impact, but conversely would not give you fully trained coaches.

Choose organisations that understand your desired outcomes and are able to ask insightful questions that help you clarify your goals.

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#### 2. ...and know what you NEED!

If you have chosen to develop formal internal coaches, the next thing to consider is what level of training is required. Don't assume everyone needs a formal academic qualification. Gaining a coaching qualification isn't for everyone. If you are concerned that you, or your team, don't have the time, or can't face the academic challenge, you may prefer to select a coaching organisation that offers a flexible approach and a range of options.

Notion's Coaching Director, Laura Ashley-Timms says that, "sometimes you can lose your best 'natural' coaches by overplaying the requirement for an academic qualification. An alternative solution is to accredit everyone to a high level of competence so that they can deliver outstanding internal coaching (without the academic rigour) and then add on the academic qualification for those who really want to achieve it. The academic element will suit some more than others and will definitely help to establish a deeper understanding but it doesn't necessarily make people better coaches. We offer an excellent ILM7 post graduate certification programme however I often recommend that less than 25% of delegates really need to achieve this in order to be fantastic internal coaches. The other 75% complete all the practical aspects of this post graduate course, with a lighter touch on the paperwork, and still achieve extremely high standards."

Whatever you decide, find an organisation that can help you build the skills you need, at a pace that suits you or your organisation and can provide flexible solutions that meets the needs of your organisation, rather than forcing your coaches through a one size fits all approach.

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#### 3. Bespoke, or not?

Coaching training can come in different guises. You may be wondering about whether to opt for an open coaching skills course or a bespoke programme that is designed and delivered by the trainer specifically for your organisation. Both approaches have their own merits - so which is right for you?

Open programmes delivered by coaching experts are a great way to develop coaching skills at the same time as learning alongside other executives from other industries. Getting this external perspective and sharing experiences with people outside of your organisation can be a great way to put coaching training into different contexts, and deepen learning. Open programmes are also an excellent way to 'test' what a coaching organisation can do and whether they are the right organisation to help you deliver a customised coaching strategy in your own business. Before you sign up check the make up of a typical cohort; will you be with other senior leaders from interesting organisations or with junior people looking for a career change to become independent 'life' coaches?

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Bespoke programmes are better for organisations that want experts to come into their organisation and train larger numbers of leaders and managers or where organisations want training content tailored to support their specific organisational strategies, e.g. change programmes, team working, leadership, e.t.c. Bringing external expertise into the organisation can help to fully integrate and embed coaching into the wider organisational agenda.

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Of course, it is also possible to used a mixed approach dependent on the specific needs of groups within your organisation. For example, senior executives and HR managers who are responsible for the organisational coaching strategy might find it useful to look outside of the organisation and learn from other industries by attending an open programme as a precursor to using bespoke programmes for internal cohorts of people in order to drive specific strategies.



## 4. Decide whether you want to impart knowledge or change behaviour

Changing behaviour takes time. A short classroom based workshop will be sufficient to impart knowledge and information, but if your goal is to change behaviour, the learning needs to be applied, practised and ingrained over time. This reflective process helps to embed changes over the longer term.

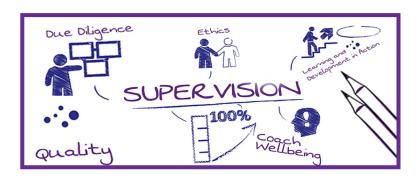
So, if you want to change behaviour that is sustainable over time, look for organisations that provide practical support and assistance before, during and long after the training event.

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## 5. Include Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Supervision in your decision

Where you specifically want to develop internal coaches, a critical part of a sustainability programme is to ensure that coaching quality and standards are maintained and that the impact of coaching continues to be leveraged by the business. As well as the continuous upskilling of the coach, organisations must do their due diligence in order to support and protect their coaches and their coachees to ensure that no harm results from the coaching relationship. Frequently, however, the professional development and welfare of the coach is overlooked when selecting a coaching skills training provider.

When developing coaching skills, be prepared to look beyond the bounds of the training event at what support is needed to ensure coaching is leveraged in a safe and effective way. A critical part of a sustainability programme is to ensure that coaching quality and standards are maintained.





#### 6. Look for a partner not a provider

Whilst training provision has its place, in a personal development area such as coaching, a partnership approach provides the continuity and depth needed to establish genuine change and deliver a return on investment.

Entering into a partnership requires a different mindset. A partner will seek to build an authentic relationship with you, understand your needs and support you in the long term success of the programme.

A partner that has a strong focus on results as well as quality of delivery will be more invested in your success, so look for organisations with whom you can establish an effective partnership.

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#### 7. Select experts in their field

When trying to learn something new, what better way than to work with some of the most experienced and talented coaches in their field. Many trainers and institutions offer coaching skills training, but imagine the level of insight and knowledge delegates will gain from some of the world's top coaches who operate in environments just like their own.

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In your search for a coaching skills course, **ask for social proof**, **references and testimonials** demonstrating the quality of the coaches who will be leading your programme.

#### 8. Ask for a Return On Investment (ROI)

Whether you are training one person or a group of people, you still want to see a return on investment. It is often erroneously stated that the ROI of coaching is difficult to measure, nay impossible. Don't be fooled, you CAN measure coaching ROI.

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Narrow your options, by identifying organisations that proactively provide ROI reports showing real commercial results from their training activity. An organisation that is prepared to stand by its results is more likely to deliver the coaching skills training that you need.



#### Part 3: Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate how three different organisations, operating in different markets and at different stages of development, used coaching as a vehicle to help them deliver their strategic goals. Each demonstrate the fantastic results that are possible when organisations choose the right coaching skills training for their needs.

## Medical Protection Society Case Study: Managing Through Change



MPS are a medical defence organisation, owned by its members. They support Doctors and Dentists in regulatory and medical negligence claims against them. Notion's work with MPS began in amidst unprecedented levels of change.

#### **Strategic Objective**

To equip champions of change with accredited coaching skills so that they can provide people with the support needed to drive through a number of large scale change programmes.

#### **Target Audience**

Employees at different levels within the organisation including, Solicitors, Salespeople and Medical Recruiters.

#### **Notion Programme**

Accredited Internal Coach Programme + Operational Coaching Practitioner for Managers + Targeted CPD

#### **Approach**

- Aligning coaching with strategic goals
- Enlisting nodal managers
- Introducing Accredited Internal Coaches to support a change programme
- Integrating coaching into everyday operational settings by upskilling managers with 'Operational Coaching' skills
- Changing behaviours on a wide scale



#### Results

A 600% return on investment. Successes include savings on litigation, new hire costs, and the speed and competence of new members being promoted. Highly engaged internal coaches also supported the change programmes and now offer coaching services to managers across the organisation. Another secondary benefit were the skills that these coaches took back into their normal roles, using Notion's 'Operational Coaching' model.

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#### **Sustainability**

Galvanised by the success of the Accredited Internal Coach Programme, MPS decided to allocate 50% of its coaching resource to accelerate change and went on to upskill further populations of people with 'Operational Coaching' skills. This has helped managers to unlock emotions, values and beliefs that block their ability to drive change and has helped managers to understand what they need to do to deliver the change. They have also used their CPD training strategically to extend the services offered by the internal coaches.

Another secondary benefit were the skills that these coaches took back into their normal roles, using Notion's 'Operational Coaching' model.





## National Express Case Study: Building a Coaching Culture in a Fast Moving Operational Environment



National Express is a leading transport provider delivering services in the UK, Continental Europe, North Africa, North America and the Middle East. Notion began working with National Express after a senior HR leader attended one of Notion's Open Coaching Programmes and was struck by how 'Operational Coaching' could add value and deliver real results for National Express.

#### **Strategic Objective**

To build a coaching culture where coaching is integrated into key business processes, and is also part of the day-to-day language, helping everyone to lift their capability.

#### **Notion Programme**

ILM Level 7 + Accredited Internal Coach Programme + Operational Coaching Practitioner

#### **Approach**

- Training a senior HR leader to a highly skilled level
- Securing executive and senior management commitment
- Inviting carefully selected managers to become Accredited Coaches
- Training 235 managers in 'Operational Coaching' skills, including the Board, a Senior Management Programme and a Junior Management Programme
- Widespread coverage of coaching skills across the business
- Investment in CPD and Supervision for the internal coaches



#### **Results**

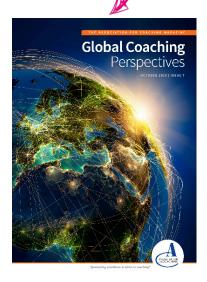
A very real and positive change in employee motivation and engagement resulting in an early 4.8 times return of investment, including one manager delivering a £250,000 increase in revenue. Asking questions has also become a key part of the everyday coaching culture. Managers routinely ask questions like "What do you think we should do?" because they believe they can unlock the talent in their employees and everyone can add more value.

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#### Sustainability

Coaching circles were put in place so that managers have the opportunity to share how they apply coaching at work and to practice their coaching skills. Coaching circles were also included as part of the senior management conference. Positive internal communications continued to support the momentum, sharing case studies and good news stories of where coaching approaches had delivered results with articles in internal company magazines and in trade press.

The National Express case study was published in the Association for Coaching Magazine. You can Download the full article here





## Scott Bader Case Study: Global Cultural Change



Scott Bader is a global chemical company and a pioneer of the future of chemistry. Employing 700 people across 7 manufacturing sites and sales offices, their goal is to make a positive difference to all the businesses they serve and to every life they touch. In 1951 owner Ernest Bader handed over ownership to its employees and now all of the company shares are held in trust.

#### **Strategic Objective**

To develop a common language in every territory across the world in order to help people take ownership and responsibility for driving the organisation forward; creating an environment where decisions are taken at the lowest possible level, where positive and empowering discussions takes place, and where exceptional feedback encourages learning and growth throughout the whole organisation.

#### **Target Audience**

Managers in every territory

#### **Notion Programme**

Operational Coaching Practitioner + International Roll Out

#### **Approach**

- Senior sponsorship
- Launching the initiative and kicking off the training at the Global Managers Conference
- Leading by example
- Cascading 'Operational Coaching' skills training (locally and internationally)
- Providing clear definitions of mentoring and coaching
- Integrating coaching with other internal processes
- Facilitated discussion groups and support



#### Results

Early results indicate that unleashed potential and better project management has resulted in savings, a few examples shared are in excess of £200k. In addition, sales managers are reporting significant uplifts in sales as a result of better customer relationships. The new skills have also built the confidence to review and update the organisational approach to appraisals and positive performance management.

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#### **Sustainability**

Notion continued to roll out training for managers and leaders in the UK, Dubai, South Africa, France and Croatia - which Notion delivers in the local language. A programme of on-going support including discussion groups facilitated by Notion is also in place .

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Special thanks to MPS and Scott Bader for presenting their case studies at the HR Directors Summit and to National Express for publishing their story in the Association of Coaching magazine, Global Coaching Perspectives.



#### **Part 4: Handling Frequently Asked Questions**

This white paper has addressed many questions about how to choose the BEST coaching skills solutions for your organisation however here are our answers to some of the more frequently asked questions that people ask us.

#### Q: What type of coaching course should I do?

A: It is really important to understand what your key objective is before embarking on a coaching course. Do you want to be a formal executive coach or do you want to use coaching skills on an informal basis? Are you looking for a pragmatic solution or an academic qualification? The ILM programmes, for example, are aimed at different management levels, from junior through to senior, and include a mix of the more practical aspects of coaching alongside written academic papers. It's also possible to complete post graduate qualifications, Master's and even PHD's in coaching.

Alternatively, there are basic coaching skills training and introduction to coaching taster programmes. Notion have also launched a fully virtual blended coaching programme, STAR® Manager, which opens up further opportunities to scale these core skills. It's worth finding out whether the course you choose is accredited and whether you can build on it over time rather than have to start again if you choose to upgrade your skills at a later date. What's right for you?

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### Q: Which professional coaching body should I affiliate with?

A: The most commonly known professional coaching bodies are the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the Association of Coaching (AC), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). All of these are extremely reputable organisations but it's still very prudent to understand the backgrounds of each one in order to make a good decision. The ICF originated from life coaching in the USA and is the most international.

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The AC started in the UK with a remit to establish ethics, professional standards and behaviours and publish global papers on the subject, it also facilitates a lot of work to maintain and build the standards of professional coaches. The EMCC is based in Europe and stems from mentoring. The ILM is based on the application of coaching in the workplace and provides academic qualifications. When choosing which coaching body to affiliate with it's worth working out what you need it for first!

## Q: What is the value of the ILM Level 7 coaching qualification?

A: Whether you undertake the ILM Level 7 depends on what you want to achieve. If you are an external coach then you will almost certainly want to get a recognisable qualification. If you are a very active coach in a strategic role, and your remit includes working out how coaching can be used to create a coaching culture, then the ILM Level 7 might be for you. The ILM Level 7 is a recognised postgraduate level qualification. However, it's worth remembering that the best internal coaches don't always want to work towards a formal qualification so it's important not to overplay the need for an ILM Level 7 for potential internal coaches.

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#### Q: What is the best coaching model?

A: Over reliance on one coaching model may limit your potential as a coach. It's far better to have a comprehensive coaching toolkit. A typical Notion programme includes over 30 tools for example. The most popular coaching model is John Whitmore's GROW model. Almost all coaching models are a derivative of GROW but because GROW is essentially an executive coaching model it doesn't necessarily work in everyday, operational settings. Notion's STAR® model is the first coaching model that can drive behavioural change on a wide scale by changing the manager's behaviour rather than focusing on the coachee - so if you want coaching to become part of a management style STAR® offers significant advantages over other models.

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#### Q: How long will it take to become a coach?

A: It really depends on what route you take. Our Accredited Internal Coach Programme takes 4 months from start to completion. More rigorous programmes that result in post graduate qualifications can take up to 18 months (which is the average length of our ILM Level 7 programme), sometimes longer depending on work capacity and an individual's capability to complete self directed work. It would take around 5 years to complete a PHD.

## Q: What advice would you give to someone looking to become a coach?

A: If you want to be an internal coach then treat your training programme as the start of your journey, not the end - and set aside time for regular CPD and Supervision. Also, develop strong 'Operational Coaching' skills so that you can role model coaching as a line manager too. Very often, coaching and mentoring gets confused so get clarity about how they are different. Importantly, develop your own style, fill your coaching tool kit, and build strong peer support.

If, on the other hand, you want to make coaching 100% of your day job you should be aware that 90% of coaches don't make a good living - you need to be good at sales and marketing as much or more than you need to be a great coach.

Q: What advice do you have for setting up an internal coaching function?

A: Getting the right people is critical to success. A good selection process is a great starting point however becoming a coach should be something that people want to do. So consider how you **invite** people to participate. Invest wisely and in stages and be clear about coaching time expectations. Select the best suppliers and let them help you set up the paperwork and processes ahead of the launch so that these processes can be embedded into your core training. Don't forget to do your due diligence and put aside budget to invest in CPD and Supervision so that the quality of coaching can be sustained. Return on investment is essential for sustainability so make sure you measure and report results and share success stories at every opportunity.

Develop strong 'Operational Coaching' skills so that you can role model coaching as a line manager too.

Put aside budget to invest in CPD and Supervision, so that the quality of coaching can be sustained.



## Q. Can you measure the effectiveness of coaching?

A: We surveyed over 700 global organisations and found that most people don't measure the effectiveness of coaching; a lonely 3% think they are quite good at it! Many coaching organisations, independent coaches and trainers will say that coaching can't be measured-this is a myth! Notion measure every programme and we typically report tangible commercial results that deliver between 5-100 times return on investment. To help measure the effectiveness of coaching get your paperwork in place and train your coaches how to use it so that you have the right information to track and collate results. To get the best out of your coaching make sure good matching and contracting takes place at the outset. If you make your programmes time bound with clear objectives you will be in a much better position to judge what impact the coaching has had.

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## Q. What approach is best for HR and L&D professionals?

**A:** It really depends on the organisational dynamics and the preference of the L&D professional. Open courses can be great for HR and L&D professionals who want to learn alongside senior executives from other organisations. It's a great way to network, gain an external perspective, and to test coaching programmes for a wider audience. For teams of HR and L&D professionals who want to increase the quality of their coaching conversations, or for organisations looking to upskill their whole HR team, an internal cohort can work very well too.



#### Part 5: Final Thoughts

As the coaching industry has grown, so too has the number of coaching skills training providers available in the marketplace, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish the quality solutions from the superficial ones. With so many training providers from within the coaching field and from within the management development field fighting for consumer attention, it is easy to see how the decision making process can quickly become taxing.

Unfortunately, many training providers can only offer very basic instruction around well-worn models of coaching. At best, courses like these might raise awareness about what coaching is, but, they are unlikely to deliver anything other than cosmetic results which can hamper efforts to engage the organisation with the benefits of coaching over the long term.

Therefore, before jumping in with two feet, organisations will benefit from taking a step back and deciding what it is they want to achieve, what is the best approach for them, and who is best positioned to help them to succeed. With this clearly outlined, it will be far easier to sift out the coaching skills training solutions that most closely match the needs of the organisation.

## So, how does Notion meet an organisation's needs?

As **global experts in coaching**, Notion take a consultative approach and work hard to make their clients' lives easier. Whether training one person or helping to set up an internal coaching pool, Notion get involved from the outset until the desired change is embedded.

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All of Notion's coaching skills courses are led by expert, practising coaches who have thousands of hours of experience coaching senior leaders across all sectors, as well as having impressive senior leadership careers in their own right. Notion's coach trainers add depth and authenticity to the training delivery that helps engage learners in their coaching journey and equips them to put their newly acquired coaching skills into a commercial context in their own organisations.

Commercial results are paramount. For each programme Notion delivers, clients receive a detailed report based on data and hard evidence. The reports demonstrate how well the original programme outcomes have been met alongside many other indirect benefits. Typically, Notion's reports show results ranging from 5x ROI up to 100x ROI. This essential information about ROI helps to secure long term internal support for coaching skills training and establishes long term sustainability of coaching practices.

To achieve these impressive results, even Notion's two day programmes are supported with at least two months of consistent and high quality touch points that help to embed new coaching practices in real life scenarios to ensure early wins and long term successes.

Notion's programmes offer coaching skills training that can meet any strategic or operational needs of the business and to make this super easy for organisations, Notion has broken down the full academic coaching qualification into three modules:

- 1. Developing operational coaching skills for an everyday coaching management style
- 2. Developing internal coaches for the organisation
- 3. Gaining a formal post-graduate qualification

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Each module can stand alone or seamlessly build upon each other and can be delivered face-to-face or via Notion's revolutionary, 100% virtual, blended learning programme STAR® Manager. This gives Notion's clients total flexibility to develop the skills they need for their specific purposes, and to choose how far they go, and how fast. By providing this modular method to coaching skills training, Notion not only cater for the unique strategic needs of different organisations, as demonstrated in the MPS, National Express and Scott Bader case studies, but they also account for the different ways in which people learn.

Notion also know just how important CPD and supervision is for long term coaching effectiveness and have curated an incredibly experienced and highly qualified supervision team to deliver **one of the world's most comprehensive CPD and supervision programmes.** Notion's supervisors work with coaches in organisations to help them grow professionally, extend their toolkit and to deal with subjects that are new to them, or where they feel a little out of their depth.

This comprehensive approach to coaching skills training ensures that Notion stands out from the crowd in this very busy market and makes the business of considering coaching skills training a whole lot easier.

If you are considering coaching skills training for your organisation, Notion can help you think through your overall goals and help you to scope out measurable outcomes in order to make sure that coaching is not just a flash in the pan, but rather, a deeply embedded way of behaving that can transform the commercial results in your organisation.

To find out more, simply call us for a free consultation on +44 (0)1926 889 885 or for more information about our range of coaching skills programmes click here.

Alternatively, register today for our next Open Coaching Skills Programmes by clicking here and discover for yourself how to make coaching work in your organisation whilst also acquiring first class coaching skills.

This gives Notion's clients total flexibility to develop the skills they need for their specific purposes, and to choose how far they go, and how fast.



Notion Ltd 12 Hamilton Terrace Leamington Spa CV32 4LY

T: +44 (0)1926 889885

E: info@notionItd.com

BusinessCoaching.co.uk

