

Why coaching for culture and engagement is a growing organisational trend

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As organisations are buffeted by endless change and disruption, there is an increase in focus on coaching for culture and engagement to build positive and resilient workplaces. In recent years, companies are grappling with significant forces impacting on organisational culture and employee engagement. Many are undergoing radical digital transformation projects that are changing the way employees work. Hybrid work models have been introduced, and the need for improved Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) across workplaces are all driving organisational change.



In pursuit of organisational success, coaches are working at the forefront with leaders and managers to support the development of strategies and skills for creating the kind of culture that fosters engagement, collaboration, as well as employee well-being and job satisfaction. Coaches bring a unique and varied toolbox of practices and techniques to the workplace to help leaders build their communication, active listening, conflict resolution, diversity management and cultural awareness skills.

Lee-Ann Drummond, head of management and leadership faculty at [SACAP](#) (the South African College of Applied Psychology), “When it comes to coaching in organisations, there’s no one-size-fits-all solution. As a leading educational provider for South African coaches, we focus on training our students to align with an organisation’s unique values, business objectives and current reality so they are empowered to customise their coaching interventions for each different company.

For example, while most South African organisations are striving at this time to improve their DEI, they won’t all approach this in the same way or have the same needs from a coach.”



How can coaching improve Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in SA companies?

Coaching interventions for DEI may involve working with leaders to improve their capabilities to manage a diverse workforce, or with new diversity hires to help them navigate the culture of organisation more effectively.

Coaching to bridge cultural differences could include:

- Helping leaders to develop greater awareness and understanding of different cultures, and how to engage with the unique experiences and perspectives of employees from diverse backgrounds.
- Building inclusive communication skills in teams so that leaders and members develop the capabilities that support inclusivity such as using inclusive language, active listening and empathetic communication.
- Training leaders to identify and safely address unconscious bias in themselves and others to improve the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, coaches can help new diversity hires to adapt more quickly and successfully to the company culture by supporting them in understanding the cultural norms and expectations of the organisation.

They can assist them in finding mentors and sponsors in the organisation who are committed to their career success. Coaches can work with individuals or teams that have become diverse to help navigate bias and microaggressions and develop communication skills that foster team cohesiveness. These coaching interventions can boost the performance of a diverse team and help the company to retain them over the long term.

Drummond says, “These are essential coaching interventions in South Africa at this time. Diversity talent is in high demand, and often companies go through competitive, lengthy and costly recruitment processes to find and hire them. However, if their new hire doesn’t settle quickly and effectively into their new roles, they may become open to more favourable employment options. Companies can improve both performance and retention, if they provide the right support that enables people to bridge cultural differences. This highlights the relevance of coaching for culture and engagement.”

Another area where coaches are making an impact on culture and engagement is supporting managers who are currently grappling to lead hybrid teams. Employees who work from home for some part of the week, experience less company culture touchpoints and can become isolated and disengaged. Coaches can help managers of hybrid teams to develop new policies, practices and communication channels so that culture and engagement remain strong and positive.

Drummond concludes, “Overall, the rise of coaching for culture and engagement reflects the increased awareness that an affirming culture and engaged employees are vital for organisational success during fast-changing, rather turbulent times.”

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