

The Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Executive Views and Metrics

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Abstract

This article examines the current state of executive coaching, focusing on its effectiveness, evaluation methods, and recent trends. Despite the growing adoption of coaching in organizations, there is a lack of consensus on optimal assessment methodologies and objective outcome measures. The COVID-19 pandemic and the emphasis on diversity and inclusion have significantly influenced coaching approaches. The article discusses the benefits of coaching, the absence of measurement in many organizations, and the importance of aligning coaching goals with organizational expectations. It explores various models and metrics for evaluating coaching effectiveness, including the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model and the calculation of return on investment (ROI). The article concludes by highlighting the need for coaches to develop comprehensive evaluation plans and integrate evaluation throughout the coaching process to demonstrate the value of coaching interventions.

Keywords

Executive Coaching, Coaching Effectiveness, Evaluation Methods, Return on Investment (ROI), Kirkpatrick/Phillips Model, COVID-19, Diversity and Inclusion

1. Introduction

Despite the widespread adoption of coaching as an intervention in organizations, there remains a paucity of systematic evaluation of coaching programs. The recognized gap is compounded by the lack of consensus among academics regarding optimal assessment methodologies and a noted deficiency in the use of objective outcome measures for evaluating the distal and longitudinal impact of coaching (Grover & Furnham, 2016: p. 25). Notwithstanding such challenges, assessing the effectiveness of coaching through organizational outcomes can

align the goals of coaching with the expectations of purchasers, such as HR departments (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the growing focus on diversity and inclusion have significantly influenced the landscape of executive coaching. Terblanche (2022) emphasizes that the pandemic fundamentally altered the managerial challenges faced by organizations, necessitating a shift in coaching approaches. As managers grappled with unprecedented uncertainties and rapid changes in work environments, executive coaching adapted to address these new complexities, including the transition to remote work and the need for enhanced communication and resilience (Terblanche, 2022). Coaching was required to adapt to such changes, while what executive coaches were teaching was expanded to focus more on sustainability and adaptability.

Concurrently, there has been an intensified emphasis on embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the coaching culture. Morukian (2023) discusses the critical need for coaching to integrate DEI principles. They argue that this integration is essential for fostering a coaching culture that is truly inclusive and equitable, which would involve coaches actively working to understand and address systemic inequities and biases and ensuring that coaching practices are accessible and relevant to a diverse range of clients (Morukian, 2023). The integration of DEI into executive coaching not only aligns with contemporary organizational values but also enhances the effectiveness and reach of coaching interventions.

There is skepticism about the efficacy of executive coaching that has been echoed in recent inquiries into the desired outcomes of coaching and calls for an increased emphasis on value creation for all stakeholders involved (Boyatzis et al., 2022). Contemporary research on executive coaching efficacy has expanded since such earlier research. For instance, de Haan et al. (2013) identified only seven studies pre-2010 that attempted to evaluate coaching effectiveness beyond client satisfaction, but most lacked robust experimental designs. More recently, Athanasopoulou & Dopson (2018) reviewed 84 articles, finding 70 instances of positive outcomes in personal development, behavioral changes, and work-related aspects due to executive coaching. Bhatia et al. (2022) found major changes in executive coaching trends, suggesting a need for further research. Meanwhile, Fulmore et al. (2022) found an increased emphasis on executive coaching in MBA programs, highlighting the enduring benefits of coaching in educational contexts. Collectively, the research points to a need to update the existing understanding of executive coaching.

The research presented in this article is laid out in the following manner. First, the methodology for the study is presented. After this, a discussion of the benefits of executive coaching and the absence of its measurement is given. The detailing of recent trends and the effectiveness of executive coaching is also provided. Lastly, the calculation of ROI based on the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model is detailed with a number of conclusions and recommendations for further research.

2. Methodology

This study employed a comprehensive literature review approach to examine the current state of executive coaching, focusing on its effectiveness, evaluation methods, and recent trends. The review process involved a systematic search and analysis of relevant academic literature and industry reports.

Literature search: the authors conducted an extensive search of electronic databases, including PsycINFO, Business Source Premier, and Google Scholar, to identify relevant articles and studies. The search terms used were combinations of “executive coaching”, “coaching effectiveness”, “evaluation methods”, “return on investment”, and “Kirkpatrick/Phillips model”. The search was not limited by publication date to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic’s evolution.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Articles were included if they 1) Focused on executive coaching effectiveness, evaluation methods, or recent trends; 2) Were published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable industry reports; 3) Were written in English. Articles were excluded if they were 1) not directly related to the study’s objectives or 2) lacked sufficient depth or relevance to contribute meaningfully to the review.

Data extraction and analysis: The selected articles were carefully reviewed, and key information was extracted, including the study’s objectives, methodologies, findings, and conclusions. The extracted data were then analyzed using a narrative synthesis approach, which involved identifying common themes, trends, and patterns across the reviewed literature. The analysis focused on the effectiveness of executive coaching, the various models and metrics used for evaluating coaching effectiveness (such as the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model and ROI calculation), and recent trends in the field, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

The literature review also incorporated relevant statistics and findings from industry reports, such as the [International Coaching Federation \(2023\)](#)’s Global Coaching Study, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of executive coaching. The synthesis of academic literature and industry data allowed for a thorough examination of the topic, enabling the identification of key insights, challenges, and opportunities in the field of executive coaching effectiveness and evaluation.

3. Findings

Executive Coaching: Benefits and Absence of Measurement

Executive coaching is defined as a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) to enhance the coachee’s behavioral change through self-awareness and learning, and ultimately contribute to individual and organizational success ([Khalique et al., 2024](#)). Generation X represents the largest cohort of coach practitioners, accounting for 48% globally, with regional variations ranging from 40% in North America to 62% in Eastern Europe

(International Coaching Federation (ICF), 2023). Baby Boomers, on the other hand, form a significant portion in North America and Oceania, where they outnumber Generation X coaches, and their representation varies from 16% in Eastern Europe to 49% in North America (ICF, 2023). Millennials comprise about one in 10 coach practitioners globally, with the highest proportion in Eastern Europe at 21% (ICF, 2023).

The gender composition in coaching is also evolving, with female coach practitioners now constituting 72% of the field in 2022, a noticeable increase from 70% in 2019 and 67% in 2015, revealing an upward trend that is most pronounced in the Middle East and Africa, where the proportion of female coaches rose from 66% to 72% during this period (ICF, 2023). The proportion of female coaches varies regionally, with the lowest in Asia at 59% and the highest in Eastern Europe at 78% (ICF, 2023). Regarding qualifications, most coaches hold a degree-level qualification or higher, including 30% with a bachelor's degree and 65% with an advanced degree. Experience in coaching correlates positively with age, as evidenced by 66% of Millennial coaches having less than five years of experience, compared to 40% of Generation X and 22% of Baby Boomers (ICF, 2023). In terms of specialization, leadership coaching is the most prevalent area, followed by executive coaching and business/organizational coaching. The emphasis on business coaching has been growing steadily, now accounting for 67% of practitioners' main specialty (ICF, 2023).

Furthermore, 16% of coach practitioners work in both internal and external capacities, predominantly focusing on internal coaching. A significant 93% of practitioners offer services beyond coaching, such as consulting and training, averaging almost three additional services (ICF, 2023). Client demographics show that most are managers or executives, and the majority, 58% are female. The age group most frequently receiving coaching services ranges from 35 to 44 years (ICF, 2023).

Executive coaching as a distinct practice appeared in the 1980s, reaching a fevered pitch in the 1990s. It has continued to grow at a rapid pace and shows no signs of slowing. A study done by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) found that there has been significant growth in coaching since 2016. It is estimated that there are over 109,200 executive coaches globally in 2023, a rise of more than 54% from 2019 (ICF, 2023). However, the quality of research available on executive coaching varies,

Looking at the academic literature from outside the coaching industry, the following benefits are reported from the perspective of the recipients of executive coaching:

- **Transformative Learning:** Executive coaching fosters transformative learning, enabling executives to reassess and evolve their underlying beliefs, values, and worldviews for personal and professional growth (Mbokota et al., 2022).
- **Behavioral and Attitudinal Change:** Coaching positively impacts behaviors, attitudes, and personal characteristics, as evidenced by a meta-analysis of

randomized control trials (Nicolau et al., 2023).

- **Long-Term Educational Benefits:** In academic settings, such as executive MBA programs, coaching contributes to sustained learning and the application of skills over time (Fulmore et al., 2022).
- **Specialized Applications:** Executive coaching is adaptable to various fields, including sports management, where it can enhance specific strategic and operational skills (Nakamura & da Cunha Bastos, 2022).
- **Coach-Coachee Relationship Dynamics:** The dynamic interaction between coach and coachee plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of the coaching process (Payne et al., 2023).
- **Use of Metaphors and Analogies:** Coaching effectively utilizes metaphors and analogies, facilitating deeper understanding and insights (Offstein et al., 2023).
- **Cultural Adaptability:** The Red Crescent Society of Iran's model demonstrates that executive coaching can be effectively tailored to different cultural and organizational contexts (Farajollahi Moghadam et al., 2023).
- **Burnout Reduction and Engagement Increase:** Executive coaching leads to favorable trajectories in reducing burnout and increasing engagement among leaders (Brooks et al., 2023).
- **Technology Integration:** Incorporating technology as a compensatory technique enhances coaching effectiveness, especially for individuals with executive function skill deficits (Anderson & Marino, 2022).
- **Relevance in Specialized Fields:** Coaching is valuable in fields like cybersecurity, helping project managers navigate complex challenges (Burrell, 2019).
- **Positive Leadership Outcomes:** Combining positive psychology with executive coaching facilitates positive leadership outcomes (Addison & Shapiro, 2023).
- **Value in Healthcare Leadership:** Coaching for physicians fosters improvements in both personal well-being and professional performance, impacting patient care (Paterick, 2023).
- **Influence of Demographics in Coach Selection:** The effectiveness of coaching can be influenced by the coach's demographics, impacting client preferences (Furnham et al., 2022).
- **Diverse Client Characteristics:** A systematic review indicates that coaching must be adaptable to a wide range of client characteristics for maximum effectiveness (Tee et al., 2022).

In practice, companies regularly base their decisions on perceptions, having not introduced processes to evaluate their return on investment, despite investing a considerable amount into coaching services (Yates, 2015). This practice is often counterproductive, for both executives and coaching professionals.

4. Recent Trends in Executive Coaching

The advent of technology has substantially impacted executive coaching, both in

methodology and evaluation (Katz, 2021). Technological advancements have enabled the emergence of virtual coaching platforms, significantly expanding the reach and accessibility of coaching services, as the platforms facilitate seamless communication between coaches and clients, overcoming geographical and time constraints. Additionally, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in coaching is transforming traditional approaches (Katz, 2021). AI-driven tools can provide personalized insights, augment the coaching process with data-driven recommendations, and even simulate coaching scenarios. Technological integration also extends to evaluation methods. Digital tools and platforms are increasingly used to collect and analyze feedback, track progress, and measure coaching outcomes more effectively and efficiently (Katz, 2021).

Executive coaching can be leveraged to promote diversity and inclusion within organizations (Pandolfi, 2020). It is also important to recognize that coaches possess cultural competence, an understanding and appreciation of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, which is fundamental in creating an inclusive coaching environment (Pandolfi, 2020). Culturally competent coaching enables tailored approaches that respect and leverage the unique experiences and views of diverse individuals, an approach that enhances the effectiveness of coaching by ensuring that it is relevant and resonant with a wide range of clients (Pandolfi, 2020). By embedding these principles, executive coaching can contribute significantly to building more inclusive and diverse organizational cultures (Pandolfi, 2020).

Today, sustainability and ethical practices are increasingly recognized as crucial elements in executive coaching, making them integral to creating coaching relationships based on trust, respect, and integrity (Bringmann de Souza & San Emeterio, 2024). Ethical coaching practices involve maintaining confidentiality, ensuring transparency in processes and outcomes, and respecting the individuality of clients (Bringmann de Souza & San Emeterio, 2024). Additionally, the sustainability of coaching outcomes is a growing focus area, with an emphasis on long-term impact and continuous development beyond the coaching engagement. Being able to understand and explain sustainability and ethical practices in a variety of contexts is all but required for an executive coach in preparing coachees for the executive world (Bringmann de Souza & San Emeterio, 2024).

Executive coaching, while universally applicable, is nuanced by cultural differences across various regions of the world (McInerney et al., 2021). Global perspectives in executive coaching necessitate an understanding of these cultural nuances and their impact on coaching approaches and effectiveness. Studies and practices from different parts of the world reveal diverse coaching methodologies, reflecting varying cultural values, business practices, and communication styles (McInerney et al., 2021). Acknowledging and incorporating cultural differences is essential for effective coaching and its evaluation, ensuring that coaching interventions are culturally sensitive and relevant across different global settings (McInerney et al., 2021).

5. The Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Models, Metrics, and Parameters of the Evaluation

The Kirkpatrick model, commonly known as Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation, stands as a pivotal instrument for assessing training effectiveness within organizations and serves as one of the foremost methods for training evaluation. The model comprises four distinct levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. The Phillips model, introduced by Phillips in 1997, further expands this by incorporating a fifth dimension, Return on Investment (ROI), thus enhancing the evaluation scope (Phillips, 2007).

Over the past four decades, the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model has emerged as the predominant framework for training evaluation in the corporate sector. Subsequent research has refined and empirically validated various parameters for measuring effectiveness, indicating an evolution in evaluation methodologies (Ely & Zaccaro, 2011).

Focusing on executive coaching, Albizu et al. (2019) articulate challenges in measuring coaching effectiveness, primarily due to a scarcity of rigorous empirical models and scales. In their analysis from the coachee's perspective, they employ the first three levels of the Kirkpatrick model—reaction, learning, and behavior. Their hypothesis posits a positive correlation between various coachee perspectives—including opinions on coach performance, readiness, process, relationship, and satisfaction—and tangible learning outcomes (Albizu et al., 2019).

Grover & Furnham (2016) underscore the necessity of utilizing objective, multisource measures and longitudinal approaches in evaluating coaching efficacy. However, they acknowledge inherent complexities due to the personalized, one-on-one nature of coaching interventions, wherein outcomes and goals vary per session and individual (Grover & Furnham, 2016: p. 24). DeLoyd et al. (2017) propose indicators for assessing coaching effectiveness that are tied to action plans between sessions. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the client's development from the onset to the conclusion of the coaching engagement. The evaluative technique suggested by Ely & Zaccaro (2011) encompasses both formative (during the coaching process) and summative (final results achieved) aspects, providing a holistic view of coaching outcomes.

To assess the effectiveness of coaching, Grant (2012) suggests using various types of objectives as internal representations of the desired states or outcomes. These objectives should be organized in a hierarchy, with the highest level consisting of broader and more abstract goals. The lower levels should then consist of more concrete objectives that are required to achieve the higher-level goals. These objectives should identify specific steps that need to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes.

Organizational inputs can be linked with higher-level objectives, which can then be aligned with management indicators. Coachees who determine the

agenda can suggest lower-level objectives that are more precise and dynamic (Jones et al., 2021). In this situation, the indicators may be more individualized and subjective (de Haan, 2021). As a result, many different objectives and indicators can be used throughout the coaching process. This approach ensures that the coaching process is tailored to the specific needs of the coachee and is more likely to yield positive results.

According to de Hann et al. (2020), coaching effectiveness was measured using the average score of these:

- creating reflective space;
- creating new insights;
- new action or behavior;
- overall coaching outcome.

de Hann et al. (2020) found that the longer the coaching relationship, the greater the coaching effectiveness, the stronger the working alliance, and the stronger the self-efficacy of the coachee. Research by Bartlett et al. (2014) further supports this, as they found that the collaborative relationship and nature of executive coaching that centered on trust created greater coaching engagement and improved coaching outcomes.

The client-centered theory of Seiler (2019) offers a paradigm for assessing the effectiveness of coaching by positioning the coach and client as equals and framing the coaching conversation as a reflexive dialogue aimed at facilitating the client's learning process. The client-centered approach diverges from traditional expert-centric models, which often treat clients as passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, it emphasizes a partnership between coach and client in designing impactful training interventions, reflecting clients' expectations for professional transformational learning and empathic interactions (Stokes, 2015). Clients anticipate that their executive coach will actively contribute to the content of coaching conversations, demonstrating interest in preparatory behaviors and employing informative strategies during the creativity phase to enhance their creative capabilities, which challenges the notion that empathy alone is sufficient for generating insights and suggests that a coach's business or organizational knowledge is a critical component of effective coaching (Grant, 2012).

Noon (2018)'s relational concept introduces a metric for coaching efficacy that centers on the dynamic interplay between client and coach, a concept that delineates various dimensions of presence, including the coach's external display of warmth and attentiveness, their internal experiences in response to listening, the relational aspect of empathy, and the client's openness and vulnerability. Noon's framework asserts that experiences of presence are crucial regardless of the coaching medium, whether face-to-face, via digital platforms, or telephone.

Jones et al. (2014) investigated the correlation between the Five-Factor Model of personality and coachee perceptions of executive coaching effectiveness, revealing a significant positive relationship between extraversion and perceived effectiveness, indicating implications for coaching and development interven-

tions, particularly in terms of investment returns. The aggregate of the perspectives discussed here demonstrate how executive coaching encompasses various aspects from relational dynamics and client expectations to the influence of personal characteristics. There is a need for coaching processes that emphasize the coach's presence and skills while also fostering client awareness of their own presence and its impact on the coaching relationship.

Seiler (2019) found that formative feedback is instrumental in enhancing the performance of executive coaching. However, a significant gap exists as many coaches do not view their clients as appropriate sources of this feedback. The gap is partly attributed to a deficiency in shared understanding regarding effective behaviors. Seiler addresses this gap by proposing the development of a client behavioral feedback instrument tailored for executive coaches, a tool that is intended to bridge the feedback loop, although it is anticipated that it may take time for coaches to fully embrace the value of client-provided behavioral feedback in their professional development.

The reluctance of inexperienced clients to provide behavioral feedback is often due to a perceived lack of competence or credibility. Consequently, executive coaches might need to ensure that new clients are sufficiently informed about the coaching process before soliciting formative feedback. Even with more experienced clients, coaches may encounter challenges in accepting and integrating this feedback into their practice. Bachkirova (2015) identifies the coach's fear of client rejection as a primary factor contributing to self-deception among coaches which is exacerbated by the prevailing belief that coaches bear sole responsibility for choosing the correct techniques and securing the success of interventions.

Gaertner (2014) suggests that addressing resistance in clients can lead to improved listening skills and better integration of information. According to coach developmental theory, the relevance of formative feedback may diminish as coaches gain more experience in their career. However, this notion is contested by Ericsson et al. (2018), who argues against the concept of mastery through unconscious performance. Ericsson et al. (2018) advocates that even highly skilled coaches should actively pursue client behavioral feedback to identify and refine specific aspects of their coaching practice. This perspective underscores the ongoing need for reflective practice and client engagement throughout a coach's professional journey, irrespective of their level of expertise.

6. The Kirkpatrick and Phillips Model. The Calculation of ROI (Return on Investment)

The Kirkpatrick/Phillips model is a fundamental tool for assessing the effectiveness of training and coaching interventions. Within this framework, Kirkpatrick emphasized a linear causality model, advocating that the most valuable data emerges at the final level. The inclusion of Return on Investment (ROI) as a fifth level in this model suggests its perceived pivotal role in executive coaching outcome measurement. However, Bernard (2006) notes that as one ascends the le-

vels of the model, the necessity for measurement decreases. While data at the fifth level, which focuses on ROI, is significant, it does not imply that every coaching engagement necessitates evaluation at this level. Nonetheless, there are compelling justifications for incorporating ROI as a crucial metric in coaching effectiveness evaluation, as outlined by Bernard (2006: p. 2):

- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Given the substantial financial investment in coaching, tangible evidence of its effectiveness is crucial.
- **Increasing Scrutiny:** In a challenging economic environment, there is intensified scrutiny over expenditure decisions.
- **Validation of Coaching:** Amidst perceptions of coaching as a transient trend, demonstrating its contribution to the bottom line is essential.
- **Distinguishing Effective Coaching:** A measurable metric is needed to differentiate effective coaching from its ineffective counterparts.

This perspective aligns with concerns among executives about the challenge of demonstrating a direct link between coaching and financial outcomes. The lack of robust evaluation mechanisms, including ROI, potentially endangers the implementation of formal, organization-wide coaching programs.

To optimize the utility of the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model, a structured, multi-step process is recommended:

- 1) Identify specific business goals that can be positively influenced through coaching.
- 2) Develop clear coaching objectives that align with and support these business goals.
- 3) Construct evaluation objectives to measure the application and impact of the coaching objectives.
- 4) Ascertain methods to isolate and identify the specific contributions of coaching to performance enhancements.
- 5) Articulate the anticipated areas of improvement as a result of the coaching intervention.

By adhering to this structured approach, organizations can more effectively gauge the impact of coaching interventions, thereby ensuring alignment with business objectives and maximizing return on investment. Although the formula of $ROI = ((Benefits - Cost) \div Cost) \times 100$ is relatively simple concerning the cost of coaching, many find trying to quantify the benefits of coaching in monetary terms a daunting task. The accepted way of doing this is for the coachee to estimate the monetary value of a performance improvement, multiply that by an estimate of what percentage of that performance improvement can be attributed to coaching, and multiply that result by how confident the coachee is in the accuracy of the coaching contribution estimate. The formula may be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Benefit} = \$ \text{monetary value} \times \% \text{attribution} \times \% \text{confidence}$$

The final result may also be annualized with a weekly or monthly multiplier (46 weeks/year or 10.5 months/year to account for holidays and vacations) de-

pending on the timeframe reported by the coachee.

Schlosser posits that Return on Investment (ROI) in the context of executive coaching is partly an organization-specific measure. Consequently, any assessments should be grounded in what is considered important or valuable within a specific organizational context, aligning with the contemporary perspective that views executive coaching as fulfilling a strategic, rather than merely remedial, function within organizations (Schlosser et al., 2006: p. 10).

Organizations that extend their focus beyond mere financial returns to encompass value creation in coaching consider various critical issues and needs. Schlosser outlines these considerations as follows:

- 1) Identifying the specific competencies (behaviors and skills) required for executing business strategy, particularly those that significantly influence both short-term and long-term results.
- 2) Recognizing the individual leaders who most need these competencies.
- 3) Understanding how expert coaching can effectively develop these essential competencies.

In a survey conducted by Boysen et al. (2018) of more than 100 coaching clients on coaching satisfaction and outcomes, a broad spectrum of ROI and success metrics for executive and leadership coaching were evaluated, indicating the multifaceted impact of coaching. The metrics assessed include:

- Retention of key executives.
- Strength of collaboration and cross-functional interaction.
- Role of the executive coach as a reliable advisor or counselor.
- Improvement in productivity and team performance.
- Quicker decision-making and successful conflict resolution.
- Establishing alignment and influence with key stakeholders (peers, senior management).
- Development of a strategic/systemic perspective.
- Techniques for nurturing top performers and creating a succession plan.
- Decisiveness in managing underperforming individuals.
- Fostering a culture of engagement and learning.
- Encouraging teams to develop a “shared vision”.
- Enhanced executive presence (confidence, composure under pressure, presentation skills, ability to engage others).

Boysen’s research also included “harder” measures of ROI, with a survey question specifically exploring the overall financial savings generated by coaching interventions. A majority of respondents estimated the total ROI/Economic Benefits to range between approximately \$200,000 and \$500,000. This figure was calculated through various methods, including the costs associated with replacing an executive, productivity losses, and the gains from increased employee engagement. Additionally, respondents identified several intangible success metrics, such as the executive coach being a trusted advisor/counselor, executive presence, impact and influence with key stakeholders, and enhanced cross-functional collaboration (Boysen et al., 2018).

Within the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model, each level offers a distinct framework for measuring the impact of coaching, allowing for a detailed understanding of its effectiveness. At Level 1, Reaction, the model focuses on gathering immediate feedback post the initial coaching sessions, similar to a client feedback survey and typically covers aspects such as the establishment of the coaching relationship's foundation, the extent of rapport built, clarity in understanding the coaching initiative's intentions, and agreement on behavioral objectives. Level 2, Learning, assesses the knowledge or skills acquired through coaching and explores various areas of personal change and growth in the coachee, such as becoming a more effective leader, understanding the impact of personal actions on others, enhancing collaboration and communication skills, working more effectively with peers, fostering teamwork, adopting a big-picture organizational view, and systemic thinking for problem-solving. At Level 3, Application, the focus shifts to the evaluation of behavioral changes in the coachee, typically using tools like 360-degree feedback. This level aims to assess how well the coachee applies the learning and insights gained from coaching to real-world scenarios and workplace interactions. Level 4, Results, tracks progress against specific performance indicators that are often unique to each client or organization. Level 5, ROI, extends the evaluation to the return on investment of the coaching intervention and builds upon the earlier levels by quantifying the financial returns relative to the cost of the coaching program, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the coaching program's overall value and effectiveness. See **Table 1** below for more information.

The academic literature discussed here highlights a clear oversight in coaching evaluation among many organizations: coaches who proactively develop an exhaustive evaluation plan exhibit a strong client-oriented approach, filling a critical gap in the coaching practice. Engaging in coaching evaluation reflects a deep-seated belief in, and commitment to, the transformative value of coaching. Coaches who subject their services to rigorous evaluation, encompassing the impact on the bottom line, demonstrate this commitment. They are convinced that their work significantly contributes to organizational success. Collaborative development of the evaluation plan with the client further solidifies this commitment, involving the client actively in the process and thereby enhancing their engagement and investment in the outcomes.

Integrating evaluation from the onset of the coaching process is crucial for advancing to its final stages, which ideally include a thorough assessment of outcomes. Approaching evaluation as an afterthought undermines the effectiveness of the coaching process and perpetuates the low prevalence of comprehensive evaluations that encompass all levels of the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model, including the assessment of financial impacts. The argument for embedding a comprehensive evaluation into the coaching process from its inception necessitates the application of all core competencies of coaching. Evaluation should not be viewed as an isolated or discrete step within the coaching process, to which only specific competencies are applicable. Instead, it should be interwoven throughout

Table 1. The five levels of the Kirkpatrick/Phillips evaluation model with ideas on metrics.

Level	Measurement Ideas
Level 1 Reaction	<p>This is the level with which many companies are familiar. It collects basic reactions to the coaching program after the first two or three sessions, not unlike a client feedback survey. Examples of topics to cover include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How well the foundation for the coaching relationship was set ● How much rapport has been established ● How clearly the intentions of the coaching initiative were understood ● How effectively the coach and client agreed on behavioral objectives ● How effectively coaching is being delivered (e.g., via telephone or in-person), session length, and frequency ● How well the assessment data were explored and explained ● The pacing of the initial sessions (e.g., too fast or too slow)
Level 2 Learning	<p>This level evaluates what the client has learned through coaching with different assessment tools. After testing, the following are some possibilities and personal changes the coachee may be required to undertake to grow and develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be a more effective leader ● Gain a better understanding of how personal actions affect others ● Work more effectively with peers to accomplish business goals ● Improve communication skills ● Improve the ability to collaborate with other leaders ● Increase teamwork ● Embrace a big-picture view of the organization ● Think more systemically about finding solutions to problems
Level 3 Application	<p>This is the level where behavior changes are evaluated. The most commonly used tool for this is 360-degree feedback.</p>
Level 4 Results	<p>In this level, evaluation tracks progress on established performance indicators. These will necessarily be unique to each client and/or company. In general, however, possible categories include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Customer: New customers acquired; repeat customer business ➤ Decision-making: Success rate of decisions; absence of post-decision conflict ➤ Employees: Employee satisfaction scores; performance review scores ➤ Financial: Increase in revenue; cost reduction; profitability ➤ Innovation: New product/service introductions; number of new ideas generated ➤ Learning and Growth: Achievement of the development plan; promotion rate; frequency and speed of skill acquisition ➤ Productivity: Time spent on specific activities; total output/time; timely achievement of goals/objectives
Level 5 ROI	<p>The basics of ROI were mentioned above</p>

Note. Information for this table is found in (Anderson & Anderson, 2005; pp. 189-191).

all aspects of the coaching engagement, requiring the application of the full spectrum of coaching competencies, as such an integrated approach helps ensure that evaluation is a central, ongoing component of the coaching process, contributing to a more robust and meaningful assessment of coaching effectiveness.

7. Conclusion

There has been, in recent decades, an increased focus on the efficacy of executive coaching, driven by the benefits perceived by recipients. However, some organi-

zations remain skeptical about the necessity of coaching or express dissatisfaction with the evaluation of its effectiveness. The challenges in accurately isolating coaching effects from other variables, coupled with the unregulated nature of the coaching field and reluctance by both coaches and clients to assess effectiveness, contribute to this skepticism. The Kirkpatrick/Phillips model, with its five distinct levels, serves as a pivotal tool for evaluating coaching effectiveness. Albizu et al. (2019) have contributed to this field by proposing scales and models for rigorous empirical evaluation of these levels. Researchers such as Grover & Furnham (2016) and DeLoyd et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of longitudinal methods, incorporating both formative and summative evaluations, to comprehensively appreciate the coaching process from its inception to conclusion.

To assess the efficacy of coaching, scholars such Grant (2012), Ely & Zaccaro (2011), Athanasopoulou & Dopson (2018), Longenecker & McCartney (2020), and Jones et al. (2021) consider various types of objectives, establishing a hierarchy of these objectives using diverse indicators. De Haan (2021) measured coaching effectiveness using average scores, while the client-centered theory, posited by Seiler (2019), emphasizes the partnership between client and coach, defining effectiveness in terms of professional transformational learning actions and empathic behaviors.

The Kirkpatrick/Phillips model's utility extends to incorporating Return on Investment (ROI) as a critical metric in the array of coaching effectiveness measures. Boysen et al. (2018) highlighted a range of ROI metrics, underscoring the model's capacity to delineate measurement ideas comprehensively. Coaches who are committed to developing a thorough evaluation plan demonstrate their client-centric approach.

While this paper provided a thorough examination of executive coaching, it is still limited in scope and not completely exhaustive of the topic. This research was limited to only those peer reviewed articles and sources we considered for this study, however, there exist many other credible sources on the topic of executive coaching that were unable to be included. As the subject area continues to evolve, more research will benefit the field, both in the theory and practice of executive coaching.

Looking to the future, research and practice in executive coaching evaluation should focus on further refining and diversifying evaluation methodologies. Emphasis should be placed on developing more nuanced tools that can effectively capture the complex, multifaceted outcomes of coaching, particularly in areas such as emotional intelligence, leadership adaptability, and resilience. Future research should also explore the integration of technology, such as AI and machine learning, to provide more sophisticated, real-time analytics for coaching effectiveness. Additionally, there is a need to broaden the understanding of how cultural, societal, and individual differences influence coaching outcomes, requiring a global perspective in research methodologies, ensuring that findings are relevant and applicable across diverse contexts.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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