



## Coaching gains impetus as way to limit turnover

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by [Sue Mitchell](#)

Companies have used coaching for years to help people move up the corporate ladder. Now the field is getting increased attention as a means to boost productivity and increase employee satisfaction, thereby reducing turnover.

The emergence of coaching as an integral part of management is evident at First Union Corp., which is working on a project that will integrate the discipline into a leadership program for executives.

Joan Wright, a certified coach and executive leadership development staff member at First Union's Leadership College, believes coaching should be part of an effective manager's skills.

"If leaders are really good, they are doing a great job of helping maximize the potential of their people," Wright says.

Duke Energy Corp. is another local company using coaches to help its managers better work with employees. Terry Thirion, president of the [Charlotte](#) Coaching Alliance and a coach for 11 years, is part of a project to work with 25 Duke managers to make coaching part of the leadership culture.

Coaches help employees develop career objectives and formulate workable plans to achieve their goals. Coaches also help employees grow by letting them focus on the future by resolving current problems.

"In an ideal world, I'd love everybody to talk to their friends the way I coach people. I'd love every manager to talk with employees with a curious, supportive posture," says Angelina Corbet, the founder of Mobius Co., a coaching firm.

Many companies hire coaches from the outside. The conversations that take place between coach and client are not passed along to the employer, allowing the employee to feel free to open up to the coach.

The cost runs from \$300 to \$600 a month in the Charlotte area. That usually pays for a 45-minute coaching session each week, and other advisory help from the coach. Most coaching lasts from four to six months.

First Union's Wright says sustainable change is not possible in a short seminar. Several months are needed to chart and reinforce progress.

The process can also be prolonged because some employees are hesitant to make changes. "Fear is a big inhibitor of employees. A great part of my work is to get them to be the great person you want them to be at work," says Thirion.

The fast-paced lives we live, encumbered with e-mail, voice mail, and the constant need to make decisions quickly, sometimes clouds career focus for professionals, Thirion adds.

Susan Shevlin is a Charlotte coach who is working with one of her greatest success stories. Seven months ago, she started coaching an executive who was constantly in fear of losing his job. He came to her as a last resort. Her coaching helped him set goals and vanquish the fears. It worked so well that his wife is referring business colleagues to her.

Coaching started in the world of athletics, and has had dramatic impact on athletes such as Tiger Woods. "He was willing to back up and unlearn and relearn everything he knew," Wright says. "Look what he's doing now. He got coached."

She and other coaches believes similar results are possible for corporate executives.

"I'm a blind optimist, so I believe coaching has the greatest potential to bring about the kinds of conversations that need to be happening among individuals in a corporate setting. The reason I do it is because if someone has been effectively coached they will start coaching the people they interact with," says Corbet.

Coaches go through training to obtain certification. Most courses are about 18 months long. Some coaches have a master's certification, requiring additional training.

Coaching is catching on as corporations try to find the best ways to retain and help employees succeed. "We say, 'Who wants to be involved?' vs. 'I'll tell you how to do it,' the old paradigm," Thirion says.

"The coachee stands on the shoulders of the coach to see farther than you can see on your own," Wright says.

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