Coaching no longer the preserve of executives

Training

Remote and group sessions extend the benefits, says *Maxine Boersma*

Coaching has become a lucrative industry in recent years, as companies increasingly invest in personal approaches to training.

Unlike mentoring, coaching is a form of training that focuses on one specific personal or professional goal, rather than on overall personal development.

The International Coach Federation, which has a membership of close to 50,000 professionals, estimates the global coaching sector generates about $2bn a year in revenue.

However, coaching is no longer confined to one-on-one discussions. It is just as likely to be delivered remotely or in group sessions.

Remote coaching is a more flexible way of extending the benefits to a wider group of employees and can be carried out by telephone or video conference.

This reduces travel costs and increases convenience. It also means that employees posted abroad can access coaching from accredited, high-quality coaches.

Samantha King, Standard Chartered's head of executive development, has used remote coaching to train employees in parts of the world where suitable coaches are scarce.

"Remote coaching enables us to increase the scope and consistency of our approach across 71 countries and is a flexible way to offer global quality coaching to a diverse community of leaders who would otherwise not have access to it," she says.

> The proof of effectiveness is yet to be found

A forthcoming report by executive coaching provider Ridler shows that nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of the 105 blue-chip organisations it surveyed expect to increase investment in coaching over the next two years.

Much of this will be spent on remote training as 42 per cent of those surveyed say they frequently use telephone or video coaching, up from 29 per cent in 2013.

The report also predicts a 47 per cent increase in group coaching over the next two years.

But some doubt whether executive coaching is worth the increased investment.

In 2014 Erik de Haan and Nadine Page of Ashridge Business School in the UK studied the effects of coaching and concluded that "outcome research in coaching is developing, but the holy grail of executive coaching — proof of effectiveness from a controlled study — is yet to be found".

The study reported evidence that matching employees with the right coach or colleague is what determines successful coaching, regardless of whether it is delivered remotely or not.