

# Leadership Coaching Effectiveness

**2022**

Results from an Annual Research  
Study Reporting on the Impact  
of Leadership Coaching



# Introduction

As a global leadership and organizational development consulting firm passionate about creating organizations where **employees start every day excited and end every day accomplished**, Dion Leadership is interested in studying the impact our leadership programs have on individual, team, and organizational performance.

For the third consecutive year, we conducted a comprehensive leadership coaching study. We invited over 100 leaders to consider the impact of coaching on their performance, well-being, and desire to stay with their organization. On the following pages, you will find the meaningful insights these leaders passed along.

We understand that leading organizations and the people within them is dynamic and ever changing. This report is reflective of the labor shortages, heightened employee expectations, and hybrid work environments that have put a great amount of pressure on leaders and managers to find new ways to get results.



## Study Details

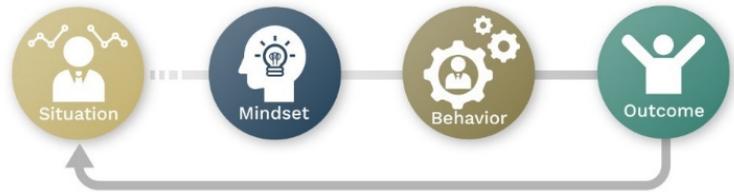
- We surveyed 116 leaders who completed coaching engagements after January 2021.
- The response rate was 55 percent.
- Those surveyed typically hold the title of manager, director, vice president, or C-level executive.
- Participants represent multiple industries, including large manufacturing and healthcare organizations, and hold a variety of jobs.
- Participants received between 3 and 25 individual coaching sessions over 3 to 12 months, either as a stand-alone program or as part of a comprehensive leadership development cohort program.

In this report, we explore the feedback from completed coaching programs and how the results have changed or remained the same over three years. Additionally, we include a selection of the respondents' open-ended comments, categorized and shown verbatim, to offer meaningful insights into when to use leadership coaching and the results of these engagements.

# What Is Leadership Coaching?

Leadership coaching is a targeted leadership development process designed to meet the unique needs of the individual leader. A leadership coach is a “thinking partner” whose specific purpose is to support the development of an individual’s personal and professional potential.

To create sustainable change, we follow a cognitive behavioral learning approach to coaching. This proven method helps a coachee explore situations with a new perspective, understand themselves in a new way, create new mindsets for approaching situations, and build new and more productive habits.



Our leadership coaches are typically previous executive-level leaders themselves. They have honed their leadership skills with decades of experience before receiving a coaching certification. We select coaches who have strong emotional intelligence skills as a complement to their business and leadership aptitude and experience.

Our coaches use a **proven coaching process**. A key element that makes our coaching engagements so successful is our coach match process. We encourage all coachees to conduct “chemistry calls” before selecting the coach they find most credible.

## The Results

### Coaching Consistently Improves Performance

Our approach—vetting leaders who want coaching, allowing them to select a coach they find credible and fitting for their situation, and having skilled, certified leadership coaches who follow a process—contributes to reliably strong results. For the third consecutive year, almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements.



As a result of my leadership coaching, I am better equipped to utilize new behaviors required of me at work.

**2020 – 93%** Agree or Strongly Agree

**2021 – 97%** Agree or Strongly Agree

**2022 – 95%** Agree or Strongly Agree

In 2020, participants reported that they utilized coaching to prioritize and focus on the most important work. With the pandemic upending nearly all aspects of their jobs, this leadership skill was certainly critical during that tumultuous year. This illustrates how coaching can be used to address any current business situation or problem.

### The New Employment Currency: Well-Being

When we first began this study three years ago, participants reported using coaching to reduce their stress and increase their confidence. In the following year, we decided to measure the degree to which their overall well-being and confidence improved due to leadership coaching. We will continue to measure these specific results in subsequent years of this study.

The powerful comments from coachees and their stated results prompted our large team of leadership coaches to more explicitly coach to these critical levers that impact overall effectiveness.

Over the last two years, much has been written about employees' search for well-being—so much so that the Great Resignation has been fueled by those willing to change jobs or leave the workforce in search of better work-life balance, a healthier culture, or more meaningful work.

We were pleased to see that the score for this increasingly important retention metric increased by nearly 10 percentage points.

My overall well-being (stress, health, focus, burnout) has improved because of leadership coaching.

**2021 – 73%** Agree or Strongly Agree

**2022 – 81%** Agree or Strongly Agree



## The Secret Sauce in Coaching

Much is studied and written about “imposter syndrome” and the devastating impact a lack of self-worth has on a leader’s ability to have the courage, focus, stamina, and authenticity to lead others. This year’s results regarding confidence showed a significant increase, with more than half of the respondents strongly agreeing that their overall confidence as a leader has improved due to leadership coaching.

**2021 – 90%** Agree or Strongly Agree

**2022 – 94%** Agree or Strongly Agree

“Coaching bolstered my confidence to move from thinking about what **COULD** be done, to voicing and acting upon what **SHOULD** be done.”



## Counteracting the Great Resignation

The Great Resignation continues to challenge organizations big and small across a range of industries. Retaining top talent remains one of the most important priorities for organizations.

In a time when huge pay increases, alternative work arrangements, and the promise of a more manageable workload are enticing leaders to change jobs, the prospect of coaching as a retention tool warrants consideration.

Keeping just one key leader who is on the brink of leaving can create a positive ROI, perhaps even funding the entire yearly leadership development budget. In this confidential study, we asked our participants if coaching positively impacted their desire to stay with the organization. Over two-thirds of respondents said it did.

**69%**

Leadership coaching positively impacted my desire to stay with the organization.



## We attribute this high rating to a few factors.

- The investment in time and money that coaching requires signals to the leader that the organization values them.
- Dion Leadership's coaching process focuses on improving the communication channels between the coachee and their direct manager, leading to increased clarity of job expectations.
- Coaching helps the coachee realize the role played by their own thinking and behavior in their struggles, challenges, and setbacks at work. The ability to look at situations from the viewpoint of others, unhook from a typical victim mindset, and be proactive when something is not going their way helps the coachee regain their engagement and commitment to the organization.

## Coaching for Retention

As a 2022 focus area, we developed a coaching for retention model that helped leaders focus on finding what they needed to stay with their current organization. Partnering with clients to utilize this coaching for retention approach rather than the traditional performance improvement focus, we created thought leadership whitepapers, blogs, and webinars on the topic.

If leader retention is important to you and your organization, check out these additional resources for ways to incorporate retention coaching into your strategy.



### e-Book

<https://dionleadership.com/retention-coaching-ebook-download/>



### Blog

<https://dionleadership.com/coaching-for-retention/>



### Webinar

<https://vimeo.com/718841367/9bea0e624d>

Of those that did, the vast majority of coachees reported that they are more effective remote/hybrid workers and/or leaders because of their leadership coaching.

**95%**

I am a more effective remote/hybrid worker and/or leader because of my leadership coaching.



## Customer Satisfaction

A leading standard to measure customer satisfaction is the net promoter score (NPS). We want zealots who not only rate coaching as a positive experience but who go out of their way to share the power of coaching and recommend it to others. We wanted to know our coaching NPS and how it stacks up.

NPS scores range from -100 to +100. According to SurveyMonkey's global benchmark data of over 150,000 organizations, the average NPS is +32. For the professional services industry, the average is +43. We are delighted to be not only above the average but approaching the top quartile for all professional services organizations.

How likely are you to recommend leadership coaching to others?

**+68**



# What Are You Working On?

A discussion that often happens when advising organizations on coaching programs centers on which leadership behaviors are developable and which are innate and unlikely to change. To better understand the behaviors that are most likely to improve using leadership coaching, we asked respondents to share the content on their coaching action plan.

These are the coaching action plan items selected by one-third or more of the participants, listed in order of frequency.

1	Improving my ability to communicate/listen
2	Effectively leading and managing others
3	Managing up/executive presence
4	Managing conflict
5	Thinking strategically/long-term planning
6	Building relationships/interpersonal effectiveness
7	Increasing my emotional intelligence

Other notable coaching items included effectively managing time, managing change, and supporting DEI efforts.

## Let's Get Specific

For selected coaching action focus areas, we asked participants for examples that described a specific situation, what they did differently as a result of coaching, and how coaching changed the outcome.

### Improving my ability to communicate/listen

Many of the responses in this area focused on understanding the importance of listening first and speaking later in the conversation, after other voices were heard. Refraining from responding until all input was solicited produced stronger performance.

“In team meetings, I listen much more now than speak. I **CHOSE** my words **WISELY**.”



## Effectively leading and managing others

To be more effective at leading and managing others, coaching participants reported the need to focus on communication, leadership, and delegation.

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## Managing up/executive presence

Many of the responses in this area focused on improving self-awareness, confidence, and communication to better manage up and demonstrate executive presence.

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## Managing conflict

Participants spoke about gaining a new mindset so they could approach conflict in a healthier manner. They reported that their idea of conflict changed from something that is scary and should be avoided to a necessary work process that leads to problem-solving and better decisions. They also noted that coaching gave them new tools and methods for engaging in difficult conversations, which resulted in the coachee staying calmer, setting clear expectations, and seeing different points of view

“Coaching allowed me to take a step back and think about how to **GROW** my **TEAM** members based on the leadership I am providing.”



“I now recognize the importance of first seeing myself as the executive in my role, leaning into the responsibility and ability to **POSITIVELY IMPACT** and nurture organizational **CULTURE**.”



“Learning how and why I **DEAL WITH CONFLICT** was eye opening and rocked me . . . I would tend to let things go when they made me uncomfortable. I now get in the mess before letting things go too far or too long. Coaching helped me understand why this is a **BETTER APPROACH**, and why I am made this way.”



## Thinking strategically/long-term planning

This area garnered some very specific and powerful responses. Key themes included intentionally carving out time to focus on strategy and planning and maintaining a mindset that avoids being distracted by today's problems.

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## Building relationships/interpersonal effectiveness

Participants focused on self-awareness, communication, and having healthier interactions with others. Participants also stated that simply understanding the importance of relationships to work effectiveness was an eye-opening coaching point.

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## Increasing emotional intelligence

Comments in the category of emotional intelligence went far beyond understanding the EQ model and improved self-awareness. Participant comments were insightful about human interactions in general and their own role in them.

“I am in a senior leadership role and understanding the importance of **DELEGATING** gives me space for long-term **STRATEGIC PLANNING**. I also manage day-to-day activities with our long-term strategy at the forefront of my decision making.”



“It was **TRANSFORMATIVE** for me to understand that until trust is earned, I can be perceived as standoffish. I **MODIFIED MY TONE**—to soften it and to add context and color to the conversation.”



“Learning about my own **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE** let me understand my own reactions and the impact it has on **DECISION MAKING** and thought patterns. Too many examples to list, but I would say it forced me to delay reactions, understand and re-evaluate, then respond in a manner that would be **MORE EFFECTIVE**.”



## Improving Performance

When respondents were asked to rate the level of improved effectiveness after focusing on specific development areas, all agreed or strongly agreed that coaching positively impacted their overall effectiveness in these areas:

- Managing up/executive presence
- Managing change
- Effectively managing my time/consistently execute work

100%

Coaching positively impacted my effectiveness.



Two areas scored slightly lower in the reported improved overall effectiveness:

- Effectively leading and managing others
- Increasing my emotional intelligence

We hypothesize that it takes longer to build skill and confidence in these broader development items and see the results that come from coaching.

## Coaching by Industry

We analyzed this year's data set to see if coaching focus areas, the coaching process, results, and specific comments about coaching varied by industry. We gathered an adequate amount of data to determine if there were any difference between manufacturing and healthcare.

We found that leaders in multiple industries have similar needs, struggles, and work situations. Clinical leaders in a hospital setting and global manufacturing executives, for example, share common development needs, with only slight differences.

Both groups reported similar results previously shared in this study. Healthcare leaders tended to more strongly agree with the statement that coaching impacted their desire to stay with the organization and that they are better equipped to utilize new behaviors required at work.

They also shared similar results in using coaching to be a more effective hybrid worker and leader, claiming improved confidence and overall well-being (stress, health, focus, and burnout).

## Coaching Focus Areas That Varied Slightly by Industry

We found that healthcare executives focused more on improving communication, building relationship/interpersonal effectiveness, and managing up/executive presence during coaching. Manufacturing executives focused on increasing their emotional intelligence, effectively leading and managing others, and managing conflict.

## In Their Own Words . . .

Perhaps the most useful insights from this study lie in the written responses to this simple prompt: Describe how your organization benefited from providing you with leadership coaching. The comments below were sourced directly from the survey responses and are sorted by category.

### Leadership

- I became a stronger and better leader. I learned techniques that have helped me navigate through challenging circumstances.
- Through coaching I was able to become a much more efficient and effective leader. My team is more engaged and understands the direction we want to take our department. I work far better cross functionally at my facility and with others to achieve goals that benefit the company.
- I am acting as a leader and not as a manager.
- I am a stronger leader. I manage performance of my team better. I am a better strategic thinker and planner, able to examine big picture, able to reframe situation to get to a solution.
- I was better able to lead others to effect the change needed in the organization.

### Ownership

- From my perspective I feel as if I own all aspects of my role, which allows me to be more effective to the organization.

### Confidence

- As a result of the coaching, I am a more confident professional and comfortable with being myself. I am speaking more in meetings and communicating more with senior leaders.



<b>Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being more reflective, setting boundaries to team, leader, and me.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing new skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership coaching gave me the tools and encouragement to excel in areas that I have struggled with. I feel more positive and productive.</li> </ul>
<b>Retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This coaching demonstrated that my organization was interested in providing me support and education. I felt valued as an executive and could tangibly say they invested in me. The coaching made such a difference in how I connected/communicated with my leader who has a totally different leadership style.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship development/building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching enabled me to understand the need to develop relationships, recognizing my strengths and playing off of them and working on my weaknesses so I do not let them affect others.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I support a team of 1,400 people with many leaders. I have used what I learned to communicate better within my team and I have shared the experience with others.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and training should not be missing in organizations.</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching was empowering and encouraged me to become a more authentic leader. It enhanced my focus on engaging my staff and my executive team colleagues.</li> </ul>





# Summing It Up

Leaders and managers have challenging jobs. They are increasingly credited or criticized for the level of productivity and engagement among an organization's workforce. Upskilling leaders to lead others for their own improved well-being is a tall order.

The data collected in this study makes the case that leadership coaching works to improve the coachee's overall perspective of the important role they play as a leader of others, provides them new skills that are displayed as healthier behaviors at work, and increases their confidence, engagement, and commitment to stay with the organization.

While the data demonstrates that coaching has a positive impact on participants' overall well-being, we are particularly struck by the specific work-related activities that are shown to improve through the coaching process.

Coaching creates new perspectives, improved confidence, and a focus on creating and sustaining healthy relationships to improve organizational performance.

To what extent is coaching worth the investment? In today's tight labor market, retaining leaders and helping leaders retain their staff is a priceless investment.

**Leaders and managers are the key to most organizations' success.** If you would you like support your leaders with a coaching program that delivers the benefits shown in this study, please contact us. Our experienced team of executive leadership coaches can help.



*Extraordinary Coaches & Consultants Delivering  
Powerful Leadership Solutions*

# Would You Like Your Employees to Start Every Day Excited and End Every Day Accomplished?

## We Can Help

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**Leadership Coaching**



**Management Training  
Courses**



**Team**



**Talent**



**Organizational  
Development**

## Let's Get Started!



[www.dionleadership.com/contact](http://www.dionleadership.com/contact)

39555 Orchard Hill Place, Suite 115, Novi, MI 48375  
Phone: 248.515.2235  
Email: [LetsTalk@DionLeadership.com](mailto:LetsTalk@DionLeadership.com)  
[www.DionLeadership.com](http://www.DionLeadership.com)

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