

# **'GROWTH' – USING COACHING TO GROW TALENT IN HEALTHCARE.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Organisational career development is a strategy for enhancing organisational effectiveness through a well-developed workforce. One way to facilitate career development in an organisation is to provide coaching. Waitemata District Health Board (DHB) has implemented an in-house coaching programme, with a focus on developing high-performing high-potential staff and supporting them to achieve their potential.

The coaching programme is called GROWTH (GROWing Talent in Health) and it aims to contribute to increased talent retention and to support career development in the DHB. We have developed a pool of in-house coaches who provide cross-organisational developmental coaching to high-performing high-potential staff

Evaluation results indicate that coaching is having a positive impact on coachees' confidence, self-awareness, resilience and ability to achieve career goals.

This paper will discuss the evidence base for a coaching programme to support career development and retention and will share the journey to implementation of the programme at Waitemata DHB. It will also present evaluation findings, with a focus on the benefits of GROWTH to the career development of both coachees and coaches.

## INTRODUCTION

Waitemata District Health Board (WDHB) serves more than 560,000 people; the residents of North Shore City, Waitakere City and the Rodney district, encompassing suburban and rural regions. The DHB employs around 6,800 people in clinical and non-clinical roles in eight different occupational groups, across multiple sites and Services.

Like many large organisations our environment is complex and constantly changing. Retention of an engaged, well-developed workforce is essential to ensure the on-going provision of quality patient care. Research indicates that the amount of career support experienced by employees is linked to their intention to stay with their employer (CIPD, 2005). Numerous study findings (Blessing White, 2008) show a strong correlation between staff engagement, customer engagement (in our case patient care and experience) and achievement of organisational outcomes (DHB health priorities).

To support career and professional development the DHB offers a range of programmes, many led by a central Learning and Development team, of which the author is a member. Late 2011 we began to sense that something was missing. Many of our programmes are classroom based and we knew that only around 20% of learning occurs in formal settings. 80 % of learning occurs non-formally through experience, reflection and through developmental relationships (Bersin and Associates, 2010). Some groups of staff receive supervision; however this typically focuses on 'the work'. We perceived a gap around non-formal development of the individual as a whole person.

In 2012, WDHB's CEO encouraged managers to look for enhanced in-house training opportunities for staff (CEO Memorandum, 2012). The small size of the Learning and Development team meant that we needed to investigate ways to enable our highly skilled workforce to develop each other. This was consistent with our new organisational values of '*connected*' and '*better, best, brilliant*'.

Our experience in organisational development and our observations of what other organisations were doing led us to explore the idea of a coaching programme at WDHB.

This paper will discuss the evidence for a coaching programme to support career development and retention, the programme design and implementation process, and outcomes to date. Plans for future development will also be outlined.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Coaching is a relatively new practice, evidenced by the dramatic increase in the number of coaching publications since 2000 (Grant and Cavanagh, 2007). The scope of coaching is broad and the literature on the topic is considerable. This review was limited to literature related to the following subjects as they were seen to be most relevant to the development of our programme:

- benefits and types of coaching;
- coaching for career development and retention of staff;
- benefits of using internal coaches.

## BENEFITS OF COACHING

The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as 'partnering with coachees in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential'. Coaching is generally recognised as a highly useful intervention. It is personalised learning

which can be organised quickly and put in place with relatively low levels of co-ordination and budget compared with traditional training programmes (CIPD, 2007).

McNally and Lukens (2006) suggest that coaching has the potential to improve individual and organisational performance, retain leadership talent, support succession planning, and help healthcare leaders meet professional and personal goals. McNicoll (2002 as cited in Byrne, 2007) states that, within health care, coaching can assist professionals to cope with the increasingly complex, multi-faceted and changing organisations characteristic of modern health services.

### **TYPES OF COACHING**

West and Milan (2001, cited in Driscoll & Cooper, 2005) identify three types of coaching: skills coaching, performance coaching and developmental coaching. Flores (1989) and Sieler (2003) propose an ontological approach to coaching.

<b>Type of coaching</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Skills coaching	Specific learning needs of coachees.
Performance coaching	Specific performance issues and behaviours that will enhance performance.
Developmental coaching	Challenges and stimulates growth and unlocks potential through reflective learning.
Ontological coaching	Enables coachees to observe themselves and their world differently, identify restrictive and enabling interpretations of this, generate new meanings and take effective action.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

According to Yoder (1995, as cited in Batson & Yoder, 2012) the desired outcome of coaching is to promote growth and development that meets the needs of both the individual and the organisation, and to give opportunities for career advancement. In interviews conducted by Stewart et al (2008) interviewees reported that coaching enhanced their career management by assisting them to successfully organise, control and direct the progress of their working life. Consistent with this, a study by Cortvriend et al. (2008) showed that for some respondents coaching sessions highlighted what they needed to do to develop their career and identified when might be the right time for them to think about promotion or career changes in the future. Donner and Wheeler (2005) suggest that coaching helps coachees become career resilient as it encourages the coachee to take responsibility and take action to achieve their career vision. Streatfield (2012) found that coaching can facilitate greater career fulfilment as it bring awareness, builds and strengthens capabilities and promotes long term career growth.

### **STAFF RETENTION**

In 2008, IAG NZ implemented a coaching programme. They reported that coaching increased engagement scores from 51% to 76% and increased retention: staff turnover decreased from 19.72% to 9.97% over two years. In a study of the impact of coaching in a medium-sized consulting company, 90% of coachees reported an increase post-coaching in how valued they felt by the organisation, with an average increase of 18% per individual. 50% felt more committed to the organisation and 60% reported increased engagement levels (Results Coaching Systems, 2005).

Several studies have shown that coaching positively influences retention of best employees (CIPD, 2007). High potential staff are 10% more likely to leave than the general employee population and

they put in 21% more effort than other employees (Corporate Leadership Council, 2009). Losing high potential employees is a significant cost to the organisation.

## **INTERNAL COACHES**

Rock and Donde (2008) compared external and internal coaches. They found that internal coaches are more cost-effective, they better understand organisational culture and systems and can be more effectively monitored for quality and consistency. Internal coaches went on to use their coaching skills in their 'day jobs' with their own staff, and retention rates for the coaches themselves were higher than for general employees. Internal coaching provides a framework for deepening connections across an organisation, strengthening internal networks and spreading the impact of coaching.

## **SUMMARY**

The literature review encouraged us to go ahead with introducing a coaching programme which would utilise internal coaches. Developmental coaching, with an ontological approach, best meets our needs for growing the whole person. Ideally all staff would have access to coaching, however we would get the biggest benefit by targeting high potential staff.

## **AIM**

The aim of this initiative was to explore how an in-house developmental coaching programme would support individual career development and thereby increase staff engagement and retention.

## **DEVELOPING THE PROGRAMME**

We took a deliberate organic, emergent approach to start small and build momentum. This is consistent with approaches described by CIPD in their research report *Coaching in organisations* (2007). Rather than designing every aspect of the programme in advance and having a formal launch, we went about developing components as they were required and allowed word of mouth to generate interest.

### **STEP 1**

To create a concept for the coaching programme and to give it a name. 'GROWTH' was chosen to stand for **GROW**ing **Talent** in **Health** and also to represent the GROW coaching model (Whitmore, 2009). The International Coaching Federation definition of coaching was adopted: 'Coaching is partnering with coachees in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential'. Programme principles were agreed:

- Coach and coachee are from different Services and occupational groups (maximises cross-organisational communication and learning and minimises likelihood of coaching being skills-focussed, rather than developmental).
- Coaching is client-centred, strengths-based and provides a safe, confidential relationship to facilitate awareness, understanding and action.
- The coach/coachee relationship is a collegial relationship and the coach may not know how to do things better than the coachee.
- Coaching is not a substitute for supervision or for line manager coaching.

**STEP 2**

The Director of Human Resources agreed to be programme sponsor. Criteria for coaches were formed in line with CIPD’s (2008) list of skills of effective coaches. Staff who met the criteria were identified and invited to train as internal coaches. Prospective coaches completed an application form, endorsed by two people and approved by a selection group.

**STEP 3**

An external facilitator<sup>1</sup> was contracted to design and deliver a Coach Development programme<sup>2</sup> for WDHB. The first programme commenced in August 2012. By the end of 2013 we will have a pool of more than 30 coaches.

**STEP 4**

We formed criteria for coachees, the target group being high potential staff. Criteria were informed by Bersin and Associates’ (2010) and the Corporate Leadership Council’s (2009) definitions of ‘high potential’ and were refined through consultation with members of the coach pool. A selection group was established to review applications for coaching, to ensure applicants meet criteria. Information on the GROWTH programme including a *Coachee’s Guide to GROWTH* was also created.

**STEP 5**

Working with Human Resources and professional leaders, staff who met the coachee criteria were identified and invited to participate. Word has spread about the programme, and this, combined with more formal communication activities has meant that the programme is building a profile.

**STEP 6**

Having completed this development phase, we then implemented the programme. Once potential coachees submit an application, the process that follows is illustrated in Figure 1.

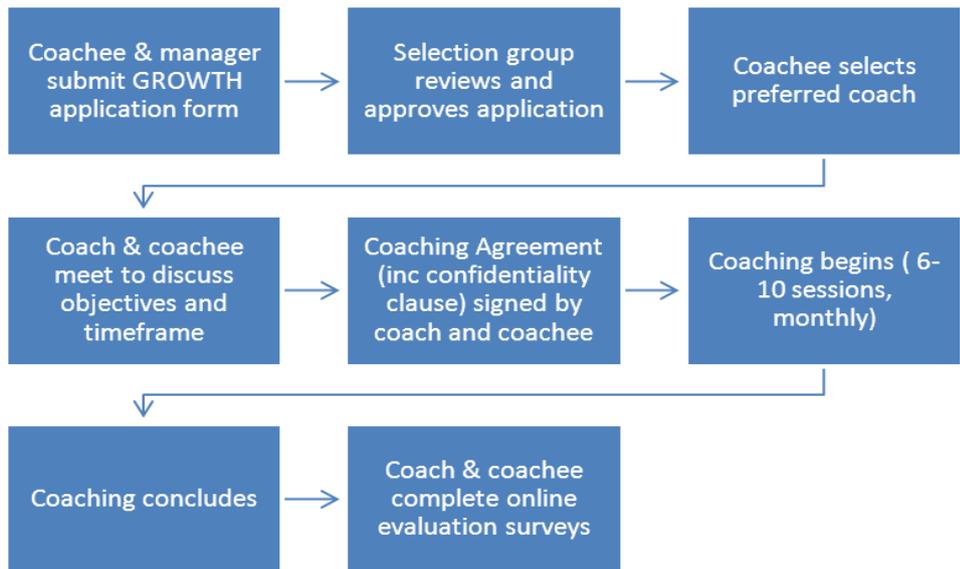


Figure 1. GROWTH programme process.

<sup>1</sup> Rhyll Stafford, MIRA Companions for Development.

<sup>2</sup> Coach Development programme involves: 3 x two days’ workshop sessions; contributing to an online discussion forum; developing coaching resources; engaging a coachee and commencing a coaching arrangement; submitting a video clip of a coaching session for peer review; writing a discussion paper on ‘Coaching and its contribution to the learning organisation at Waitemata DHB’; participation in individual and group supervision.

Coachees and coaches are sent an evaluation survey within a week of coaching concluding. See Appendix 1 for copies.

## OUTCOMES

Since August 2012 we have developed 32 internal coaches and 45 staff have been or are being coached. There is a waiting list of eight coachees and six prospective coaches.

Ten coachees have completed the coachee survey (83% response rate) and nine coaches have completed the coach survey (100% response rate). There has been no negative feedback from coachees or coaches.

### IMPACT ON COACHEES

The coachee survey identified that the top four areas explored through coaching were: my own career development; building confidence; enhancing self-awareness; and managing change. 100% of respondents agreed that ‘coaching was a good investment of my time’ and ‘would recommend the programme to others’. The reported impact of coaching is represented in Figure 2, below.

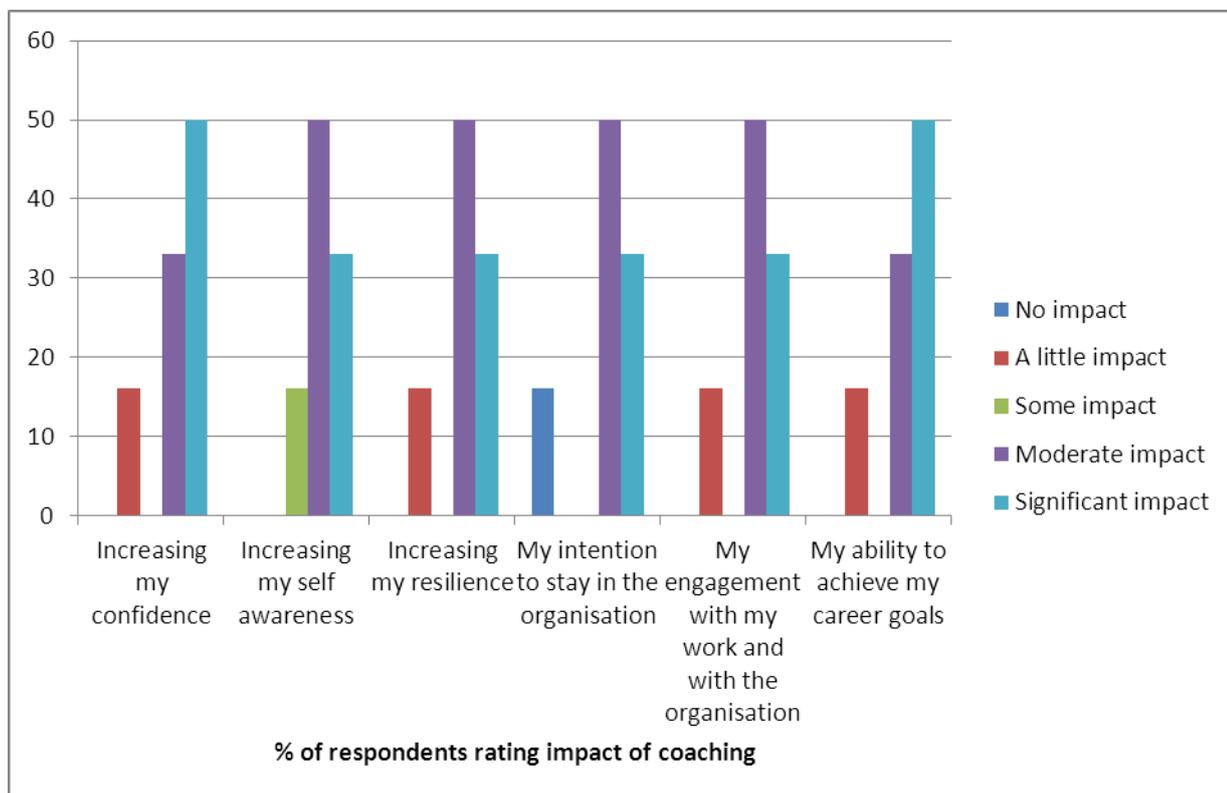


Figure 2. Impact of coaching.

Coaching had a significant impact on ‘increasing confidence’ and ‘ability to achieve career goals’ and a moderate impact on ‘increasing self-awareness’, ‘increasing resilience’, ‘intention to stay’ and ‘engagement’.

Comments suggest that coaching has contributed to **career development**:

*“Coaching really helped me to make some decisions and work through some issues with my career in a very logical manner.”*

*“I found the coaching invaluable in helping me to challenge myself and work through some very difficult decisions with regard to my career.”*

*“Given me direction, confidence and helped me make decisions about my career path.”*

*“Assisted me to realise my own potential and assisted me with self-confidence.”*

and to **engagement**:

*“The programme has made my experience working at the DHB richer.”*

*“The growth programme has confirmed to me how much I enjoy the work I do.”*

*“The growth programme assisted me to become focused on what I should be doing and has given me the motivation to strive for goals set.”*

*“I have regained my self-confidence and vitality in life and passion for nursing”.*

#### **IMPACT ON COACHES**

Our hope was that coaching would provide a development opportunity for the coaches themselves, and that coaches would use their coaching skills with their own staff. This seems to have been achieved. Coaches' comments suggest that coaching has made a positive contribution to the **coaches' development and to their skill-set as leaders**:

*“(Coaching has provided) an insight into my own self - as much as the coachee is learning, as a coach I have learned from her too. My questioning skills have vastly improved and listening skills strengthened.”*

*“(Gained) new skills that can be used in my everyday work and also with my supervisees, as needed.”*

*“Increased confidence, self-belief, ability to focus on strengths, a way of looking at things.”*

*“Using the coaching skills I am learning to explore situations without prior judgement. I am really excited by this new way of having conversations on a regular basis. Although I had provided supervision over many years, to me coaching is a whole new process, it's like I have seen the light!!!”*

Coaches articulate a strong **commitment to the programme**:

*“When we take the time to celebrate rising stars and invest together in their growth through coaching, the organisation really is demonstrating the value of Everyone Matters.”*

*“Ensuring that WDHB leaders and potential leaders have an opportunity to develop in their strengths and access their potential can only ensure a better health service for our communities.”*

*“Keep moving forward in the way that it has as it is growing stronger all the time.”*

*“Those of you who have set up and initiated this project have provided a way of supporting employees that has been needed for a long time.”*

*“A feeling that I am doing my bit towards supporting and keeping staff in the DHB, as I am passionate about this work environment and really want to see staff feeling needed, valued and recognised as well as encouraged to develop ideas that feed into and uphold our WDHB values.”*

## **IMPACT ON ORGANISATION**

It is too soon to be able to identify specific organisational impact; however there are two indicators that GROWTH is recognised as an effective initiative:

- The Director of Human Resources has included the programme as one of his two education KPIs
- A General Manager has made GROWTH available to staff in her Service who are leading a change initiative.

## **DISCUSSION**

There are a number of learning points. Taking an emergent approach to designing the programme meant that we could refine processes and information to respond to feedback and experience. It also made the workload more manageable. Developing clear criteria and application processes for coaches and for coachees was very important. This transparency made any decisions about suitability much easier. A fundamental part of the success of the programme has been the involvement of an external facilitator in the Coach Development programme. Her knowledge, skills and professionalism have made a huge contribution to the programme and to the benefits coaches in particular have gained.

Plans for further development of the GROWTH programme include:

- Conducting a formal return on investment study on the impact of GROWTH coaching on a specific service-based change initiative. Results will be available early 2014.
- Supporting, developing and retaining current coaches by establishing a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger et al., 2001) for coaching.
- Building the profile and momentum of the GROWTH programme.
- Investigating making the GROWTH model available to other DHBs.

The GROWTH programme has highlighted the value of a coaching approach. To make coaching more widely available, we have recently implemented a new programme, ‘Everyday Coaching’, which supports workplace coaching by line managers.

It is recognised that there are limitations to this study. There was no control group and feedback from coachees’ managers has not yet been sought. It is too soon to definitively state that the

GROWTH programme has increased staff engagement and retention, however these early results indicate that the programme is likely to achieve this. There are plans to conduct follow up surveys to gather this data.

This programme has made an important contribution to the career development of coachees and coaches and is now a key element in the development support available to our staff.

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# APPENDIX 1

## COACHEE SURVEY

### 1. Please provide the following information

Your coach's name

How frequently did you meet?

How many coaching sessions did you have?

Approximately, how long was each coaching session?

### \*2. Please say how much you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I had enough information in advance on what to expect from the GROWTH coaching programme	<input type="radio"/>				
The Coachee's Guide to GROWTH gave useful information on what to expect from coaching, from my coach and on how to make the most of my coaching sessions	<input type="radio"/>				
The programme was well organised	<input type="radio"/>				

### 3. To help us understand the types of goals and issues people bring to coaching, please indicate the areas you explored (you can select several) :

- Building confidence
- Career development (own)
- Career development (supporting others)
- Communication styles and strategy
- Conflict resolution
- Creative thinking
- Decision making
- Enhancing self awareness
- Information management
- Initiating change
- Leadership development
- Managing change
- Managing stress
- Organisational/time management
- Other (please specify in Comments box, below)
- Relationship building
- Setting & achieving realistic goals
- Staff engagement
- Staff retention
- Transition to new role

**\* 4. What has been the impact of coaching for you in the following?**

	No impact	A little impact	Some impact	Moderate impact	Significant impact
Increasing my confidence	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing my self-awareness	<input type="radio"/>				
Increasing my resilience	<input type="radio"/>				
My intention to stay in the organisation	<input type="radio"/>				
My engagement with my work and with the organisation	<input type="radio"/>				
My ability to achieve my career goals	<input type="radio"/>				

Comments

**\* 5. How much do you agree with the following statements?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I achieved my purpose for coaching	<input type="radio"/>				
Coaching helped me to achieve my developmental objectives	<input type="radio"/>				
My coach was skilled and responsive to my needs	<input type="radio"/>				
Coaching was a good investment of my time	<input type="radio"/>				
I would recommend the GROWTH coaching programme to others	<input type="radio"/>				

Any comments?

**\* 6. What changes have you made as a result of coaching and what specific benefits and results have you achieved?**

**\* 7. Please rate the value of this programme to you.**

- Very high value
- High value
- Medium value
- Low value
- Very low value

Any comments?

**8. What suggestions do you have for ongoing development of the GROWTH coaching programme? Please be as specific as you can.**

**9. Is there anything else you would like to say?**

# COACH SURVEY

**\* 1. Please say how much you agree with the following statements:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The programme was well organised	<input type="radio"/>				
I have received the support I needed to be an effective coach	<input type="radio"/>				
The Coach Development programme prepared me well for coaching	<input type="radio"/>				
I had enough information in advance on what to expect from the GROWTH coaching programme	<input type="radio"/>				
The 'Optimism Booster' card set is a useful resource.	<input type="radio"/>				

Please add any comments here:

**\* 2. What differences did you observe in your coachee as a result of the coaching process?**

**\* 3. What benefits do you feel YOU gain through being a coach in this programme?**

**4. What have been the challenges of coaching for you?**

**5. What development needs have you identified for yourself, as a coach?**

**6. We are looking at providing coach 'in-service' sessions to support your ongoing development. What topics would be useful for you?**

**7. What organisational themes have emerged through the coaching process? Please include both themes that support a coaching culture & a learning organisation as well as those that may challenge it.**

**8. What suggestions do you have for ongoing development of the GROWTH coaching programme? Please be as specific as you can.**

**9. Is there anything else you would to say?**