Internal Coaching and Mentoring Thought and Action Group (TAG)

Introduction 》》》

- Members of the Engage for Success Internal Coaching and Mentoring Thought and Action Group (TAG), have been exploring the role of internal coaches and mentors – with a specific focus on the potential to support best practice in employee engagement.

- The group spans all sectors – public, private and not for profit – and includes representatives from local and central government, civil service departments, charities, small and large private companies.

- Through a series of guided discussions, we collated information on how coaching and mentoring supports and facilitates the four enablers of employee engagement.

- For each enabler, we posed a series of questions and recorded the key points from our discussions against each one. You can view the outputs from these discussions on the following pages.

- By offering real-life examples from practicing internal coaches and mentors, we hope to offer some inspiration and encourage further debate around best practice in your workplace.

The four enablers of employee engagement

Our discussions explored opportunities to leverage **cultural change** and promote **employee engagement,** through the four enablers:

> **Strategic narrative**

> **Engaging managers**

> **Employee voice**

> **Organisational integrity**

Strategic narrative

Strategic
narrative

Our group used the four questions below to explore the role that **internal coaches and mentors** in supporting **strategic narrative** (you can find out more about <u>the enabler here</u>):

> **What does strategic narrative mean in your organisation?**

> **What role do your internal coaches play in supporting this enabler?**

> **What more could internal coaches contribute?**

> **What limiting assumptions might we be making? And how can we reframe?**

ENGAGE
FOR SUCCESS

Strategic narrative

If perception is reality, then the stories we tell each other about our past, our present and our unknown future matter. Whether we are established leaders or new starters at any level, where better to explore the meaning and purpose of our stories, to understand their intention and impact, than with a colleague who can coach or mentor?

Tips for coaches:
Goals
Reality – discourage 'offloading…'
Opportunities – focus here
Way forward/Will

Internal coaches and mentors can:

- Support the whole self at work
- Build psychological safety
- Help navigate limiting beliefs creating culture of good mental health
- Creating culture of good mental health
- Promote diversity and inclusion of thought
- Develop agile and growth mindsets

EMERGENT FUTURE

- Welcome new people to the dance
- Encourage new insights through shift to transformational practice
- Normalise coaching as the fabric of leadership – an expectation
- Support new leadership skills – unlearning and re-learning
- Bring to life values and purpose through behavioral change
- Map themes needing attention
- Encourage cross-organisational learning – up/down and across

"Is there anything bigger than facilitating the thinking of our senior leaders?"

"My work is about helping people to find their feet culturally"

"The very presence of internal coaching and mentoring speaks volumes about culture"

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS

Engaging managers

Engaging
managers

We used the following questions to explore the role that **internal coaches and mentors** have in supporting **engaging managers** (you can find out more about <u>the enabler here</u>):

## Is there a culture of encouraging an engaging style of managing in your organisation?

> Clear drive supporting a shift towards a more relational way of managing people – with **busy-ness** a major hurdle to progress – best intentions slip back to reactive practices when pressure builds.

> Growing recognition that leaders of people **need time to manage well** – job design lagging behind this curve?

> Competency frameworks **describing behaviours** in a more granular way to support culture shift – importance of aligning recruitment processes – engagement in the person specification/script?

> Working systemically across all people development processes to **create a wrap around culture** of good practice – as the DNA of the organisation.

> Building series of coaching questions into appraisals to support the conversation. **Coaching habit** training – supporting managers with do-able ways to use coaching in everyday conversations – making it more of a conscious decision between directive and non-directive interventions – including using (T) GROW at speed.

> Importance of surveys – annual, quarterly, regular temperature/pulse checks, use of quality standards like Investors in People – using explicit questions to **track progress** towards engaging management styles.

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS

Engaging managers

Are there any models or approaches you are using that are particularly effective for coaching managers and encouraging managers to coach?

> **OSCAR, (T)GROW**, CLEAR models all useful to keep it simple/accessible/demystify and encourage use of powerful single questions e.g. What else? What have you tried so far? What do you need from me? What will you do now?

> **Situational Leadership** – directing/coaching/supporting/delegating – encouraging managers to self-assess current and default modes and consider what to dial up or down.

> Shifting the mindset – developing appreciation of range of managerial approaches and encouraging appropriate choice in the moment, e.g. **coaching/mentoring/advocacy modes** – all underpinned with coaching skills.

> Promoting **conscious competence** – make use of virtual working to use invisible prompts – e.g. 'post-its' to support progress from autopilot to conscious choice of modes.

> Embedding coaching skills in all **Learning and Development content** – wrapping learning materials around themes – wellbeing, returning to the workplace, sensitive issues - <u>SWAY</u> mentioned as a useful tool.

> **Social modelling** – raising the profile of coaching through peers has a powerful trickle-down effect. Identifying vocal and influential senior people who are benefiting from coaching and can amplify its value.

> **Reverse mentoring** – including cross-organisational functions/geography/hierarchy/protected characteristics to promote collaboration and organisational-wide learning from different perspectives.

> **Organisational core behaviours and values** – e.g. learning not blaming, empowerment, inclusivity.

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS

How is coaching/mentoring positioned in your organisation and how might it be enhanced to further develop engaging managers?

> **Options** for offering coaching and mentoring to all staff, senior leaders, middle managers, those on specific developmental programmes e.g. for women, black staff etc.

> Growth in wellbeing coaching to promote **good mental health** – pro-active approach as important as reactive.

> **Blending internal and external** coaching services to address specific organisational needs and affordability

> Important to ensure **internal coaching is valued** in the same way as external coaching.

> **Supply and demand** challenges when launching/expanding – need to balance awareness raising with managing expectations.

> **Soft launch** to manage demand for internal coaching arrangements through awareness raising in appraisals/one to one meetings.

> Importance of **limiting requests** for both one-off coaching support, for example for interview preparation, and remedial support where there is a performance issue. Instead focus on long-term personal and professional development.

> Ensure coachees are fully signed up – self referred, willing to be challenged and change – it must be a **voluntary process**.

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS
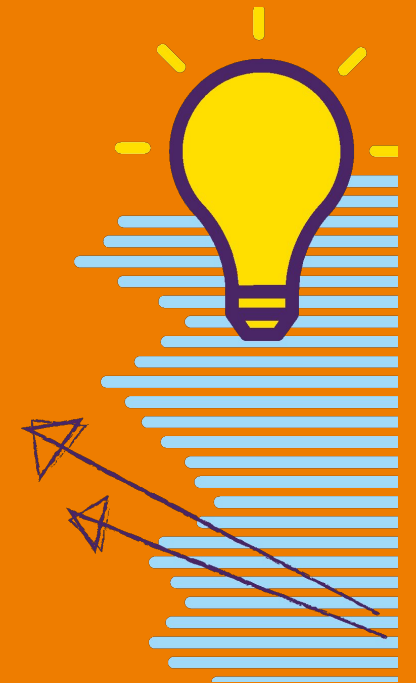
Engaging
managers

How do you ensure that colleagues have confidence in your ability to manage confidentiality as an internal coach/mentor. How do you make the boundaries visible?

> **Contract** clearly around what confidentiality means and looks like in your organisational context. For example, how will thematic issues be raised? What will be included in evaluation? How will feedback be anonymised? Will it be known that you are in a coaching relationship?

> Use **chemistry checks** to match coaches and mentors – to ensure a good "fit" for working together.

> Build the **trust and rapport** – create a learning partnership and recognise that this may take time to grow.

> Internal coaches and mentors most frequently wear **several hats** – including HR roles – important to be aware of perceptions others may hold and discuss boundaries.

> Be clear on appropriate **reporting lines** should any issues need escalation.
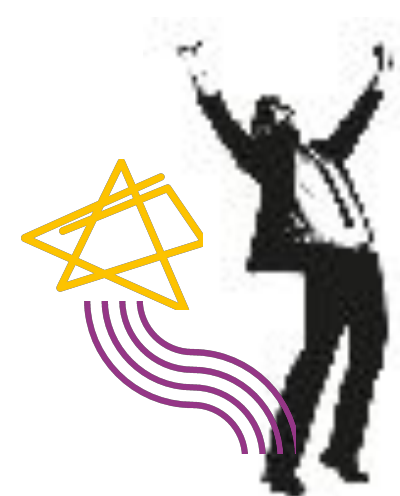
ENGAGE
FOR SUCCESS

Employee voice

Employee voice

Internal coaches and mentors offer insights into how to ensure **employee voice** is heard within an organisation (find out more about **the enabler here**):

> For genuine, authentic employee voice to be heard, there needs to be a culture of willingness to ask uncomfortable questions, to really listen to responses and to act on what emerges.

> Is there clarity about how insights will be shared? Is there a coaching lead?, someone well placed in the organisation to highlight themes, issues and advocate for change?

> Internal coaches and mentors are trained to listen deeply and offer a safe space for authentic, genuine employee voice.

> Modelling these deep listening skills can enable others to adopt this way of engaging with employee voice.

> Training managers in coaching skills and an understanding of psychological safety will encourage staff to engage in direct dialogue – breaking the cycle of anonymous comments in employee surveys failing to bring change. Engage for Success has information here on how leaders and managers can support psychological safety in the workplace.

> Internal coaches and mentors as well as internal mediators are well placed to help people feel heard and seen – a critical part of employee voice.
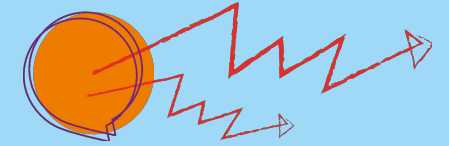
ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS

Employee voice

Internal coaches and mentors offer insights into how to ensure **employee voice** is heard within an organisation (continued):

> Coaching contracts/orientation meetings are important to be explicit about:

- Purpose, intention, confidentiality and how data will be collected, anonymised themes shared etc.
- Recognising coaching as legitimate working time to encourage take up of support available.

> Reverse mentoring can demonstrate organisational openness to employee voice - sharing employee experience through someone else's eyes:

- Starting with a specific purpose e.g. 360 feedback, digital capability etc. is a good way to build rapport and confidence in this approach
- And there is diversity and inclusion potential e.g. challenging inequalities through enabling senior leaders to better understand employee experience in relation to ethnic background, disability, other protected characteristics etc.

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS

Employee voice

Employee surveys can play a part in promoting employee voice:

> Best practice requires an integrated approach – to understand employee experience through trend analysis

> Drilling down where possible to individual team reports

> Identifying what to celebrate and where additional support is needed

> Mapping understanding of organisational values and how well they are being delivered

> How can we reach those who choose not to engage in employee surveys – unheard voices?

Benchmarking employee surveys over time allows monitoring of change in responses:

> Although to stay fully tuned, questions need to stay abreast of definitions, meaning and intentions over time

> Similarly benchmarking across sectors can bring insights – as long as the uniqueness of each organisation is not toned down in the process.

Opportunities to hear collective voice: partnership working, forums for trade unions and staff representatives.

> Such forums can create important opportunities for Employee Voice in response to complex and specific challenges – e.g. 2021 working arrangements/future working models – exploration of concepts and terminology - hybrid working?, expansion of flexible working?, location-free?

> Consider using "challenge or shadow boards" – where groups of colleagues across all grades, locations, business areas are recruited to form a shadow board - entrusted with the same papers as executive committees or senior management teams. Caveats apply around what the group is asked to seek views from others on and what is confidential. Chairs of the challenge/shadow board then attend the executive meeting, to provide additional insight and views - strengthening organisational voice and enabling more informed, robust and inclusive decision making.

> Trust is key for authentic Employee Voice:

- Potential for the 2020/21 virtual working arrangements to improve trust – some evidence of a natural shift from highly task focused management to a more 'whole person at work' approach – i.e. getting to know staff better.

- Without the opportunities for ad hoc in person communication to keep track of how people are feeling and the progress of work activities, it's possible to develop more inclusive connection and attention to people on a more individual basis – opportunities to enhance employee voice amidst the challenges…!

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS
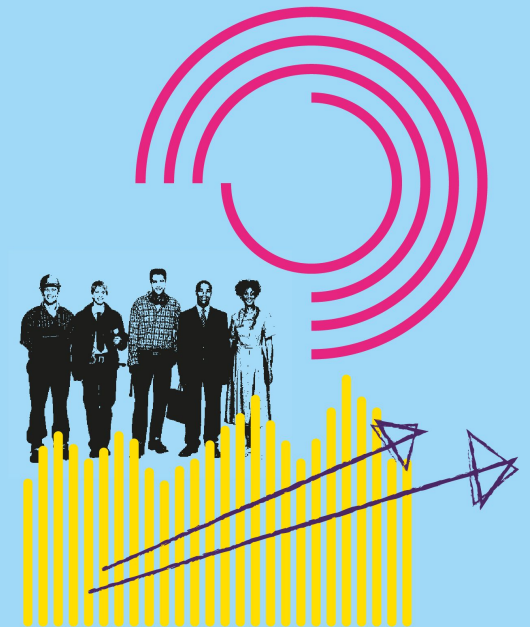
Organisational integrity

Organisational integrity

Organisational Integrity is sometimes described as the 'say/do' gap. Here are some of the challenges for **internal coaches and mentors** in supporting this employee engagement enabler (**find out more here**):

> Language - people may not understand what organisational integrity means – the 'say/do' gap can be a more helpful concept.

> Neutrality – internal coaches and mentors are part of the organisational system and may be unaware of ways in which they may unconsciously collude with colleagues or guide a direction of thought, based on their own experiences of the workplace. Mentors in particular, when sharing their experiences of working in the organisation, are in effect reinforcing the culture – positively or negatively.

> Boundary management – managing multiple organisational hats e.g. organisational development and HR roles as well as internal coach/mentor work presents challenges of integrity – what can be shared and what is not appropriate.

> Rescuing and accountability – a coachee/mentee may be looking to unburden and to shift responsibility onto the coach/mentor – consciously or unconsciously.

> Internal/External provision – internal coaching is often available to middle managers with external provision for senior leaders – creating a divide and potentially unhelpful dynamic. Senior leaders set the 'say/do' frame, yet are rarely coached by internal colleagues who will have a lived experience and understanding of how things play out in the organisation, of which external coaches may be unaware. Both internal and external coaches can experience a conflict of interest – in terms of 'speaking truth to power' – holding a mirror up can be uncomfortable and risks losing an ongoing relationship.

FOR SUCCESS

Organisational integrity

Challenges for **internal coaches and mentors** in supporting the **organisational integrity** enabler (continued):

> Intention and impact – may not be the same – concept of "the light we shed and the shadows we cast" – in terms of organisational integrity the higher up we are, the longer the shadow.

> Frozen middle – middle managers are responsible for delivering strategies set by senior leaders, and to succeed must build a climate of trust both up and down the organisation – acting as the conduit can be a tough place to maintain integrity.

> Time – the demands of the day job may pull against the best version of the colleague who shows up in coaching/mentoring. The same may apply to the coach, particularly where they are wearing multiple hats.

> Values – personal v organisational values and ways of working may be at odds – lack of alignment and sense of personal fit.

> Organisational purpose and values – clear, simple and well understood statements of purpose and values provide a benchmark against which to measure people's experience of any say/do gap in people management processes including surveys and one to one reviews.

> Coaching contracts – with clear expectations for both coach/mentor and coachee/mentee and explicit details of how confidentiality will be handled – including GDPR compliance for record keeping etc.

> Ethics training – should play a major part in the training of internal coaches and mentors – with practical examples to ensure understanding of the sorts of issues that might arise and how to handle.

> Arrangements for intervention/escalation – clear guidelines for what constitutes a legitimate concern, how and to whom it should be escalated.

> Signpost other processes – coaching may not always be the right vehicle – it can be helpful to make a range of options available – e.g. policies and procedures on mediation, grievances, whistleblowing, employee assistance schemes with counselling, etc.

> Other sources of support – trade unions, staff representatives, self organised groups etc.

ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS

Organisational integrity

> Clear language – ask who would 'do the right thing when no one is looking…?' when exploring what organisational integrity means.

> Case studies - positive stories of coaching and mentoring support leading to improvements in the workplace can be powerful to encourage engagement and take up of coaching and mentoring services – as long as confidentiality is carefully observed, and nothing shared that has not been agreed with the coachee/mentee.

> Job design – including for internal coaches and mentors can be key to manageable workloads – an important factor for doing the job well.

> Coaching Supervision – regular peer, internal or external coaching supervision, can help support boundary management and ethical practice.

Want to find out more?

> You can find more insights and research into employee engagement on the **Engage for Success website**.

> If you'd like to get involved in Engage for Success, you can contact **info@engageforsuccess.org**

> This document was put together by Katherine Bassey, executive coach, coach supervisor and facilitator (**katherine@engageforsuccess.org**) with help from members of the Engage for Success Internal coaching and Mentoring TAG and the team at Bundle Training, who are experts at creating engaging content for employees. **Find out more here**.