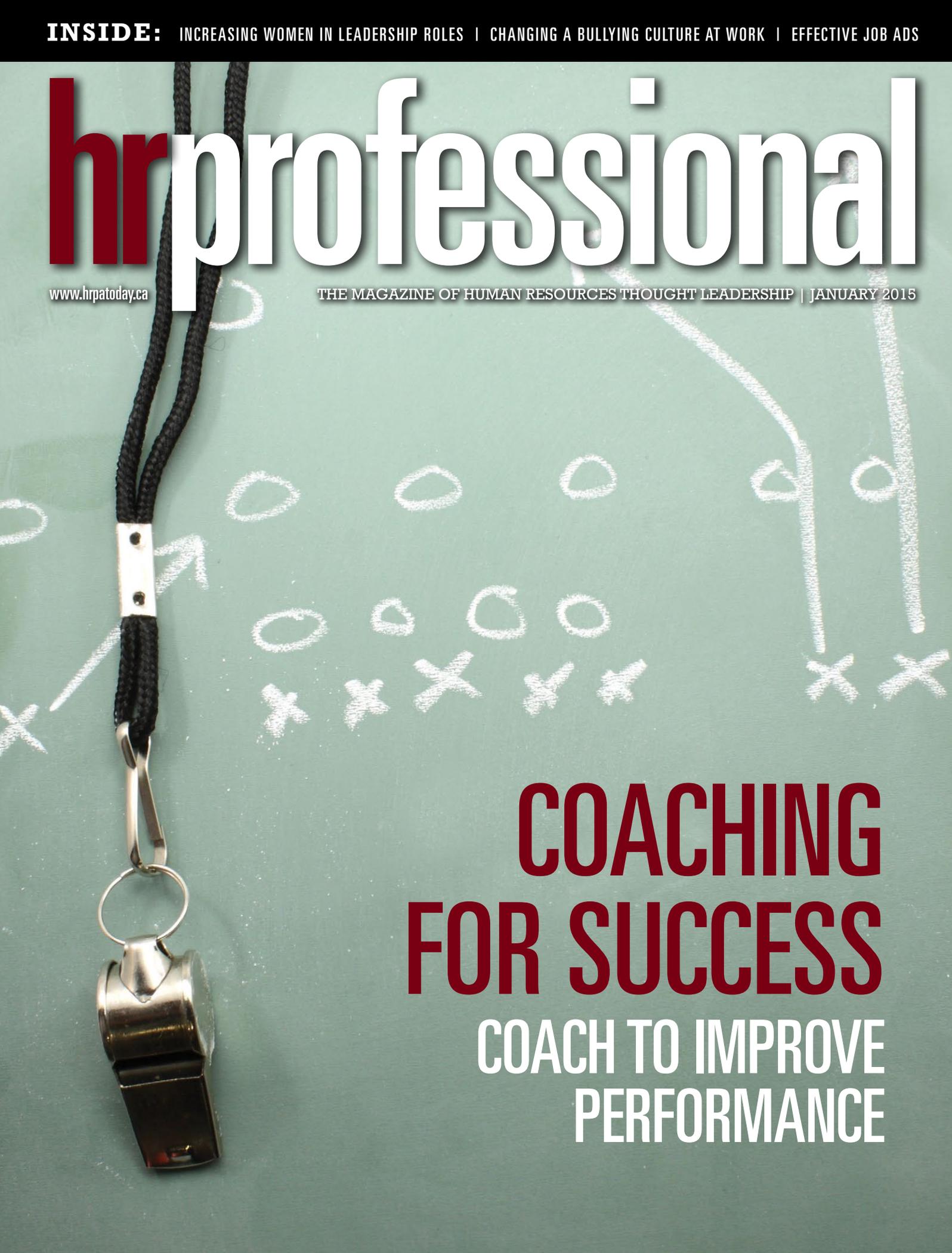


**INSIDE:** INCREASING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES | CHANGING A BULLYING CULTURE AT WORK | EFFECTIVE JOB ADS

# hrprofessional

[www.hrpatoday.ca](http://www.hrpatoday.ca)

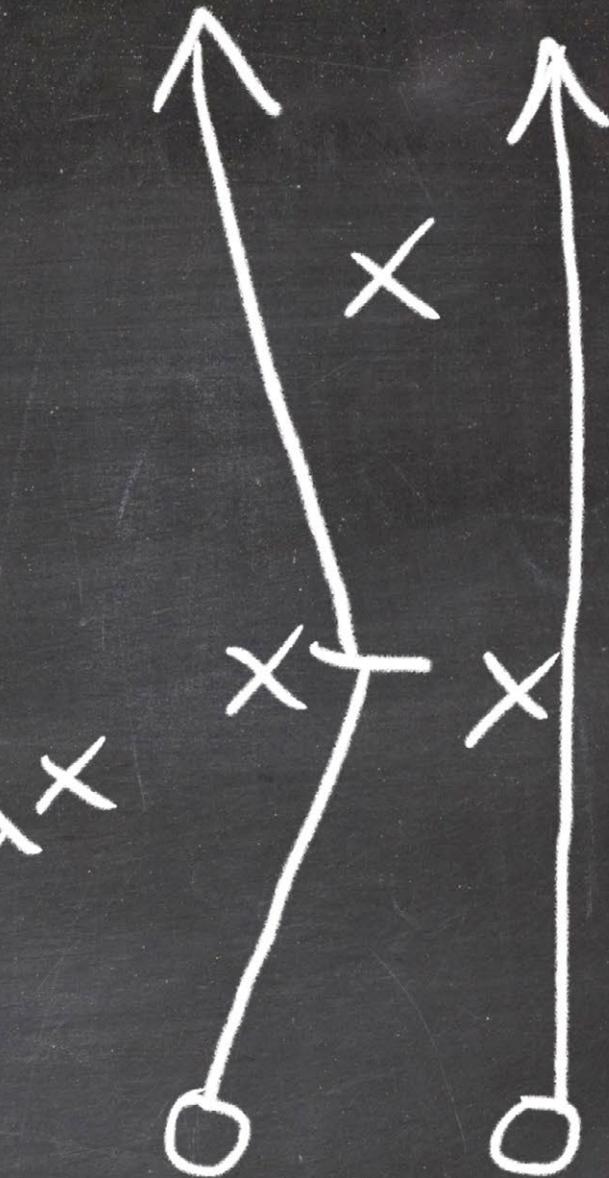
THE MAGAZINE OF HUMAN RESOURCES THOUGHT LEADERSHIP | JANUARY 2015



## COACHING FOR SUCCESS

COACH TO IMPROVE  
PERFORMANCE





By Melissa Campeau

In January of 1991, Canadian swimmer Mark Tewksbury emerged from the Claremont Superdome pool in Perth, Australia with a problem. A second-place finish in the 100-metre backstroke – 6/100ths of a second behind American Jeff Rouse – moved his dreams of gold at the 1992 Olympics a little further out of reach.

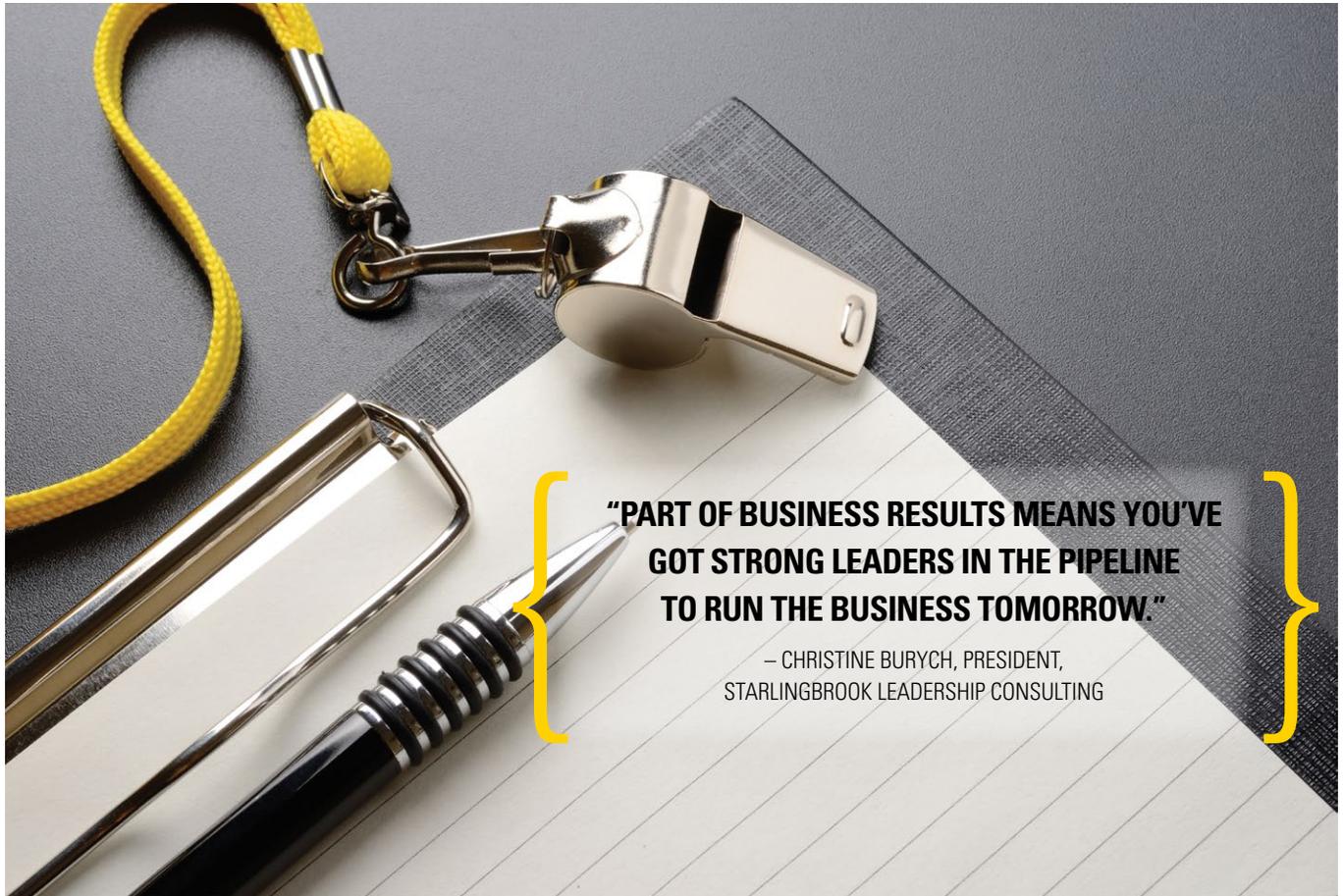
In search of a solution, he made the unlikely move of hiring synchronized swim coach Debbie Muir. Together, they dissected his performance and concluded his weak spot was the underwater dolphin kick, a move swimmers use to gather speed at the start of a race and after turns. So they worked on it. The next year in Barcelona, Tewksbury won his race with a come-from-behind victory, securing the gold and breaking an Olympic record in the process.

Before partnering with Muir, Tewksbury was among the top competitors in the world. When they worked together, he was quite literally unbeatable.

The same might just apply to employees. Everyone has his or her “dolphin kick” – the weak spot that’s an opportunity in disguise. What if someone helped your staff members pinpoint their unique challenges and work out their best solutions? What could that mean to the organization?

With a long list of positive results associated with coaching, the most compelling just might be its ability to boost engagement, which in turn can impact the bottom line.

While executive coaching has been popular for decades now – a recent Hay Group survey reports between 25 and 40 per cent of Fortune 500 companies use executive coaches – the International Coach Federation reports that an increasing number of businesses are bringing coaching to employees of all levels within their organizations. With a solid grasp on what to do, what to expect and how to execute a good coaching plan, HR can help an organization make the most of this growing trend.



**“PART OF BUSINESS RESULTS MEANS YOU’VE GOT STRONG LEADERS IN THE PIPELINE TO RUN THE BUSINESS TOMORROW.”**

– CHRISTINE BURYCH, PRESIDENT,  
STARLINGBROOK LEADERSHIP CONSULTING

Andrei Kuzmnik / Shutterstock

### MENTORING VS. COACHING

To some, coaching may sound quite similar to mentoring, but the differences are important.

“Mentoring is a relationship where one person helps another person navigate through the organization,” said Toronto-based leadership coach Bonnie Flatt. “In a mentor role you’re sharing your experience with others; you’re doing a lot more telling than directing.”

Coaching, on the other hand, takes quite a different form.

“Coaching isn’t about telling or directing someone what to do, so much as holding a mirror up, guiding them, showing what’s possible for them,” said Flatt. “As a coach, I help you to pull from within yourself – your strengths, your knowledge base – what’s going to work for you. In mentoring, you’re looking to me as the expert. In coaching, you’re your own expert.”

### PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Coaching can be applied to a wide range of challenges or needs within an organization.

“In some cases, coaches are brought in to address performance issues,” said Flatt. For example, if a leader has a team that’s not performing at a high level, that leader may bring in a coach to assess the obstacles and map out a solution.

“Some coaches will come in and do performance coaching and they’ll focus on the behaviours and the shifts that need to take place for the team to be more effective,” said Flatt.

Development coaching, on the other hand, is broader and includes performance coaching within its mandate.

“This kind of coaching takes it to a whole new level,” said Flatt. “There may be some specific behaviours that need to shift, and then you really get into the drivers of that behaviour, to address and change the underlying assumptions and beliefs.” This kind of coaching, she says, is more likely to bring about lasting change. “Once the coach leaves, the person can still sustain the new behaviour.”

### WHAT DOES A COACH DO?

Whether coaching is introduced to address a problem or take a leader from great to greater, a pivotal step in transformation and improvement is to change behaviour.

Anyone who’s ever tried to break a habit or develop a new one knows just how hard this can be.

“If they could do it themselves, they would have done it,” said Christine Burych, president of StarlingBrook Leadership Consulting in Toronto. “It’s like saying I want to lose weight. I know how to do it, but if I could do it on my own I would have done it by now. That’s why places like Jenny Craig and WeightWatchers can be so helpful, because they provide the environment, there are people to talk to and you’ve got an accountability partner who will hold you to those things you say you’re going to do.”

Sometimes, a coach is able to help you see things you might not notice on your own.

"They'll help you identify your blind spots and make them less blind so you can change them," said Flatt, who shares a story about a client whose specific objective was to listen more and build understanding. "This particular client had a habit of being the first person in a meeting to share everything she knew," she said, who notes the behaviour was preventing the client's growth. "One of the things she committed to doing was listening in meetings and letting others speak first."

To gain insight and shift behaviour, coaches need to develop a specific set of skills.

"For one thing, they need to know how to ask really good open-ended questions," said Burych. "These are questions that begin with 'what' as opposed to 'why.'" A good coach then listens to the answers and follows where they lead. "When a coachee is answering these questions, you're helping them go on a path that's not determined by you," she said. "At the end of the ride you're helping them create some new revelations for themselves. This is so much more powerful than a coach saying, 'This is what I see about you.'"

## EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL

A great deal of training goes into being an effective coach, which is why many organizations turn to external experts with years of specialized training and experience to guide their employees. Outsiders can bring a fresh and unbiased perspective, too.

"Sometimes, not being involved in the day-to-day is helpful because you're not attached to anything but the success of your client," said Flatt.

HR's involvement with an external coach can vary wildly from organization to organization. HR may have recommended the coaching for the employee in the first place, or they could be responding to a request. They may consult with the coach or the individual may work entirely independently.

However, in many cases, businesses prefer to keep coaching within the organizational family.

"What I do like about an internal coach is that you've got somebody on hand when you need them," said Burych. "And you've got somebody who knows the lay of the land and the context within the organization, so he or she understands the environment and the players."

Oftentimes, the internal coach might be an objective person within the organization who doesn't work directly with the employee. There are differing opinions about how effective a direct supervisor can be as a coach, but when the exchange is set up as coaching conversations and stays firmly in the realm of performance coaching (rather than the more in-depth development coaching), it can lead to positive results.

"There are definitely folks who can act as effective internal coaches, with the caveat that they have training on how to be a coach," said Burych.

Cadillac Fairview, for one, has developed an internal program where a growing number of staff are engaging in performance-focused coaching conversations with their trained and supported direct supervisors, at least once a quarter.

"That's the frequency the executives have committed to," said Carmen Klein, senior director of organizational development and culture at Cadillac Fairview. "But when you dig deeper, they're having them more frequently, at least once a month and in many cases every two weeks."

The company has set up a thorough support system for managers that includes a coaching toolkit, workshops and online learning content. HR offers ongoing education, on-the-job coaching and real-time feedback.

The company regularly brings external coaches into the mix, as well.

"Particularly with the more senior leaders where the coaching needs to exceed the capability or capacity of the one-up manager, we'll use executive coaching as a supplement," said Klein. For consistency, HR prepares external experts before they work with employees. "We use different coaches, but it's important we're all using the same language. So we've established our intent process and most coaches can map their process to it."

## WHO NEEDS A COACH?

In many ways, any willing employee could benefit from the skills of a good coach. Certain conditions, though, make coaching a particularly good addition to the HR mix.

Often, some kind of change within the organization will spark a need for coaching. "When there's unrest, people feel more vulnerable and performance can start to slip," said Burych. Or someone might be disconnected, disengaged or burnt out. "The

## Looking to hire?

**We offer win-win strategies for employers!**

**FREE services + qualified candidates  
+ incentives/supports**

### Next-Steps Employment Centres



 <b>Don Mills</b> <b>416-395-5101</b>	 <b>Downsview</b> <b>416-395-9559</b>
 <b>Riverdale</b> <b>416-396-2313</b>	 <b>Scarborough Rouge</b> <b>416-396-8110</b>
 <b>Dundas-Dixie</b> <b>905-896-2233</b>	 <b>Mississauga Meadowvale</b> <b>905-814-8406</b>
 <b>Vaughan</b> <b>905-851-6551</b>	<div style="background-color: #800040; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <b>Monday to Friday</b>  <b>9 am - 5 pm</b> </div>




**NEW! Canada-Ontario Job Grant available for employers**

[www.next-steps.ca](http://www.next-steps.ca)

NextStepsEmploymentCentres

@NextStepsEC

Operated by



This Employment Ontario service is funded in part by the Government of Canada

## cover feature

goal of coaching is to find ways to reenergize this person within the context of the position,” she added.

The anticipation of change can also lead to coaching. “A little while ago I started working with staff at a consumer packaged goods company as they geared up for a major reorganization,” said Flatt. “They had to fundamentally change the way the business was operating, which meant the leaders had to change.”

Or, an organization may employ development coaching to prepare leaders for their next step. “Perhaps they’ve moved or are about to move from middle management to senior management and they need support on what the role looks like and what behaviours they need to be displaying in this new role,” said Burych.

Companies also hire coaches to take people from great to greater. In a company where things are running smoothly, an organization might bring in coaches – particularly for senior executives – to take performance to the next level. Or those tapped for future leadership roles might be coached to prepare them. “Part of business results means you’ve got strong leaders in the pipeline to run the business tomorrow,” said Burych.

At Cadillac Fairview, there are many triggers for coaching opportunities, including business objectives, general development, new processes or tools, new projects or assignments, a change in responsibilities or a result that needs to be improved. “With any of those triggers, a manager can ask, ‘What is the new critical behaviour required for success?’ Then coach that behaviour in,” said Klein.

## ENGAGEMENT BOOST

Coached employees may feel more confident about what’s expected of them and more empowered to make smart decisions.

“Not only is the coachee receiving support to continuously improve their performance and, consequently, business results, coaching tells them that their manager cares about them and their development,” said Klein. “When we look at the parts of the organization where we do regularly coach well, all things being equal, those areas also tend to have higher engagement.”

“It’s not that the workplace has changed, but the individuals have changed,” said Burych. And this in turn creates teams who are much more likely to work well together and produce greater results.

“Coaching can transform leaders and entire organizations,” said Flatt. “If I was in HR right now, I’d be putting coaching in because I want to make sure that I’ve got a culture and environment where people can succeed, be more self aware, be better leaders and create more engagement.”

While coaching is only one tool in an HR professional’s development toolkit, it can be an important ingredient for success. “In terms of leadership and driving results, coaching is all about unlocking new potential,” said Klein. “And you’re leaving something on the table if you’re not finding ways to help your staff tap into their full potential.” ■



Centre for Research & Education  
on Violence Against Women & Children

## Domestic Violence is a workplace issue.

Learn how to:  
Recognize, Respond  
and Refer.

Education and training  
for workplaces.



T. 519.661.2111 x87486 [www.makeitourbusiness.com](http://www.makeitourbusiness.com)