

# Coaching vs. Employee Assistance Programs

Support for good to great

Whitepaper

April 2018

# Introduction

Today's professionals crave—and respond to—a positive, quality coach. For many, having a coach is seen as a badge of honor because it means their employer is investing in their success.

HR practitioners understand the value and demand for coaching and are often the pivotal champions who introduce coaching to the workplace. But from some perspectives, coaching has similarities to the on-demand counseling services offered by Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). HR leaders may find themselves pressed to rationalize the investment in the former, demonstrating how a targeted coaching program supplements (not duplicates) a company's existing EAP benefit.

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# Key differences

**The following resource was designed to help you outline the key differences and build the business case in your organization:**

## **High Utilization**

Current EAP utilization across North America is just 6.5%.<sup>1</sup> The industry continues to grapple with low utilization metrics even as HR leaders double down on communication and promotion. Meanwhile, the Talking Talent Group enjoys higher take up rates, for example of up to 90% take up for one-on-one coaching in the UK. When employees are invited to use the service, a clear majority do.

## **Legacy: Career not Crisis**

Traditionally EAPs have positioned themselves as a bandage resource to help employees cope with conflicts and problems. Consequently, employees must first overcome a certain stigma before reaching out for support.<sup>2</sup> Even as EAPs begin to reposition themselves, they're still perceived as "crisis counselors," an industry-wide hurdle that will continue to limit their reach for many years.

In contrast, coaching programs have a different legacy, having historically been offered as a key talent development tool for top executives. Employees are quick to see value and view coaching as a desirable perk.

## **Meaningful Outcomes**

In a tight labor market, it's essential that HR efforts demonstrate bottom line impact. Most EAP reporting fails to meet this need with an ineffective focus on utilization rates and process metrics.

With Talking Talent, you can capture participant outcomes in terms of turnover, career progression, and reduced absence. Coaching metrics demonstrate real ROI like this:

- EY UK saw an 18% increase in retention, and 77% of maternity returners retained the same performance grade or improved it.
- At Citi in London, retention increased from 84% to 97% of maternity returners still in position after a year.
- A London law firm saw a 144% increase in retention, with 87% of women coached by Talking Talent retained over a three-year period.
- In the U.S., 92% of employees using coaching believe it made a difference in their engagement, productivity, and retention.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Chestnut Global Partners: Trend Report 2017

<sup>2</sup> Sources: WorldatWork "Remove the Stigma of an EAP;" Benefits Quarterly Q1 2017 "How Perceptions of Mental Illness Impact EAP Utilization;" Psychology Today "Why Don't Employees Use EAP Services?" Workforce Magazine "EAPs are Valuable But Underused"

# Key differences cont'd

## **Niche Experience**

Industry tracking shows that employees access EAP services for several reasons, led by marital issues, stress, anxiety, depression, and child behavior. Occupational and work-related concerns account for just 7.1% of EAP contacts, primarily composed of organizational change issues and increased workloads.<sup>3</sup>

“Meanwhile, coaching targets niche issues in maternity/paternity transitions, women’s leadership, and career development. Moreover, coaches can be hand selected for their experience in your industry and their own commercial background, ensuring they understand the stressors that affect your workforce. EAPs, designed to address a wide range of mental health and relationship challenges, cannot offer the same focus and impact or commercial acumen.

## **Manager Integration**

Management support is critical to an employee’s job experience. Over a third (33%) of parents say their manager’s behavior impeded their progression, and 57% of parents want greater managerial support.<sup>4</sup>

All Talking Talent services are built for manager integration, with group training and/or one-on-one coaching being crucial to the success of the transition. Separately, some managers are asked to participate in a three-way conversation with the coach and employee to establish shared purposes, align expectations, and embed learning.

EAPs are not set up to affect this kind of systemic culture change, and any managerial challenges will continue to impact employee after employee.

## **Retention and Development**

Transition coaching overlaps with women’s leadership coaching in an essential way. As coachees move back into their roles, the career/leadership aspects of coaching become fundamental. Retaining new parents is only part of the solution—ensuring their careers don’t stall and they continue to thrive is the second part of the equation. EAPs won’t deliver on this.

## **Bright Horizons Integration**

A partnership with Bright Horizons means Talking Talent can fit seamlessly into your existing support package for working parents. Our blended offering further increases retention statistics and provides a far more proactive and actionable tool to reduce lost workdays versus calling an EAP counselor for on-the-spot crisis support.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Chestnut Global Partners: Trend Report 2017

<sup>4</sup> Source: Up, Out or Different? TT Research 2012

# Conclusion

EAPs are valuable programs designed to help employees cope with problems that impact their ability to function at work. But coaching does far more. With an expanded focus on career development, coaches help employees in stress as well as those ready to move from *good to great*. What's more coaching programs like Talking Talent offer the systemic feedback and inclusive leadership training which are critical for organizations who are trying to shift their cultures and become more parent-friendly.

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**Global Head office**

102 Crowmarsh Battle Barns,  
Oxfordshire, OX10 6SL, UK

**T** +44 (0)1491 821850

**E** [info@talking-talent.com](mailto:info@talking-talent.com)

**Asia Pacific Head office**

135 Bonham Strand Trade Centre,  
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

**T** +852 630 20360

**E** [info@talking-talent.com](mailto:info@talking-talent.com)

**US Head office**

1350 Avenue of the Americas,  
2nd Floor, New York, NY 10019  
United States of America

**T** +1 (212)612 3329

**E** [contact@talking-talent.com](mailto:contact@talking-talent.com)

[www.talking-talent.com](http://www.talking-talent.com)