

2008

# The relationship between executive coaching and organizational performance of female executives as a predictor for organizational success

Lily Benavides

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The University of San Francisco

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXECUTIVE COACHING AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE EXECUTIVES AS A  
PREDICTOR FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

A Dissertation Presented  
to

The Faculty of the School of Education  
Department of Leadership Studies  
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

By

Lily Benavides  
San Francisco  
December 2008

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	viii
CHAPTER I. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	3
Background & Need for Study	3
Diversity and Gender	3
Socialization of Females	6
Patriarchal Forms of Power in Corporate America	7
Career Experience	8
Leadership Development	12
Key Differences between Coaching and Mentoring	15
Conceptual Framework	17
Supporting Theories	18
Research Questions	23
Limitations of the Study	23
Significance of the Study	24
Definition of Terms	26
Summary	28
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	30
Introduction	30
The Effectiveness of Female Leaders	33
An Introduction to Executive Coaching	36
Definition and Standards	39
Executive Coaching Models	40
The Executive Coaching Process	44
Qualifications of the Coach	45
Measuring the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching	46
Executive Coaching Impact on Performance of Female Executives	51
Executive Coaching Impact on Organizational Performance	54
Summary	55
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	57
Restatement of Purpose	57
Research Design	58

Population and Sample	59
Instrumentation	61
Pilot Test	68
Validity	70
Data Collection	71
Data Analysis	73
 CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS	 76
Introduction	76
Profile of Participants	76
Description of Variables	82
Research Question Findings	84
Research Question One	84
Research Question Two	86
Research Question Three	87
Research Question Four	90
Research Question Five	93
Summary	94
 CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS	 99
Summary	99
Discussion	100
Research Question One	100
Research Question Two	102
Research Question Three	107
Research Question Four	109
Research Question Five	111
Conclusions	111
Implications	120
Recommendations for Professional Practice	121
Recommendations for Future Research	122
Concluding Thoughts	123
 REFERENCES	 125
 APPENDICES	 134
Appendix A: Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey	134
Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Form	147
Appendix C: Validity Panel	152
Appendix D: Validity Grid	153
Appendix E: Professional Women’s Associations	154
Appendix F: Appeal Letter	155



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Impact of Executive Coaching in Dollars	90
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Progression of Women into Top Management Positions	4
Table 2:	Senior Executive's Views on the Advancement of Women	5
Table 3:	Comparison between Mentoring and Coaching	17
Table 4:	Types of Leadership Development Options	31
Table 5:	Definitions and Purposes of Executive Coaching	40
Table 6:	Comparison of Counseling Approach and Consulting Approach	41
Table 7:	Research Questions with Corresponding Item Numbers	63
Table 8:	Industry Sector	78
Table 9:	Organizational Rank	79
Table 10:	Tenure in Current Position	79
Table 11:	Age	80
Table 12:	Education	81
Table 13:	Reasons for Participation in Executive Coaching	81
Table 14:	Hours of Executive Coaching Received	82
Table 15:	Reliability Analysis of Subscales	84
Table 16:	Organizational Performance Subscale	85
Table 17:	Job Behavior Subscale	86
Table 18:	Tangible Business Impact	88
Table 19:	Intangible Business Impact	89
Table 20:	New Learnings Subscale	91
Table 21:	Factors Sustaining New Behaviors	92
Table 22:	Factors Preventing New Behaviors	93

## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Introduction

There exists a critical gap at the highest executive levels in corporate America today. That the demand for senior executive leadership far outweighs the supply cannot be disputed, as senior executives at these levels have begun to retire, depart to pursue other interests, and leave their current roles. The real crisis occurs when these seasoned, professional executive leaders depart, and take with them years of institutional knowledge and experience, the lack of which can negatively impact an organization's future growth, stability, and sustainability. This shortage is a real, compelling business issue, leaving senior executive leaders grappling with how to best solve it. Often, they turn to the senior HR executive to propose a solution.

It is expected that within corporate organizations, senior HR executives have a systemic process in place which identifies high-potential individuals. In many instances, it is further assumed that HR professionals have devised, designed, and implemented leadership development plans which assure that these programs will provide high-potential individuals with learning experiences from which they can develop skills and knowledge, which assures their success as they are promoted into the executive suite of their organizations.

This research study had two main purposes. First, it proposed that the objective of leadership development programs should measure the impact on organizational performance, and not solely measure increases in an individual's effectiveness. Second, this research investigated the effectiveness of a specific leadership development

modality, executive coaching, and its impact on the organizational performance of female executives.

The rationale for the specific focus on the development of female executives was twofold. First, research was presented which demonstrated that a singular focus on developing females leads to improvements in organizational performance as measured in financial outcomes. Second, a large body of work exists in the leadership arena which suggests that increasingly, the types of skills most needed by today's global organizations are the skills most closely associated to those that women typically possess.

Many studies in the literature have focused on mentoring, (a specific leadership development modality) its effectiveness, and its impact on the career development of women. Much has been written about this topic. This begs a further question, however, as to what *new* leadership development modalities are being developed and implemented which focus on the development and promotion of women into these senior executive positions. This study sought to fill the leadership development gap by providing a two-pronged solution: (a) a focus on the leadership development of women through the specific use of executive coaching, and (b) measuring the impact of this leadership development modality on the organizational performance of female executives.

#### Statement of Problem

The demand for senior executive leadership continues to increase, yet remains in short supply in corporate America. This gap has reached a critical stage. As the first wave of baby boomers retire, one-fifth of the largest companies in the United States will lose up to 40% or more of their senior executives (McCuiston, Wooldridge, & Pierce, 2004). RHR International, a global management consulting firm, found that one half of

the companies studied expected to lose 50% or more of their senior managers – identified as two ranks below the CEO (Anonymous, 2005).

Senior human resource executives struggle to answer the question of where they will draw their top candidates from in the future. They recognize that the supply of talented individuals with the requisite strengths, skills, and abilities required to lead complex, global corporations, are few. Woolridge (2006) agreed, stating: ‘Talent has become the world’s most sought-after commodity’ (p. 27).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the efficacy of a specific leadership development modality, executive coaching, on the organizational performance of female executives, in an effort to determine if the new knowledge, skills and abilities learned led to their further promotability. Specifically, this research study focused on the following areas for female executives: (a) to what extent did the outcomes of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives’ job behavior, (b) which specific business areas were impacted, and (c) what new skills, abilities or increased knowledge was attained as a result of participation in an executive coaching program. Finally, the researcher investigated to what extent the participation of female executives in an executive coaching program resulted in promotion opportunities.

### Background and Need for the Study

#### *Diversity and Gender*

Traditionally, male executives have primarily held the majority of senior leadership positions in United States corporations. However, the number of female

executives promoted into these senior leadership positions has increased in recent years.

Researchers expect the numbers to continue trending upward, as evidenced by table 1.

Table 1. Progression of Women into Top Management Positions

YEAR	COMPANIES	GROWTH RATE	REFERENCE
1970's – 1990	Fortune 500	0 – 3%	Powell, 1999
1995	Fortune 500	8.8%	Catalyst 1998, 2002
1998	Fortune 500	11.2%	Catalyst 1998, 2002
2000	Fortune 500	12.5%	Catalyst 1998, 2002
2002	Fortune 500	15.7%	Catalyst 1998, 2002
2005	Fortune 100	11 %	Capelli & Hamori, 2004
*2016	CEO position	4.9 – 12.8%	Helfat, Harris & Wolfson, 2006

*Note.* From Helfat, C.E., Harris, D., and Wolfson, P.J. (2006). The pipeline to the top: women and men in the top executive ranks of U.S. corporations. *Journal of Management Perspectives*, 20, p. 45. \*(estimated)

As the numbers for women slowly inch upward, data indicates that there are fewer female executives who are directly in line to become CEOs (Helfat, Harris & Wolfson, 2006).

In reviewing the literature, a wide array of reasons is provided for the lack of female CEOs in the corporate world. For example, as part of a study published by the Academy of Management Executive (a publication of the Academy of Management, Briarcliff Manor, NY), a national survey was administered to 786 participants, all employed at Fortune 1000 companies. Of the total cohort, 461 were female executives and 325 were male CEOs. The results of the study offered different explanations for the paucity of female CEOs. Men said that this disparity existed due to females' lack of experience, whereas female executives saw this inequality to exist due to "inhospitable and exclusionary social attitudes and patterns," (Anonymous, Management Review, 1998, p. 9). Table 2 summarizes the results of this study.

Table 2: Senior Executive's Views on the Advancement of Women

Rationale	% of male CEOs agree	% of female executives agree
Women lack significant general management or line experience	82%	47%
Women haven't been in the pipeline long enough	64%	29%
Male managers are intimidated by or have difficulty managing women	31%	54%
Many white men fear reverse discrimination in the workplace	20%	40%

*Note.* Adapted from: Anonymous, (1998). Why there are so few women CEO's. *Management Review*, 87, p. 10.

Organizational barriers to the advancement of women – factual and perceived – have been in place ever since women joined the workforce. Pettigrew and Martin (1987) found that barriers to upward career mobility occurred at the advancement stages. This may explain why there continues a paucity of women who are identified, promoted, and developed for senior executive leadership positions.

Perhaps the perceptions shown in Table 2 can be better understood by the research conducted by Oakley (2000). Oakley stated that there are two broad categories which underlie the theories of why there are so fewer women in senior executive positions. The first category consists of those “barriers created by current corporate practices leading to the gender imbalance: the recruitment, retention and promotion of males over females” (p. 322). The second category includes behavioral and cultural causes, which consists of the following explanations: “stereotyping, tokenism, power, preferred leadership styles, and the psychodynamics of male/female relations” (p. 322).

*The socialization of females*

In general, leadership had traditionally been viewed as a masculine pursuit (Bass, 1985). The socialization of young females, on the other hand, prepares them for subordinate work roles. Girls will typically look for ways to ensure that the needs of others are taken care of. Many young girls are socialized to believe that if they sound too sure of themselves they will be unpopular. They are conditioned by society to not call attention to themselves. They have been taught to not “toot their own horn”, trumpet their own achievements, or claim credit for their success. Consequently, women’s efforts are less likely to be recognized.

Men, on the other hand, often behave in ways that attract attention by those in power, which works to their advantage in rising up the corporate ladder. However, a significant finding in a study conducted by Hagberg Consulting Group (a consulting and leadership development firm in Foster City, CA) indicated that although men excel in calling attention to - and being recognized for - their efforts, women are far superior in their ability to focus on getting the job done (Oakley, 2000).

In addition, other socialization variations that exist between men and women are behavioral factors. Studies suggest that women use less domineering body language, are more nurturing, flexible, emotional, caring, sensitive and cooperative than men. Women are more apt to share power and view it as an unlimited resource. They are less hierarchical and more willing to cross boundaries (Cook, 2003).

Furthermore, Oakley (2000) wrote about the “femininity/competency bind,” which is identified as a situation where acting “feminine” is associated with incompetence, and acting “competent” is associated with masculine traits, leading to the

conclusion that one must be “unfeminine” to be competent (p. 35). It has often been said that women must be tough and act authoritatively (like men) to be taken seriously, yet they are perceived to be “bitches” if too aggressive (p.324).

Many women, in top management positions, are forced to change their linguistic style in order to be perceived as authoritative and in control. For example, women executives may ask the question “Can you please have this report on my desk by noon?” whereas, men issue a command: “Have this report on my desk by noon” (p. 324). According to Georgetown University Professor Deborah Tannen, men state their opinions as fact, especially when they’re in leadership roles. But if a woman does it, she is perceived as pushy and non-feminine. On the other hand, if she tries to meet expectations of how a woman should talk, she is perceived as soft and ineffectual. The dilemma is characterized as a “double-bind” (Epstein, 2003, p. 18). Thus, a double-bind is analogous to a catch-22, because a person cannot win no matter what she does.

#### *Patriarchal forms of power in corporate America*

Is the predominant American corporate structure useful today in its ability to meet women’s needs and demands for a more equitable power distribution? Ferguson (1984) stated that what began as a military model, exists today as a hierarchical, bureaucratic, organizational model. This model fosters the legacy of patriarchal forms of power and pervasively dominates the American business experience. This model prevails in many aspects of corporate American life, from the makeup of the people who hold power in the corporation, to those with the authority to appoint new CEOs. This structural model includes elements from the very tone of language that women must use in order to be regarded as credible, to their personal style of dress.



Prior research indicates that in large, predominantly white male-led corporations, women's contributions and voices are often stifled. Women are induced to adapt and blend in, rather than speak out and give force to their voices (Oakley, 2000). A number of women had to personally overcome these barriers in their rise to the top. For example, early in her career, Linda Crompton, the CEO of Vancouver-based Citizens Bank of Canada, learned about keeping silent and being silenced. She learned to ignore off-color, sexual jokes made by male colleagues. She felt invisible, at times, and often felt her male peers overlooked the suggestions she made. This feeling was particularly heightened when she discovered that a male colleague had claimed her suggestions as his own (Bourette, 1999). According to Raggins, Townsend, and Mattis (1998), successful women today have learned to develop managerial styles that are acceptable to male colleagues and subordinates, a challenge that male colleagues are not faced with.

#### *Career experience*

Another common theme prevalent throughout the literature is women's lack of line experience that slows, or prevents, their ascension up the corporate ladder. Line experience is defined as those functions which generate revenue for the organization. For example, senior executives need line experience in marketing or operations. These positions should typically have been offered by mid-career in order to be a viable candidate for CEO (Oakley, 2000). Wells (2001) indicated that serial staff functional responsibilities, rather than line function responsibilities, is a common career path for women. In a study conducted by Catalyst (a research and advisory organization dedicated to the advancement of women in business), the data showed that women hold only 7.3% of all line officer posts. Cox and Harquail (1991) found that "line jobs are more strongly

associated with career success than staff jobs” (p. 70). These job assignments provide developmental opportunities for managers due to the inherent challenge associated with the job’s objectives.

One way in which women are actively managing their careers is through formal preparation. Women continue to gain experience and education to qualify for positions of increased prominence and organizational responsibility. Stelter (2002) found that the supply of capable women increases as they “gain critical work experience and education required to qualify for leadership positions,” (p. 89). It is estimated that by the year 2030, there will be more women in management roles due to the number of women earning bachelor and graduate level degrees (Girion, 2001).

A recent study by McKinsey & Company (2007), a global management consulting firm, found that the need to ensure women are included in every aspect of business makes economic sense, as women today control the greater proportion of purchasing power. Certainly this inclusion should be reflected at the senior most executive positions in organizations.

This finding is echoed in Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland’s 2008 book, *Why Women Mean Business*. They cited the growing economic purchasing power of women as having a global dominant influence, noting that 83% of all consumer purchases, including 94% of home furnishings, 91% of new homes, and 60% of new cars, are made by women. In fact, most corporate purchasing managers are women. In addition, it is estimated that over 90% of the growth in private wealth will be gained by women between 2008 and 2010 (p. 82).

Accordingly, several organizations have begun to realize higher profits, due in measure, to the advancement of women into senior leadership positions. New studies support the view that the financial performance of companies is increased with the development and advent of women in the executive suite. One recent study by Catalyst (2004), found that companies with a high representation of women in the executive suite experienced increases in financial performance; specifically, a 35% higher equity return and a 34% higher return to shareholders.

In related research, an original longitudinal study was conducted by the Glass Ceiling Research Center. It evaluated 215 of the leading Fortune 500 firms (Adler, 2001). The study demonstrated a strong link between promoting women into the executive suite and an increase in profits an average of more than 40%. Twenty-five of the 215 firms studied demonstrated an increase of between 18% and 69% higher profitability. A 1998 study conducted by the Bureau of National Affairs found that diversity in gender, race, and age on senior management teams is correlated with superior business performance in worker productivity, net operating profits, gross revenues, total assets, market share, and shareholder value (Bureau of National Affairs, 1998).

Shrader, Blackman, and Iles (1997) noted that those firms with a higher percentage of women in leadership positions are more progressive and competitive, in part, because their management group closely mirrors the composition of existing markets. McCuiston, Wooldridge, and Pierce (2004) suggested that organizations must ensure they are ready to align their organizational goals with the existing realities related to demographics, culture, and the market place, to ensure that ongoing growth, profitability and development can be achieved and sustained. As such, it is logical, and

makes business sense, for organizations to identify, develop and promote women into senior leadership positions to ensure that the needs, and new economic opportunities, of the newly emerged female consumer power force are leveraged.

Thus, organizations have identified that there is a severe shortage of competent individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities to serve in the most critical executive leadership positions in their companies. Further, recent studies indicated that those organizations which promoted and developed their high-potential female candidates realized an increase in their organization's financial performance. Yet, many organizations are slow to implement processes designed to minimize organizational barriers, and institute programs by which they can systematically identify, develop and promote women into senior leadership positions.

Organizations can no longer afford to ignore whole portions of their populations, such as their female employees. To continue to do so would be akin to committing economic suicide. Consider the nearly two trillion dollars in earned income (Catalyst, 2004) as evidence of the growing economic power of women, and it becomes critical to the ability of an organization to identify, develop and promote its female executives who understand how best to develop products and services that tap into the consumer base of which they are part. Organizations can increase revenue by including a diverse group of perspectives, talents, efforts, styles and abilities (Katz & Miller, 1996), as opposed to maintaining a singular organizational viewpoint.

There is evidence which suggested that diversity efforts in United States corporations have increased with respect to ethnicity, race, educational level, tenure and gender (Carson, Mosley, & Boyar, 2004). The need for executive leaders is great, yet the

number of women promoted into senior executive positions continues to slowly inch upward. Often, many organizational resources are marshaled into formal leadership development programs for the purpose of identifying, developing and promoting these executives (Collins, 2002).

### *Leadership Development*

Organizations invest in educational training for their executives as they seek to develop global leaders in order to remain competitive on a worldwide scale. Typically, organizations institute a formal leadership development process to provide high potential employees with learning experiences, such that existing competencies can be developed further, while new skills can be gained. Recent studies have indicated that organizations with a systemic process in place that actively identifies, promotes, and develops individuals with high potential, have produced a return, on average, of 22% to shareholders (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006).

According to Brungardt (1996) leadership development programs are defined as being,

“every form of growth or stage of development in the life-cycle that promotes, encourages and assists the expansion of knowledge and expertise required to optimize one’s leadership potential and performance.” (p. 83)

The leadership development experiences may include executive coaching, mentoring, international assignments, action learning, job rotations, and off-site executive retreats (Collins, 2001). HR professionals involved in the design and implementation of leadership development programs expect that “leadership development efforts will result in improved leadership skills” (Sogunro, 1997, p. 714). An increase in individual

leadership effectiveness is typically expected as a result of the general outcome of leadership development efforts. At the conclusion of leadership development programs, it is assumed that there will be improvement in an employee's skills and performance, but the research indicated that this is not always the resulting outcome.

Little evidence exists, however, which supports the premise that these leadership developmental experiences contribute to greater organizational performance (Collins, 2001). Similarly, several researchers (Collins, 2001; Fiedler, 1996; Kilburg, 1996) further expand upon this same finding. Their findings indicate that very little is known regarding the skills, knowledge, or processes in leadership development programs that contribute to organizational performance.

Further, the ability to measure return-on-investment (ROI) of leadership development programs is a critical competency for HRD professionals to master, yet a recent study found that 78% of organizations do not regularly evaluate the return on investment of leadership development programs (Lockwood, 2006). Chiumento, an HR consultancy firm, conducted a survey of approximately 500 *Personnel Today* readers, and found that 67% of survey respondents do not formally measure ROI on coaching initiatives (McCormick, 2007). A recent study by Sherpa (2008) found that only 12% of HR professionals queried have a formal process in place to quantify the results of the organizational investment in leadership development.

Quantifying the results and measuring the impact in business areas of a leadership development program such as executive coaching, contributes the following for Human Resource Development professionals: (a) increased organizational credibility, (b) heightened organizational visibility, and (c) perceived by peers as strategic value-add

professionals. Executive coaching, a specific leadership development modality, has been shown to have a high return-on-investment (Lockwood, 2006).

Senior executive leaders are increasingly demanding an accountability indicating that leadership development programs do in fact contribute to heightened performance of the organization. Senior executive leaders will typically perform cost analysis, to determine if the amount of expenditure will equal or surpass the value-added productivity for the company. Additionally, corporations must decide which interventions will create the highest value for the organization. Corporations must evaluate which company stakeholders – investors, clients, and employees – will derive the most value from organizational initiatives. Corporations are familiar with evaluating the return-on-investment (ROI) of organizational initiatives.

The term ROI, when used to evaluate the value of leadership development programs, is a precise value “developed by comparing training intervention costs to outcome benefits” (Phillips & Stone, 2002, p. 26). Outcome is defined as “a measurement of effectiveness or efficiency (of the organization) relative to core outputs of the system, subsystem, process, or individual” (Holton, 1999, p. 33).

Women have identified which success factors are critical for their career advancement. Female respondents to a survey listed the following factors as important to have access to or master, in order to advance in their careers in their respective companies: (a) access to high-visibility assignments (51% strongly/somewhat agree), (b) performing over and above expectations (49%), (c) communicating well (47%), and (d) having an influential mentor or sponsor (44%) (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002).

Much has been written in the literature about mentoring and the benefits to women's careers. Mentoring is often correlated with the advancement of women in organizations as the process can help women overcome organizational advancement barriers. In addition, organizational visibility, support and improved job performance are beneficial outcomes for women (Ragins & Scandura, 1994). They are not, however, the same practice.

#### *Key Differences between Executive Coaching and Mentoring*

Typically, mentoring is a one-on-one developmental relationship between a seasoned, high-ranking organizational member and a new or less-experienced organizational member (Hegstad, 1999). The mentoring relationships can either be formal or informal, and may last a year or more. In their comprehensive literature review highlighting the differences between mentoring and executive coaching, D'Abate, Eddy, and Tannenbaum (2003) found that there are unique characteristics to each of these development modalities which clearly delineate that each is separate and distinctive.

The process of executive coaching is similar to that of mentoring, yet there are key differences. A developmental process as well, executive coaching involves an intimate, one-on-one relationship between a senior organizational leader and a coach, who is generally external to the organization (Maltbia & Power, 2005).

Further, coaching is short-range and focused on specific organizational or business issues, whereas mentoring is longer-term and focused on the career advancement of the individual (Joo, 2005). The major goal of mentoring is to help protégées with career development, as evidenced by the five specific functions performed



by the mentor: exposure, protection, coaching, sponsorship, and challenging assignments (Joo, 2005).

Due to the fact that the coaching process is client-focused, client-oriented, performance focused, and performance driven, and the client is responsible for the outcomes, coaching is a better tool than mentoring for improving performance. The critical difference between mentoring and coaching lies in who is the focus of attention and who is responsible for the action, relating to the learning or the performance.

In mentoring, the mentor is responsible for modeling the behavior, and the focus is mentor-centric. The mentor is responsible for his or her actions, but not for the client. In the mentoring relationship, there is neither a guarantee that learning will occur nor that performance will improve. Mentoring has no specifically stated goals or outcomes, and is a much longer process than coaching.

In coaching, the focus is on the client who is coached, through pointed dialogue, to determine what performance gaps need to be addressed, and the coaching is conducted in a specified timeframe. The coach helps the client to develop an action plan for development or to improve performance. The client ultimately is responsible for his or her own actions, learning, and performance (Long, 2003, p. 8). Table 3 summarized the differences between mentoring and executive coaching.

Table 3: Comparison between Mentoring and Coaching

	Mentoring	Coaching
Purpose	Diverse from socialization to management development	Improving performance through self-awareness and learning
Coach	Internal senior manager	External professional
Coachee	Diverse from lower level employee to high potential	Mostly executive and higher level manager
Process	Less structured and lack of mentor experience	Systematic and structured
Focus	People centered	Issue and/or problem centered
Duration	Can last for a long time	Short-term

*Note.* From Joo, B-K. (2005) Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Developmental Review*, 4, p. 474.

Kilburg (1996) offered one of the earliest definitions of executive coaching in the literature. Kilburg stated:

“helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organization within a formally defined coaching agreement.” (p. 142)

Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001), Judge and Cowell (1997), Levinson (1996), Peterson (1996), Richard (1999), Saporito (1996), Tobias (1996), and Passmore (2007) agreed that this definition is representative of the comprehensive view of executive coaching.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on strategic human resources development (HRD), as conceptualized in Swanson and Holton’s *Foundations of Human*

*Resource Development* (2001). Strategic HRD is defined as: “a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (p. 8). It is this definition which provides the conceptual framework for this research study. Strategic human resources development ensures that organizations have the individuals with the appropriate talents, skills and abilities in place, and that each individual has the opportunity to further develop their skills, knowledge and abilities such that the present and future needs of the organization are met.

Strategic HRD provides an integrated and comprehensive framework for the development of human capital through the activities of creating a learning culture, and formulating both organizational and individual learning approaches. It is by creating an environment where people are encouraged to learn and develop that the primary objective of strategic HRD is accomplished; that is, the organization’s human capital as an organizational resource is enhanced, and can be leveraged as a source of competitive advantage (Armstrong, 2006).

#### Supporting Theories

Resource-based theory of competitive advantage posits that it is an organization’s ability to employ, and benefit from, an organization’s internal resources which leads to a competitive advantage and better performance (Barney, 1991). Barney (1991) defined human capital resources as “any training, experience, judgment, intelligence, relationships, and insights of individual managers and workers in a firm” (p. 101). Becker & Gerhart (1996) agreed, “firms can develop sustained competitive advantage by creating value in a way that is rare and difficult for competitors to imitate” (p. 781).

Four characteristics of an organization's resources further elaborate upon the conditions that provide the framework for sustained competitive advantage: a resource must be valuable, such that opportunities are taken advantage of, and competitive threats reduced or eliminated. Second, the resource must be rare; third, it must be imperfectly imitable; and fourth, it must be non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). We begin this discussion by understanding what is meant by labeling a resource 'valuable'.

Several studies suggested that women possess a unique combination of interpersonal and work ethic traits that seem tailor-made for the management ranks. Evidence showed that women make better corporate managers compared to men. An example of such research is a study conducted by the Hagberg Consulting Group (an HR and consulting firm located in California). The participants of the study consisted of 425 high-level executives. The findings indicated that female managers were rated higher than the male counterparts in 42 of the 52 skills measured (Wells, 2001).

The perceived value of the female manager or executive in corporate America has continued to be undervalued. Differentiating and indentifying the specific abilities which female executives bring to an organization is an excellent position to begin to understand exactly how valuable this particular organizational resource is. As Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Kanter stated: "Women get high ratings on exactly those skills needed to succeed in the global Information Age, where teamwork and partnering are so important" (Sharpe, 2000).

Secondly, Barney (1991) suggested that the resource must be rare amongst current and potential organizational competitors. Here what is meant by 'rare' is that an organization must utilize resources and capabilities that are different from the skills they

and their nearest competitor are developing. Hence, it makes sense that those organizations with a systemic program in place that identifies, develops and promotes its female executives have found an internal resource they leverage to drive a competitive advantage. This approach would be particularly strategic if the organization existed in an industry where historically, women and their contributions had been undervalued and not viewed in this way of being a rare, valuable asset one could employ for a competitive advantage. McCuiston et al. (2004) suggested that if an organization does not employ policies or practices to ensure diversity is a critical objective, business losses will be experienced, particularly in growth markets.

Third, it must be ‘imperfectly imitable’, such that a competitor could not be certain that they could perfectly duplicate the exact characteristics and abilities of the organization’s human capital. Barney (1995) stated imitation can occur in two ways: duplication and substitution. Short of cloning an organization’s employees, a competitor could not duplicate nor substitute an organization’s employee population. This is due to the competitor’s inability to replicate exactly the particular personalities, experiences and relationships that exist in a specific firm (p. 53), making note as well of their individual skills and abilities that make up the history of an individual organization.

An employee’s relationship and history with key customers, the shared experiences between co-workers lead to the importance of numerous “small decisions” (Barney, 1995, p. 54); these hallmarks of individual employee’s work experiences can never be rebuilt, recreated nor imitated by a competitor, providing an inherent basis for a sustained competitive advantage. What Barney (1995) terms “big decisions” (p. 54) are

huge, fairly obvious; they're easy to understand and describe to anyone external to the organization, and are usually studied by strategic management scholars.

Barney (1995) posited that it is the importance of socially complex resources, i.e.: "reputation, trust, friendship, teamwork, and culture" (p. 55) which post imitation limits. As an example, he cited the Hewlett Packard culture which encouraged teamwork and cooperation across organizational boundaries, as having providing a competitive advantage which could not be easily imitated nor duplicated.

Finally, there is no substitute for the resource, a characteristic that Barney labels non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). Barney (1991) found that an organization's firm-level resources are among the most sustainable, yet a difficult resource for competitors to duplicate, from which to gain a competitive advantage. Robins and Wiersema (1995) support this viewpoint as well, further asserting that the ability of an organization to share strategic assets or resources is critical for its successful performance. The 1994 study by Hamel and Prahalad on the resource-based theory found that the key to competitive advantage is the utilization and development of unique resources (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994).

Organizations are aware of the shortage of talented managers ready for development and promotion; there is recognition of the importance in developing leaders at all organizational levels, and the need for a broadening of perspective such that it can compete on a global basis (Collins, 2001). Evidence supports the identification, development and promotion of women into the executive suite as a sustainable competitive advantage, yet there are organizations which ignore this ready source of executive candidates. Shrader et al. (1997) cited the underutilization of women and

persons of color in an organization's human capital that detracts from their ability to sustain a competitive advantage. Further, the inability of an organization to recruit and retain persons of diverse backgrounds can negatively impact an organization's competitive standing.

McCuiston et al., (2004) found that the best candidates are attracted to those organizations that have a demonstrable record of equitable opportunities for promotion and professional development in their careers. Finally, McCuiston et al. (2004) verified the need for the diversification of an organization's human capital, stating: "Recruiting and retaining people of diverse backgrounds who can share a common set of values...and approach to business – is a priority for today's competitive organization" (p. 1).

One way to ensure an organization's future success and sustainability lies in its ability to capitalize on its human capital and focus attention and resources where they were not previously directed: on its female managers. Fondas (1997) stated that the requirements of management today are described in traditionally feminine terms, for example: 'sharing responsibility, helping and developing others, and building a connected network of relationships', a term she calls 'the feminization of management'. As the shift in leadership competencies shifts from control-oriented, bureaucratic methods to a more collaborative, integrated set of leadership skills more commonly associated with feminine traits, it became apparent that a focus on the leadership skills of female executives merits additional study, such as this.

### Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives?
2. To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the effectiveness of a female executive's behavior on the job?
3. To what extent was tangible impact in business areas measured as a result of participation in an executive coaching program by female executives?
4. To what extent did participation in an executive coaching program by a female executive result in the attainment of new skills, increased abilities or new knowledge?
5. To what extent did participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities?

### Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study was that the researcher's study specifically included only female executives who had received or participated in an executive coaching experience. Hence, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all persons who have received executive coaching. It is expected that while many male executives have received executive coaching in their professional careers, they were excluded from this particular study. The focus of this study was to gather data from female executives who received executive coaching as part of their leadership development.

Further, this study asked female executives to provide insight and feedback on their experiences with executive coaching, a specific leadership development modality.



This data relied on the self-perceptions of the participants to quantify the outcomes of the executive coaching program on their organizational performance, their behavior on the job, the measured impact in business areas, and the opportunity for further promotion. The inherent danger in relying solely on individuals' perceptions of a personal experience they underwent is that they may be unable to present a clear and objective accounting of the facts, thereby placing limits on the interpretation of the findings.

The results of this study may be further limited by the use of one single method for data collection, that of a survey questionnaire. Had other non-quantitative methodologies been utilized, such as interviews, focus groups, or observations, the resultant findings may have been improved.

#### Significance of the Study

The importance of this research study was compelling for the following reasons: as organizations continued the expansion of their operations on a global scale, their need for highly valued executive leadership far outstrips the present supply. Evidence exists to support the identification, development and promotion of women into the executive suite, as studies have found a correlation with the number of female executives in key executive positions, and significant financial improvements. A key significance of this study was to provide evidence that supports the organizational practice of developing high-potential female candidates into capable, competent senior executives, via well-constructed executive educational development efforts, such as executive coaching, which prepared these individuals to assume the most senior leadership positions of their organization.

Organizations invest in educational training for their senior executives in their quest to develop global leaders to remain competitive on a worldwide scale. A major

shortcoming of this type of executive educational development effort is the lack of comprehensive analysis as to whether the expected outcome of the leadership development effort was on individual performance, as compared to organizational performance. This research is critical, for as organizations begin to measure the results of these executive leadership development experiences, educators will gain a deeper understanding as to how to best design and structure these executive development programs, which result in quantifiable organizational results.

A further significant outcome of this research study was to provide evidence of the impact of executive coaching on organizational performance. This was achieved via the development of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* which quantified the impact that executive coaching had on the organizational performance of female executives. In addition, this tool served to provide evidence of the impact of executive coaching on their individual performance as well.

This study sought to lessen the existing gap in the literature by providing evidence of the efficacy of this specific leadership modality. To date, there have been too few empirical studies which provided evidence of the efficacy of executive coaching as a specific leadership development modality. This study increased the knowledge base of executive coaching for HR and Learning and Development professionals, as well as educators.

Lastly, an important outcome of this research study was that it sought to increase the organizational credibility of the HR and Learning and Development professionals who are chartered with the design, implementation and measurement of these leadership development programs. In this study, organizational credibility pertained to the

perception that one's leadership development programs are reliable and trustworthy, and that they produced a measureable impact on organizational performance.

To accomplish this, HRD professionals must speak the language of business; they should understand the organization's strategy and business model in order to know how to best measure the impact of leadership development programs (Spitzer, 2005). Further, improving one's ability to speak the economic language of ROI propels these HR professionals to being considered as strategic value-add business partners, gaining respect from one's peers, superiors and others. Results obtained from leadership development programs should seek to measure the elements most critical for business success. Learning effectiveness is measured by producing desired results, which means a measured improvement in organizational performance is obtained.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose and use in this research study, the following terms were operationalized by the subsequent definitions:

*Baby boomers*: individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Horrigan, 2004). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Executive Coaching*: A practical, goal-focused form of personal one-on-one learning for busy executives; it may be used to improve performance of executive behavior, enhance a career or prevent derailment, and work through organizational issues or change initiatives (Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck, 1999, p. 40). In this study, executive coaching is operationalized as the process of a one-on-one, individualized learning process used to impact organizational performance, and increase individual effectiveness.

*Human Resource Development (HRD)*: A process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance (Armstrong, 2006, p. 133). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Human Resource Management (HRM)*: A strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets - the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives (Armstrong, 2006, p. 3). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*High Potential Identification and Development*: A process by which an organization identifies and develops employees who are potentially able to move into leadership roles sometime in the future (Jerusalim & Haurisdorf, 2007, p. 934). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Human Capital*: Capital formation in people (Mincer, 1962, p. 50). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Human Capital Resources*: Any training, experience, judgment, intelligence, relationship, and insight of individual managers and workers in a firm (Barney, 1991, p. 101). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Learning Effectiveness Measurement (LEM)*: A learning measurement process developed to better align learning with business results. (Spitzer, 2005, p. 95). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Mentoring*: A one-on-one developmental relationship between a seasoned, high-ranking organizational member, and a new or less-experienced organizational member (Hegstad, 1999). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Organizational credibility*: The perception that one's leadership development programs are reliable and trustworthy, and produce a measureable impact on organizational performance. (Benavides, 2008). This definition is operationalized in this study.

*Return-on-investment (ROI)*: The monetary earnings (net benefits) minus the actual program cost (investment) (Phillips, 2007, p. 44). This definition is operationalized in this study.

### Summary

In Chapter I, a description of the research problem addressed by this study is presented. The purpose and underlying justification were offered, along with a summary of the conceptual framework for the study. The research questions were identified, around which the research methodology was organized. Lastly, a list of the operationalized terms used in the study was presented.

Chapter II presents a review of the related literature for the effectiveness of female leaders, an introduction to executive coaching, executive coaching models, the executive coaching process, qualifications of the executive coach, measuring the effectiveness of executive coaching, the impact of executive coaching on the performance of female executives, and the impact of executive coaching on organizational performance.

Chapter III presents the overarching research design for the study. Included in this chapter are the research methodology, the population and sample, the instrumentation, the pilot test and validity, and the data collection and analysis. Also presented is the conceptual framework which grounded the study.

The final chapters of the study present the resultant findings and provide an interpretation of these. Chapter IV presented the findings of the study. The corresponding findings for each of the five research questions are presented. Chapter V of the study presented the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for professional practice, in addition to recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this section was to review the related literature regarding executive coaching, executive coaching in relation to the promotion rates of female executives, and the outcomes of leadership development programs within organizations. First, an overview discussed the organizational changes, which led to the development and increased use of executive coaching as a leadership development modality in recent years. This section focused on the leadership skills which are typically affected as a result of an executive coaching experience. It also identified new leadership skills that are required by today's organizations. A definition of executive coaching, augmented by dissimilar operating models, followed. A study of the elements contained within the executive coaching process followed, which then led to a discussion of the formal preparation for the professional who provided the coaching to the executive.

Next, the discussion focused on the impact of executive coaching, from the perspective of the executive coachee, as well as the financial return of executive coaching to the organization. There are very few studies that offered empirical data on the efficacy of executive coaching, although there is much opportunity for further research. Finally, the discussion moved to the review of an empirical study, which was centered on the impact of executive coaching on female executives.

Senior executive leadership is critical and in short supply in corporate America. Several studies found that many of the Fortune 500 companies expect to lose up to 50% or more of their senior managers (identified as two ranks below the CEO) as these

individuals either retire, or leave to pursue other employment opportunities, including self employment (Anonymous, RHR International white paper 2005).

Formal leadership development programs exist in organizations with the stated purpose of identifying, developing and promoting these executives. These programs represent a large investment of organizational resources. Estimates range upwards of \$50 billion which organizations expend in leadership development annually (Lockwood, 2006).

Lockwood (2006) defined leadership development as “formal and informal training and professional development programs designed for all management and executive-level employees to assist in developing the required leadership skills and styles to deal with a variety of situations”. There are different forms of leadership development options, as evidenced by table 4.

Table 4: Types of Leadership Development Options

Assessment	Coaching	Learning	Experience
Psychometric assessment	Internal	Individualized development planning	Stretch assignments
Multi-rater feedback	External	High-profile learning events	Outside positions and projects
Competency assessment	Mentoring	Leaders developing leaders	Action learning
Assessment centers		Partnering with thought leaders Technology-based learning Business school affiliations Development of intact teams	

*Note.* From Lockwood, N.R. (2006). Leadership development: Optimizing human capital for business success. *HR Magazine*, 51, p. 5.



Leadership development makes business sense, as evidenced by recent studies. These findings have indicated that those organizations with a systemic process in place that actively identifies, promotes, and develops individuals with high potential, have produced a return of 22%, on average, to shareholders (Collins, 2001). One of the first steps an organization will undertake is to determine who will be chosen to receive these targeted leadership development experiences. Often, after a battery of interviews and formal assessments, individuals are identified as “high potentials”.

Organizations will typically institute a formal leadership development process to provide high potential employees with learning experiences, by which to broaden existing competencies and gain new ones. The development experiences may include “mentoring, stretch assignments, 360 degree feedback systems, on-the-job experiences, or developmental relationships which include exposure to senior executives such as at off-site leadership retreats, and executive coaching” (Collins, 2001).

Several studies cited by Day (2001) as well as Lockwood (2006) suggested that today, leadership learning and development occurs primarily on-the-job. Furthermore, the most effective leadership development programs are linked to the attainment of strategic business objectives, which leads to sustainable organizational growth (Lockwood, 2006). Jackson et al. (2003) echoed this conclusion as well; that is, leadership development “should be carried out within a strategic framework rather than as a separate and isolated process so as to deliver business results” (p. 186). This indicates that HR and Learning and Development professionals should be working together, first to understand the exact objectives the organization is striving toward, and

then to design and execute leadership development programs which keep this goal in mind.

An organization's employee population can provide a competitive advantage to the organization. Organizations, aware of the shortage of talented managers ready for development and promotion, have come to recognize the importance of developing leaders at all organizational levels, as well as the need for a broadening of perspective such that it can compete on a global basis (Collins, 2001).

Diversity in gender represents such a broadening of perspective. Evidence supports the identification, development and promotion of women into the executive suite as a sustainable competitive advantage, yet there are organizations which ignore this immediate pool of qualified executive candidates.

#### *The Effectiveness of Female Leaders*

Several studies have been conducted which quantify the effectiveness of female leaders. For example, Personnel Decisions International Corporation (an HR and management consulting firm in Minneapolis) conducted a study based on the 360-degree feedback method (Wells, 2001). In this type of study, the subject completes a self assessment and also receives feedback from their direct reports, their immediate supervisors and their peers. It was administered to a large group consisting of 58,000 managers.

The study found that women scored higher than men in 20 of 23 management areas. Women outscored men in the following executive competencies: seasonal judgment, visionary thinking, shaping strategy, driving execution, attracting and developing talent, empowering others, influencing and negotiating, leadership versatility,

building organization relationships, inspiring trust, fostering open dialogue, high-impact delivery, drive for stakeholder success, entrepreneurial risk taking, mature confidence, adaptability, career and self-direction, and leading continuous improvement.

Additionally, males received significantly higher ratings on only the following four competencies: financial acumen, global perspective, industry knowledge, and business situation versatility. Men and women ranked equally on one competency: cross-functional capability (Wells, 2001).

A study conducted by Management Research Group (an HR consulting and assessment firm in Portland, Maine) compared the management styles of male and female managers. There were 900 male and 900 female managers who participated in the study. This study contradicted the widely held view that men are more autocratic and women are more democratic at work. The findings of the study indicated that women managers were more results-oriented at work; whereas their male counterparts engaged in more business analysis and strategic planning. The study further demonstrated that bosses had rated men and women equally on making the best leader overall. However, subordinates and peers rated women slightly higher (Wells, 2001).

In another study, Copernicus (a marketing consulting and research firm in Auburndale, MA) administered a survey designed to compare the management styles of 293 marketing executives; 144 men and 179 women. The results indicated that 73 percent of the respondents perceived men as making decisions without input from others, whereas only 20 percent said the same about women. On the other hand, respondents believed female executives were more effective in building consensus when making decisions (84 percent of women to 60 percent of the men), more thoughtful in

their decision-making processes (90 percent of women versus 71 percent of men), and more likely to carefully examine many options before taking action (Wells, 2001).

The Management Research Group (an HR consulting and assessment firm in Portland, Maine) conducted a more recent study of gender differences in senior organizational leadership competency effectiveness. The study consisted of 86 women and 86 men who were statistically matched for management level, years of management experience, function, race and experience. The executives received feedback from their superiors, their peers, and their direct reports, as well as self-report data. The researchers collected data on 22 leadership dimensions and 20 leadership effectiveness measures from all groups (Kabacoff, 2004).

Findings were reported from the direct reports of the female executives, their peers and their managers. The direct reports group rated the female executives higher on the elements of excitement and production; higher ratings for male executives from their direct reports were on the elements of conservative and restraint. The peer group provided feedback rated the female executives as higher on the control element, and rated the males higher on the measure of restraint. The superiors group rated the female executives higher on the elements of feedback, control and dominant, while the male executives were found to have higher ratings on the elements of conservative and restraint (Kabacoff, 2004).

Much has been discussed in the leadership literature about the suspected relationship between transformational leadership and women. Bass describes transformational leaders as those who inspire followers and enable them to achieve an organization's goals (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders are effective at establishing

an awareness of the organization's goals and mission. It is their unique ability to create and communicate this knowledge, and acquire their followers' buy-in, which allows the followers to subsume their own individual goals, and concentrate their efforts on the achievement of the organizational goals, which results in the ultimate benefit to the entire organization. Jogulu & Wood (2006) find that the transformational leadership model "characterises a feminine model of leadership, built around cooperation, lower levels of control, collaboration, and collective problem solving and decision-making" (p. 244). In their study, Mandell & Pherwani (2003) found that females scored higher than males on the transformational leadership scale, which provided additional support for this view.

It is these same leadership qualities which today's global organizations need. Therefore, it is prudent to investigate the different leadership development modalities which promote the identification, development and promotion rates of female executives. In sum, the knowledge, skills and abilities that female executives bring to the management arena are the leadership capabilities which are required in this new management age.

As evidenced by the studies listed, there is immense value in identifying, developing and promoting female executives. This study sought to answer the question of how effective executive coaching is in developing and promoting female executives. The section below provided an introduction to the process that is known as executive coaching.

#### An Introduction to Executive Coaching

Organizations will typically institute the use of executive coaches for their senior executives for two primary reasons: one, in an effort to correct behavior which interferes

with the executive's responsibilities; and two, when an executive needs to enhance their professional development through personal growth (Luecke, 2003). Consider the example of an internal candidate, who lacks executive experience, tapped to fill a senior leadership role after the previous executive's resignation. Senior leaders, seeking to lessen the risk that the candidate will fail, will provide coaching to ensure the executive's rapid mastery of the job and ability to provide results quickly.

The practice of executive coaching has increased greatly in corporate America today. Alison Carter, the author of a study commissioned by the Institute for Employment Studies (Anonymous, 2002) posited that due to a number of organizational shifts, primarily via mergers, acquisitions and downsizing, has resulted in a measureable gap of critical managerial skills at the executive level.

These skills, according to Sherman and Freas (2004) are a different set of competencies required in organizations today. Included among these skills are the need for superior communication and interpersonal skills, necessary for influencing employees; an ability to be adaptive and flexible in the face of constant change; and a respect and acceptance for diversity, as the sphere of influence these senior executives are responsible for, is global. Examples of skills which may be impacted as a result of executive coaching include: developing the leadership competencies of high-potential individuals; or improving upon poor interpersonal skills; ensuring that newly promoted managers have the leadership skills they need to be successful quickly; or even ensuring that technical staff develop necessary managerial skills (Joo, 2005). In addition, Sherman and Freas (2004) stated that executive coaching can enhance teamwork, align individuals to collective goals, facilitate succession, and support organizational change.

These skills are often at the center of many executive coaching engagements. Frequently, executives tend to exist in isolation, where direct feedback is rarely provided to them about the impact of their individual leadership ability (Saporito, 1996). Specifically, through the use of feedback and the development of personal insight and awareness into one's behavior or performance, executive coaching leads to an improvement of the faulty behavior or performance, resulting in the obtainment of organizational objectives and the delivery of results. The primary focus of executive coaching is to improve performance or behavior. Executive coaching is a one-on-one individualized learning process which encompasses the use of feedback, self-awareness and self management (Jay, 2003).

It is difficult to pinpoint specifically when the practice of executive coaching first began due to its recent entry into the literature (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Witherspoon and White (1996) stated that the word *coach* first appeared in English in the 1500s.

(Coach) refers to a particular kind of carriage. Hence, the root meaning of the verb *to coach* is to convey a valued person from where one was to where one wants to be – a solid meaning for coaching executives today! (Witherspoon & White, 1996, p. 124).

Kilburg (1996) found that as consultants began gaining access to organizational leaders and providing consultative services marked the beginning of the practice of executive coaching. Tobias (1996) stated that the term *executive coach* gained prominence in the business arena in the late 1980s.

In his integrative review of executive coaching practice, Joo (2005) offered the various definitions of executive coaching found in the literature (p. 467). Sherman and

Freas (2004) found that most executive coaching stems from a number of disciplines, “including consulting, management, organization development, and psychology” (p. 85).

#### *Definition and Standards*

The field of executive coaching is relatively new. To date, there is no singular model upon which researchers and practitioners agree. The practice of executive coaching has far outpaced the differing theoretical offerings. Many different definitions have emerged as a result. Certain organizations, such as the International Coach Federation (ICF) have sprung up and have attempted to bring credibility and professionalism to the field. ICF is a global, nonprofit organization comprised of business and professional coaches; it has attempted to provide a professional code of standards, in addition to an accreditation process ([www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org)). Table 5 illustrates a historical perspective of how practitioners have attempted to define executive coaching through the years (Joo, 2005, p.467).



Table 5: Definitions and Purposes of Executive Coaching

Author(s)	Year	Definition and Purpose
Kilburg	1996	Executive coaching is a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods <i>to assist the client to achieve a mutually identified set of goals, to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction, and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization</i> within a formally defined coaching agreement (p. 142).
Peterson	1996	Coaching is <i>the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities</i> they need to develop themselves and become more effective (p. 78).
Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck	1999	Coaching is meant to be a <i>practical, goal-focused form of personal one-on-one learning</i> for busy executives and may be used <i>to improve performance of executive behavior, enhancing a career or prevent derailment, and work through organizational issues or change initiatives</i> (p. 40),
Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson	2001	Coaching is a <i>form of systematic feedback intervention</i> aimed at enhancing <i>professional skills, interpersonal awareness, and personal effectiveness,</i>
McCauley and Hezlett	2001	Executive coaching involves <i>a series of one-on-one interactions</i> between a manager or executive and an external coach in order to further <i>the professional development of the manager</i> (p. 321).
Orenstein	2002	Executive coaching is referred to as a <i>"one-on-one intervention with a senior manager for the purpose of improving or enhancing management skills"</i> (p. 356).
Bacon and Spear	2003	Coaching in business contexts can generally be defined as an informed dialogue whose purpose is <i>the facilitation of new skills, possibilities, and insights in the interest of individual learning and organizational advancement</i> (p. xvi).
International Coaching Federation (ICF)	2005	Professional coaching is <i>an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations.</i> Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life.

*Note.* Adapted from Joo, B-K. (2005) Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4, p. 467.

### *Executive Coaching Models*

Joo (2005) contended that there are two major opposing approaches to executive coaching: counseling versus consulting. They share similar characteristics such as

behavioral change, development of self awareness and learning, and both are performed by professionals who have created strong bonds with their clients. The clinical model, as defined by Barner and Higgins (2007) can be viewed as the counseling approach. Those practitioners who use the counseling approach have backgrounds in clinical or counseling psychology (Joo, 2005). The critical differences between the two approaches are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Comparison of Counseling Approach and Consulting Approach

	Counseling (Therapy) Approach	Counseling (Coaching) Approach
Primary purpose	Remedial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Helping those who are damaged or in crisis</li> <li>○ Self-awareness through self-reflection and wellness</li> </ul>	Developmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increasing capacity and reaching goals</li> <li>○ Result oriented, action based, and outwardly defined</li> </ul>
Background	Clinical and/or Counseling Psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on <i>past</i></li> <li>○ Knowledge about pathology is important in order to recognize danger signal</li> </ul>	Management, I/O Psychology, Human Resource Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on <i>present</i> and <i>future</i></li> <li>○ Having business savvy is important</li> </ul>
Relationship and activities	Traditional <i>expert-client</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Less defined, wandering process of uncovering and discovery</li> <li>○ Listening is important</li> </ul>	Flexible and Collaborative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More structured and task focused</li> <li>○ Involves concrete action plans</li> <li>○ Listening is not enough</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted from Joo, B-K. (2005) Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Developmental Review*, 4, p. 469.

Barner and Higgins (2007), however, suggested that there are four theory models that inform executive coaching practice. These are the clinical, behavioral, systems and the social constructionist models. An overview of the four models was presented next.

In the clinical model, the overarching question the coach seeks to answer is:

“What is revealed about the underlying structure of the client’s personality that sheds

light on his performance issues?” (Barner & Higgins, 2007, p. 150). The coach will use a variety of psychometric instruments to gain an understanding of the client’s overall personality, and the predominant beliefs that guide their actions. The goal in this model is to help the client gain personal insight into themselves as leaders and individuals. Much dissension exists among clinicians and executive coach practitioners of the clinical model, for the latter are not formally trained nor educated to appropriately address psychological problems which may arise during the course of the coaching engagement (Barner & Higgins, 2007).

The behavioral model guides clients into understanding the impact of their behavior on themselves and others. In this model, the coach asks: “What changes to behavior would help the client to perform more effectively on his/her job?” (Barner & Higgins, 2007, p. 151). The coach provides guidance on how to adapt their problematic behavior or develop new work abilities. Here the focus of the coaching is to change an identified behavior, and by doing so, improve the client’s job performance.

This view ties in nicely with the stated objective of executive coaching most noted in the media; that is, an executive’s performance in their work environment is greatly improved, and optimally, an increase in organizational results is realized. Barner and Higgins (2007) defined the goal of executive coaching as to improve an individual’s effectiveness at work in ways that are linked to the organization’s business strategy (p. 149).

Saporito’s (1996) view that development coaching must be tied to the realities of the business (p.96) is closely aligned to this goal. Again, the relationship between

leadership development programs and the alignment to business goals was reiterated here. These viewpoints are guided by the behavioral model of executive coaching.

In the systems model, the fundamental question that drives the coaching process is: “How can the client’s leadership issues be understood in terms of the organizational system?” (Barner & Higgins, 2007, p. 152). Within this model, the coach views the executive as an inherent part of the entire organization, and approaches their manager and other key organizational stakeholder to gain their support, and directly include them in the process.

Here, the coach works to surface the effective and ineffective social interactions the executive is involved in throughout the organization. This model is shaped by the belief that leadership changes are difficult to produce without ensuring that change occurs throughout the organization as well; it is an integrative, holistic approach.

The social constructionist model suggests that it is in how members of an organization direct their attention, and how they use language to describe their future, both organizational and personal, which acts as the catalyst for change. This model is closely related to that of appreciative inquiry. Here the coach is guided by the question: “What is the client’s story, and how does this differ from how the client has been storied by his organization?” (Barner & Higgins, 2007, p. 153).

In this model, the coach uses narrative to gather information about the client and key stakeholders; the narrative is an ever-evolving story based on ongoing interactions. Additionally, the coach assists the client in focusing on how their stories impact their organizational role as leaders.

### *The Executive Coaching Process*

Although a universal definition of the executive coaching process does not currently exist, in general, there is agreement among practitioners that the following elements are critical to the process: “relationship building, assessment, intervention, follow-up, and evaluation” (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001, p. 210). Additionally, Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson (2001) argue that there is general agreement regarding the use of assessment procedures and instruments, whose purpose was to collect data such that it could be presented back to the client. Included among these are the 360-degree feedback questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and psychological instruments.

360-degree feedback refers to the practice of the executive taking a self-assessment typically on leadership style and behavior. Other raters, such as the executive’s peers, immediate supervisors and direct reports, also assess the individual executive. As the assessment findings are analyzed, it is the gap between the executive’s self-assessment and the feedback from the other raters which provides the most powerful, and logical, point to address.

Further, there is consensus in the field that providing feedback is of critical importance, for it is through the receipt of this data that behavioral patterns are first brought to light, examined, and plans for development or improvement can be created (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Thach, 2002; Witherspoon and White, 1996). In addition, Thach (2002) provided several studies (Hagberg, 1996; Rosti and Shipper, 1998; Shipper and Dillard, 2000) which confirm that the use of 360 feedback is a best practice to “promote increased self-awareness of skill strengths and deficiencies in managers” (p. 206).

A five-step coaching process model, developed from Kilburg's (1996) definition of executive coaching includes: establish an intervention agreement, build a coaching relationship, create and maintain expectations of success, provide experiences of mastery and cognitive control, and evaluate and attribute coaching success and failure. This has evolved into a 17-dimension model, which is based on systems and psychodynamic theory (Kilburg, 2001). Saporito's (1996) business-linked executive development model offers an alternative viewpoint: defining the context, assessment of the individual, development planning and implementation.

Witherspoon and White (1996) present a model comprised of four distinct coaching roles: coaching for skills, performance, development, and the executive's individual agenda. No mention was made of the need to determine the return-on-investment of this leadership development program in any of these models, which appears to be a glaring oversight.

#### *Qualifications of the Coach*

The practice of executive coaching has advanced faster than empirical studies have informed the theory (Joo, 2005, p. 463). In truth, anyone can declare themselves an executive coach for there is no governing body outlining the requisite academic nor experiential qualifications for executive coaches today. The International Coach Federation (ICF) (Joo, 2005), a professional association, is attempting to change this, and offers itself as the industry leader, having developed an overarching definition of coaching, a set of ethical guidelines, and a certification program. It should be noted that this association encompasses all differing types of coaches, including executive coaching.

Judge and Cowell (1997) found that the formal education and preparation of executive coaches varies widely. In their study, nearly 90% had master's degrees in the areas of business or the social sciences; approximately 45% had doctoral degrees. Membership in professional associations is de rigueur; such as the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) or the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychologists (SIOP).

Wasylyshyn (2003) suggested that ideally, executive coaches should have both experience and knowledge in management and psychology. Additionally, some executive coaches were practicing psychologists, licensed in the state where they conducted their primary practice. At the time of the study, less than 40% of the coaches were female, 80% were between the ages of 35 and 55, and most worked for small companies or operated individually. Although there was a variety of approaches, most of the coaches developed some form of a 360-degree assessment to gain additional insight and background into the executive they worked with.

#### Measuring the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching

Senior HRD professionals struggle to determine how to measure the ROI of their training initiatives, including leadership development programs. This is a critical competency to master because senior executives, used to measuring the return of other organizational initiatives, have begun to ask for proof of 'bottom-line effectiveness' (Spitzer, 2005, p. 56). HRD professionals, who provide evidence as to how a specific leadership development program such as executive coaching impacted certain business areas, and subsequently, its organizational performance, will draw the attention of organizational stakeholders and earn their respect.

ROI is determined when training-intervention costs are compared to outcome benefits. The two most frequently used measures for deriving this value are the benefit-cost ratio and the ROI formula (Phillips & Stone, 2002, p. 26). The benefits-cost ratio is determined by dividing the training benefits by the training costs. The benefits equal the costs of a training-intervention program at a ratio of 1, which is usually expressed as 1:1.

The ROI formula, as developed by Phillips (Phillips & Stone, 2002, p. xv), uses net benefits divided by cost. Net benefits are training benefits minus training costs (Phillips & Stone, p. 28). The ROI value is related to the BCR by a factor of one. Companies which provide this service for organizations are starting to measure the results of executive coaching.

The 2005-2006 Leadership Forecast, a global benchmarking study, was conducted by Development Dimensions International (DDI), and collected data from more than 4,500 leaders (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006). The study gathered data from more than 900 organizations around the world. A key finding from this study stated that “most leaders with a coach or mentor (91%) find the experience provides moderate or great benefit for their careers” (p. 36).

A study by the Corporate Leadership Council on the effectiveness of executive coaching found that executive coaching improves business performance by enhancing employees’ communication and leadership skills (Corporate Executive Board, 2004). They cite specific examples in some of the largest American corporations, as indicated below.

At Dell Computer Corporation, a 90% satisfaction rate was attained from company executives who participated in the executive coaching. Moreover, there was a



greater propensity for promotion within their organization as well. At Kodak, it is believed that the coaching intervention resulted in double-digit increases in productivity, as well as decreases in waste-levels and overtime expenses. Finally, at Capital One, the company believes that the direct reports of executives who received executive coaching outperformed the direct reports of non-coached executives.

A study conducted by MetrixGlobal, LLC at Booz Allen found that executive coaching generated a return-on-investment of nearly 700% (Parker-Wilkins, 2006). Twenty-eight of the original forty-three respondents found that the business areas most impacted as a result of the executive coaching experience they underwent included: improved team work, team member satisfaction, increased retention, increased productivity, increased quality of consulting, accelerated promotions, increased client satisfaction, and increased diversity.

A Fortune 500 firm engaged MetrixGlobal, LLC to conduct an executive coaching engagement for a telecommunications firm. Thirty employees, identified as potential leaders and executives, completed a questionnaire which measured the impact of executive coaching in business areas. In this study, the overall return-on-investment resulted in a return of over 780%. The business areas impacted in this study included increases in productivity (60%), employee satisfaction (53%), customer satisfaction (53%), work output (30%), and work quality (40%) (Anderson, 2001).

A return-on-investment of 545% was realized in a study by McGovern et al. (2001). A total of sixty-six participants were included in this study; 34 of these participants were female at an organizational rank level of vice president or above. The researcher did not report on the outcomes segmented by gender. Tangible impact was

measured in the following business areas: productivity, quality, organizational strength, customer service, reduced complaints, own retention, cost reductions, bottom line profitability, top line revenue, reduced turnover, and other business.

The studies cited above should not be misconstrued as providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of executive coaching. Rather, they are more indicative of the perceptions of executives who have participated in executive coaching and what they perceive the impact and outcomes are from the coaching experience. Still, these are typical of the results that Human Resources Development professionals are seeing in practice at their organizations.

A study conducted by Turner (2006) identified the following five significant benefits of executive coaching as a leadership development modality:

1. Continuous one-on-one attention
2. Expanded thinking through dialogue with a curious outsider
3. Self-awareness, including blind spots
4. Personal accountability for development
5. Just-in-time learning

Weller and Weller's (2004) study on the impact of executive coaching provided evidence which builds an increased appreciation for soft skills. Thirty-two executives, at the director or vice president level, completed a questionnaire following the executive coaching they received. Specifically, the study's findings demonstrated increases in "building and mending relationships, composure, and participative management" (p. 21). Additionally, reductions were noted in other areas: less problems in interpersonal relationships, less difficulties building and leading teams, and less difficulty in changing

or adapting. No further data was provided as to the impact of executive coaching on organizational performance.

The study conducted by Olivero et al. (1997) presents one of the first empirically grounded studies that provide evidence for the efficacy of executive coaching. This study consisted of a sample size of 31 participants; no demographic data was provided on the gender make-up of the sample. The study was conducted in two phases: first, the participants received classroom-based training on management competencies such as goal setting and collaborative problem solving.

In the second phase, 8 of the original 31 participants received training to learn how to provide executive coaching to the remaining 23 study participants. In this study, the researchers reported a measured increase in unit productivity by 65.6 percent, as compared to an outcome of 44 percent with just training alone. The results following the executive coaching indicated an increase in knowledge of management competencies from 71% to 88%. Further, qualitative data from the study evidenced two clear themes: the coaching was beneficial to the participants individually, as well as beneficial to the organization.

The results from Thach's study (2002) illustrated an increase in leadership effectiveness on average of 55 percent and 60 percent, as evidenced by the 360 feedback ratings and the executive coaching. Organizational goals were achieved as well, namely, the stakeholder's perception of the effectiveness of leaders was increased, as well as the number of executives who were considered to be "ready now" for expanded leadership roles. The demographic data was not listed in the study, therefore there was no way to

identify the percentage of female executives who had benefited from executive coaching in this study.

Executive coaching was found to have a significant impact on changing leadership behavior in a study with more than 1,200 executives (Smither, et al., 2003). One important finding in this study was that those managers who worked with an executive coach were more likely to set *specific* goals, and to request ideas for development from their managers. This indicates the inherent value in the executive coaching process; namely, that as an executive coach provides feedback to the senior manager, it is the identification of specific goals that provide the direction for where the development, or improvement, can best be leveraged to increase performance, organizationally as well as individually.

Further, when an executive seeks their manager's suggestions for development, it signals an awareness for constructive feedback and an openness to self-improvement on the executive's part. This study did not provide detail on the gender composition of the group of senior managers who participated in the study.

#### *Executive Coaching Impact on Performance of Female Executives*

The compelling reason to explore the impact that executive coaching does, or does not, have on the organizational performance of female executives can be answered, in part, by the following definition of feminist research, offered by Bierema (2002):

“To summarize, the purpose of feminist research is to challenge the traditional assumptions and practices of research inquiry, to affirm women's value and contributions as women (not in comparison to men), to examine asymmetrical power relationships that marginalize and oppress women, to recognize gender as an essential category of analysis, to create awareness of how language

renders women invisible and unspoken issues perpetuate oppression, and finally, to advocate social action and change” (p. 254).

It is a fact that there continues to be a paucity of female executives in the executive suite today. As such, it makes sense to study the effects of a specific leadership development modality, such as executive coaching, to observe the measureable impact it has on the organizational performance of these female executives, such that Human Resource Development professionals can learn from these programs, and apply the new knowledge in the design of improved programs.

Yet, leadership development professionals continue to question the efficacy of executive coaching as a specific leadership development modality by which to develop managers, and future leaders, who possess the competencies their specific organizations find relevant and important. Very few empirical studies exist currently in the literature that quantify the impact, and measure the results, of this leadership development modality (Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson, 2001; Thach, 2002). To date, only one recent study (Starman, 2007) – a dissertation - exists that specifically measured the outcome of an executive coaching program on the performance of female executives.

Starman (2007) conducted a quantitative study in which 21 female executives participated. The respondents were employed in a variety of industrial sectors, including retail, finance, service, healthcare, insurance, non-profit, education, food/beverage, pharmaceutical and technology. A mix of organizational ranks was represented: managers, directors, presidents, vice presidents and two CEOs. The length of tenure in their current position at the time of the study ranged from less than one year to more than

ten. In addition, the researcher determined that they had each received a significant amount of executive coaching, i.e.: ten or more hours.

The researcher measured the responses to how executive coaching had impacted the executive's job performance. Included among the measures were the following areas: become a better manager, increase productivity, improve interpersonal communication, become a better leader, become more goal oriented, improved professional relationships, and improved job performance. Increases were noted by the respondents in the following areas: interpersonal communications (90%), professional relationships (81%), and productivity (76%) (Starman, 2007, p. 80). Furthermore, 90% believed that the executive coaching intervention had improved their job performance.

Ballinger's (2000) study consisted of a group of forty-nine individuals, of which 21 were female executives, identified as High Performers. The results found that the female executives rated most of the coaching factors higher than men, including level of motivation, and achievement of objectives.

Moreover, women valued more of the coaching factors, including such elements such as encouragement from the coach, behavior modeled by the coach, new skills learned in the coaching, personal effort and drive, new knowledge/insights from coaching, change to try/practice new behaviors and support from coworkers. The value of coaching to performance in current jobs was rated as significantly higher in this study.

Overall, 33% of all respondents stated that the value of coaching to their career in their current organization, indicating their promotability, was greatly valued. No further information was available to discern the impact of the coaching on the female executives, nor the impact executive coaching had on their performance.

### *Executive Coaching Impact on Organizational Performance*

The American Management Association (AMA) (2008), a management training and professional development services firm, recently commissioned a study on the state of the art of coaching. In conjunction with the Institute for Corporate Productivity, the study reviewed how organizations have employed the discipline to date, as well as what trends have begun to evolve for the future.

The survey was global in scope, with more than 800 participants from North America, and 176 international respondents. Forty-five percent of the North American respondents were primarily HR managers, with a smaller percentage of respondents coming from Operations. In the international data set, the majority of respondents were General Management directors (26%), with a smaller subset of respondents from HR (21%).

Respondents in the AMA/Institute for Corporate Productivity survey (2008) used coaching to increase individual performance or productivity (79%); to address leadership development or aid in succession planning (63%); or to increase individual worker skill levels (60%). This finding is echoed in the 2008 Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey, where respondents indicated the reported use of coaching as a leadership development tool increased from 43% to 50%. (Sherpa, 2008).

Approximately 56% of the respondents in the AMA/Institute for Corporate Productivity survey (2008) reported that their organizations used coaching either frequently or a great deal of the time in order to improve organizational performance. Feldman and Lankau (2005) offer one possible explanation which attempts to make sense of the apparent principal importance of individual performance versus organizational

performance as the foci of executive coaching in organizations. They suggest that in order for organizational performance to be impacted to a degree where measurement can be obtained, a ‘coaching culture’ must exist. This is operationalized as a culture where a large number of employees have received coaching, and the executive support for it is obvious and apparent.

Additionally, 25% of the respondents to the AMA/ Institute for Corporate Productivity survey (2008) reported their ability to measure the bottom-line impact of executive coaching on the business correlated with a successful coaching program. Furthermore, a significant correlation with market performance was also reported by this group of respondents.

#### Summary

In summary, the field of executive coaching is still relatively new; the empirical data which provides evidence of the efficacy of this specific leadership modality with specific returns to both the organization and the individual, remains to be seen. Yet, HRD professionals are grappling with the ever-increasing gap of competent candidates with the requisite leadership skills to lead their organizations into the future.

Female executives have gained the requisite experience, have the education, and are ready to be identified, promoted and developed for the senior-most leadership roles in these organizations. This study sought to provide empirical evidence regarding the outcome of an executive coaching program on the organizational performance of female executives.

The next section, Methodology, provided a detailed accounting of the research process, the rationale for choices made with respect to the research design, sampling



methodology, the population selected, and instrumentation – all of the elements necessary which would serve future researchers in duplicating this study. In addition to those elements previously listed, the following elements were addressed: the need for a pilot test and validity, the way data was collected, and the procedures for data analysis. The chapter begins by restating the purpose of the study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of an executive coaching program, as a specific leadership development modality, on the organizational performance of female executives, to determine if the new knowledge, skills and abilities learned led to their further promotability. The rationale for the specific focus on the development of female executives is twofold as well: firstly, research is presented which evidences that a singular focus on developing females leads to improvements in organizational performance as measured in financial outcomes.

Secondly, there exists a large body of work in the leadership arena which suggests that increasingly, the types of skills most needed by today's global organizations are the skills most closely associated as those which women typically possess. Many studies in the literature have focused on mentoring, a specific leadership development modality, its' effectiveness of mentoring, and its impact on the career development of women. Much has been written about this topic.

This begs a new question, however, as to what *new* leadership development modalities are being developed and implemented which focus on the development and promotion of women into these senior executive positions. This study sought to fill the leadership gap by providing a two-pronged solution: one, a focus on the leadership development of women through the specific use of executive coaching, and measuring the impact of this leadership development modality on their organizational performance.

## Research Design

This research was a mixed-methods study. The researcher created a cross-sectional survey design for this study. In a cross-sectional survey design, data is collected at one point in time (Creswell, 2005). The data collected provides a snapshot of a particular group at a specific point in time. In this study, the researcher arrived after the female executives had received or participated in an executive coaching experience. The independent variable in this study is the executive coaching as a leadership development methodology. The dependent variable in this study was the outcome of the executive coaching, at two levels: organizational and individual performance.

Swanson and Holton (2001) suggest in the Results Assessment model that there are two categories for the two outcome levels of organization and individual performance. Organizational performance is characterized as a system or financial outcome. These outputs are related to the organization's mission in the form of products or services provided. Products or services which have value to the customer are an example of organizational performance; they are related to the core mission of the organization. The output of these goods and services are easily converted to financial measures. In this study, organizational performance was operationalized to include impact in business areas, measured improvement in organizational performance, and factors that sustain this improvement within organizations. Elements which prevented the sustainment of this improvement were measured.

The individual level of performance is measured in human behaviors that have effective results, and optimize organizational efficiency (Swanson & Holton, 2001), which culminates in expertise-level knowledge. Learning outcomes will typically occur

at the individual level, yet can be measured at the group level (Rummler & Brache, 1995). Individual performance was operationalized as behavior on the job, learning new knowledge and new skills learned or improved.

The researcher controlled for gender as a variable, by including only female executives who had received executive coaching as a leadership development methodology. The researcher explored the relationship between the outcomes of the executive coaching experience, and the resultant impact on organizational performance, business areas impacted as well as impact on the job behavior of the female executives who participated in the executive coaching program.

The researcher further explored what new skills, increased abilities or new knowledge was gained by the female executives who participated in an executive coaching program. Finally, the researcher explored to what extent did participation by female executives in an executive coaching program result in opportunities for promotion.

Female executives had already participated in an executive coaching program prior to their involvement in this study. This type of leadership development experience is typically offered to senior managers, directors or vice presidents in large organizations. The executive coach paired with the female executives was either a female or a male executive coach. An executive coaching engagement would last on average six months, up to a possible 18 months.

#### Population and Sample

Female executives were the target population selected for this study. Female executives were defined as individuals with titles such as CEOs, Partners, Presidents,

Vice Presidents, Directors, and Managers. The sample was comprised of female executives who have received executive coaching as a leadership development modality.

The following sampling criteria were identified for use in this study:

1. All members of the sample were female executives.
2. All members had directly participated in an executive coaching experience in their respective organizations.
3. All members of the sample participating in the research study were interested in contributing to what is known about the outcome and benefits of participating in an executive coaching program. (Adapted from Starman, J., 2007).

The sampling methodology used was the convenience sampling method, in which participants were selected because of their immediate availability and willingness to participate (Creswell, 2003). A potential area for bias in the utilization of this methodology limited its generalizability to the larger population. The most significant impact of this sampling method was that every person who may have received executive coaching did not have an equal chance of participating in the study, which produced limitations on the conclusions of the study. Hence, the findings of the study would not be generalizable to the entire population of individuals who had received executive coaching, since males were excluded from the study.

Several professional individuals known to the researcher were contacted and invited to participate in the study. In addition, several small to large sized organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area were asked to participate. Included among the targeted organizations were: Sun Microsystems, Adobe, Applied Materials, Bechtel, Safeway, Oracle, Visa, Genentech, and Cisco. These organizations were targeted because they are large organizations and are known to have executive coaching programs in place.

A further reason for the targeting of these organizations is that their corporate headquarters are located in the same geographic area as the researcher, which reduced the need for travel out of state by the researcher to conduct the study. This targeted outreach did not result in a group of sample participants.

A second outreach effort, aimed at several professional women's associations, was conducted to request the participation of their members in the study. The researcher conducted an online search to identify professional women's associations. Only professional networks that were comprised of individuals who fit the criteria were contacted. Appendix A contains the names of the professional women's associations contacted by the researcher.

#### Instrumentation

The *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (Appendix A) was created by the researcher as a tool to collect the data required for this study. The researcher reviewed the instrument created by Carol Gegner in 1997 for her master's thesis, *The Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (C. Gegner, personal communication, Nov. 20, 1997). The researcher reviewed the design of the survey Starman designed (2007) for her dissertation as well. Following this review, the researcher determined that the survey items used by Gegner and Starman were not an appropriate fit for inclusion in the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (Appendix A). However, several items from Starman's dissertation were adapted by the researcher (Starman, 2007).

The *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* grouped the items into subsections (subscales), which provided the data to answer the research questions. The distinctive names for each of the subscales are: *Organizational Performance (OP)*; *Job Behavior*

(JB); *Business Impact* (BI) and *Learnings* (LRN) subscales. The items measured the impact of executive coaching on organizational performance; the outcomes of executive coaching on the job behavior of female executives; the business areas impacted as a result of executive coaching; identified the new knowledge, skills or increased abilities learned as a result of participation in an executive coaching experience, and measured to what extent did participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities. The final section gathered demographic information.

The *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* was comprised of five sections and contained 59 items, excluding the sixth demographic section. It was designed this way such that each section organized the collection of data to a corresponding research question, which provided the framework for this study. Table 7 provided a view of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* containing the item numbers and the corresponding research question.

Table 7: Research Questions with Corresponding Item Numbers from the Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey

Section	Items	Research Question No.
Section I. Introduction	1	
Section II. Organizational Performance Subscale	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18,19	Q1: The impact of executive coaching on the organizational performance of female executives
Section II.	15	Q5: Does executive coaching lead to promotability?
Section III. Job Behavior Subscale	20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31	Q2: The impact of executive coaching on their behavior on the job
Section IV. Business Impact Subscale	32,33,34,35	Q3: The impact of executive coaching in business areas
Section V. Learnings Subscale	36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58, 59	Q4: New skills, abilities or new knowledge attained as a result of participating in executive coaching
Section VI. Demographics	60,61 62 63,64,65,66,67,68,69	

Item 1, an introduction, comprised the first part of the survey, Section I. It contained the stated purpose of the study, as well as a statement that the data collected by the researcher would be kept confidential and anonymous. The participants were further advised that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time, and that their participation was freely given.



The items in Section II, the Outcomes of Executive Coaching on Organizational Performance, were categorized into the *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale. This subscale provided the data to answer the question on the impact executive coaching has on the organizational performance of the female executive. The *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale contained 17 items that measured organizational performance using a five-item Likert-like scale to describe the frequency of a behavior. Each item had a 5-point response dimension which spanned from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The five available responses for each item were: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The score ratings ranged from 1 to 5. The item scores were computed as Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; and Strongly Agree = 5. The respondents were asked to indicate the most appropriate response for each item. The information was operationalized as quantitative data. The items contained within the *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale are: Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 19. Item 15 was intentionally left out of the group as it was the single item which provided the data to answer the fifth research question.

In this subscale, items 5, 8, and 12 were reverse-coded to reduce any response bias. This means that the negatively worded items are recoded so that all responses with the value of 5 represented positive responses; all responses with the value of 1 represented negative responses. The recoding appeared thusly: 5=1, 4=2, 3 remained the same, 2=4, and 1=5. The reverse coded items were used in the reliability analysis and in deriving scale means and SDs.

The items in Section III, the Outcomes of Executive Coaching on Job Behavior, were categorized into the *Job Behavior* (JB) subscale. This subscale measured the individual executive's perceptions of any changes in their individual effectiveness. Data collected from this section measured the impact of the executive coaching experience on their job behavior. These responses provided the data to measure what changes were wrought in the female executive's overall leadership effectiveness as a result of her participation in the executive coaching program.

The *Job Behavior* (JB) subscale contained 12 items which measured the impact of executive coaching on the job behavior of the female executives. Similar to the *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale, the items in this subscale used a five-item Likert-like scale to describe the frequency of a behavior. The five available responses for each item were identical to those listed for the *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale, and were computed as Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; and Strongly Agree = 5. The respondents were asked to indicate the most appropriate response for each item. The information was operationalized as quantitative data.

The items contained within the *Job Behavior* (JB) subscale were: Items 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31. In this subscale, items 23, 25 and 28 were reverse-coded to reduce any response bias. This means that the negatively worded items are recoded so that all responses with the value of 5 represented positive responses, and all responses with the value of 1 represented negative responses. The recoding appeared like this: 5=1, 4=2, 3 remained the same, 2=4, and 1=5. The reverse coded items were used in the reliability analysis and in deriving scale means and SDs.

The items in Section IV, Business Areas Impacted as a Result of Executive Coaching, were categorized as the *Business Impact* (BI) subscale. This subscale collected the data required to answer the third research question. It is hypothesized that as a result of participation in an executive coaching program, a potential outcome was that a positive impact would be measured in specific business areas. These responses provided the data to quantify these results. The *Business Impact* (BI) subscale contained 4 items which measured the impact in business areas as a result of the female executive's participation in executive coaching. The items contained within the *Business Impact* (BI) subscale were: Items 32, 33, 34 and 35.

The first two items asked the respondents to check as many responses as appropriate to answer the statement. A total of 20 singular measures of tangible business impacts were contained in Item 32. A total of 12 singular measures of tangible business impact areas were contained in Item 33. Item 34 contained dollar values, which ranged from \$0 to over \$1,000,000. A total of 10 singular dollar value ranges comprised this item. Item 35 was an open-ended item and was operationalized as qualitative data. As a result of the various singular elements which comprised the measurement in business areas, reverse coding was not included as a design element in this subscale.

The items in Section V, Things I Learned from Executive Coaching, were categorized into the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale. This subscale provided the data to the fourth research question: to what extent did participation in an executive coaching program by a female executive result in the attainment of new skills, increased abilities or new knowledge. This section requested respondents to list any other outcomes from the

executive coaching program not previously noted. This section contained two open-ended items on the instrument. There was a total of 24 items in this section.

The *Learnings* (LRN) subscale contained 20 items which measured the new skills, knowledge or increased abilities which resulted as an outcome of the female executive's participation in executive coaching. Similar to the *Organizational Performance* (OP) and *Job Behaviors* (JB) subscales, the items used a five-item Likert-like scale to describe the frequency of a behavior. The five available responses for each item were identical to those listed for the *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale and *Job Behaviors* (JB) subscales, and were computed as Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; and Strongly Agree = 5. The respondents were asked to indicate the most appropriate response for each item. The information was operationalized as quantitative data. The items contained within the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale were: Item 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, and 55.

In addition, Items 56 and 57 in the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale asked the respondents to check as many responses as appropriate to answer the statement. A total of 14 singular measures of newly acquired behaviors were contained in each item. Items 58 and 59 in the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale were open-ended items and were operationalized as qualitative data.

Item 15 provided the data to answer research question five. Although located within the section which contained the *Organizational Performance* subscale, the responses of this item were not included in the data analysis performed for the subscale. A single item, 'After participating in executive coaching, I expect I will receive a promotion shortly based on the performance of my business unit' provided the data to

answer the fifth research question: to what extent did participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities.

It used a five-item Likert-like scale to describe the frequency of a behavior. The five available responses for the item were computed as Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; and Strongly Agree = 5. The respondents were asked to indicate the most appropriate response for each item. The information was operationalized as quantitative data.

Section VI was the demographic section. Demographic data collected included an organization's industry sector, the participant's current organizational rank level, length of tenure in current position, the reasons for participating in the executive coaching experience, the number of coaching hours received, the gender of the executive coach, and the age, educational level, and ethnicity of the sample participants. There were 10 questions in this section. The last question asked the respondents to provide general comments about the research study or the survey. This question offered the respondents the final opportunity to reflect upon their experience with executive coaching, the outcomes of that experience on their organizational performance, in addition to their individual effectiveness.

#### Pilot Test

The researcher employed the use of a pilot test to identify any potential issues with the design of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*, the instrument used in this research study. A pilot test was conducted to determine that the participants in the sample understood the questions and were able to complete the survey (Creswell, 2005). The pilot test warranted that the researcher had designed a reliable survey. The focus of

the pilot test was to ensure the clarity of survey items and the overall format of the survey (Fink, 2006). The pilot test addressed possible concerns such as unclear language, difficult to understand survey directions, or if the pilot participants experienced any connectivity issues with the website hosting the online survey.

To minimize the potential risk to subjects providing responses to the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (Appendix A), the researcher used a blind copy format when emails were sent to individuals requesting their participation. Additionally, so that the confidentiality of their responses was protected, the researcher maintained the data, including records, email addresses, contact information, etc. in a locked file cabinet. The researcher was the only person with access to the cabinet. This procedure was in accordance with the Institutional Review Board's requirements at the University of San Francisco (Appendix B).

Three female executives who had participated in executive coaching agreed to participate in the pilot test. These individuals fit the stated criteria of self-identifying as executives, had directly participated in an executive coaching program, and wanted to contribute to what is known about the outcomes of an executive coaching program. They were excluded from the final sample in the research study; their participation was limited strictly to the pilot of the instrument.

The pilot test participants were emailed a link to the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* by the researcher. Specific questions were included at the end of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* to capture feedback by the participants to ensure the reliability of the instrument. This information included what questions should be deleted, what additional questions ought to be included, were the directions clear and

easy to understand, and the average length of time to complete the survey. The feedback from the pilot participants resulted in the revision of several items. Based upon the feedback of these participants, revisions were made to the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* and the final version was readied for distribution.

### Validity

The primary purpose for conducting a validity panel is to ensure content validity; that is, that the items which comprise the instrument truly measure what the researcher intended. The researcher convened a Validity Panel to test the content validity of the instrument. Appendix C lists the job titles for the individuals who comprised the Validity Panel. This means that the instrument was reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts (SMEs) with expertise in an aspect of the subject which is the focus of the study. Included in this group of subject matter experts are psychologists, various executive coaches, a statistician, and several individuals who have designed, developed and implemented leadership development programs.

Prior to their review of the instrument, the SMEs answered a set of questions which provided evidence of their unique qualifications to review the instrument. The qualifying questions are included in the Validity Panel Grid (Appendix D). The 'yes' responses for each SME were indicated with an X under the column with their initials; the more X's in the Validity Panel Grid (Appendix D) indicated a stronger base of evaluation.

## Data Collection

The instrument used in the collection of data for this research study is the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (Appendix A). The data collected allowed the researcher to calculate any perceived differences in organizational performance, and individual effectiveness, of the female executives as a result of participation in an executive coaching program.

The administration of a web-based survey was the primary method used for collecting data from the respondents. Research was conducted to analyze which survey design company would be utilized in the design of this online survey. An online survey was designed and developed for the administration of the survey. Through the use of the host site, SurveyMonkey.com, on the Internet, respondents were able to conveniently access the survey 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, which ensured on-demand access to the survey by the participants.

The survey administered to the individuals contained a criteria list for participation at the beginning of the survey, which they were asked to complete in order to continue to the online questionnaire. Survey responses from the participants were captured using interval scales.

The researcher contacted the highest-ranking senior executives (either CEOs or Executive Directors) of professional women's associations via an email appealing for their participation in this research study (Appendix E), and followed up with a phone call within one week. The email contained an overview of the study's purpose, as well as the survey link.



In the email appeal, the researcher requested that the professional associations either: 1) publish the link to the survey directly on their website, allowing individuals who met the criteria direct access to the study; 2) email the survey link to members informing them about the survey and invite them to participate; or 3) forward the overview and survey link to their personal network and invite their colleagues to participate.

In addition to the professional women's associations that were contacted for participation in this study, the researcher connected with other related groups via Linked In, an online professional networking service ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)). Through LinkedIn's Groups Directory service, the researcher found communities of professionals who shared a common interest or affiliation. *ASTD National, Executive Suite, Executive Women's Group, HR World Expert Group, Human Resource Management, Linked 2 Leadership, LinkedHR, Society for Human Resource Management, The Human Resource Planning Society, University of San Francisco Alumni Association, University of San Francisco – Doctoral Programs, Women 2.0, and Worldwide Management Consultants* were the groups the researcher contacted, emailing the appeal (Appendix F).

The researcher sent 289 emails, either to initiate initial contact with the identified groups, or to correspond with the Executive Directors, CEOs, and individuals who requested further information about the study. As a result of posting the appeal via Linked In, it is likely that more than 185,000 individuals worldwide received the email from this effort alone.

Further, the researcher contacted several independent executive coaches known to her individually, or to whom she had been personally referred. The same contact process

was repeated. In addition, the researcher contacted the Executive Director of the International Coach Federation ([www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org)), a non-profit membership organization which provides certification for executive coaches, to appeal to their members for participation in this research study.

This targeted approach resulted in a sample of participants who met the stated criteria sufficient for inclusion in the study. If a total of more than 30 participants were willing and available to be studied, then the researcher would be able to generalize the findings of this study to a larger population.

The researcher held the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* open for a period of three weeks. During this time, there were no incidences reported that individuals could not access the survey, or that they had had problems while posting their responses.

#### Data Analysis

The independent variable in this study was executive coaching, a type of leadership development experience; the dependent variable was the outcome. Outcomes were measured at two levels: an organizational performance result and an individual performance result. Performance level results included mission-related outputs in the form of goods and services, having value to the customer, that are related to the core organizational, work, process, and group or individual contributor to the organization (Holton, 1999). The *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

A reliability analysis was computed using Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of internal consistency, on the following subscales of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness*

*Survey: Organizational Performance (OP), Job Behavior (JB), and Learnings (LRN).*

The purpose of conducting Cronbach's alpha is to assess the item consistency to show that the scale consistently measures a common construct. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, were provided for the *Business Impact (BI)* subscale. The mean, the statistical average of the scores, determined the measure of central tendency; and the standard deviation measured the amount of variability among the raw scores.

Research question 1, 'To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives?' was addressed by the items contained within the *Organizational Performance (OP)* subscale of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*. These items were 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

Research question 2, 'To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the effectiveness of a female executive's behavior on the job?' was addressed by the items contained within the *Job Behavior (JB)* subscale of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*. The items contained within the *Job Behavior (JB)* subscale were: Items 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31.

Research question 3, 'To what extent was tangible impact in business areas measured as a result of participation in an executive coaching program by female executives?' was addressed by the items contained within the *Business Impact (BI)* subscale of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*. The items contained within the *Business Impact (BI)* subscale were: Items 32, 33, 34 and 35.

Research question 4, 'To what extent did participation in an executive coaching program by a female executive result in the attainment of new skills, increased abilities or

new knowledge?’ was addressed by the items contained within the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*. The items contained within the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale were: Item 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 and 59.

Research question 5, ‘To what extent did participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities?’ was addressed by item 15 in the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*. This was the sole research question which was answered by a single item.

In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the findings of this research study. An introduction which contained the research questions was presented first. This was followed by a profile of the participants, which included demographic data. The data for each of the five research questions followed.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the efficacy of a specific leadership development modality, executive coaching, on the organizational performance of female executives, to determine if the new knowledge, skills and abilities learned led to their further promotability. The researcher designed the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* as the tool for data collection. This research study specifically sought to understand to what extent did the outcomes of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives; secondly, how participation in executive coaching impacted the effectiveness of female executives' behavior on the job.

A third question asked which specific business areas were impacted as a result of participation in executive coaching; the fourth question sought to identify what new skills, abilities or increased knowledge were attained as a result of participation in an executive coaching program by female executives. Finally, attention was focused in exploring to what extent did participation by female executives in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities.

#### Profile of Participants

The sample of respondents consisted solely of female executives who had received executive coaching. The response to the web-based survey yielded an initial return of 83 respondents; however, only 28 participants submitted completed questionnaires. A frequency distribution and descriptive analyses were conducted on the

participants' industry sectors, organizational rank, tenure in current position, age, ethnicity, and level of education.

*Industry sector.* A total of 28 responses were valid. Four industrial sectors, financial, retail, service and technology, each had three respondents, representing 10.7% from the overall pool of respondents. Six industrial sectors had two respondents each: education, entertainment, food/beverage, health care, industrial/farm equipment, and insurance. This represented 7.1% each of the total respondents. Four of the industrial sectors had one respondent each: aerospace, agriculture, government, and pharmaceutical, each representing 3.6% of the total respondents. Thirty-three percent (7) of the 21 industrial sectors listed did not have any respondents: automobile, chemical, forest/paper, military, non-profit, petroleum refining, and wholesaler. Table 8 provides this data in tabular form.

Table 8: Industry Sector (N = 28)

Industry Sector	<i>f</i>	%
Financial	3	10.7
Retail	3	10.7
Service	3	10.7
Technology	3	10.7
Education	2	7.1
Entertainment	2	7.1
Food/Beverage	2	7.1
Health Care	2	7.1
Industrial/Farm Equipment	2	7.1
Insurance	2	7.1
Aerospace	1	3.6
Agriculture	1	3.6
Government	1	3.6
Pharmaceutical	1	3.6
Automobile	0	0.0
Chemical	0	0.0
Forest/Paper	0	0.0
Military	0	0.0
Non-profit	0	0.0
Petroleum Refining	0	0.0
Wholesaler	0	0.0

*Note: f = frequency. (Adapted from Starman, 2007).*

*Organizational rank.* A total of 26 responses were valid. The largest percentage of respondents (38.5%) was Vice-Presidents. Nearly thirty-five (34.6%) percent of the respondents were Directors. Four of the respondents were Managers, representing 15.4% of the total respondents. Three categories – Partner, President and CEO – had one respondent, representing 3.8% each from the total number of respondents. Table 9 presents this data.

Table 9: Organizational Rank (N = 26)

Organizational Rank	<i>f</i>	%
Vice President	10	38.5
Director	9	34.6
Manager	4	15.4
Partner	1	3.8
President	1	3.8
CEO	1	3.8

*Note: f = frequency (Adapted from Starman, 2007).*

*Tenure in current position.* Nearly half (48.1%) of the total pool of respondents had been in their current position for between 2 – 4 years. Two categories each presented 18.5% of the total respondents: those with less than one year in their current position, and those with between 5 – 7 years in their current position. A total of two respondents each presented in two categories: those with between 8 – 10 years in their current position, and those with over 10 years in their current position. Each category presented 7.4% of the total respondents.

Table 10: Tenure in Current Position (N = 27)

Tenure	<i>f</i>	%
2 - 4 years	13	48.1
Less than 1 year	5	18.5
5 - 7 years	5	18.5
8 - 10 years	2	7.4
Over 10 years	2	7.4

*Note: f = frequency (Adapted from Starman, 2007).*

*Age.* A total of 28 responses were valid. The respondents ranged in age from 35 to over 60 years. The largest percentage of respondents (28.6%) were younger than 50.



The median of the survey participants fell between the ages of 45 - 49. These results are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Age (N = 28)

Age	<i>f</i>	%
45 - 49 years	8	28.6
35 - 39 years	7	25.0
40 - 44 years	6	21.4
50 - 54 years	5	17.9
55 - 59 years	1	3.6
Over 60 years	1	3.6
20 - 24 years	0	0.0
25 - 29 years	0	0.0
30 - 34 years	0	0.0

*Note: f = frequency*

*Ethnicity.* A total of 26 responses were valid. Over 90% (92.3%) of the respondents to the survey were White. In two categories, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino, there was one respondent each, which presented 3.8% each of the total respondents.

*Education.* A total of 28 responses were valid. Over half (53.6%) of the respondents had a Masters' Degree; 21.4% of the respondents had a 4-year college degree, 14.3% of the respondents had a Doctorate; 7.1% of the respondents had a professional degree, and 3.6% had a graduate degree. One category, comprised of individuals with an AA degree, had zero respondents.

Table 12: Education (N = 28)

Education	<i>f</i>	%
Masters' Degree	15	53.6
4-year College Degree	6	21.4
Doctorate	4	14.3
Professional Degree	2	7.1
Graduate Degree	1	3.6
AA Degree	0	0

*Note: f = frequency (Adapted from Starman, 2007).*

Other demographic data was collected. A frequency distribution and descriptive analyses were conducted on the participants' reasons for participating in executive coaching, the number of executive coaching hours received, and the gender of the executive coach.

*Reasons for participation in executive coaching.* A total of 28 responses were valid. The participants were asked to choose all the responses that were applicable as to why they decided to participate in executive coaching. Nearly one third (32.1%) of the respondents indicated that leadership skill improvement was the number one reason they participated in executive coaching. The findings are summarized in table 13.

Table 13: Reasons for Participation in Executive Coaching (N = 28)

Reasons	<i>F</i>	%
Leadership Skill Improvement	9	32.1
Career Development	6	21.4
Personal Growth	5	17.9
Work/Life Balance	3	10.7
Other	3	10.7
Managerial Skill Improvement	1	3.6
Interpersonal Skill Improvement	1	3.6
Organizational Change	0	0.0
Succession Planning	0	0.0

*Note: f = frequency (Adapted from Starman, 2007).*

*Coaching hours received.* A total of 27 responses were valid. Forty-one percent (40.7%) of the respondents received between 11 – 20 hours of executive coaching. Eighteen and a half percent of the respondents received between 40-49 hours of executive coaching. Two categories, those that received 21 – 29 hours, and those who received over 50 hours of executive coaching, garnered nearly 15% each (14.8%) of the respondents to this item. Seven percent (7.4%) of the respondents received between 30 – 39 hours of executive coaching, and one percent (3.7%) of the respondents received less than 10 hours of executive coaching in this study.

Table 14: Hours of Coaching Received (N = 27)

Hours	<i>f</i>	%
11 - 20 hours	11	40.7
40 - 49 hours	5	18.5
21 - 29 hours	4	14.8
Over 50 hours	4	14.8
30 - 39 hours	2	7.4
Less than 10 hours	1	3.7

*Note: f = frequency (Adapted from Starman, 2007).*

*Gender of the coach.* A total of 27 responses were valid. Nearly 70% (67.9%) of the coaches who provided the executive coaching were female; the remaining coaches (32.1%) were male.

#### Description of Variables

The independent variable in this study was executive coaching, a specific leadership developmental modality. The dependent variable in this study was the outcome of the executive coaching, at two levels: organizational and individual performance.

The researcher created the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (Appendix A) as the tool to collect the data required for this study. The *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* grouped the items into subsections (subscales), which provided the data to answer the research questions. The distinctive names for each of the subscales are: *Organizational Performance (OP)*; *Job Behavior (JB)*; *Business Impact (BI)* and *Learnings (LRN)* subscales.

Item 1 was the sole item which comprised Section I of the survey. Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18 and 19 comprised the *Organizational Performance (OP)* subscale. In this subscale, items 5, 8, and 12 were reverse-coded to reduce any response bias. Item 15 contained the sole item which provided the data to answer the fifth research question. (See Table 7 for the survey items organized by research question).

The items contained within the *Job Behavior (JB)* subscale were: Items 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31. In this subscale, items 23, 25 and 28 were reverse-coded. Items 32, 33, 34 and 35 comprised the Business Impact Subscale. Items 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, and 59 comprised the *Learnings (LRN)* subscale. The reverse coded items were used in the reliability analysis and in deriving scale means and SDs.

A reliability analysis was computed using Cronbach's Alpha, a measure of internal consistency on the following subscales of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*: *Organizational Performance (OP)*, *Job Behavior (JB)*, and *Learnings (LRN)*.

The point of Cronbach's alpha is to assess the item consistency to show that the derived

scale consistently measures a common construct. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, were provided for the *Business Impact* (BI) subscale.

Alpha coefficient values are rated from 0 to 1; they are used to report on the reliability of factors extracted from multi-point Likert-like scales (i.e., rating scale: 1 = poor, 5 = excellent). The higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale is considered to be (Santos, 1999). Cronbach's alphas indicated that the subscales were highly reliable. The mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and Cronbach's alphas are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Reliability Analysis of Subscales

Subscale	Number of Items	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Cronbach's Alpha
Organizational Performance	17	59.45	11.365	0.947
Job Behavior	12	45.11	5.587	0.798
New Learnings	20	71.42	13.747	0.945

### Research Question Findings

#### *Research Question #1.*

Q1. To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives? There were 17 items in the Organizational Performance (OP) subscale which provided the data to answer this question. The number of respondents to this subscale varied between 40 and 42. The results for this question follow below.

Table 16: Organizational Performance Subscale

Organizational Performance Subscale Items	No. of Responses N	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Team increased its speed to market	42	1	2.4	19	45.2	15	35.7	6	14.3	1	2.4
Balance good for business unit with other organizational needs	41	5	12.2	21	51.2	9	22.0	5	12.2	1	2.4
Information flows freely among team	41	7	17.1	20	48.8	11	26.8	2	4.9	1	2.4
Improved communication among team	40	6	15.0	24	60.0	7	17.5	2	5.0	1	2.5
*My business unit's productivity has not increased	41	3	7.3	16	39.0	10	24.4	12	29.3	0	0.0
Business unit is more efficient	41	3	7.3	19	46.3	13	31.7	4	9.8	2	4.9
Clearer goals my team and I mutually agree upon	40	7	17.5	23	57.5	5	12.5	4	10.0	1	2.5
*My professional relationships with others have not improved.	41	11	26.8	19	46.3	7	17.1	3	7.3	1	2.4
Belief that business unit produced better business results	40	3	7.5	21	52.5	11	27.5	4	10.0	1	2.5
Business unit developed more strategic relationships	41	4	9.8	21	51.2	12	29.3	3	7.3	1	2.4
Team produces more 'on-time' results on schedule	41	1	2.4	15	36.6	17	41.5	7	17.1	1	2.4
*I have not encouraged my team to achieve higher performance levels.	40	11	27.5	18	45.0	3	7.5	6	15.0	2	5.0
Team's increased ability to make valuable contributions	41	5	12.2	25	61.0	8	19.5	3	7.3	0	0
Positive impact on the performance of my team	41	5	12.2	26	63.4	8	19.5	1	2.4	1	2.4
Team able to deliver results ahead of schedule	41	1	2.4	11	26.8	22	53.7	6	14.6	1	2.4
Increased recognition from peers for business unit's contributions	41	4	9.8	13	31.7	13	31.7	9	22.0	2	4.9
My team's support of organizational change increased	41	4	9.8	20	48.8	12	29.3	3	7.3	2	4.9

\*Reverse Coded

The *Organizational Performance* (OP) subscale contained 17 items which measured the outcomes of executive coaching on the organizational performance of female executives. More than two-thirds of the respondents (63%) indicated that as a result of their participation in executive coaching, their teams' performance had been positively impacted. Secondly, 61% of the respondents indicated an increase in their team's ability to make valuable contributions. Sixty percent of the respondents noted improved communication levels among their team, as a result of their participation in executive coaching. Furthermore, 58% of the respondents indicated that the goals she and her team mutually agreed upon were clearer as a result of her participation in executive coaching. Interestingly, 54% of the respondents indicated a neutral response when asked if their teams were able to deliver results ahead of schedule, with an

additional 27% agreeing that their team was able to deliver results ahead of schedule. Similarly, over half of the respondents (53%) believed that their business unit had produced better business results as an outcome of their participation in executive coaching.

*Research Question #2.*

Q2. To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the effectiveness of a female executive's behavior on the job? The number of respondents to this subscale ranged between 30 and 31. The results for this question follow below.

Table 17: Job Behavior Subscale

Job Behavior Subscale Items	No. of Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Increased ability to develop my team	31	10	32.3	18	58.1	2	6.5	1	3.2	0	0.0
Increased ability to communicate my vision for my business unit more effectively	30	7	23.3	15	50.0	6	20.0	2	6.7	0	0.0
I am more effective in my job as a result of participating in executive coaching	30	7	23.3	19	63.3	2	6.7	2	6.7	0	0.0
*I do not spend more time developing strategic work relationships	31	5	16.1	15	48.4	8	25.8	3	9.7	0	0.0
I am more aware of the impact of my behavior on others	31	14	45.2	16	51.6	1	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
*I have not become more sensitive to the needs of others	31	6	19.4	16	51.6	3	9.7	4	12.9	2	6.5
I am able to display patience with others when in a difficult situation	31	6	19.4	15	48.4	5	16.1	5	16.1	0	0.0
I recognize the talents and abilities of others	31	6	19.4	10	32.3	12	38.7	3	9.7	0	0.0
*My relationships with stakeholders have not improved	31	4	12.9	16	51.6	10	32.3	1	3.2	0	0.0
I have tried new behaviors as a result of receiving feedback	31	14	45.2	16	51.6	1	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
I am a more effective leader of my business unit	31	10	32.3	17	54.8	2	6.5	2	6.5	0	0.0
Increased team diversity by being more inclusive of others	30	3	10.0	11	36.7	8	26.7	7	23.3	1	3.3

\*Reverse coded

The *Job Behavior* (JB) subscale contained 12 items which measured the impact of executive coaching on the effectiveness of female executives' behavior on the job. Individual level outcomes were measured with this subscale. Individual learning

outcomes included 63% of the respondents indicated they were more effective in their jobs as a result of their participation in executive coaching. As a result of the one-on-one individualized attention from an executive coach, 58% of the respondents felt their ability to develop their team had increased. Fifty-five percent of the respondents believed they were more effective leaders of their business units as a result of their participation in executive coaching.

Similarly, 52% of the respondents indicated that they were more aware of the impact their behavior had on others; they were more sensitive to the needs of others; and they had tried new behaviors as a result of the feedback they received while participating in executive coaching. Conversely, nearly 40 percent of the respondents indicated a neutral response in their ability to recognize the talents and abilities of others.

*Research Question #3.*

Q3. To what extent was tangible impact in business areas measured as a result of participation in an executive coaching program by female executives? Four items comprised the *Business Impact* (BI) subscale, which provided the data to answer this research question.

BI-1, the first item in this subscale asked the female executives to check all appropriate responses to the statement: ‘The following tangible business impacts occurred as a result of my participation and receipt of executive coaching.’ A total of 20 singular measures of tangible business impacts comprised this item. A total of 30 respondents answered this item. Table 18 presents the data for this item.



Table 18: Tangible Business Impact (N = 30)

Tangible Business Impact Subscale Item Responses	<i>f</i>	%
Improved teamwork	22	73.3
Team member satisfaction levels increased	17	56.7
Improved ability to execute	16	53.3
Increased employee satisfaction in business unit	14	46.7
Reinforced my own intention to stay with the organization	14	46.7
Increased retention of key employees	11	36.7
Increased productivity of business unit	11	36.7
Increased quality of services or product provided	11	36.7
Increased client satisfaction	10	33.3
Increased work output	8	26.7
Increased speed to market	7	23.3
Retained key clients	6	20.0
Accelerated promotions	5	16.7
Increased diversity levels	5	16.7
Deadlines met on time	5	16.7
Increased bottom line profitability	5	16.7
Reduced complaints	5	16.7
Increased top line revenue	4	13.3
Decreased turnover in business unit	4	13.3
Cost reductions	2	6.7

*Note: f = frequency*

BI-2, the second item in this subscale asked the female executives to check all appropriate responses to the statement: ‘The following intangible business impacts occurred as a result of my participation and receipt of executive coaching.’ A total of 11 singular measures of tangible business impacts comprised this item. A total of 30 respondents answered this item. Table 19 presents the data for this item.

Table 19: Intangible Business Impact (N = 30)

Intangible Business Impact Subscale Item Responses	<i>f</i>	%
Improved relationship with direct reports	19	63.3
Improved teamwork	19	63.3
Improved relationship with stakeholders	18	60.0
Increased level of personal engagement	18	60.0
Improved job satisfaction	16	53.3
Increased personal effort	15	50.0
Improved relationship with peers	15	50.0
Other intangibles	11	36.7
Reduced conflict in business unit	10	33.3
Increased organizational commitment	10	33.3
Improved relationship with clients	8	26.7

*Note: f = frequency*

BI-3, the third item in this subscale asked the female executives to estimate the dollar value ascribed to the outcome(s) of the executive coaching received. A total of 10 singular dollar value ranges from \$0 to over \$1,000,000 comprised this item. A total of 29 respondents answered this item. Figure 1 presents the data for this item.

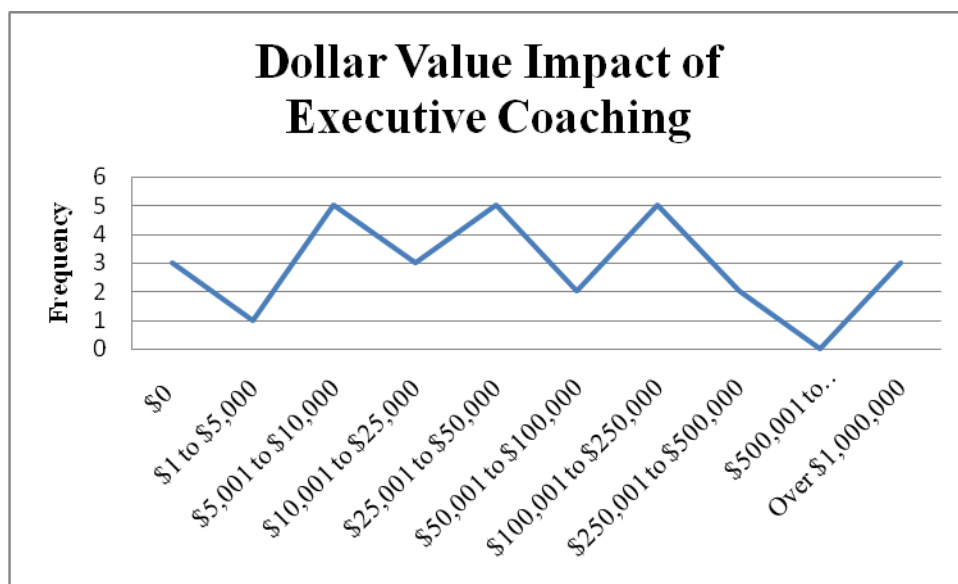


Figure 1: Impact of Executive Coaching In Dollars

BI-4, the fourth item in this subscale, asked the female executives to provide any additional comments regarding the business areas which were impacted as a result of their participation in executive coaching. A total of eight responses were recorded for this item. These responses are discussed in the following section in detail.

*Research Question #4.*

Q4. To what extent did participation in an executive coaching program by a female executive result in the attainment of new skills, increased abilities or new knowledge? There were 20 items in the *Learnings* (LRN) subscale which provided the answers to this question. The number of respondents to this subscale ranged between 27 and 28. The results for this question follow in Table 20.

Table 20: New Learnings Subscale

New Learnings Subscale Item Responses	No. of Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
*Executive coaching did not teach me how to create a collaborative environment with my team	28	6	21.4	15	53.6	5	17.9	1	3.6	1	3.6
My ability to produce results has increased	28	2	7.1	14	50.0	8	28.6	3	10.7	1	3.6
Executive coaching taught me how to identify specific goals to achieve	28	3	10.7	16	57.1	6	21.4	3	10.7	0	0.0
Executive coaching increased my ability for self-promotion	28	7	25.0	10	35.7	6	21.4	5	17.9	0	0.0
Executive coaching taught me the importance of feedback	28	8	28.6	12	42.9	3	10.7	5	17.9	0	0.0
Executive coaching increased my ability to consider others' points of view when making decisions.	28	3	10.7	15	53.6	7	25.0	3	10.7	0	0.0
As a result of my participation in executive coaching, I am less abrasive with others.	28	2	7.1	7	25.0	13	46.4	6	21.4	0	0.0
Executive coaching helped me shift from a tactical to a more strategic focus	28	2	7.1	12	42.9	8	28.6	5	17.9	1	3.6
Executive coaching helped me learn the importance of reflection	28	5	17.9	12	42.9	9	32.1	1	3.6	1	3.6
Executive coaching helped me learn to value feedback	28	6	21.4	12	42.9	6	21.4	4	14.3	0	0.0
My self-confidence has increased as a result of executive coaching	28	7	25.0	15	53.6	2	7.1	4	14.3	0	0.0
*Executive coaching did not teach me how to create a collaborative environment for my team members.	27	5	18.5	14	51.9	4	14.8	4	14.8	0	0.0
I practice active listening skills	28	3	10.7	16	57.1	5	17.9	3	10.7	1	3.6
Executive coaching helped me learn to value the diversity of others' experiences	27	2	7.4	8	29.6	13	48.1	3	11.1	1	3.7
*Executive coaching did not increase my ability to be flexible	28	4	14.3	9	32.1	10	35.7	5	17.9	0	0.0
My tolerance for ambiguity has increased	27	3	11.1	11	40.7	6	22.2	6	22.2	1	3.7
My credibility within the organization has increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.	28	6	21.4	9	32.1	6	21.4	7	25.0	0	0.0
Executive coaching has helped improve my focus on producing results	28	2	7.1	15	53.6	7	25.0	4	14.3	0	0.0
Executive coaching taught me how to increase the alignment of individual team members to attain collective organizational goals.	28	4	14.3	15	53.6	4	14.3	3	10.7	2	7.1
Executive coaching taught me how to enhance teamwork within my team.	28	4	14.3	15	53.6	5	17.9	3	10.7	1	3.6

\*Reverse Coded

The *Learnings* (LRN) subscale contained 20 items which measured the new skills, and increased abilities or new knowledge that were attained by female executives as a result of their participation in executive coaching. Individual level outcomes were measured with this subscale. Individual learning outcomes included 57% of the respondents learned how to identify specific goals to strive toward. Additionally, 57% of the respondents practiced active listening skills. Self-confidence levels of the female executives increased as a result of their participation with executive coaching, according to 54% of the respondents.

Fifty-four percent of the respondents indicated that executive coaching had improved their focus to produce results. The ability to consider others' point of view

when making decisions increased, as reported by 54% of the respondents. Furthermore, the respondents indicated they had learned how to create a collaborative environment, learned how to enhance teamwork within their teams, and learned how to increase the alignment of individual team members to attain collective organizational goals.

Two items provided additional data to answer this research question. The first item asked the female executives to check all appropriate responses to the statement: ‘Identify the factors that contributed to the sustainment of the newly acquired behaviors you learned as a direct result of executive coaching.’ A total of 14 singular factors comprised this item. A total of 28 responses were valid. Table 21 provides the data for this item.

Table 21: Factors Sustaining New Behaviors (N = 28)

Factors Sustaining New Behaviors Item Responses	<i>f</i>	%
Emotional competence of the executive coach	17	60.7
Your readiness level to participate in executive coaching	17	60.7
Your relationship with the executive coach	16	57.1
Effectiveness of the feedback received	15	53.6
Your commitment to the executive coaching process	15	53.6
The executive coaching assessment process	14	50.0
You and the executive coach's availability to meet	14	50.0
The specificity of the target development goals you and your coach identified	13	46.4
The executive coach's ability to keep things confidential	12	42.9
Frequency of meetings between yourself and the executive coach	10	35.7
Your manager's support	9	32.1
Organizational support	8	28.6
Soliciting suggestions from raters	5	17.9
Feedback shared with raters	2	7.1

*Note: f = frequency*

The second item asked the female executives to check all appropriate responses to the statement: ‘Identify the factors that prevented the sustainment of the newly acquired

behaviors you learned as a direct result of executive coaching.’ A total of 14 singular factors comprised this item. A total of 25 responses were valid. Table 22 provides the data for this item.

Table 22: Factors Preventing New Behaviors (N = 25)

Factors Preventing New Behaviors Item Responses	<i>f</i>	%
Organizational support	10	40.0
Your readiness level to participate in executive coaching	8	32.0
Frequency of meetings between yourself and the executive coach	8	32.0
Emotional competence of the executive coach	7	28.0
Your manager's support	7	28.0
Effectiveness of the feedback received	6	24.0
Your relationship with the executive coach	6	24.0
You and the executive coach's availability to meet	6	24.0
The executive coaching assessment process	4	16.0
The specificity of the goals identified by yourself and your coach to work upon	4	16.0
Your commitment to the executive coaching process	4	16.0
The executive coach's ability to keep things confidential	4	16.0
Soliciting suggestions from raters	2	8.0
Feedback shared with team	1	4.0

*Note: f = frequency*

#### *Research Question #5.*

Q5. To what extent did participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities? A single item, ‘After participating in executive coaching, I expect I will receive a promotion shortly based on the performance of my business unit’ provided the data to answer the fifth research question. A total of 41 responses were valid. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents indicated they disagreed that after participating in executive coaching, they expected to receive a promotion shortly based on the performance of their business unit. Thirty-four percent of the respondents indicated a neutral response to this item. Seventeen percent of the

respondents indicated they agreed with this statement. Seven percent of respondents indicated they strongly disagreed, and two percent indicated they strongly agreed with this statement.

### Summary

Respondents to the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* were female executives who had received executive coaching as part of their leadership development in their respective organizations. Responses were received from female executives who worked in a variety of industries, primarily the financial, retail, service and technology sectors.

A distinct profile emerged of the respondents to the Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey. These findings indicate that she is:

- White, highly educated female between 45 and 49
- Vice President in the financial, retail, service or technology sectors
- In the position a minimum of 2, but less than 4 years
- The main reason: improve leadership skills
- Worked with a female executive coach
- Received between 11 and 20 hours of executive coaching

Responses in the first section of the survey provided the answers to the first research question: ‘To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives?’ The majority of the female executives felt that as a result of the executive coaching received, it had improved the professional relationships they had with their peers. Executive coaching had overwhelmingly produced a positive impact on their teams.

Their teams increased their speed to market of new products and services. Additionally, their business units produced more business results, had increased productivity, and were more efficient. Further, the flow of information had increased in the business unit. Communication among the team had improved as well. The goals the female executive and her team agreed upon were clearer.

The business unit had developed more strategic relationships as a result of the female executive's participation in executive coaching. Furthermore, their teams' support of organizational change had increased as well.

As a result of the female executive's participation in executive coaching, they encouraged their team to perform at higher levels, and felt that their ability to balance what was good for their respective business units with other needs of the organization had increased. Higher levels of recognition from peers for their respective team's contributions were realized. Interestingly, neutral responses were received from the majority of the female executives regarding their teams' ability to deliver results either ahead of schedule, or on time.

Responses in the second section of the survey provided the answers to the second research question: 'To what extent did the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the effectiveness of a female executive's behavior on the job?' Overwhelmingly, the majority of respondents believed that they were more effective in their jobs as a result of their participation in executive coaching. They felt their ability to develop their teams had increased, their ability to communicate their vision for their teams had increased, they spent more time developing strategic relationships, and they were more aware of the impact their behavior had on others. They had become more



sensitive to the needs of others, and felt they were able to display patience with others when in a difficult situation.

Additionally, the majority of the female executives indicated that they often tried new behaviors as a result of the feedback they received during the executive coaching experience. They recognized the talents and abilities of others as a result of the executive coaching they received. Their relationships with stakeholders improved. Lastly, they increased the diversity of their teams by being more inclusive of others.

Responses in the third section of the survey provided the answers to the third research question: ‘To what extent was tangible impact in business areas measured as a result of participation in an executive coaching program by female executives?’ The top five most recorded responses included: improved teamwork (73%); increased team member satisfaction level (57%); improved ability to execute (53%); increased employee satisfaction (47%), and reinforcement of their own intention to stay with the organization (47%).

Demonstrable improvement in intangible business impacts were obtained as a result of participation by female executives in an executive coaching program. The top five most recorded responses included: improved relationship with direct reports (63%); improved teamwork (63%); improved relationships with stakeholders (60%); increased level of personal engagement (60%), and improved job satisfaction (53%).

Respondents were asked to ascribe a dollar value to the outcome(s) of the executive coaching. The top 3 most recorded responses included the following dollar value ranges: \$100,001 to \$250,000; \$25,001 to \$50,000; and \$5,001 to \$10,000. Each dollar value range received 17% of the total responses.

Responses in the fourth section of the survey provided the answers to the fourth research question: ‘To what extent did participation in an executive coaching program result in the attainment of new skills, increased abilities or new knowledge?’ The majority of the respondents indicated that they learned how to create a collaborative environment (54%); increased their ability to produce results (54%); learned how to identify specific goals to achieve (57%); increased their ability for self-promotion (36%); taught them the value of feedback (43%); increased their ability to consider others’ point of view when making decisions (54%); learned how to shift their focus from a tactical to a strategic one (43%); learned the importance of reflection (43%); and learned to value feedback (43%).

Executive coaching resulted in increased self confidence (54%); increased their practice of active listening (58%) and increased their tolerance for ambiguity (41%). Further, the female executives agreed that their organizational credibility had increased (32%), and their ability to improve the alignment of individual team members to attain collective organizational goals had increased as well (54%). Executive coaching taught female executives how to enhance teamwork within their teams (54%).

Interestingly, the majority of female executives indicated a neutral stance on whether executive coaching increased their ability to be flexible (36%). A neutral response was recorded by the majority of respondents (48%) as to whether executive coaching taught them to value the diversity of others’ experiences.

Additionally, the female executives identified the factors which contributed to the sustainment of the newly acquired behaviors they had learned as a direct result of executive coaching. The top five most recorded responses indicated the emotional

competence of the executive coach (61%); their level of readiness to participate in executive coaching (61%); their relationship with the executive coach (57%); the effectiveness of the feedback they received (54%), and their commitment to the executive coaching process (54%).

Finally, the female executives further identified the factors they felt had prevented the sustainment of the newly acquired behaviors they had learned as a direct result of the executive coaching they received. The top five recorded responses indicated organizational support (40%); their level of readiness to participate in executive coaching (32%); the frequency of meetings between the executives and their coaches (32%); the emotional competence of the executive coach (28%), and their manager's support (28%). These findings are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Responses to the fifth research question: 'To what extent did participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities?' indicated that a majority of the respondents (39%) disagreed that as a result of their participation in executive coaching, the female executives did not expect to receive a promotion. Only seventeen percent of the respondents indicated that they expected to be promoted.

The following chapter presented an interpretation of the findings surfaced in this research study. First, a discussion presented the general findings, from which conclusions were drawn by the researcher. This was followed by the implications for action at the individual and organizational levels. In addition, recommendations for professional practice, as well as further research were presented.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study, and includes the major conclusions extracted from the data presented in Chapter IV. First, a discussion provides a brief summary of the major findings. Following, the implications for action are addressed, and recommendations for professional practice and further research are presented as well.

#### Summary of the Study

To accomplish the objectives of this study, the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* (Appendix A) was created and designed to measure the impact of executive coaching at two levels: organizational and individual performance. The *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* was disseminated to self-identified, self-selected female executives who had participated in an executive coaching program within their organizations. Responses from the *Organizational Performance (OP)* and *Business Impact (BI)* subscales of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* provided the dataset for the dependent variable of organizational performance. Responses from the *Job Behavior (JB)* and *Learnings (LRN)* subscales provided the dataset for the dependent variable of individual performance. The independent variable in this study was executive coaching, a leadership development methodology. The *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey* was administered over the Internet for the respondents' on-demand convenience.

Following the collection of the data, it was prepared for data analysis. As a result of the analysis performed of the quantitative data generated by this research, the researcher drew a number of conclusions. This chapter begins, however, with a discussion of the findings as related to the research questions.

## Discussion

### Research Question One

This question sought to understand how the outcomes of a formal executive coaching program impacted the organizational performance of female executives. The results of this study provided empirical evidence which indicated that executive coaching contributes to the organizational performance of female executives. The dataset for this research question resulted from the *Organizational Performance (OP)* subscale ( $M=59.5$ ;  $SD=11.365$ ; Cronbach's Alpha=0.947). Table 15 presented the means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha data range for each of the subscales.

The principal impact that executive coaching produced on the organizational performance of female executives was measured in the degree to which the outcome positively influenced the performance of their teams. Notable results from the *Organizational Performance (OP)* subscale included the improved communication among the teams, which likely led to the teams' enhanced ability to make valuable contributions to the organization. Other key results from this subscale indicated that the ability to clearly identify goals for the team, the development of an increased belief that business units produced better business results, and the development of more strategic business relationships, significantly impacted the organizational performance of female executives.

The field of executive coaching is relatively new. This research contributes to the body of knowledge emerging in the field by demonstrating the impact it can have on an individual female executive's organizational performance. These individual female executives have direct responsibility for managing virtual teams and globally dispersed

business units. Executives need a confidential ear in which they can openly share their concerns, explore ideas, and consider potential risks about their organization and their careers, without fear of ridicule or reprisal. The singular focus which occurs during executive coaching builds personal awareness, improves communication skills, and identifies new behaviors to apply while working with their teams, lead to the resultant impact on organizational performance as posted in this study.

As a new field of study with few guidelines, the opportunity exists to influence policies related to the measurement of the efficacy of executive coaching, at the organizational level. For example, this study supports the little-practiced effort by Human Resources Development (HRD) professionals of measuring the impact of a leadership development program on organizational performance. It is critical to understand how implementing return-on-investment (ROI) metrics enhance the design of leadership development programs which impact performance at the organizational level.

The optimal design of leadership development programs which impact organizational performance must begin with clearly linking the program objectives to organizational ones. Only by first understanding the goals the organization must achieve, and linking the objectives of the leadership development programs to attain these, can organizational performance be achieved and measurably impacted. As previous findings indicate, there was little known about the skills, knowledge, or processes in leadership development programs that contributed to organizational performance. As such, this study proposes to bridge this gap.

This study contributes to the practice of executive coaching by clearly delineating which specific skills, knowledge and processes lead to improved organizational

performance. A leadership development program, such as executive coaching, that specifically impacts the performance of these groups, and measures that impact, is essential for the HRD professional to design and implement. For example, ensuring that an individual develops improved communication skills, as a result within the executive coaching experience, leads to an impact on organizational performance, as evidenced by the findings of this study.

#### Research Question Two

This question sought to understand how the outcomes of an executive coaching program impacted the effectiveness of a female executive's behavior on the job. The dataset for this research question resulted from the *Job Behavior (JB)* subscale ( $M=45.11$ ;  $SD=5.587$ ; Cronbach's Alpha 0.798). Table 15 presented the means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha data range for each of the subscales. The greatest impact that executive coaching had on the effectiveness of female executives' behavior on the job was an increased belief that they *were* more effective in their jobs, as a result of their participation in executive coaching. Key findings from the *Job Behavior (JB)* subscale indicated, that to a large degree, the female executives' ability to develop their teams, coupled with the belief of their personal increased effectiveness as leaders of their business units, were supported by this research study. Further, their increased sensitivity to the needs of others, an improved awareness of how their behavior impacts others, and the increased frequency of trying new behaviors, were added measures which demonstrated how executive coaching impacted the effectiveness of the female executive's behavior on the job. This may have contributed to improved relationships with stakeholders, leading to increased efforts developing strategic work relationships.

This research study contributes to the growing body of knowledge of executive coaching. The knowledge generated by this study provides an understanding of how participation in an executive coaching program impacted the effectiveness of an individual female executive's behavior on the job. As an example, an increased awareness of the impact one's behavior has on others, is especially beneficial for ceasing the behaviors that undermine the establishment of a collaborative work environment. This heightened awareness, coupled with the executive's willingness to reflect upon it, and try something new, are fundamental to a successful outcome in an executive coaching program.

This study contributes to the policies regarding the implementation of executive coaching programs in organizations. The objective of a leadership development program such as executive coaching should maximize its impact on organizational performance such that the present, as well as the future, leadership needs of the organization are addressed. This would ensure the leadership pipeline is filled with female executives with the requisite knowledge, skills and experience ready to assume their organization's highest leadership positions. This alone would address the immediate issue of the critical leadership shortage.

The findings of this study support the practice that learning experiences, particularly when developing leadership skills, should be practiced within the natural working environment. Leadership development programs typically include offsite executive retreats, assessment centers and training workshops as examples of different learning experiences. In particular, it is critical for the executive to try a new way of behaving in her natural work setting, rather than in the more sterile laboratory setting



such as a workshop. As a result, the visual cues one receives provide immediate feedback as to how effective the new behavior is, and whether or not it bears repeating.

Two additional questions provided supplementary data which augmented the answer to this research question. First, the question was asked, “What factors sustained the new behaviors learned by the female executive as a result of their participation in executive coaching”? The second question asked which factors prevented the sustainment of these new behaviors. The first of these questions is answered here. To a large degree, the emotional competence of the executive coach, as well as the readiness level of the female executive to participate in executive coaching were overwhelmingly identified as factors which helped sustain the new behavior.

Further, the relationship between the female executive and the executive coach, the effectiveness of the feedback they received, and their commitment to the executive coaching process were all identified as factors which sustained the new behaviors. Too, the assessment process at the start of the executive coaching engagement, coupled with the availability of the female executive and the coach to meet, provided support to continue the new behavior. Less frequently, the specificity of the goals identified by the executive and the coach, the coach’s ability to maintain confidentiality, and the frequency of the meetings with the executive coach, were identified as those factors that maintained the new behaviors.

The factors that prevented the sustainment of the new behaviors included a lack of organizational support, as well as the readiness level of the female executive to participate in executive coaching. The inadequate frequency of the meetings between the executives and the coaches, the emotional competence of the executive coaches, lack of

support from managers, ineffective feedback received, and the quality of the relationship between the female executives and the executive coaches, were factors which prevented the sustainment of the new behaviors. To a lesser degree, the assessment process, the specificity of the goals mutually identified by the executives and their coaches, as well as a lack of commitment to the coaching process were singled out as well. The coaches' inability to maintain confidentiality, the desire to not solicit suggestions from raters nor to share feedback with them were identified as contributing factors prohibiting the sustainment of the new behaviors.

Much knowledge resulted from this study's findings regarding the quality of the relationship between the female executive and the executive coach. Fundamentally, at its very core, executive coaching is a relationship. In particular, it is the quality of that relationship, which drives successful outcomes. There are essential elements which affect the quality of the relationship; among these are the coach's qualifications; the readiness level of the female executive; and their commitment to the relationship.

For example, a good fit between the coach and the executive is essential to a successful coaching relationship. Other best practices for successful outcomes of executive coaching engagements include: an external coach who has previous coaching experience, provides references, and is emotionally competent. The emotional competence of the coach can be established by speaking with the references. Ideally, the coach has past business experience; in certain instances, line experience is a good background.

Additionally, the willingness of the female executive to receive unvarnished feedback, both positive and negative, how open she is to trying new behaviors, and her

comfort level with risk, all have the potential to affect the relationship as well. Not surprisingly, if either participant, the female executive or the executive coach, does not allow sufficient time to meet in person, or at a minimum, speak on the phone, will negatively impact the relationship, and consequently, the outcome.

The findings of this study affect organizational policies in the following ways: from the onset, it is important to understand that the relationship between the female executive and the executive coach is professional and confidential. As with any relationship, an executive coaching relationship must be built upon mutual standards of respect and trust. It should be understood that change takes time; additionally, behavioral change requires motivation on the part of the executive. That is why a female executive's openness and willingness to change is key to a successful outcome.

At the organizational level, the approach used to communicate the implementation of an executive coaching initiative is important. The purpose of the coaching should be communicated in such a way that the executive understands that this is an investment in their professional development by the organization; as such, they will be more willing to participate, will schedule the necessary time for it, and value it as such.

The goals the female executive and the executive coaching are working towards as the objective of the coaching engagement are of paramount importance to ensure a successful outcome. Secondary objectives, such as those of the immediate manager or the HR professional, are of less significance. Should it be discovered during the coaching engagement that there was a breach of confidentiality, or trust, the executive should have the right to immediate withdrawal from the engagement. For example, the coach may

share confidential comments with the female executive's immediate manager, or the HR professional; either of which is unprofessional and inappropriate. After all, as this relationship is played out within the boundaries of the organizational environment, it is critical that the female executive's participation is supported properly. In some instances, as a result of the executive coaching engagement, the female executive realizes that they are better served by leaving the organization, as evidenced by a participant's remarks surfaced in this research study:

*“The survey presupposes that coaching results in success within the same firm. In my case, coaching resulted in exposing reasons to leave and reasons to be confident in that decision. I believe the coaching improved my work, my self-awareness, my inclusiveness. Coaching could have resulted in advancement if that setting was right for me. But leaving a firm is a reasonable result of coaching”.*

### Research Question Three

This question sought to understand the impact, tangible and intangible, that executive coaching had in business areas as a result of female executives' participation in an executive coaching program. The dataset for this research question resulted from the *Business Impact (BI)* subscales. By far, the greatest tangible impact that executive coaching had in a business area was improved teamwork. Team satisfaction levels increased, which likely led to an improved ability to execute. Employee satisfaction levels went up too. Retention levels were reinforced among the female executives who participated in executive coaching. Impact was measured in the improved retention of key employees, increased productivity of business units, in addition to a measureable increase in the quality of services or products provided. Client satisfaction levels increased as well.

A specific tangible measurement was seen in the data from the dollar value ascribed to the impact in business areas of the executive coaching. As evidenced by the Dollar Value Impact of Executive Coaching (see figure 1), the most frequently ascribed values to the executive coaching ranged from \$100,001 to \$250,000; \$25,001 to \$50,000; and \$5,001 to \$10,000.

This question sought to understand which intangible impacts were measured in business areas as a result of female executives' participation in executive coaching. The largest impacts were noted in improved relationships with direct reports and improved teamwork. These areas were closely followed by measurable impact in improved relationships with stakeholders and increased levels of personal engagement. Improvements in job satisfaction were noted, as well as increased personal effort and improved relationships with peers, although with slightly lesser frequency.

The findings from this research study served to add to the body of knowledge regarding leadership development programs, such as executive coaching. Most organizations measure organizational performance in the language of business results. The results of this study directly measured the impact of executive coaching in business areas by producing both tangible and intangible outcomes.

It is important to capture the outcomes of leadership development programs such as executive coaching in the language of business results, because these are typical of the outcomes which are of most importance to senior leaders. After all, they're in business to drive results. Whether the outcomes of leadership development programs lead to reducing expenses, or increasing profits, the point is to provide systemic metrics which impact organizational performance. This study sought to demonstrate the effectiveness

of executive coaching on the organizational performance of female executives. The findings of this study provide evidence which support this hoped for result.

The findings of this study directly impact organizational policies regarding the support of leadership development programs. As senior executives look to their HRD colleagues, they hope to find professionals who understand that to be successful in today's corporate environment, the value of every organizational asset must be identified, recognized and leveraged.

The deliberate focus on identifying, developing and promoting female executives via a leadership development initiative such as executive coaching provides organizations with a distinct advantage over their closest competitors, particularly in those industries where traditionally, the value of women has been largely ignored. This focus, coupled with measuring the outcome of leadership development initiative at the organizational level, ensure successful outcomes.

Many attempts at measuring the outcomes of leadership development programs stop short of quantifying the return-on-investment to the organization. The findings of this study demonstrate support for the practice of surfacing both quantitative and qualitative data. The numbers tell the short story of whether or not it was a successful initiative. The stories add the richness and provide additional insight into the meaning of the outcomes.

#### Research Question Four

This question sought to understand what new skills, increased abilities or new knowledge were attained by female executives who had participated in an executive coaching program. The dataset for this question resulted from the *Learnings (LRN)*

subscale ( $M=71.42$ ;  $SD=13.747$ ; Cronbach's Alpha=.945). Table 15 presented the means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha data range for each of the subscales.

Overwhelmingly, the ability to identify specific goals, as the purpose of the executive coaching experience, and increase the use of active listening skills, were identified as the new knowledge that was attained as a result of executive coaching. Increased self-confidence received high scores. Establishing a collaborative environment, improved focus on producing results, enhancing teamwork, including others' point of view when making decisions, and aligning individuals with collective organizational goals, were other abilities with high scores on this subscale.

In particular, the findings of this study on executive coaching provide an in-depth look as to what new skills, abilities or new knowledge results from this specific type of leadership development methodology. Of these, two stand out which are of principal importance to the future success of female executives. The first of these is the ability for a female executive to align individuals with the collective organizational goals the group is working to achieve. Among all of the other responsibilities senior leaders face, this is the toughest one to master.

To assist in the process, it is critical that the female executive understand what each individual employee's skills and interests are, such that every possible attempt to match these with the duties of their jobs is maximized. In other words, the more closely matched the skill set and interests of the employees are, with the required tasks within the team or business unit, the more closely the individual's goals will be aligned with the organizational ones. Further, a close understanding of where your employees aspire to be in the future means that one can look out for opportunities that place them further along

that path. This requires flexibility, in that there may be a need for cross-promotion among teams and across business units.

The second element is the ability to identify specific goals to achieve. This is of critical importance because clearly articulating a specific objective reduces confusion, conflict, and competition among employees. A leader must identify goals, true; however, it is the very diligent execution toward a *specific* goal, that reduces ambiguity, and lessens possible misinterpretations (“I think she meant this, this must be what she meant,” etc.) among the team. This aspect supports the greater alignment of the individual goals toward the attainment of the organizational goal. This harkens to one of the hallmarks of the transformational leader, which is that the goals of the individual are subsumed by the goals of the organization. This important finding is supported by the work of Bass (1985) and Jogulu and Wood (2006) on transformational leaders.

#### Research Question Five

This question sought to understand if participation in executive coaching by female executives result in promotion opportunities. This item asked the participant to indicate their response to a Likert-like 5-item scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. Surprisingly, the majority of the respondents indicated they disagreed or indicated a neutral response to this item. Further discussion as to the meaning of this finding is presented below.

#### Conclusions

A distinct profile emerged of the female executives who participated in this study. She is a White, highly educated female between 45 and 49 years old. Typically, she is employed at the Vice President level in either the financial, retail, service or technology



sectors. She has served in this position for a minimum of 2, but no longer than, 4 years. The main reason she decided to participate in executive coaching was to improve her leadership skills. Primarily, she worked with a female executive coach, and received between 11 and 20 hours of executive coaching. As a result of her participation in executive coaching, a positive impact resulted on her organization's performance.

The central finding of this research study indicates that executive coaching contributes to the organizational performance of female executives. We begin at the individual level, to gain an understanding as to how executive coaching contributed to the individual performance of the female executives, before we turn our attention to learn how executive coaching impacted their organizational performance. In his study, Joo (2005) found that fundamentally, the purpose of executive coaching is to direct focus on building skills at the individual level to affect behavioral change, self-awareness, and learning. We will see how participation in executive coaching by female executives increased their abilities, resulted in new behaviors, and led to the development of new skills that impacted their behavior on the job, essentially capturing measurement at the individual level. We will review the factors that contributed to the sustainment of the new behaviors, and those which prevented it. We look at how the executive coaching process impacted their behavior.

In particular, two elements of the executive coaching process provided support for the sustainment of the new behaviors learned: the first concerned the emotional competence of the executive coach; the second element referred to the readiness level of the female executive to participate in executive coaching. This was closely followed by the quality of the relationship between the two parties. Equally important was the

effectiveness of the feedback they received, and their commitment to the coaching process. We begin by examining the emotional competence of the executive coach.

Emotional competence refers to the fact that one is aware of, and able, to manage one's emotions. As Wasylyshin (2003) stated, ideally, effective executive coaches should be experienced and knowledgeable in both business and psychology. Several other psychological skills are offered which may impact the emotional competence of the coach, and are believed to be essential: interpersonal effectiveness, listening, empathy for widely differing groups, patience, adaptability, analytical problem solving skills, creativity, and a sense of humor (Wasylyshin, 2003). Sherman and Freas (2004) found that effective coaches have sound judgment and finely tuned insight. In addition, skills in establishing rapport, building and maintaining confidence, and trust with clients, are considered essential skills such that one is considered to be effective as an executive coach (Kilburg, 1996).

Laske's research indicates that individuals must be developmentally ready to experience the transformative effects of executive coaching (1999). This finding directly supports the premise that individuals who participate in executive coaching are well balanced, have an openness to receive feedback, and have a fundamental willingness to change or improve, such that positive outcomes are possible. Bernthal and Wellins (2006) suggested that those individuals who are "defensive about feedback" are more predisposed to eventual failure (p. 34).

Further, Laske notes that it is the "developmental compatibility of the two parties to the alliance that guarantees lasting, in contrast to merely adaptive, change" (Laske, 1999, p. 157). Wasylyshyn's research (2003) supported this finding as well: the ability to

form a strong ‘connection’ with the executive was found to be characteristic of an effective executive coach, such that lasting, positive outcomes result. In addition, Wasylyshyn suggested that those coaches who work from the perspective of the executive as the client, versus the organization as the client, will satisfy both the ‘coachee’ and the sponsoring organization. An effective relationship between the coach and the executive is critical to generating successful outcomes of the executive coaching engagement, as evidenced by this research study.

Another element which supported the sustainment of the new behaviors learned as a result of the executive coaching experience was the effectiveness of the feedback received. Most coaches utilize multi-rater feedback as a method for obtaining different personal perspectives of the individual they are working with from their peers, supervisors, direct reports, and clients (Thach, 2002). In their study, the AMA/Institute for Corporate Productivity Coaching Survey (AMA, 2008) stated that 360 feedback is now nearly synonymous with coaching programs. Wasylyshyn’s study reported the use of 360 feedback tools as one of the three highest rated coaching tools (2003). In particular, when the 360 feedback process and executive coaching are linked to the business need of developing more leaders for the future, the feedback derived from this methodology is especially impactful and effective (Thach, 2002). McDermott et al. (2007) found that sustained behavioral change is related to leaders constantly seeking feedback from stakeholders. As such, the finding from this research study supported this practice as well.

Wasylyshyn’s (2003) study found that when sustainable behavior change is the intended outcome of an executive coaching engagement, the frequency and face-to-face

contact are critical elements which ensure successful outcomes. A finding from the 2008 Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey (Sherpa, 2008) concurred; their study found that in-person meetings were the most effective delivery method for coaching. Other methods, such as coaching over the phone, via webcams or email, are much less effective modalities. The commitment to the coaching, as evidenced by the effort made to make time for this leadership development modality, particularly when other business drivers are competing for attention, supports this practice, and is confirmed by the findings of this research study.

We now turn our attention to review the findings of this research study on how participation in executive coaching impacted the effectiveness of the behavior of female executives on the job. By far, the largest impact that executive coaching had on the effectiveness of female executives' job behavior was in their belief that they were more effective in their jobs, as a result of their participation in this leadership development modality. This finding, in addition to their belief that they were more effective leaders of their business units, increased their ability to develop their teams. They became more aware of how their behavior impacted others; and developed an increased sensitivity to the needs of others. A final measurement of impact on the effectiveness of job behavior was the improved relationships with stakeholders. We begin by interpreting these findings.

Sogunro (1997) suggested that executives today must learn new leadership skills such that they can be effective on the job. These new skills, abilities and knowledge can properly prepare them to meet the unique challenges in the global workplace today. In other words, they must "learn new ways of leading differently" (p. 735). In particular,

through the advantage of a professional, confidential executive coach who provides individualized feedback, female executives can learn how they can become more effective in their roles.

Holton (2005) presented a similar view. First, he suggested that those individuals, who have the desire to increase one's competence by developing new skills and mastering new situations, have a learning orientation, as contrasted with a performance orientation. Individuals with a performance orientation are characterized by the desire to showcase one's ability, and look for positive evaluations from others (p. 498). Further, he suggested that those individuals with a learning orientation are associated with positive learning outcomes. The individualized learning experience that is executive coaching is invaluable in this way. The unvarnished view of themselves is reflected back to them by the coach, such that they understand how others see them, and understand how their behavior may get in their way of being effective. The findings of this research study supported this leadership development modality as an effective method to improve an individual female executive's effectiveness on the job.

Bernthal and Wellins (2006) found that nearly one third of internally promoted leaders fail, primarily because they lack people and/or interpersonal skills (p. 33). In particular, as more women are identified, developed and promoted into the executive suite, it becomes critically important to offer support and development opportunities as they transition to these new positions of authority and responsibility. Executive coaching suits this need well, as the type of leadership development methodology that supports these transitions, evidenced by the findings of this study.

Finally, when asked to describe what they were doing differently they may not otherwise have done as a result of participating in the executive coaching, there were several comments:

- “Confronting issues with other departments and problem employees. Before coaching, I was seen as too nice.”
- “Examine when I want to avoid a particular change. I now review why I want to avoid.”
- “Pushing through fear rather than trying to avoid it.”
- “Self promotion, generally; more practically though is I learned how best to position my work and the work of my team.”

We shift our focus now to understand how executive coaching impacted the organizational performance of female executives. First, the findings of this research study suggested that the executive coaching experience resulted in a positive impact on team performance, which led to improved communication, and increased the teams’ ability to contribute value to the organization. An outcome of this impact was that the goals the teams worked towards were specific and clear, two distinct elements. As leadership is accomplished through individuals, a leader’s ability to identify specific, and clearly defined collective goals a team or business unit will work towards is key, and leads to decreases in job ambiguity, a leading cause of organizational inefficiency. This led to increased business results, which culminated in increased speed to market, efficiency and productivity. “Able to increase the level of productivity of my team, which in turn, led to an increase of profitability to my business unit of \$289,000,” was representative of the comments from female executives who provided additional thoughts on business areas impacted as a result of their participation in executive coaching. Other

comments included: “Business results have improved as a result of the coaching I received on prioritizing and communication skills.”

As suggested by the AMA/Institute for Corporate Productivity Coaching Survey 2008 (AMA, 2008), many organizations implement the use of a formal executive coaching program in order to improve organizational performance. A significant finding in the McDermott et al. (2007) study indicated that those organizations who focus coaching on positive performance outcomes report better results. As evidenced by the findings of this research study, impact in other business areas included both tangible and intangible outcomes: improved teamwork, improved relationships with direct reports, improved higher employee satisfaction levels (including team members), self-retention of the female executives, along with retention of key employees. Similarly, these findings were reported by McGovern et al. (2001): increases in productivity levels, quality, organizational strength, customer service, reduced complaints, own retention, cost reductions, bottom line profitability, top line revenue, reduced turnover, and other business.

These key business results provide evidence that executive coaching contributes to the organizational performance of female executives. Interestingly enough, however, was the finding that the respondents in this study did not expect to be promoted within a short period of time, following their participation in executive coaching. This finding was surprising, for even though quantifiable business results were realized after their participation in executive coaching, the female executives indicated that they did not expect to be promoted shortly thereafter as a result. Improved teamwork, a measureable rise in productivity, increased employee satisfaction levels, and lowered turnover – these

results provided proof positive of the impact in key business areas. Perhaps other factors should be considered. We discuss the key factors that prevented the sustainment of these new behaviors below.

Several issues that prevented the sustainment of new behaviors, and the opportunity to try new skills, included the lack of visible support from the organization. This includes lack of support from immediate managers, senior executives and the existence of organizational processes that act as barriers for the support of a learning environment. A telling comment from an executive in the McGovern et al. (2001) study provides insight into what a supportive environment could look like: *“Supportive manager, supportive organization...the fact that it (executive coaching) is so well endorsed by the company. The service is provided and encouraged...”* (p. 8).

Obviously, in this study, female executives felt the lack of support for their participation in executive coaching, which could have been manifested in several ways. For example, in this scenario, individuals were expected to learn on their own, and little or no time is allocated away from their daily work responsibilities to provide for learning new skills or acquiring new knowledge. Often, this type of environment is characterized by senior leaders indicating that no one had taught them, yet somehow they managed to be successful. Another example of non-support could be the approach used to communicate the purpose of executive coaching by HR to the executive and her manager: *“My company’s way of presenting the coaching was negative. Thus, I had a lot of resistance at the beginning,”* (McGovern et al., 2001, p. 9).

Following their executive coaching experience, it is possible the executives returned to an inhospitable environment. The climate the executive returns to must be a



learning environment; that is, there is tangible, visible recognition of the value of continued learning. Personal recognition of the new changes in behaviors, attitudes or competencies are noted. Public recognition of the improvements in organizational performance would be one way to accomplish this. In their study, McGovern et al. (2001) interviewed several executives regarding behavioral changes, the connection to tangible business outcomes, and the return on investment of executive coaching. As a result, the heightened self-awareness levels led to the appreciation that their behavior changes had impacted the organization at many levels, which was mutually motivating and energizing. Conversely, lack of support from managers, supervisors and peers has the opposite effect. The implications of this study are next discussed.

#### Implications

As more organizations seek to fill critical leadership positions, assumptions are made which imply that the leadership development programs currently in place provide the high potentials with the types of learning experiences that properly prepare them to assume the senior most leadership positions in their organizations. Scant evidence existed previously which lent support as to the efficacy of executive coaching, a specific leadership development modality, on the organizational performance of individuals. This study sought to provide evidence that supported the use of executive coaching to develop high potential female executives, and promote them into the executive suite. The findings of this study support the positive impact of executive coaching in the leadership development of female executives. Their perceived reluctance to seek promotions, or better termed, their hesitancy in recognizing they deserve to be promoted, was an unusual

finding. Perhaps, as has been noted in the literature, they continue to be unable to ‘toot their own horn’ and call attention to their success.

This study sought to demonstrate that female executives should be identified, developed and promoted into the executive suite; one way of accomplishing that objective was through their participation in executive coaching. As evidenced by the findings of this study, executive coaching impacted not only their individual performance but more importantly, provided evidence of impact in their organizational performance. Surely, this finding alone merits further attention.

#### Recommendations for Professional Practice

First, it is recommended that prior to deciding to implement a leadership development program, there must be demonstrated support for it from senior executives, up to and including the board. Examples of this include the involvement of the CEO and other senior executives in the design of the leadership development experiences; teaching classes, and holding other senior managers accountable for identifying and developing individuals at all levels within the organization (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006).

Secondly, the outcome of any leadership development program must be linked with the organization’s business objectives. Again, it is essential for the HRD professional to understand both the strategy and the business model of their organization, such that the maximum benefit from improved leadership effectiveness can be leveraged, both to the organization and the individual executive. Further, leadership development experiences should take place in the environment in which the individual professional works, rather than held out as a sole training or development experience. Bernthal and Wellins (2006) agreed, indicating that accelerated development occurs through applied

learning, specifically as organizational leaders learn chiefly by observing others and through trial and error in the workplace.

Senior HRD professionals must develop a proficiency in measuring the effectiveness of leadership development initiatives. This competency is critical as not only are senior leaders demanding an accounting of the return-on-investment of leadership development initiatives; HRD professionals must be able to quantify the impact in business areas. As Spitzer (2005) argued, “Learning is only effective if it contributes to improved performance and organizational value” (p. 57). Increasingly, HRD professionals must prove their value as organizational stakeholders demand that they justify their existence.

By delivering an impact on organizational performance as an outcome of leadership development programs they have initiated, this raises their organizational credibility, heightens their organizational visibility, and earns the respect of their peers. Several measurement options are presented for further review: the return-on-investment methodology proposed by Phillips (2007) and the Learning Effectiveness Method as suggested by Spitzer (2005). As HRD executives are proponents for professional development, their ability to develop the competence in measuring the outcomes of leadership development programs on organizational performance is crucial for advancement in their respective careers as well.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

This study was limited by the selection of a convenience sample, limiting the generalizability of the study’s findings. The results of this study apply to female executives who have participated in executive coaching only. Further research is

suggested for an enhanced research design of T1 – T2, which features an intact group, one receiving executive coaching, the other no treatment, to further isolate the impact of executive coaching on organizational performance.

Further research is suggested, utilizing the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey*, to compare the differences between male and female executives who have participated in executive coaching. At a minimum, the findings would indicate how the process might be changed to support better outcomes. This would add value to the body of empirical studies on executive coaching.

Further research is warranted to include the viewpoints of executives who have participated in executive coaching and are employed in organizations outside of the United States. It would be useful to learn how other companies have designed their executive coaching programs, what the outcomes are, how organizational performance is impacted, and what new levels of individual performance can be measured, etc.

### Concluding Thoughts

An updated census report from Catalyst, the nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing women in business (2008), reported the following findings:

“In 2008, women held 15.7 percent of corporate officer positions at *Fortune* 500 companies, compared to 15.4 percent in 2007. Women held 6.2 percent of top earner positions; in 2007, this number was 6.7 percent. The number of companies with no women corporate officers increased from 74 in 2007 to 75 in 2008. The number of companies with three or more women corporate officers also increased from 203 in 2007 to 206 in 2008.”

As indicated earlier in this study, the number of women in the uppermost executive positions within corporate America continues to slowly inch upward. As more organizations seek to fill critical leadership positions, leadership development modalities

which accelerate the development of females into senior executive leadership positions are urgently needed.

This study sought to fill the leadership gap by providing a two-pronged solution: one, a singular focus on the leadership development of women through the specific use of executive coaching, and measuring the impact of this leadership development modality on their organizational performance. Support for gender diversity as an organizational initiative is warranted as supported by the findings of this research study. This analysis demonstrated support for the further identification, development and promotion of the female executive; provided evidence of the efficacy of the practice of executive coaching; and added to the growing body of evidence which promotes the measurement of leadership development programs at the organizational level.

One leading Fortune 100 company, PricewaterhouseCoopers, understands this critical organizational need to identify, develop and advance the promotion rates of women, as evidenced by their commitment to gender diversity. Their Gender Advisory Council (2008) has spearheaded the effort to bridge the gender gap at the highest executive positions, acknowledging that the inclusion of women is an organizational, economical necessity, in order to maintain a competitive stance. Research studies which provide justification and evidence for the identification, development and promotion of women, are crucial in closing the leadership shortage gap. As these initiatives address the current leadership shortage, efforts must be instituted, in tandem, which lead to the identification, development, and promotion of women of color into these senior executive positions. The gender inclusion dialogue is deficient without the addition of this significant group.

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## Appendix A

## EXECUTIVE COACHING EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

## Introduction

My name is Lily Benavides, a fourth-year Doctoral candidate in the Organization & Leadership program, in the School of Education, at the University of San Francisco. Thank you in advance for participating in this doctoral research study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy of an executive coaching program, as a specific leadership development modality, on the organizational performance of female executives, to determine if the new knowledge, skills and abilities learned, lead to their further promotability.

Please take a few moments to answer these questions about your experience with executive coaching. The survey should take less than 25 minutes to complete. You can re-enter the survey at any time to update your responses until the survey is finished or until you have exited the survey.

Your survey responses are both confidential and anonymous. As the project and survey author, I will not collect identifying information with the survey. Your responses will be collated with those of the other participants and reported as aggregate data.

Dr. Patricia Mitchell is the Chair of my Dissertation Committee. She can be reached via email at Mitchell@usfca.edu.

I can always be reached at 415-860-7992 or via email: mizlilyb@yahoo.com to provide further information about this study.

Thank you for your assistance with my dissertation research.

Lily Benavides  
Fourth-year Doctoral Candidate  
University of San Francisco/School of Education  
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415-860-7992

**1.** Please note that you may discontinue your participation in the study at any time. The data will be kept confidential. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Please indicate that you have read and understood the information provided above, and that you willingly agree to participate in this study.

## **I. Outcomes of Executive Coaching on Organizational Performance**

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements by selecting the corresponding response. \*The use of 'team' in the questions below indicates the entire group of persons who directly report to the executive.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

2. I believe that as a result of the executive coaching I received, my team has increased its speed to market of our products and services.
3. My ability to balance what is good for my business unit with the needs of other parts of the organization, has increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
4. Information flows more freely among my team as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
5. Communication among my team has improved as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
6. My business unit's productivity has not increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
7. As a result of my participation in executive coaching, my business unit is more efficient.
8. The goals my team and I mutually agree upon are clearer as a result of my experience with executive coaching.
- \*9. As a result of my participation in executive coaching, my professional relationships with others have not improved.
10. I believe my business unit has produced better business results as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
11. As a result of my experience with executive coaching, my business unit has developed more strategic relationships across the organization.
12. My team produces more 'on-time' results on schedule due to my participation in executive coaching.
13. I have not encouraged my team to achieve higher performance levels as a result of my participation in executive coaching.



14. My team's ability to make valuable contributions to our organization has increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
15. After participating in executive coaching, I expect I will receive a promotion shortly based on the performance of my business unit.
16. The executive coaching I received has had a positive impact on the performance of my team.
17. As a result of the executive coaching I received, my team was able to deliver results ahead of schedule.
18. The amount of recognition from my peers for my business unit's contributions has increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
19. My team's support of organizational change has increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.

## **II. Outcomes of Executive Coaching on Job Behavior**

20. Since participating in the executive coaching, my ability to develop my team has increased.
21. The executive coaching I received helped me increase my ability to communicate my vision for my business unit more effectively.
22. I believe I am more effective in my job as a result of participating in executive coaching.
23. As a result of participating in executive coaching, I do not spend more time developing strategic work relationships.
- \*24. I believe I am more aware of the impact of my behavior on others as a result of executive coaching.
25. I have not become more sensitive to the needs of others as a result of executive coaching.
26. I am able to display patience with others when in a difficult situation as a result of participating in executive coaching.
27. I recognize the talents and abilities of others as a result of executive coaching.
28. My relationships with stakeholders have not improved as a result of the executive coaching experience.

29. I have tried new behaviors as a result of receiving feedback during the executive coaching experience.

\*30. I believe that I am a more effective leader of my business unit as a result of executive coaching.

31. I've been able to increase the diversity of my team by being more inclusive of others as a direct result of my participation in executive coaching

### **III. Business Areas Impacted as a Result of Executive Coaching**

This section of the survey asks information about the impact of executive coaching in specific business areas. The impact in some of the business areas can be measured quantitatively; others are more difficult to assess using numbers, yet an increase or a decrease is noted.

Please indicate business areas impacted by your participation and receipt of executive coaching. Check all areas that are applicable.

32. The following tangible business impacts occurred as a result of my participation and receipt of executive coaching:

- Increased top line revenue
- Improved teamwork
- Team member satisfaction levels increased
- Increased retention of key employees
- Improved ability to execute
- Increased productivity of business unit
- Increased quality of services or product provided
- Increased work output
- Accelerated promotions
- Increased client satisfaction
- Increased diversity levels
- Increased employee satisfaction in business unit
- Decreased turnover in business unit
- Deadlines met on time
- Reinforced my own intention to stay with the organization
- Cost reductions
- Increased bottom line profitability
- Reduced complaints
- Retained key clients
- Increased speed to market

33. The following intangible business impacts occurred as a result of my participation and receipt of executive coaching:
- Improved relationship with direct reports
  - Improved relationship with stakeholders
  - Increased personal effort
  - Improved teamwork
  - Improved relationship with peers
  - Improved job satisfaction
  - Reduced conflict in business unit
  - Increased organizational commitment
  - Improved relationship with clients
  - Increased level of personal engagement
  - Other intangibles
34. Estimate the dollar value ascribed to the outcome(s) of the executive coaching you received using the following dollar ranges:
- \$0
  - \$1 to \$5,000
  - \$5,001 to \$10,000
  - \$10,001 to \$25,000
  - \$25,001 to \$50,000
  - \$50,001 to \$100,000
  - \$100,001 to \$250,000
  - \$250,001 to \$500,000
  - \$500,001 to \$1,000,000
  - Over \$1,000,000
35. Please indicate any additional comments on business areas impacted as a result of your participation in executive coaching.

#### **IV. New Learnings Gained from Executive Coaching**

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements by selecting the corresponding response.

1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree

36. Executive coaching did not teach me how to create a collaborative environment with my team.
37. My ability to produce results has increased as a result of executive coaching.
38. Executive coaching taught me how to identify specific goals to achieve.
39. Executive coaching increased my ability for self-promotion.
40. Executive coaching taught me the importance of feedback.

41. Executive coaching increased my ability to consider others' points of view when making decisions.
42. As a result of my participation in executive coaching, I am less abrasive with others.
43. Executive coaching helped me shift from a tactical to a more strategic focus.
- \*44. Executive coaching helped me learn the importance of reflection.
45. Executive coaching helped me learn to value feedback.
46. My self-confidence has increased as a result of executive coaching.
47. Executive coaching did not teach me how to create a collaborative environment for my team members.
48. I practice active listening skills as a result of executive coaching.
49. Executive coaching helped me learn to value the diversity of others' experiences.
50. Executive coaching did not increase my ability to be flexible.
51. My tolerance for ambiguity has increased as a result of executive coaching.
52. My credibility within the organization has increased as a result of my participation in executive coaching.
53. Executive coaching has helped improve my focus on producing results.
54. Executive coaching taught me how to increase the alignment of individual team members to attain collective organizational goals.
55. Executive coaching taught me how to enhance teamwork within my team.
56. Identify the factors that contributed to the sustainment of the newly acquired behaviors you learned as a direct result of executive coaching. (Check all that apply).
  - The executive coaching assessment process
  - Effectiveness of the feedback received
  - The specificity of the target development goals you and your coach identified
  - Emotional competence of the executive coach
  - Your commitment to the executive coaching process
  - Your readiness level to participate in executive coaching
  - Your relationship with the executive coach
  - The executive coach's ability to keep things confidential
  - You and the executive coach's availability to meet
  - Frequency of meetings between yourself and the executive coach
  - Your manager's support
  - Organizational support
  - Feedback shared with raters

- Soliciting suggestions from raters

57. Identify the factors that prevented sustainment of the newly acquired behaviors you learned as a direct result of executive coaching. (Check all that apply).

- The executive coaching assessment process
- Effectiveness of the feedback received
- The specificity of the goals identified by yourself and your coach to work upon
- Emotional competence of the executive coach
- Your commitment to the executive coaching process
- Your readiness level to participate in executive coaching
- Your relationship with the executive coach
- The executive coach's ability to keep things confidential
- You and the executive coach's availability to meet
- Frequency of meetings between yourself and the executive coach
- Your manager's support
- Organizational support
- Feedback shared with team
- Soliciting suggestions from raters

58. What are you doing differently that you may otherwise not have done without the executive coaching?

59. Please list any other additional outcomes of the executive coaching experience.

#### V. Demographic Section

This section of the survey asks general information about your organization's industry sector, your current organizational rank level, and your reasons for participating in the executive coaching experience.

Please complete the following demographic information by checking the box next to the response that applies to you.

60. My organization belongs to the following industry sector:

- Aerospace
- Agriculture
- Automobile
- Chemical
- Education
- Entertainment
- Financial
- Food/Beverage
- Forest/Paper
- Government
- Healthcare

- Industrial/Farm Equipment
- Insurance
- Military
- Non-Profit
- Petroleum Refining
- Pharmaceutical
- Retail
- Service
- Technology
- Wholesaler

61. My current position within the organization is:

- Manager
- Director
- Vice-president
- Partner
- President
- CEO

62. I have been in my current position for:

- Less than 1 year
- 2-4 years
- 5-7 years
- 8-10 years
- Over 10 years

63. I decided to participate in executive coaching to address: (Check all that apply)

- Personal Growth
- Organizational Change
- Career Development
- Succession Planning
- Managerial Skill Improvement
- Leadership Skill Improvement
- Interpersonal Skill Improvement
- Work/Life Balance
- Other

64. I have received approximately \_\_\_\_ hours of executive coaching:

- Less than 10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-29 hours
- 30-39 hours
- 40-49 hours
- Over 50 hours

65. My executive coach was a:

- Female
- Male

66. Age:

- 20 – 24 years
- 25 – 29 years
- 30 – 34 years
- 35 – 39 years
- 40 – 44 years
- 45 - 49 years
- 50 - 54 years
- 55 - 59 years
- Over 60 years

67. Ethnicity:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- White

68. Education:

- AA degree
- 4-year college degree
- Graduate degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate
- Professional degree

69. This space is provided for any general comments regarding the research study or the survey.

*\*Adapted from Starman, 2007*

Participant comments from open-ended survey items

Q 35. Please indicate any additional comments on business areas impacted as a result of your participation in executive coaching:

- Part of my coaching forced me to confront people in my company that I was havin issues with. This ultimately improved the relationships over time.
- Should be a part of every executive's development program
- the coaching was more about interaction with peer executives and ceo thasn specific project delivery. obviously intangibles impact delivery but less directly than for project or skill coaching
- Able to increase the level of productivity of my team, which in turn, led to an increase of profitability to my business unit of \$289,000.
- All the questions have the supposition that my division and or team were non performing. None of that was true. The team was a very high performing team, consistently met and exceeded demands, deadlines, and project quality. Team was a team and the all the performance metrics for my role were met. Relationships with key stakeholders were in place except with two individuals whose ethics and performance standards were unexceptable in my books. My biggest issue was I did "not play around" and all the executives did...this made them very uncomfortable.
- "Coaching" is a loose term. I use a "coach" right now for specific clarification regarding my career.
- My coaching revealed a misalignment in personal style between me and my management which ultimately resulted in me leaving the oranization. Through coaching, I was able to be true to myself.
- It gave me the courage to stand up for decisions I believed the organization needed to make so accelerated change

Q58. What are you doing differently that you may otherwise not have done without the executive coaching?

- developing peer relationships working on clarity of communication
- Have the ability to identify different learning styles in others which make me more effective in my coaching and communication with my teams.
- Reading more organizational development tools
- Interacting with peers across the organization; realistically assessing my strengths and weaknesses; being candid with senior leadership
- thinking about alignment, stakeholders, and necessary communication
- I have more clearly focused my mid-career goals and opportunities.
- Examine when I want to avoid a particular exchange. I now review why I want to avoid.
- "pushing through fear" rather than trying to avoid it; keeping track of positive feedback to make my case at review time
- I took charge of my own career
- Team building; personal development of my team members.



- Clarity around collective goals for team and managing to outcomes. this is empowering for the team. Having the courage to challenge executive management on key decisions even when i am the lone voice. Being more politically savvy and scenario planning key meetings
- Self promotion, generally; more practically though is I learned how best to position my work and the work of my team.

Q59. Please list any other additional outcomes of the executive coaching experience.

- feedback was essential to obtain from third party and experienced interviewer in qualitative fashion because it was specific to the people who evaluated
- Business Results have improved as a result of the coaching I received on prioritizing and communication skills.
- Greater willingness to take care of myself emotionally and physically; better integration of home/work life.
- I left my job. It became clear to me that there were not any real issues with me but with the culture I was in. The coaching process affirmed I was a strong performer with good self awareness, self management, empathy, adaptability, agility, strong business accumen, good team work and even relationship building..... The area that was hitting me were strategic relationships with individuals who were senior executives who had non performance, cronyism, and were uncomfortable with a strong minded, smart, caring and beautiful woman. My coach affirmed in me that I had all the right attributes, still areas to grow at a global scale, and there was not a lot both he and she could offer me to be even better in the current environment. So I left and started my own company, which is highly successful and a lot more fun! I found the exercise of coaching enlightening, affirming, healing, and painful since the truth was I was not the problem .....there was no where for me to go in the current male dominated structure I was in.....
- safety valve to explore options in a confidential setting.
- more awaraeness that my style works 90% of the time; less envy of people with different styles
- I realized I needed to leave the orgainization and resigned
- Increased objectivity based on the third-party view of my feedback.

Q69. This space is provided for any general comments regarding the research study or the survey.

- I had two coaches male and female. I think coaching is a great exercise and should not be linked to organizational performance metrics....if only the world were that simple. Coaching is not always a fix the problem kind of thing as it is a way to shepard in executives to focus on the right activities for their new roles and really love themselves more than they have in the past. The need to celebrate their natural talents and rejuvenate their innate ability to grow, learn and try new practices are the best outcomes of coaching....for it stimulates acceptance, forward focused thought, and solution oriented conversation in an organization. This is the beauty and true soul of coaching. Metrics are there to make people feel better to do what they inherently know feels good for themselves and others....

- The survey presupposes that coaching results in success within the same firm. In my case, coaching resulted in exposing reasons to leave and reasons to be confident in that decision. I believe the coaching improved my work, my self awareness, my inclusiveness. Coaching could have resulted in advancement if that setting was right for me. But leaving a firm is a reasonable result of coaching.

## Appendix B: IRB Form



## 1. Background and Rationale

Senior executive leadership is critical and in short supply in corporate America. As the first wave of baby boomers retire, one-fifth of the largest companies in the United States will lose up to 40% or more of their senior executives. A recent report by RHR International, a global management consulting firm, found that one half of the companies studied expected to lose 50% or more of their senior managers (identified as two ranks below the CEO).

Traditionally, male executives have primarily held the majority of senior leadership positions in United States corporations. The number of female executives promoted into these senior leadership positions has increased in recent years, however.

As the numbers for women inch upward, data exists which indicates that there are less female executives who are directly in line to be CEO. Organizations recognize the paucity of talented individuals with the requisite strengths, skills, and abilities required to lead corporations on a global scale.

Senior human resource executives struggle to answer the question of where will they draw their top candidates from in the future. A ready source that can provide a competitive advantage is an organization's human capital, particularly through the identification, promotion and development of females into senior leadership roles.

This specific focus on female executives is particularly critical today, for the types of leadership competencies required now are different from those of the past. These competencies include the ability for organizational leaders to develop others, to be effective at influencing others, the ability to establish a collaborative environment, to take other's opinions into consideration before making decisions, the ability to establish and develop key relationships, are attributes more closely associated with feminine characteristics.

Many organizational resources are marshaled into formal leadership development programs with the intention of identifying, developing and promoting these executives. Senior executive leaders are familiar with evaluating the return-on-investment (ROI) of organizational initiatives, as organizational stakeholders demand an accountability of results that these programs do contribute to the performance of the organization. The term ROI, when used to evaluate the value of leadership development programs, is a precise value, determined by comparing the total training intervention costs to outcome benefits.

The ability to measure return-on-investment of leadership development programs is a critical competency for HR professionals to master, yet a recent study found that 78% of organizations do not evaluate the return on investment of leadership development programs. Quantifying the results and measuring the impact in a business area of a formal executive coaching program leads to an increase in organizational credibility and value of HR professionals. Although more studies are needed, executive coaching has been shown to have a high return-on-investment (ROI).

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the efficacy of an executive coaching program, as a specific leadership development modality, on the organizational performance of female executives, to determine if the new knowledge, skills and abilities learned lead to their further promotability. Specifically, this research study will focus on the following: to what extent does the outcome of a formal executive coaching program impact the organizational performance of female executives. Secondly, focus will be directed to explore to what extent does the outcome of an executive coaching program impact the effectiveness of a female executive's behavior on the job.

Additionally, focus will be directed to understand to what extent participation in an executive coaching program by a female executive result in a tangible impact in specific business areas. Further, focus will be given to understand to what extent participation in an executive coaching program result in the attainment of new skills, increased abilities and new knowledge. Finally, focus will be given to investigate to what extent does participation by a female executive in an executive coaching program result in promotion opportunities.

## 2. Description of Sample

Female executives will be the target population selected for this study. Female executives were defined as individuals who have titles such as CEOs, Partners, Presidents, Vice Presidents, Directors, and Managers. The sample will be comprised of female executives who have received executive coaching as a leadership development modality.

## 3. Recruitment Procedure

A targeted outreach program, aimed at several professional women's associations, will be conducted for the purpose of presenting an overview of the program, and to request the participation of their members in the study. Only professional networks that are comprised of individuals who fit the criteria will be contacted. This targeted approach will likely result in a sample of participants with the stated requirements sufficient for inclusion in the study.

An example of the targeted organizations for participation include: *National Association of Female Executives (NAFE)*, ([www.nafe.com](http://www.nafe.com)); *California Federation of Business and Professional Women*, ([www.bpwcal.org](http://www.bpwcal.org)); *The Professional Women's Roundtable (PWR)*, ([www.pwronline.org](http://www.pwronline.org)); *Women in Technology International (WITI)*,

(www.witi.com); WITI's Global Executive Network (GEN) (www.witi.com/gen/); and the *Forum for Women Entrepreneurs (FWE)* (www.fwe.org).

The professional associations, targeted for contact, will be contacted via email by the researcher. In this email, the researcher will provide an overview of the study's purpose, and request permission from the associations to invite their members to participate in the study. The professional associations may allow the researcher to post the electronic link to the survey on their internal message boards.

#### 4. Subject Consent Process

Several professional associations and individuals were contacted for the purpose of presenting an overview of the study. Each association and individual contacted will be requested to cooperate with the collection of data for the study. Individuals who agree to participate will be requested to sign an Informed Consent form, which provides an overview of the research objectives and assures respondents that their responses would be kept completely anonymous.

After receiving the signed Informed Consent form, a link to the survey will be emailed to the individual. The survey administered to the individuals contains a criteria list for participation at the beginning of the survey, which they will be asked to complete in order to continue to the online questionnaire.

The following sampling criteria were identified to use in this study:

- All members of the sample are female executives.
- All members have directly participated in an executive coaching experience in their respective organizations.
- All members of the sample participating in the research study are interested in contributing to what is known about the outcome and benefits of participating in an executive coaching program.

#### 5. Procedures

A pilot test will be conducted to determine that the participants in the sample understand the questions and are able to complete the survey. The purpose of the pilot test is to identify any potential issues with the design of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey (Appendix A)*, an instrument designed by the researcher. The pilot test warrants that the researcher has designed a reliable survey. The focus of the pilot test is to ensure the clarity of survey items and the overall format of the survey.

The individuals who will participate in the pilot test will be female executives who fit the stated criteria. They will be excluded from the final sample in the research study. Their participation is limited strictly to the pilot of the instrument. Several female executives known to the researcher, who fit the requisite criteria, will be provided an overview of the study, and invited to participate. The researcher will email the pilot participants a link to the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey (Appendix A)* from

which to capture their responses. The researcher will include specific questions at the end of the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey (Appendix A)* to capture the comments required to ensure the reliability of the instrument.

The pilot test will address possible concerns such as if the language was unclear, if the directions were difficult to understand, or were there any connectivity issues with the website hosting the online survey. Additional information such as the participants' general reactions to the survey, such as where there any questions that should be deleted, what additional questions should be included, and on average, how long it took to complete the survey.

Changes will be incorporated into the instrument based upon the feedback provided by these individuals. Once the changes have been implemented into the instrument, the researcher will begin collecting responses from subjects identified from the professional associations, as identified earlier.

## 6. Potential Risks to Subjects

The collection of data via the Internet poses possible risks to the subjects. For example, persons other than the researcher may access the subjects' personal information, including their identity. The information provided by the subjects may be saved in their Internet service provider's files. The risk of exposure can surface at different stages, from data gathering, to data processing, to data storage and dissemination.

As an USF researcher, I have designed the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey (Appendix A)* and will gather data from subjects using the Internet. I am required by the IRB to include the IRB email address and telephone number, as listed below.

School of Education, Room 023  
Department of Counseling Psychology  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
(415) 422-6091 voice  
(415) 422-5528 fax  
E-mail: irbphs@usfca.edu

## 7. Minimization of Potential Risk

To minimize the potential risk to subjects providing responses to the *Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey (Appendix A)*, I will use a blind copy format when sending emails to the list of survey recipients. Additionally, I will ensure that respondents cannot click on the option "reply to all" recipients of a message so that the confidentiality of their responses is protected. I will include a statement saying there will be no future mailings or an opt-out message that permits addressees to have their names removed from any future mailings.

## 8. Potential Benefits to Subjects

One of the benefits to the subjects participating in this research study includes the ability to provide their opinions and perspectives from their participation in an executive coaching program. Other benefits to the individuals who consent to participate in this research study include an internal sense of satisfaction that they were included in an important University research study, from which others may benefit.

## 9. Costs to Subjects

There are no costs incurred by the subjects, as the researcher will only forward, via email, a link to the survey. It is expected that only those individuals who have access to the Internet will participate in the survey.

## 10. Reimbursements/Compensation to Subjects

Individuals who participate in this study will receive neither reimbursement nor compensation.

## 11. Confidentiality of Records

The researcher will maintain a copy of any data, including records, email addresses, contact information, etc. in a locked file cabinet. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the cabinet.

## Appendix C

## Validity Panel

CEO & President, Talent Management Consulting Firm & Industrial/Organizational Psychologist

- Instructional Designer
- Has designed surveys and leadership development programs

Associate Director, Biopharmaceutical Firm

- Has designed leadership development programs
- Has conducted executive development ROI impact programs

Statistician

- Has designed quantitative surveys

HR Director, Pharmaceutical Firm

- Has worked in executive development at large organizations

Executive Coach, Own Practice

- Former executive
- Presently an executive coach in private practice

Executive Coach, SFSU Professor

- Provides executive coaching services in education

Director, Executive Coaching Program, Financial Services Firm

- Directs executive coaching program in large corporation



## Appendix D

## VALIDITY GRID

<b>LW</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>MH</b>	<b>EJ</b>	<b>TDW</b>	<b>PB</b>	<b>MM</b>	
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	Have you ever designed a survey?
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	Have you ever provided feedback to your manager on their leadership ability in a survey?
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	Have you ever assessed your personal leadership qualities in a survey?
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	Have any of your direct reports ever provided feedback to you on your leadership qualities?
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	Have you ever designed a training program?
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	Have you ever designed a leadership development program?
<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	Have you ever personally assessed performance improvement as an outcome of the leadership training you were involved in?

## Appendix E. List of Professional Women's Associations

<u>Professional Associations</u>	<u>Website</u>
National Association of Female Executives	<a href="http://www.nafe.com">www.nafe.com</a>
California Federation of Business and Professional Women	<a href="http://www.bpwcal.org">www.bpwcal.org</a>
The Professional Women's Roundtable	<a href="http://www.pwronline.org">www.pwronline.org</a>
Women in Technology International	<a href="http://www.witi.com">www.witi.com</a>
WITI's Global Executive Network	<a href="http://www.witi.com/gen/">http://www.witi.com/gen/</a>
Board of Directors Network	<a href="http://www.boarddirectorsnetwork.org">www.boarddirectorsnetwork.org</a>
Women of Color Action Network	<a href="http://www.wcan.ws.org">www.wcan.ws.org</a>
The Boston Club	<a href="http://www.thebostonclub.com">www.thebostonclub.com</a>
The Central Exchange	<a href="http://www.centralexchange.org">www.centralexchange.org</a>
The Chicago Network	<a href="http://www.thechicagonetwork.org">www.thechicagonetwork.org</a>
Financial Women's Association of New York	<a href="http://www.fwa.org">www.fwa.org</a>
Forum of Executive Women	<a href="http://www.foew.com">www.foew.com</a>
Inforum Center for Leadership	<a href="http://www.inforummichigan.org">www.inforummichigan.org</a>
Milwaukee Women Inc	<a href="http://www.milwaukeeewomeninc.org">www.milwaukeeewomeninc.org</a>
Women Executive Leadership	<a href="http://www.womenexecutiveleadership.com">www.womenexecutiveleadership.com</a>
Women President's Organization	<a href="http://www.womenpresidentsorg.com">www.womenpresidentsorg.com</a>
US Women's Chamber of Commerce	<a href="http://www.uswcc.org">www.uswcc.org</a>
eWomenNetwork	<a href="http://www.ewomennetwork.com">www.ewomennetwork.com</a>
Forum for Women Entrepreneurs	<a href="http://www.fwe.org">www.fwe.org</a>

## Appendix F. Appeal Letter



## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXECUTIVE COACHING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE EXECUTIVES AS A PREDICTOR FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS**

### **Research Study Overview**

The increasing need for executive senior leadership outstrips the present supply in corporate America. Organizations have acknowledged the severe shortage of competent and capable individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities to serve in the most critical executive leadership positions in their companies.

Evidence exists to support the identification, development and promotion of women into the executive suite. Recent studies have found that those organizations which promote and develop their high-potential female candidates realize an increase in their organization's financial performance. Diversity in gender promotes superior business performance, notably in the following areas: worker productivity, net operating profit, gross revenues, total assets, market share and shareholder value.

Leadership competencies required today are different from the leadership skills required in the bureaucratic, top down command types of the past. Examples of the types of leadership skills needed today include the ability to establish relationships; to develop others; to create a collaborate environment; to include the points of view of others before making a decision; which are more closely associated with the leadership skills of women.

Further, the ability to measure the impact of leadership development programs is a critical competency for HR and Learning & Development professionals to master, yet very little is known about the knowledge, skills or processes in leadership development programs that contribute to organizational performance.

### **Contribution to the Field**

- Provides empirical evidence of the efficacy of executive coaching on the organizational performance of female executives
- Provides empirical evidence of the efficacy of executive coaching
- Fills the existing gap in the leadership literature

- Increases the knowledge base of HR and Learning & Development professionals as to how to design leadership development programs which impact organizational performance

**Criteria for Participation:** 1) female executives, 2) have participated in executive coaching, and 3) have an interest in contributing to what is known about the outcomes of a leadership development program.

### **Research Tool**

The Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey, an original assessment tool, was designed for this study. It is divided into 5 different sections which measure the outcomes of executive coaching on organizational performance, job behavior, impact in business areas, things learned from executive coaching, and demographic information. It is available online, 24 hours/day. It is expected that it should take no longer than 25 minutes to complete.

### **Survey Roll Out: (Monday, Sept. 15, 2008 – Saturday, Oct. 4, 2008)**

Best case scenario: 30 or more female executives complete the study

### **Your Organization's Opportunity to Participate**

- 1) Publish the link to the survey directly on your website, allowing individuals who meet the criteria direct access to the study;
- 2) Email the survey link to members letting them know about the survey and invite them to participate; or
- 3) Forward this letter and survey link to your personal network and invite your colleagues to participate.

### **W.I.I.F.T. (What's In It For Them)**

- Opportunity to provide feedback on their experience with a specific leadership development modality, executive coaching
- To contribute to what is known about leadership development programs (in addition to mentoring) which serve to identify, develop and promote women into senior leadership positions
- The occasion for female executives' point of view to be considered in the design of leadership development programs, such as executive coaching
- The opportunity to provide input for an important research study

### **Timeframe**

Survey Roll Out: Monday, Sept. 15, 2008

Data Analysis: October, 2008 - November, 2008

Study Completed: December, 2008

**Survey Link:** The Executive Coaching Effectiveness Survey will be released to the public on Monday, Sept. 15, 2008.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=TXacFb\\_2bZed\\_2fNrsTJyLkyHw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=TXacFb_2bZed_2fNrsTJyLkyHw_3d_3d)

I would be delighted to share the results with your organization upon completion of the study. I am always available at 415-860-7992 or via email: [mizlilyb@yahoo.com](mailto:mizlilyb@yahoo.com) should additional information be required.

I do hope your members will participate in this important study. I am grateful for your enthusiastic support for this research study.

## Appendix G



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

**Purpose and Background**

Lily Benavides, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is conducting a study that is designed to measure the impact of executive coaching, as a specific leadership development modality, on the organizational performance of female executives, to determine if the new knowledge, skills and abilities learned lead to their further promotability.

Senior executive leadership is critical and in short supply. As more women gain senior executive positions, the researcher is interested in understanding to what extent does participation in an executive coaching program impact specific business areas, leading to a significant increase on an organization's performance; while at the same time, increase the effectiveness of a female executive's individual performance.

I am being asked to participate because I am a female executive and have received executive coaching.

**Procedures**

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will complete a short questionnaire providing basic information about me, including industry sector, organizational rank, length in current position, reasons for participating in executive coaching, approximate hours of executive coaching received, age, ethnicity, and education level.
2. I will complete a survey about my executive coaching experience.
3. I will complete the survey via the Internet, the results of which will be retrieved by the researcher.

**Risks and/or Discomforts**

1. It is possible that some of the questions on the survey may make me uncomfortable; however, I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer.
2. I can stop my participation in the study at any time.
3. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. The study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only the researcher will have access to the files.
4. I understand that I will need to have access to the Internet in order to complete the online survey.

**Benefits**

The anticipated benefit of this study is an understanding of the effect of executive coaching programs, and their impact on the performance of organizations, as well as its impact on my individual performance.

**Costs/Financial Considerations**

I will incur no financial costs as a result of participating in this study.

**Payment/Reimbursement**

I will not be monetarily compensated as a direct result of my participation in the study.

**Questions**

I have talked to Lily Benavides about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call her at (415) 860-7992 or Dr. Patricia Mitchell (415) 422-4321.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first contact the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message; by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu; or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

**Consent**

I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights" and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a student or employee at USF.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

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Subject's Signature

Date of Signature

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This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Lily Benavides  
Candidate

November 25, 2008  
Date

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Patricia Mitchell, Chairperson

November 25, 2008

Br. Raymond J. Vercruyse

November 25, 2008

Dr. Betty Taylor

November 25, 2008