

COACHING FOR A
BETTER WORKPLACE

BUILDING CAREERS & ENHANCING PERFORMANCE



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Message from Managing Director & Head, Group International Management, United Overseas Bank Limited (UOB)

Today, our workforce has to operate in a world with three "unstoppable phenomena".

A "business-as-unusual" operating environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck ASEAN in early 2020, many of us were ill-prepared for a prolonged disruption not just at work, but also our daily lives, which we now know bears lasting impact on mental health.

Mental well-being challenges are being faced by more and more people in industrialised countries, research papers have suggested. With fast-ageing populations as well, leaders and organisations will thus need to proactively address these phenomena with their workforce in order to thrive sustainably.

UOB embarked on a journey in 2021 to nurture an organic mentoring and coaching culture. Starting with our colleagues across 18 international geographies, we worked purposefully with them to navigate through the post-pandemic recovery with the ultimate aim for all of us to emerge stronger against the unstoppable phenomena.

We rallied various country leadership teams to come on board, equipped them and other people-centric leaders with essential capabilities to have meaningful, empowering and inspiring conversations and interventions with the people in their charge.

Over time, we are seeing more and more colleagues pivoting more strongly, holding themselves accountable to maximise business and workplace outcomes while achieving better work-life balance and integration. We observe an organic rise in multi-generational task force teams seeking productivity gains and revenue traction, often inspired by successes achieved by colleagues who have benefited from ongoing mentoring and coaching interventions.



It has been about four years since UOB embarked on this journey internationally, and intentionally. It is still very much a work-in-progress as we plant the seeds throughout the organisation. We know it will take a lot more time, and a lot more leaders and colleagues to jump on the bandwagon to truly embed this as our way of leadership and culture. Our UOB Way.

We are humbled and heartened by the recognition bestowed on us, including the Marshall Goldsmith Coaching Culture Excellence Award for Asia, the AcComm Group Excellence in Coaching & Mentoring Award for Thailand, as well as the Corporate Excellence Winner awarded in Singapore's National Mentoring Summit.

With the good momentum, we have partnered with SUSS to provide an objective lens to the impact of our journey, and collaborated with Workforce Singapore and Great Place to Work to advocate the important national agenda of career health and enabling our workforce. We believe that by sharing our mentoring and coaching culture journey, more organisations and leaders can leverage on our insights and experience as a source of inspiration in their own quests to bring out the best in their people.

To a sustainable and ever rejuvenating future-ready workforce.

Mr Ian Wong



Message from the Provost of the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)

At SUSS, our vision is to be a university that inspires learning for life and impacts lives. In accordance with this vision, we have been a pioneer and champion of continuous education and lifelong learning in Singapore. This mission is more critical than ever as our world and workplaces undergo rapid and constant change and disruptions. SUSS is motivated by the belief that a university education is not an end in itself; it must be an ongoing journey of discovery and growth, providing access, opportunities and multiple pathways.

Workplace coaching aligns closely with SUSS's values, especially its focus on lifelong learning and equipping working adults with real-world skills. Coaching supports lifelong learning, sustains effectiveness, and enhances adaptability in the workplace. SUSS is committed to nurturing future-ready leaders who can thrive in diverse cultures and environments.

Our ongoing collaboration with UOB, exemplified by the Global Leadership Symposium, provides an ideal backdrop for this study and report. For three years now, SUSS and UOB have partnered on the Global Leadership Symposium, bringing together executives, industry professionals, and students to foster global leadership skills. These skills are essential for navigating an uncertain and complex world, especially with the rise of artificial intelligence.

This study sought to evaluate the outcomes of coaching at UOB. I am pleased to note that SUSS's Behavioural Insights Centre of Excellence has found evidence that workplace coaching can lead to concrete business outcomes for organisations. We hope our findings will inspire more organisations to adopt workplace coaching practices.

Professor Robbie Goh

Disclaimer and Project Background

This report is a commissioned project by United Overseas Bank Limited ("UOB"), undertaken to assess the impact of workplace coaching within the organisation. The findings, insights, and conclusions presented are unique to UOB and reflect its unique context, culture, and implementation of coaching practices.

The content of this report is provided strictly for informational purpose only. It is not intended to serve as professional advice or as a basis for decision-making outside the scope of UOB's internal initiatives. Readers are advised to exercise their own judgment and discretion when interpreting or applying the information contained in this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coaching is good for today's business

By fostering meaningful coaching conversations, co-creating goals, and encouraging strong coachee-coach collaboration, coaching may help align individual aspirations with organisational objectives, ultimately supporting business success.

At UOB, the vast majority of coachees we studied achieved or surpassed their coaching goals, as reported by their supervisors and colleagues. These accomplishments include enhanced management capabilities, improved team productivity, and crucially, direct business outcomes such as increased sales revenue and greater operational efficiency.



9 in 10 coachees met or exceeded their **business outcome goals**.



8 in 10 coachees met or exceeded their **professional development goals**.

To prepare employees for **Business as Unusual**, coaching increases...



Task Performance
▲ **7.5%**



Innovativeness
▲ **7.5%**

To fortify employees' **Mental Well-Being**, coaching increases...



Maintaining Perspective
▲ **8.5%**



Cooperative Interaction
▲ **10%**

To rejuvenate an **Ageing Workforce**, coaching increases...



Succession Planning
▲ **14%**



Retirement Preparedness
▲ **11%**

Coaching helps prepare for tomorrow's business

Amid economic uncertainties, technological disruptions, and shifting demographics, organisations face increasing challenges in staying competitive. Embedding coaching into the organisational culture empowers employees and strengthens their career health, building a resilient workforce that is prepared for future challenges.

At the conclusion of the six-month study, UOB coachees reported a range of meaningful gains that position both themselves and the business for future success. These include improved task performance, greater innovativeness, enhanced ability to maintain perspective, and a stronger focus on succession planning and knowledge sharing.

1.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace coaching is growing rapidly. The Amazon Mentoring Program, launched in 2016 with 18,800 participants in its first year, expanded nearly tenfold to 160,000 participants by 2022.¹

Coaching has evolved in response to changing organisational structures and needs — shifting from formal executive coaching programmes to a more flexible, embedded coaching culture.² This transformation emphasises the importance of cultivating high-quality coaching conversations across the organisation to enhance agility.²

When coaching is embedded organisation-wide through multiple modalities, it fosters a culture that supports the development and performance of individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole.³ Coaching can provide guidance and help coachees reframe their thinking more analytically, encouraging innovation and effective problem-solving at work.⁴

Importantly, coaching is backed by science. International research has linked workplace coaching to a whole suite of positive organisational outcomes, including **increased productivity⁵, higher employee retention⁶, and stronger overall firm performance.⁷**



Coaching session at UOB Malaysia

Journey of UOB Coaching Culture

UOB is no stranger to employing coaching as a strategic lever for personal and professional development.

**COVID
19**

UOB's coaching culture build has its genesis during COVID-19.

- Amid economic downturns and the business challenges faced by our regional colleagues, UOB recognised the importance of investing further in its people by strengthening both personal and organisational resilience.
- This investment empowers UOB employees across international markets to be guided by a strong sense of purpose and better equipped to navigate unprecedented challenges.

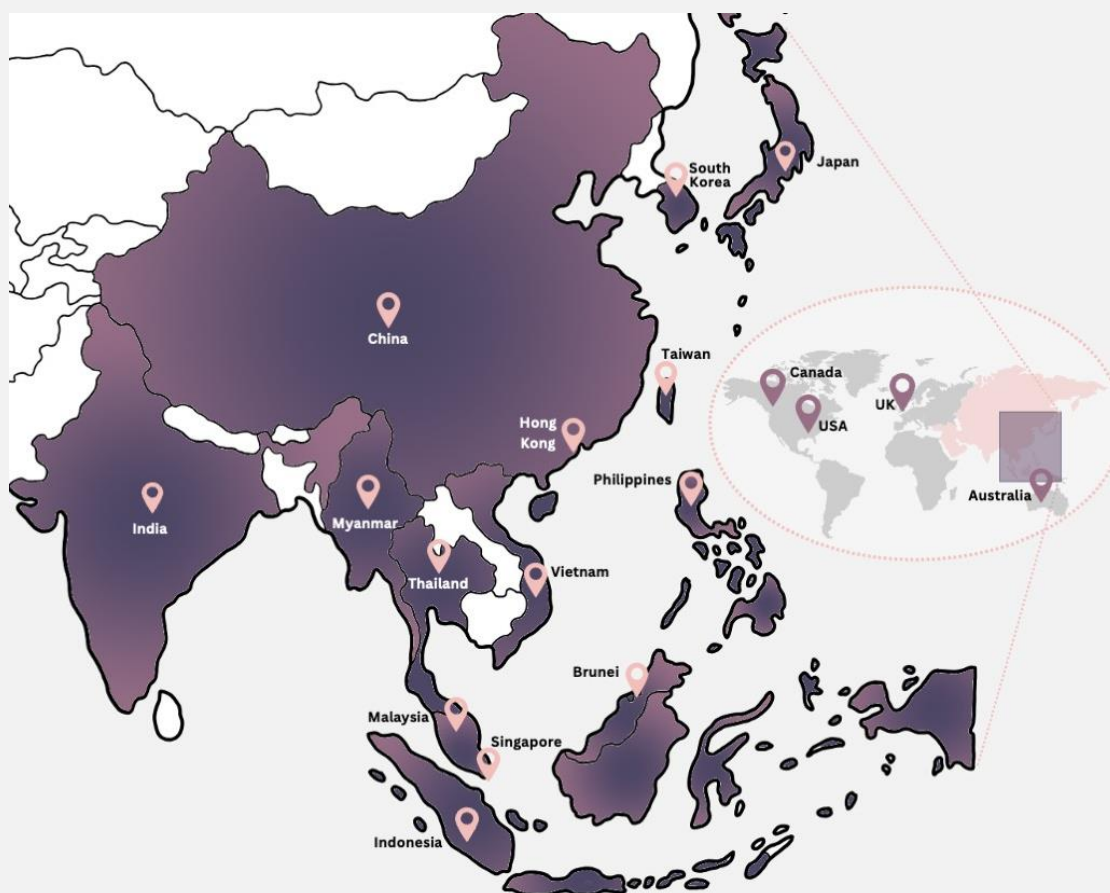
**Since
2021**

Over the last four years, UOB intentionally invested in their people to build a coaching culture as a strategic enabler.

- Expansion of existing coaching and mentoring resources for leaders and performance management has yielded positive business outcomes and is further amplified via personal endorsement across teams and individuals of various seniority.
- UOB scaled their coaching culture across their international franchise, making it accessible to all employees over time.
- The organic culture build has left an indelible footprint of personal growth and measurable business outcomes.



Coaching at UOB Thailand



Participant demographics by location

UOB-SUSS Research Study Collaboration

To provide an objective lens on the impact of coaching within an organisation, UOB partnered with SUSS to undertake a rigorous research project. This study aimed to examine whether and how organisational and professional development gains from coaching apply within a multinational Asian company.

Over a six-month period in 2024, a total of 284 UOB staff across 16 global locations participated in the research through surveys and/or interviews.

Participants included coaches — UOB business leaders who incorporated coaching into their management routines — and coachees — UOB staff who received coaching from either UOB coaches and/or externally engaged coaches. The group also included accountability partners (APs), such as direct supervisors, skip-level bosses, or HR partners, who can objectively observe changes in coachees' behaviours.

- The surveys tracked coachees' progress toward their goals, focusing on both organisational outcomes and personal development as influenced by coaching.
- In-depth interviews examined the traits and behaviours of successful coachees and coaches, as well as the qualities of relationships that contribute to effective coaching.

Our research highlights three key findings:

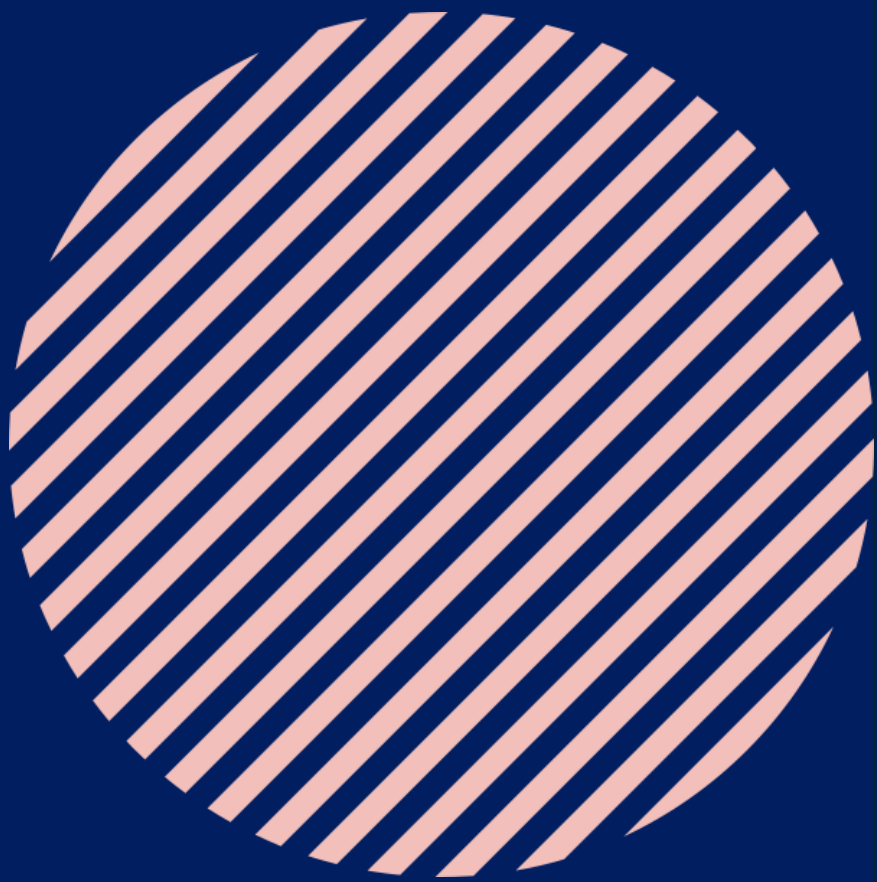
1. **Coaching is good for businesses today** as it contributes to improved performance, productivity, and engagement.
2. **Coaching prepares businesses for future macro trends** by building resilience, adaptability, and leadership capabilities.
3. **Organisations can optimise their coaching culture** by leveraging our findings and insights.

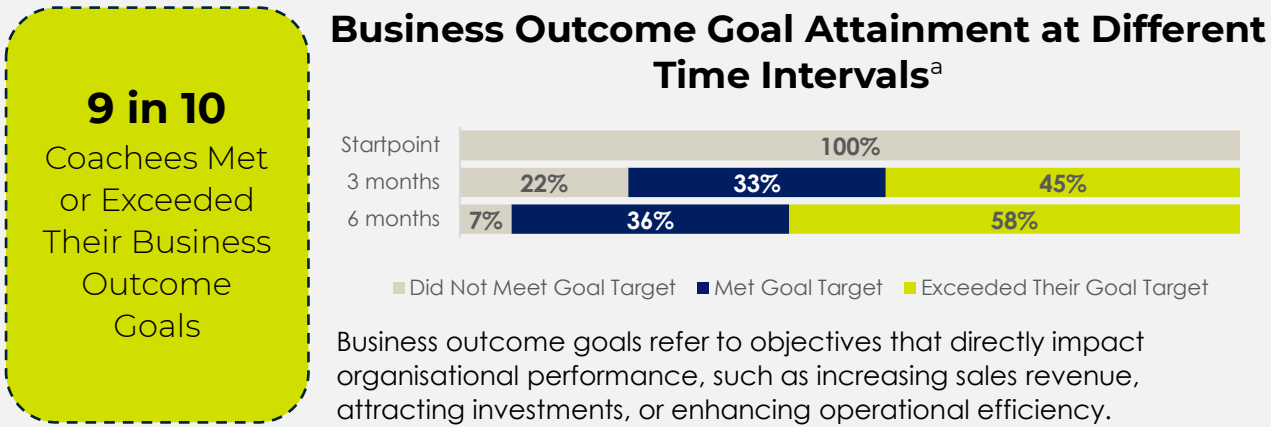
2.

COACHING IS GOOD FOR TODAY'S BUSINESS

Individual growth that aligns with organisational goals and objectives can contribute to business success.⁷ Building a coaching culture with clear guidelines⁸ can help coachees identify relevant development areas and acquire the skills needed to achieve their goals.⁹

Beyond enhancing professional capabilities, such as leadership skills, our interviews revealed that coaching also supports coachees in managing their well-being. This holistic development fosters both professional and personal growth, enabling individuals to become better versions of themselves at work and strengthening their overall performance.





Most Successful Goals

Success Rate ^b	Development Areas	Coaching Outcomes
87%	Knowledge Expansion Broadening one's understanding through various sources	- Coachees gained a greater understanding of credit risk frameworks, enabling them to complete more credit-related projects - Coachees gained a stronger understanding of the bank's products, enabling them to pitch more effectively to clients and increase sales
80%	Adaptive Leadership and Change Agency Improving leadership skills and effecting change within the immediate team and organisation	Coachees enhanced their leadership skills by adopting an empathic and proactive approach towards team members, leading to the successful delivery of cross-functional team projects that resulted in significant business impact
80%	Networking and Client Relations Management Expanding one's professional network and enhancing interactions with clients	Coachees increased investment opportunities through expanding their network
80%	Process Optimisation Streamlining and improving overall personal and organisational work processes	- Coachees introduced a process to reduce the due diligence documents processing time - Coachees adopted a technology solution that improved productivity and enhanced efficiency
71%	Communication Effectiveness Improving communication transparency and abilities	Coachees communicated ideas more effectively to various stakeholders and successfully gained their support

^a As rated by Accountability Partners (APs)

^b Success rate refers to the proportion of coachees who selected this development area and have successfully met or exceeded their goal targets.

Variables Contributing to Goal Success

While a variety of business outcome goals were chosen by coachees,

Our research indicates that goals related to **Knowledge Expansion, Adaptive Leadership and Change Agency, and Networking and Client Relations Management** had the highest odds of success.

Organisations can optimise coaching at work by guiding coaches and coachees towards these business outcome goals.

Based on our interviews, the success could be attributed to coaches being able to provide coachees with:



Relevant resources

- Documents, books, guides that can enrich coachees' knowledge



Shared personal experiences

- Strategies for engaging stakeholders



Access to professional networks

- Coaches introducing coachees to key stakeholders





Most Successful Goals

Success Rate ^d	Development Areas	Coaching Outcomes
86%	Performance Conversations (Management) Set expectations for performance and standards	Coachees were able to communicate performance expectations more clearly to team members, with a focus on work quality and productivity, resulting in greater efficiency in report generation
84%	Developing Others (Leading Others) Support others to grow and develop professionally	Coachees successfully developed team members into subject-matter experts, preparing them for future leadership roles
83%	Emotional Intelligence (Leading Self) Enhance their well-being by managing their emotions in stressful situations and becoming more empathetic to others	Coachees were able to manage their emotions better when handling difficult situations, resulting in increased customer satisfaction
78%	Others: Self-Regulation, Lifestyle Enrichment Prioritise personal growth, self-improvement, and enriching life experiences	Coachees were able to focus better at work by improving their well-being and enriching their work-life integration and lifestyle
73%	Trust & Relationships (Leading Others) Forge a closer bond and build more meaningful relationships with colleagues within or across teams	Coachees built stronger bonds with colleagues, leading to more effective collaboration at work

^c As rated by Accountability Partners (APs)

^d Success rate refers to the proportion of coachees who selected this development area and have successfully met or exceeded their goal targets.

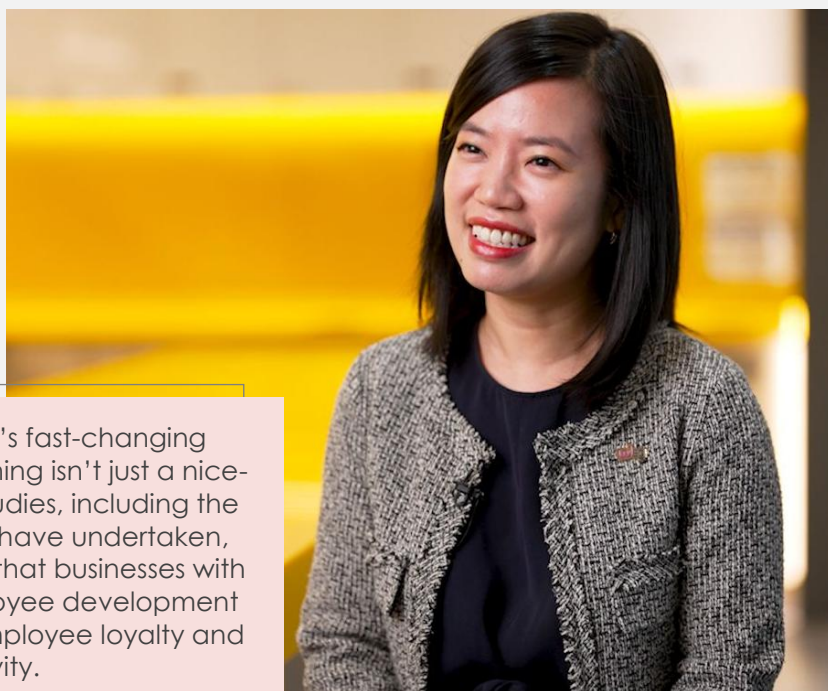
Utilising Government Resources to Facilitate Goal Attainment

Organisations can strengthen their coaching culture by encouraging coachees to participate in relevant training programmes and seminars, and by leveraging external resources to further enhance their skill sets. Depending on the jurisdiction, government-supported initiatives may also be available to help organisations upskill their workforce and foster continuous development.

Government Agencies in Singapore

The coaching culture aligns with the **SkillsFuture movement in Singapore**, where companies can empower their employees to pursue continuous learning with enhanced opportunities to acquire greater skills proficiency, knowledge and expertise. This national initiative is jointly led by **SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG)** and **Workforce Singapore (WSG)**, which work in close collaboration to drive workforce transformation.

To support these initiatives, there are various government funding schemes that companies can tap into. These include substantial **course fee subsidies**, the **SkillsFuture Enterprise Credit** for business transformation, and **absentee payroll funding** to offset the costs of releasing employees for training. As organisations navigate industry and workforce transformation, they can also tap into **job redesign initiatives** to strengthen and redesign roles effectively. This provides coaches and coachees access to quality training programmes that enhance their capabilities.



“It is clear that in today's fast-changing workplace, career coaching isn't just a nice-to-have; it is essential. Studies, including the one that UOB and SUSS have undertaken, have consistently shown that businesses with a strong culture of employee development tend to see improved employee loyalty and productivity.”

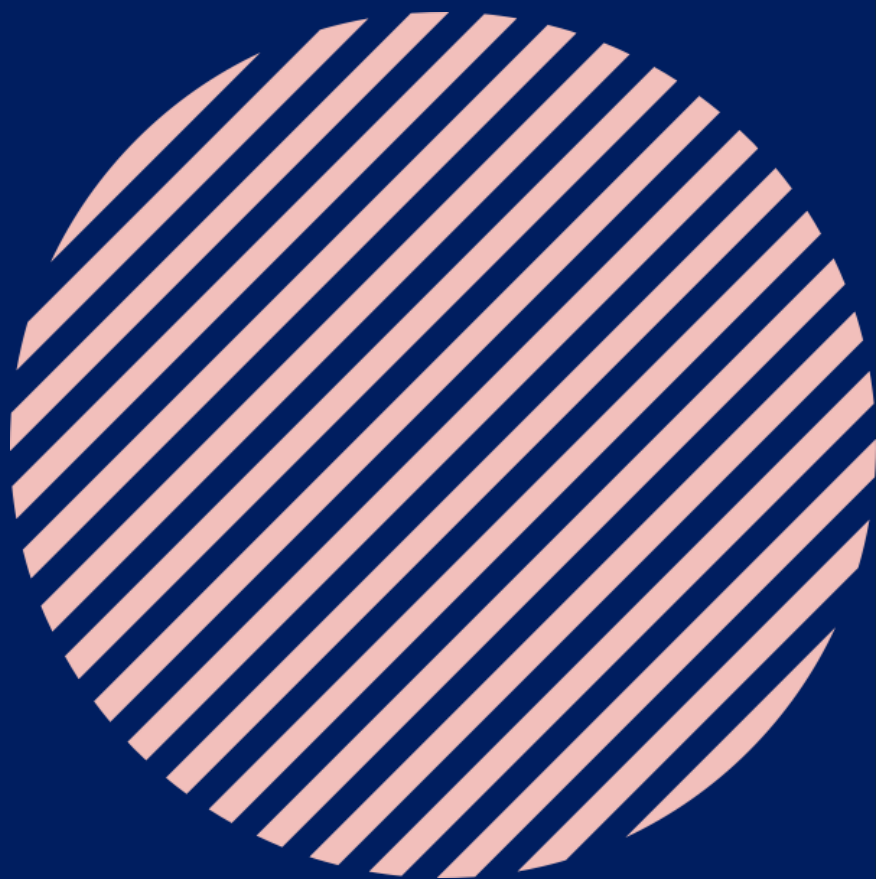
-Yap Zhi Jia
Director, Employer Strategy Office & Creative
and Professional Services Division
Workforce Singapore

3.

COACHING HELPS PREPARE FOR TOMORROW'S BUSINESS

Among the multitude of challenges organisations face today, they must navigate a “Business As Unusual” environment¹⁰ while balancing employee well-being,^{11,12} and managing an ageing workforce.^{13,14} As the workplace continues to evolve, the need for adaptive strategies to address these complexities becomes increasingly critical. Coaching can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by equipping employees with the support and skills they need to thrive, while also serving as a key business enabler.

For each challenge, we present a review of relevant research literature to highlight the impact of coaching. These insights are complemented by survey and interview findings from this study.



Coaching in a Business as UN-usual World

What Is It?

The complexities of today's rapidly evolving business landscape, driven by the rise of generative AI and escalating geopolitical tensions, present organisations with increasingly "unusual" challenges.¹⁰ To remain competitive and resilient, businesses must foster a culture of innovation that transforms disruption into opportunities for reinvention to drive growth.¹⁵

How Can Coaching Help?

Increase Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Innovativeness

- Coaching plays a role in building confidence, enhancing leadership self-efficacy, and equipping coachees with the skills to overcome challenges and adapt in the face of business uncertainty.¹⁶
- Coaching has been shown to foster entrepreneurial behaviours, enabling individuals to take the initiative and implement innovative ideas to resolve business problems.¹⁷

Increase Skill-Based Outcomes

- Coaching can enhance decision-making skills by helping coachees develop greater self-awareness through reflective discussions and objective feedback from their coaches.⁴
- It also strengthens problem-solving capabilities by guiding coachees in identifying areas for behavioural development and tracking their progress, contributing to improved sales performance and overall business impact.¹⁸

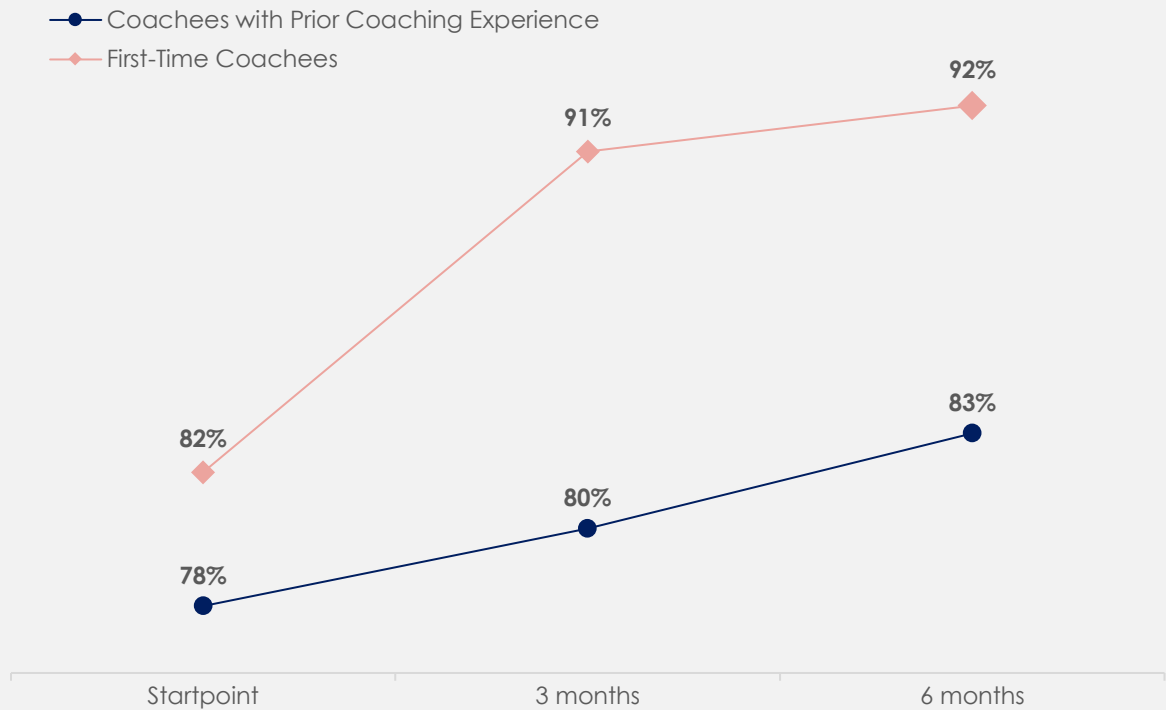


“We found that workplace coaching has the potential to benefit businesses and workers in multiple ways, including the attainment of business outcome goals and future-proofing businesses.

**-A/P Victor Seah, Director,
Behavioural Insights Centre of Excellence,
Singapore University of Social Sciences**”

Gains in Outcomes Related to Preparing Employees for a Business As *Unusual* World

Coachees’ Task Performance^e



After 6 Months of Coaching		
	Coachees with Prior Coaching Experience	First-Time Coachees
Task Performance	▲ 5%* (Effect size, $g = 0.44$) [†]	▲ 10%* (Effect size, $g = 2.29$) [†]

* Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

[†] Small effect: $g = 0.2$, Medium effect: $g = 0.5$, Large effect: $g = 0.8$

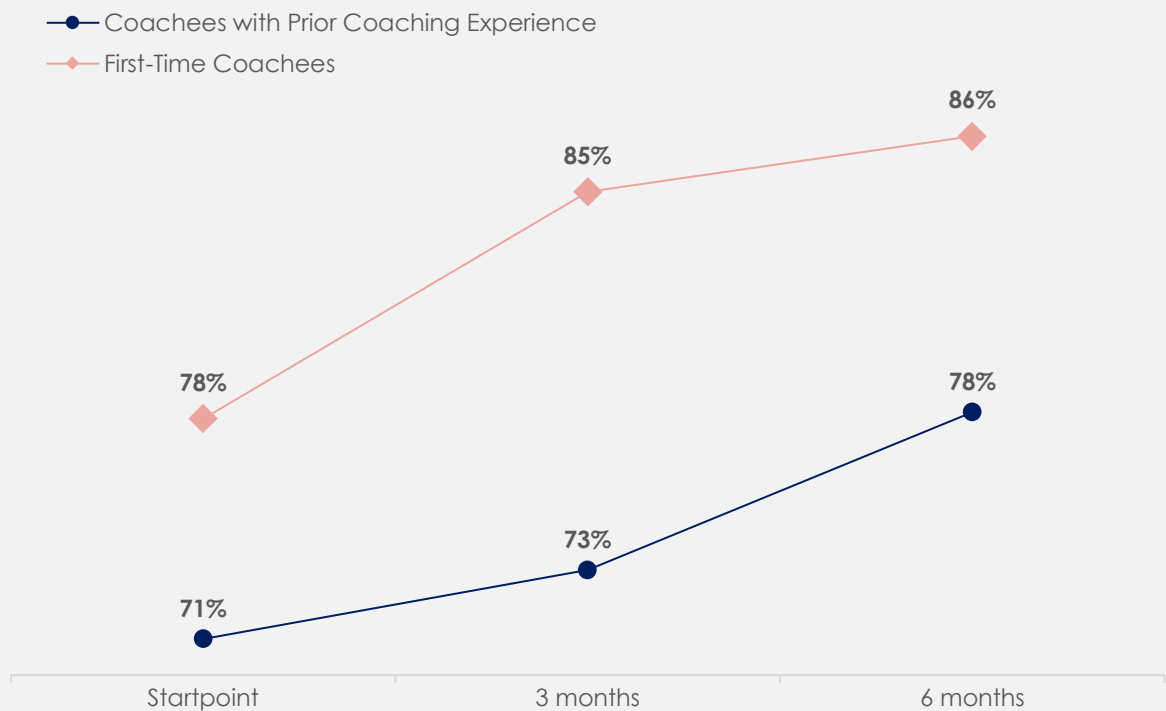
Coaches and coachees shared that coaches can impart valuable knowledge, share practical skills and past experiences, and leverage their networks to help coachees enhance their performance at work.

A previous international study found an average 2.4% increase in task performance after nine months of coaching.¹⁹

First-time coachees demonstrated a 10% increase in performance — twice the improvement observed among colleagues with prior coaching experience.

^e As rated by Accountability Partners (APs)

Coachees’ Innovativeness^f



After 6 Months of Coaching

	Coachees with Prior Coaching Experience	First-Time Coachees
Innovativeness	▲ 7%* (Effect size, g = 0.55) [†]	▲ 8% (Effect size, g = 1.02) [†]

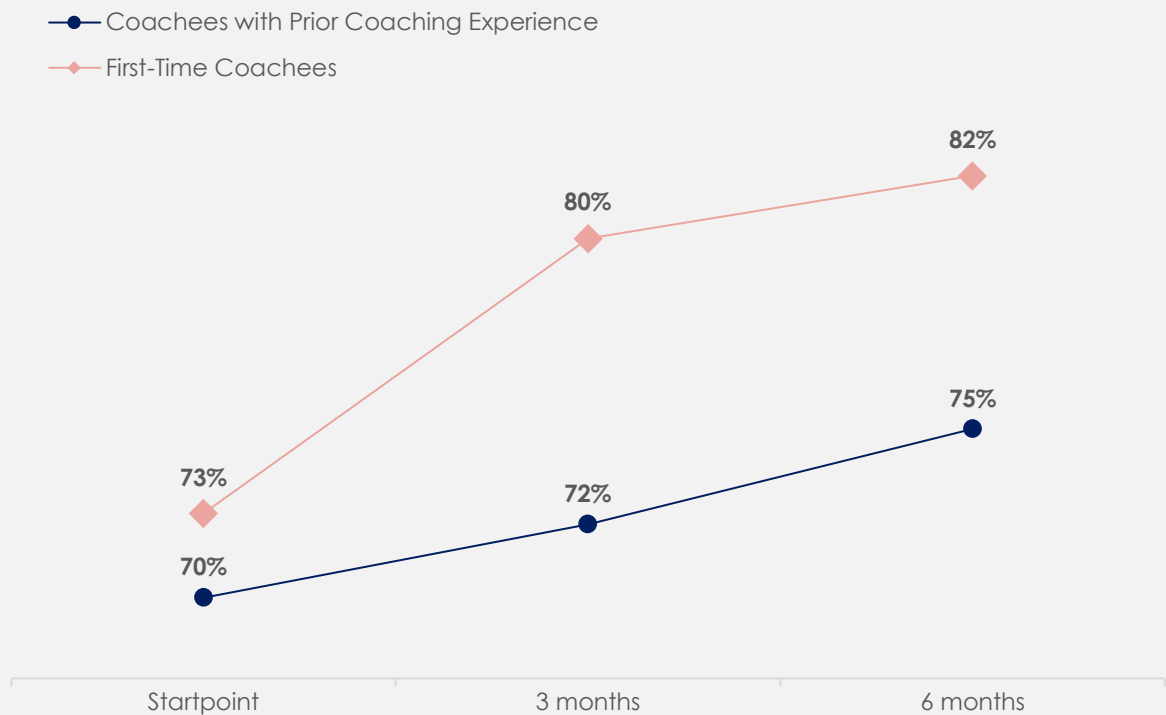
^{*} Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
[†] Small effect: $g = 0.2$, Medium effect: $g = 0.5$, Large effect: $g = 0.8$

Coaching can lead to fresh insights and motivation to create and implement new ideas — crucial ingredients for innovative work behaviours.²⁰ We see evidence of how coaching can support a continuous process of innovation with both experienced (+7%) and first-time (+8%) coachees.

An example of an innovative solution generated by a UOB coachee is the optimisation of data processing for credit evaluations, which tremendously improved the productivity of credit analysts, resulting in an estimated savings of 5,000 man-hours annually. This improvement not only increased efficiency but also contributed to business competitiveness in a dynamic environment.

^f As rated by Accountability Partners (APs)

Coachees’ Team Effectiveness⁹



After 6 Months of Coaching

	Coachees with Prior Coaching Experience	First-Time Coachees
Team Effectiveness	▲ 5%* (Effect size, $g = 0.32$) [†]	▲ 9% (Effect size, $g = 0.93$) [†]

* Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
[†] Small effect: $g = 0.2$, Medium effect: $g = 0.5$, Large effect: $g = 0.8$

Our survey results reveal that coaching can enhance team cohesiveness by improving interactions among team members, keeping teams aligned, and raising expectations for quality. Interview findings suggest that coaching may foster a harmonious workplace culture and promote alignment of objectives — strengthening collaboration and encouraging kindness at work. Individuals are motivated to support their colleagues both professionally and personally, contributing to a more connected and resilient workforce.

Among first-time coachees, coaching led to a 9% improvement in team effectiveness — nearly double the increase observed in those with prior coaching experience.

⁹ As rated by Accountability Partners (APs)

Coaching Unleashes Innovation and Performance Through Team Collaboration

UOB Thailand

The team coaching initiative at UOB Thailand emphasised active sharing of insights and experiences among team members. This collaborative exchange of knowledge is thought to have accelerated learning and empowered employees to apply newly acquired strategies to elevate their performance.

After just three months of team coaching, the team was inspired to make meaningful changes — resulting in a remarkable increase in sales performance ranging from **+47% to +110%** across different product groups. Notably, this outstanding improvement was not observed in other teams that did not participate in coaching.



Team coaching at UOB Thailand

UOB Hong Kong



Team coaching at UOB Hong Kong

Two female executives at UOB Hong Kong credit coaching with boosting their confidence to address knowledge gaps among new hires and cross-functional colleagues — many of whom lacked a clear understanding of their unit's processes. Feeling empowered to make a meaningful change, they developed and implemented an unprecedented **Introduction Guide**. This guide helps new employees and cross-functional teams better understand key workflows, while also enhancing overall operational efficiency.

“

Briefing with the Operation Centre (OC) Head improved my operational understanding and boosted my confidence in communicating with senior colleagues during Technology and Operations (T&O) updates.

-Gladys, Hong Kong”

These case studies from Thailand and Hong Kong validate our research findings and illustrate how coaching enhances knowledge sharing and collaboration — key drivers that can drive substantial performance improvements. They demonstrate how coaching can foster a thriving workplace culture, even amid the complexities of a “business as unusual” world.

Coaching Fortifies Employee Mental Well-Being

What Is It?

Globally, work-related stress is on the rise, driven by unmanageable workloads, tight schedules, and demanding responsibilities.¹² This stress can lead to both physical and mental strain, ultimately causing employees to disengage from their work.²¹

How Can Coaching Help?

Increase Resilience

- Coaching can help coachees cope with stress by supporting them in developing strategies to navigate challenging situations and manage negative emotions.²¹ Past studies have shown a 5% to 7% increase in resilience among doctors and public health executives following coaching.^{22,23}
- Coaches may also provide emotional support, which can further strengthen coachees' resilience.¹⁶

Increase Employee Well-Being

- Coaching can contribute to improved well-being by empowering coachees to achieve personal goals, access social support to alleviate stress, and build self-confidence.²³
- It can also indirectly enhance well-being by improving the quality of interactions among employees.²⁴

Increase Job Satisfaction

- Coaching may support coachees in developing self-awareness, enabling them to identify areas for growth and devise constructive strategies to navigate challenges.²⁵ This can lead to greater job satisfaction and reduced turnover intention. A cross-industry study found that coaching led to a 5% increase in job satisfaction, attributed to improved goal setting and cultivation of positive habits.⁹

I developed strategies to manage my workload and stress more effectively, such as prioritising tasks, setting realistic goals, and taking regular breaks to avoid burnout. My coaching leader also encouraged me to practice self-compassion, reminding me that it was okay to ask for help and take time for myself.

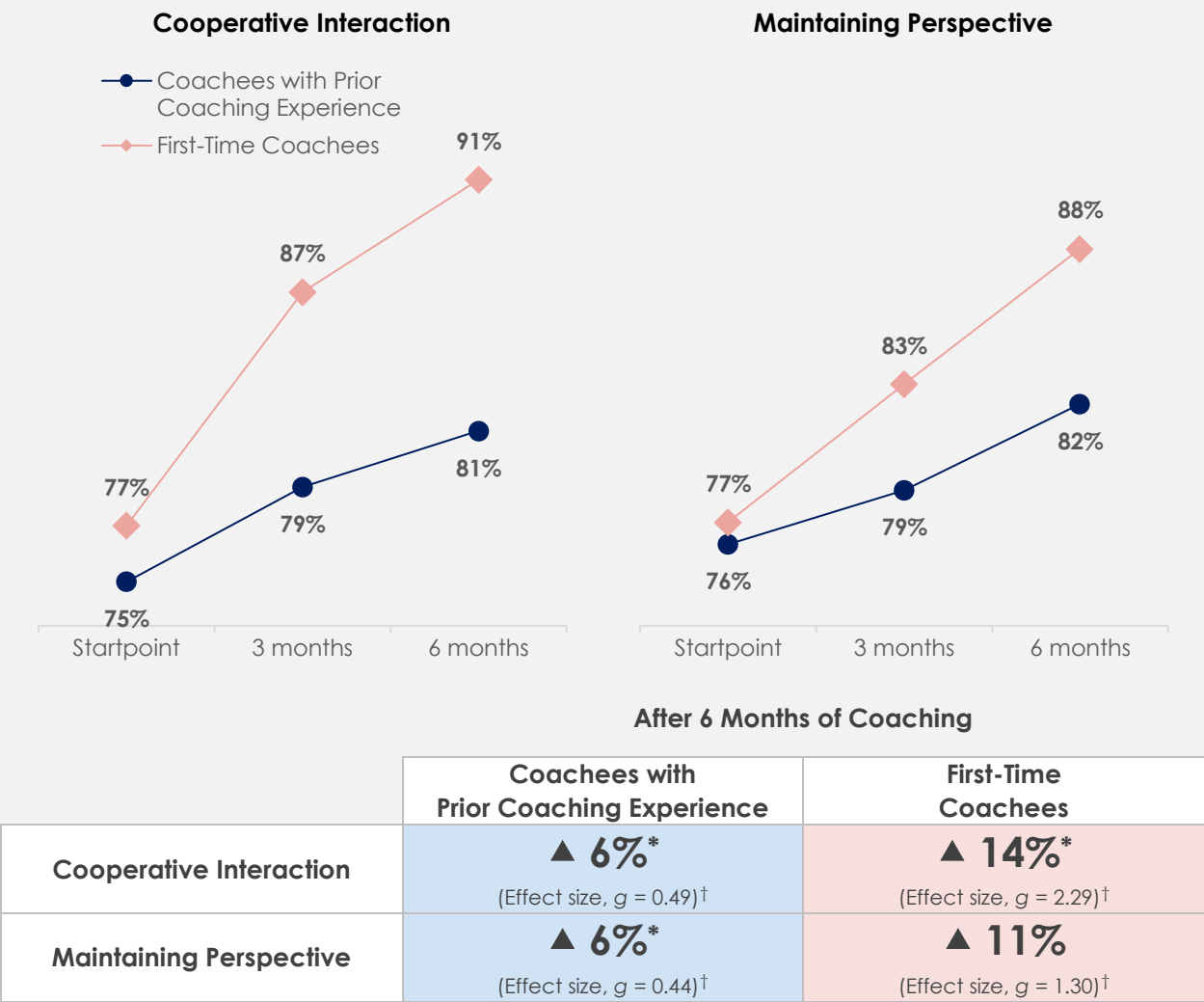
-Rachel, Malaysia



Gains in Outcomes Related to Fortifying Employee Mental Well-Being

Coachees’ Mental Well-Being^h

Survey results suggest that coaching can enhance coachees’ mental well-being by fostering cooperative interactions, helping them maintain perspective, manage stress effectively, and build meaningful relationships.



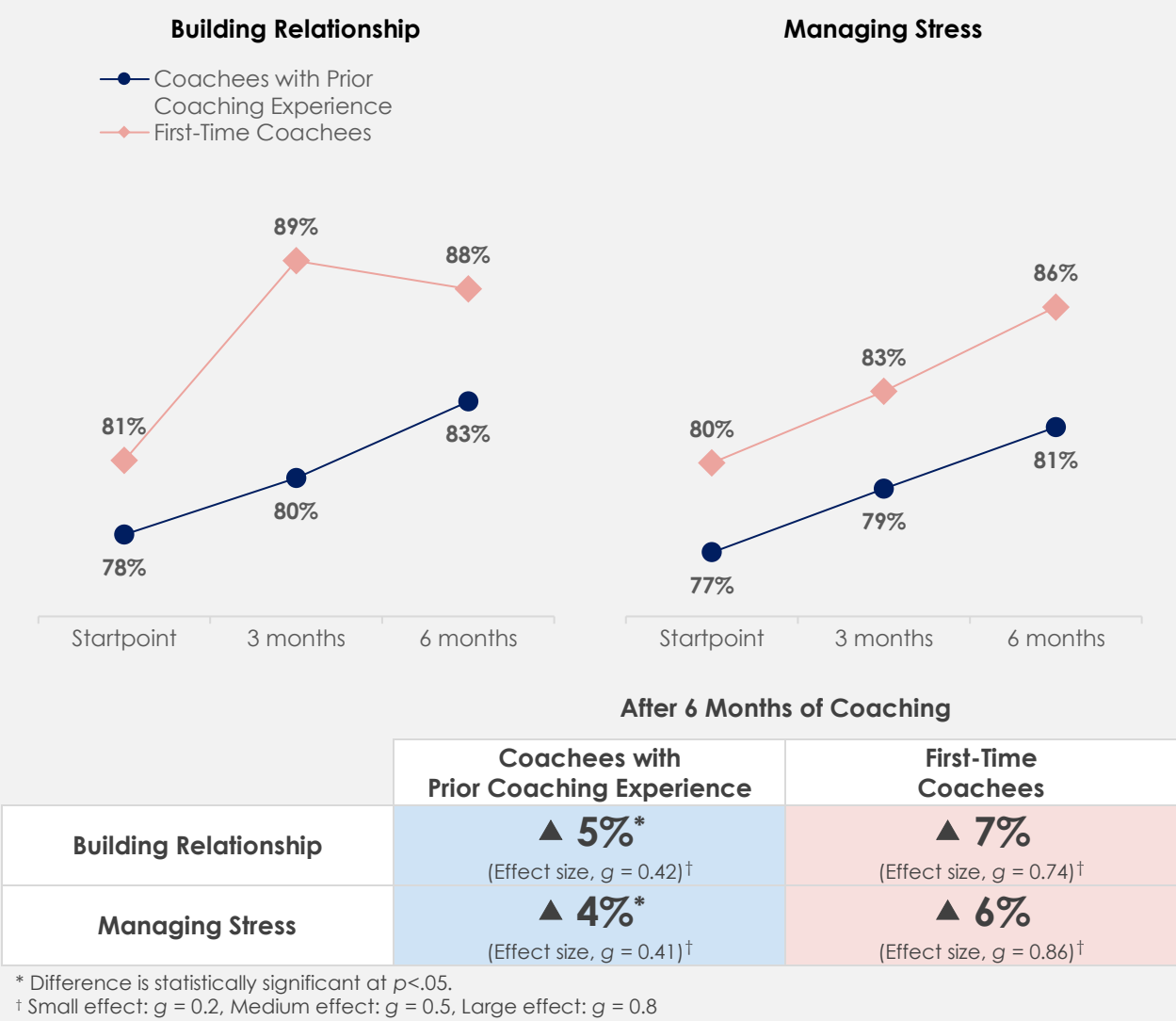
* Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
[†] Small effect: $g = 0.2$, Medium effect: $g = 0.5$, Large effect: $g = 0.8$

Cooperative interaction involves coachees actively seeking feedback, offering support, and collaborating effectively with colleagues. Maintaining perspective refers to the coachees’ ability to reframe setbacks, stay focused, and manage negativity.

First-time coachees experienced greater improvements in both attributes, showing gains approximately twice as high as those of experienced coachees.

^h As rated by Accountability Partners (APs)

Building relationships refers to developing supportive networks both within and beyond the workplace, while managing stress involves coping with daily pressures and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Both attributes saw steady and continuous improvement of 4% to 7% throughout the coaching process.



In our interviews, coachees shared that great coaches often played a supportive role in their overall well-being. One coachee, for example, described how their coach provided a safe and empathetic space to express their emotions during challenging moments. The coach would listen attentively and, when appropriate, offer constructive feedback to help reframe the situation, enabling the coachee to view it more positively.

This insight aligns with Grant et al.'s (2009) study, which highlights that coaching can significantly enhance well-being by empowering individuals to manage their emotions more effectively and resolve issues with greater confidence.²³

Coaching That Cares

UOB Yangon

At UOB Yangon, coaching initiatives were designed to build resilience amid the uncertainties brought about by the 2024 conscription law. Team empathy sessions encourage employees to share their concerns and foster meaningful connections, creating a supportive environment. Skill mapping and cross-training helped team members prepare for new roles by expanding their capabilities and instilling a sense of security.

As a result, employees reported increased resilience and confidence, with **overall engagement scores rising from 80% to 93%**. Many attributed this positive shift to a renewed sense of purpose and solidarity gained through coaching.



Team coaching at UOB Yangon

The Yangon experience shows that coaching not only supports professional growth but also prioritises mental well-being, demonstrating the importance of healthy work environments in helping employees thrive.

I was hesitant at first, but cross-training opened my perspective and helped me see risk in a new way. With my team's support and coaching, I now feel confident in a totally different role.

-May, Myanmar

Coaching Rejuvenate an Ageing Workforce

What Is It?

Within the Asia-Pacific region, an estimated 25% of the population, approximately 1.3 billion people, will be aged 60 and above by 2050.²⁶ Countries with the largest senior populations include China, India, and Japan.²⁶

Key challenges limiting employment opportunities for mature workers include perceived bias and health-related concerns.²⁷ Additionally, a shrinking pool of available workers underscores the importance of effective succession planning to ensure successors are well-prepared for future roles.^{28,29}

How Can Coaching Help?

Succession Planning

- Coaching can equip younger talents with the skills and knowledge to step into roles vacated by their predecessors.²⁸
- It may also help minimise the negative impacts of transitions by supporting individuals in working toward their goals and preparing them to navigate change more effectively.³⁰

Reduce Negative Stereotypes

- Coaching can foster forward-thinking approaches to managing opportunities and challenges by helping individuals reframe negative workplace stereotypes and adapt more effectively to change.³¹

“Mentoring and coaching reminded me that leadership isn't about control. It's about empowering others. That mindset prepares me to step away with confidence and clarity. I resolve to retire on a high, knowing that the next generation is ready.”

-Yasushi, Japan”



Gains in Outcomes Related to Rejuvenating an Ageing Workforce

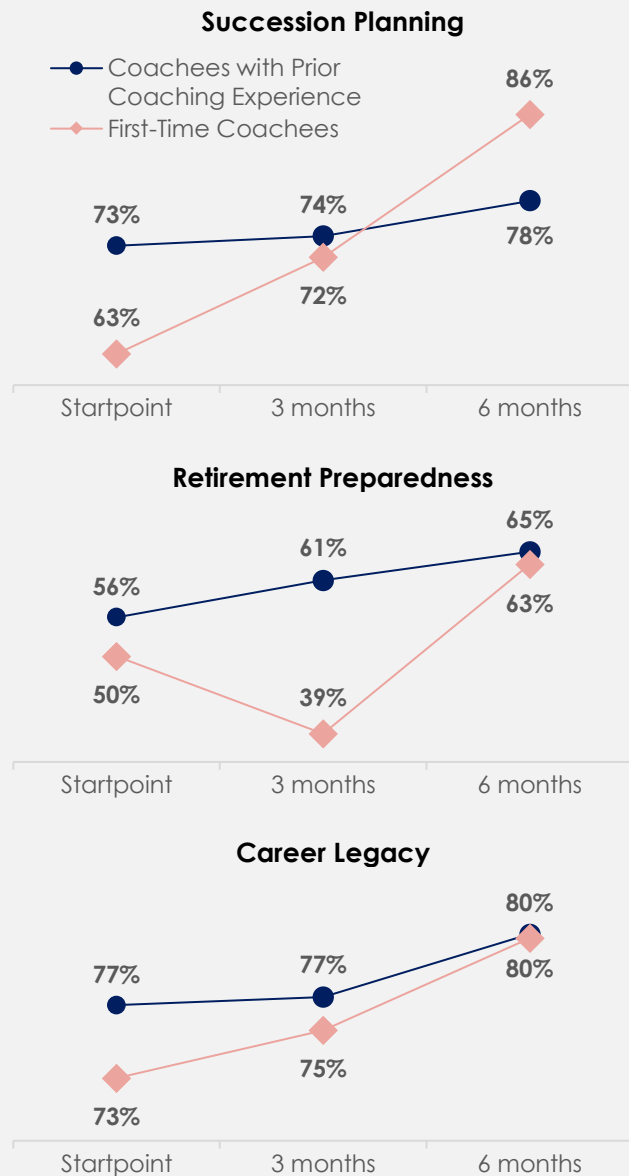
Ageing Workforce Rejuvenationⁱ

Survey results revealed that coaching is invaluable in prompting reflection on succession planning, retirement preparedness and career legacy — particularly among first-time coachees.

First-time coachees reported a 23% improvement in succession planning — four times the increase observed among those with prior coaching experience. They also saw a 7% improvement in career legacy, double that of previously coached colleagues, and a 13% increase in retirement preparedness.

In interviews, one coach shared that she begins by asking coachees about their career aspirations to guide the coaching objectives. Encouraging such reflection can support retirement planning and succession by helping individuals align their career goals with their long-term plans.

For those in leadership roles, such reflection can also spark meaningful conversations around legacy and succession planning.²⁸



After 6 Months of Coaching

	Coachees with Prior Coaching Experience	First-Time Coachees
Succession Planning	▲ 5%* (Effect size, $g = 0.24$) [†]	▲ 23%* (Effect size, $g = 1.34$) [†]
Retirement Preparedness	▲ 9%* (Effect size, $g = 0.34$) [†]	▲ 13% (Effect size, $g = 0.47$) [†]
Career Legacy	▲ 3%* (Effect size, $g = 0.23$) [†]	▲ 7% (Effect size, $g = 0.41$) [†]

* Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

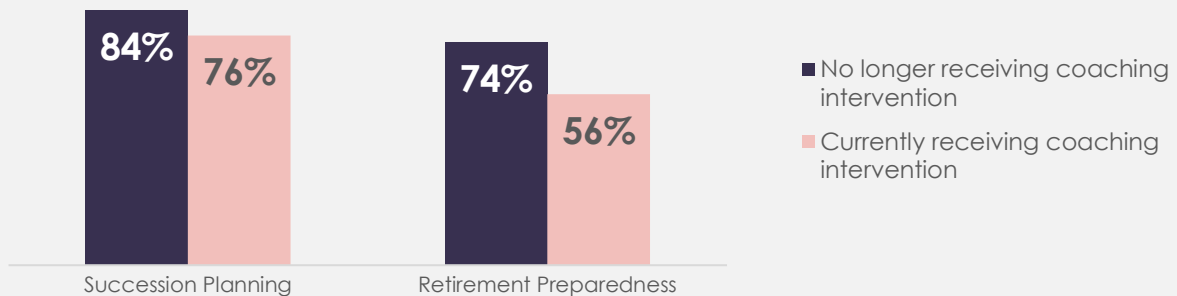
[†] Small effect: $g = 0.2$, Medium effect: $g = 0.5$, Large effect: $g = 0.8$

ⁱ As self-rated by coachees

Career Planning: The Lasting Effects After Coaching Ends

Coaching encourages coachees to take ownership of their professional development beyond the coaching engagement. This ongoing self-development is driven by their intrinsic motivation to apply the tools,ⁱ skills, and opportunities explored during coaching to new situations.³²

In this study, coachees who previously received coaching interventions and have since paused coaching activities demonstrated higher levels of succession planning and retirement preparedness than those still receiving coaching, suggesting that the techniques learned have a lasting impact on their long-term career planning.



* Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Leveraging Government Support to Engage Mature Workers

Organisations facing labour shortages and an ageing workforce should harness the experience and talents of mature workers.³³ Coaching may play a role in this effort by enabling mature coachees to plan their career progression and take actionable steps towards their goals, whether through acquiring new skill sets or transferring institutional knowledge. To support these efforts, organisations may leverage government programmes designed to engage mature workers more effectively.

In Singapore, Workforce Singapore (WSG) also supports organisations through [Career Conversion Programmes](#), which provide enhanced salary support to reskill mature workers for growth job roles that align with evolving industry demands, allowing organisations to tap into this valuable workforce more effectively.

By reskilling existing or new mature workers in job roles with good longer-term prospects, organisations can build a more resilient and adaptable workforce while providing meaningful career opportunities for mature workers.

ⁱ WSG offers a [career conversations guidebook for managers \(or coaches in a coaching context\)](#) to engage in these discussions and support coachees in taking action towards their career goals. Through these career conversations, coachees are equipped with tools to explore their career progression and contribute to organisational success.

Developing Future Leaders Through Coaching

UOB Mumbai

A coaching journey was launched at UOB Mumbai to prepare an employee for the role of Branch Risk Lead. Through this process, key succession planning challenges were identified, including the need to align strategic and operational goals and strengthen decision-making under uncertainty. The coaching focused on fostering cross-departmental collaboration and developing a personalised goal-setting roadmap to enhance the employee's leadership and decision-making capabilities.

This development not only positioned the employee as a strong candidate for leadership but also contributed to the organisation's broader succession planning efforts — helping to build a robust pipeline for future leaders.



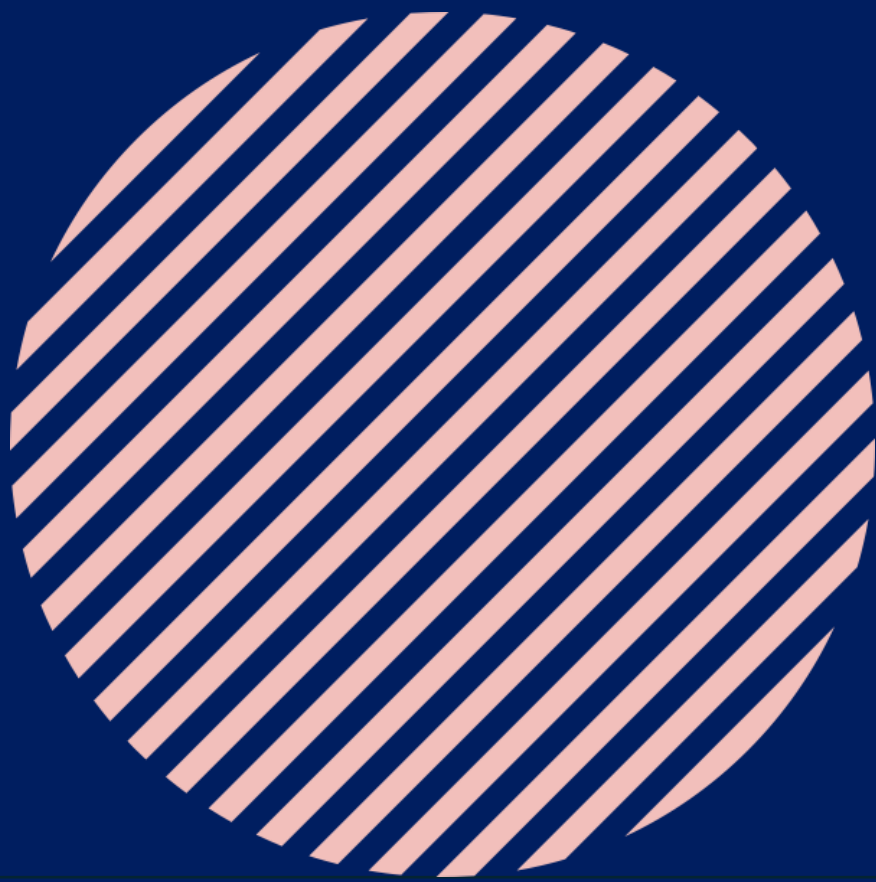
One-to-one coaching at UOB Mumbai

The coaching journey at UOB Mumbai illustrates how targeted coaching initiatives can help cultivate future leaders by addressing the specific challenges coachees encounter during succession planning. By focusing on strategic alignment, decision-making under uncertainty, and cross-departmental collaboration, coaching empowers individuals to grow into leadership roles with confidence and clarity. This approach ultimately contributes to building a sustainable leadership pipeline, ensuring the organisation is well-prepared for future transitions.

4.

HOW CAN I OPTIMISE COACHING AT MY BUSINESS?

We have presented evidence for how a coaching culture can enhance organisational performance through improvements in areas such as employee engagement, communication and retention. Success depends on leaders modelling coaching behaviours and integrating coaching into performance systems.³⁴ By broadening access to coaching and fostering a coaching mindset at all levels, organisations can build the agility and resilience needed for sustainable growth.²



A Coaching Checklist for Businesses

Building on existing research and our current findings, we have identified four key elements that businesses need to establish a strong coaching culture.



1. Buy-in from Leaders and All Stakeholders

- Leadership Support is Most Crucial in Building a Strong Coaching Culture**
 When leaders demonstrate buy-in, organisations are better positioned to allocate time and budget toward coaching initiatives, while also fostering employee commitment.^{3,8} Leadership endorsement not only signals the value of coaching but also helps embed it into the organisational fabric, driving long-term success.
- Convincing All Stakeholders of the Value of Coaching**
 Communicate the value of coaching to all stakeholders, including how it delivers measurable, observable outcomes that enhance both organisational performance and personal growth.
- Extending Coaching Relationships Beyond the Organisation**
 Sharing coaching goals and benefits with external partners can foster collaboration and generate shared impact. By exchanging best practices and cultivating a coaching mindset among external stakeholders, organisations can drive shared growth across the ecosystem.⁸

Thriving Together Through Coaching

At Great Place To Work®, we believe that trust is the foundation of every great workplace. Trust is built when leaders consistently build credibility, demonstrate care, and act with fairness. In our work around the world, we've seen that leaders play a pivotal role in shaping workplace culture. The daily behaviours, decisions, and priorities of leaders set the tone for how people experience their work, and ultimately, for how organisations perform today and prepare for tomorrow.

As a Great Place To Work-Certified™ company across Singapore and many South East Asian countries, UOB demonstrates that when leaders make coaching a habit, they build both capability and confidence in their teams. The result is an organisation that can adapt, innovate, and sustain success — for its customers, its people, and the communities it serves.

UOB's strong coaching culture is a powerful example of this leadership in action. By equipping leaders to engage in meaningful, forward-looking conversations with their people, UOB is not only enhancing current business performance but also developing a workforce ready to thrive in a fast-changing future. Coaching creates the space for listening deeply, giving constructive feedback, and inspiring growth — key ingredients for a high-trust, high-performance culture.

**Evelyn Kwek, Managing Director
Great Place to Work®**





Through coaching, asking powerful, thought-provoking questions in terms of the reasoning behind the why, the staff can actually benefit in terms of how they can be resourceful and try to derive their own solution and work toward their own target.

- Aloysius, Hong Kong



2. Desirable Behaviours and Characteristics of Coaches

- **Coaches' Flexibility to Adapt**

Effective coaches tailor their approach based on coachees' states of mind, availabilities, and specific needs, rather than rigidly adhering to fixed agendas. This adaptability helps maximise the impact of each coaching session and ensures relevance to the coachees' evolving contexts.

- **Coaches' Commitment Reflects Genuine Concern**

Coaches who consistently demonstrate availability and readiness to support their coachees signal their genuine concern for their well-being. This empathetic engagement fosters trust and rapport, creating a safe space for open and meaningful communication.

- **Coaches' Ability to Guide by Challenging Thinking**

Successful coaches provide guidance by sharing relevant resources, techniques, feedback, and personal experiences. By posing thought-provoking questions and encouraging reflection, they help coachees explore new perspectives and stimulate cognitive growth, driving meaningful progress.



3. Desirable Behaviours and Characteristics of Coachees

- **Coachees' Openness**

Coachees' openness to feedback is essential for maximising the benefits of coaching. When coachees are receptive, they can gain insights more quickly, learn effective strategies, and create a collaborative learning environment that allows coaches to tailor their support.

- **Coachees' Intrinsic Motivation**

Coachees driven by an internal desire to grow and improve are more likely to embrace learning opportunities and apply coaching insights with commitment. This motivation fuels continuous development, reinforces positive habits, and sustains behavioural change over time.

- **Coachees' Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness can enable coachees to recognise their strengths and limitations, set realistic goals, and identify areas for improvement. This clarity is pivotal in shaping a purposeful and effective development journey.



Collaboration is facilitated because now both parties know each other's objectives and what are the challenges... and try to find something that works because ultimately, we are in the same organisation and have the same common objectives to work towards.

-Kevin, Singapore



4. Qualities of Effective Coaching Relationships

- **Trust in Coach**

When coachees trust their coaches, they feel safe sharing their vulnerabilities and challenges. This openness fosters transparent communication, enabling coaches to better understand coachees' needs and tailor their coaching strategies for greater impact.

- **Sense of Psychological Safety**

Trust lays the foundation for psychological safety — a sense of security that allows coachees to express their thoughts, emotions, and concerns without fear of judgement. This safe space allows for meaningful growth and honest reflection.

- **Mutual Alignment**

A shared understanding between coaches and coachees about the goals of the coaching relationship reduces confusion and miscommunication. This alignment ensures that coaching efforts are focused and purposeful, guiding coachees effectively towards their objectives.

Choosing the Right Coaching Modality for Your Business

This study evaluated the impact of various coaching modalities on coaching outcomes. In particular, it compares coaching delivered by internal versus external coaches, as well as individual versus team coaching formats. By understanding how these different approaches influence results, organisations are better equipped to make informed decisions about the coaching modality that best aligns with their business objectives.

Internal Versus External Coaches

- While external coaches can offer broader perspectives and foster psychological safety, internal coaches are often better positioned to support career advancement and long-term professional growth within the organisation.
- Building a pool of internal coaches may offer a more sustainable approach, helping to reduce costs while ensuring stronger cultural alignment with coaching initiatives.³⁴
- Embedding a coaching mindset within the management team can encourage coaching to take place organically in everyday conversations — transforming it from a stand-alone programme into a culture that is seamlessly integrated into daily workflows.⁸

Individual Versus Team Coaching

- Ultimately, both individual and team coaching can lead to meaningful organisational and professional outcomes. The choice between the two should be guided by the specific needs of the coachees and the strategic goals the organisation seeks to achieve.



Team coaching at UOB



Individual coaching at UOB

Organisations that offer a range of coaching modalities empower coachees to choose the approach that best aligns with their personal preferences and developmental needs. This flexibility can enhance the relevance of the coaching experience and foster deeper engagement in the process.⁸

Role of Internal Vs External Coaches in Professional Development

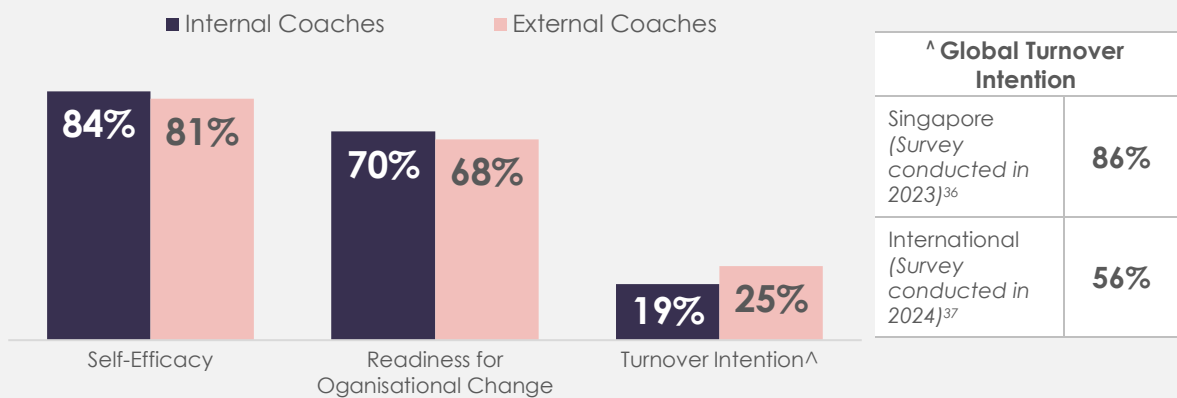
Coaching by External Coaches

- As careers evolve and become more complex, Individuals are turning to external coaches for developmental support.⁷ These coaches may provide insights from other industries, offering fresh perspectives and guidance that can be especially valuable for senior management in navigating their professional growth.³⁵
- Coachees also highlighted that external coaches can provide a greater sense of psychological safety and trust. Their independence from the workplace allows for open and honest discussions, free from concerns about how these conversations might influence performance appraisals.

Coaching by Internal Coaches

- Internal coaches may have a deeper understanding of workplace dynamics, organisational culture, and the specific challenges coachees face due to their familiarity with the organisational context. As one coachee shared, internal coaches are able to leverage their strategic insight and organisational knowledge to ask thought-provoking questions that help them prioritise critical business issues while managing less pressing matters with greater ease and confidence.

Value of Internal Coaching in a Volatile Business Environment



* Difference is statistically significant at $p<.05$.

Our survey results indicate that coaching delivered by internal coaches is associated with significantly **higher self-efficacy, greater readiness for organisational change, and lower turnover intention** compared to coaching by external coaches. This may be attributed to internal coaches' deeper contextual awareness, which enables them to better understand their coachees' experiences and challenges and offer guidance that is closely aligned with work-related needs.

Additionally, the support provided by internal coaches can help coachees navigate workplace challenges more effectively, potentially reducing their intent to leave the organisation.

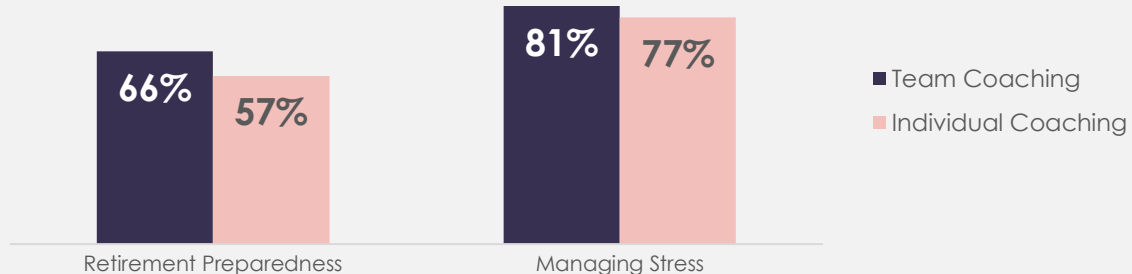
Individual Vs Team Coaching on Personal and Professional Growth

Individual Coaching

- Coachees who have participated in individual coaching report meaningful benefits for both personal and professional growth. These include improved physical and mental well-being, as well as enhanced health and better work-life balance.
- Professionally, coachees highlight development in both soft and hard skills, such as enhanced communication with stakeholders and learning specific operating processes.
- A key advantage of individual coaching is its flexibility. The one-on-one format allows sessions to be easily rescheduled and organised informally, making it more adaptable to the coachees' schedules and needs.

Team Coaching

- Previous studies have shown that team coaching tends to be more effective for teams with lower performance levels, while offering limited benefits for high-performing teams that already demonstrate strong self-awareness.³⁸
- Beyond performance metrics, team coaching may be particularly beneficial in reducing burnout and strengthening work relationships.³⁹ Consistent with past research findings, coachees in our study who participated in team coaching reported greater progress in non-performance-related areas, such as being better prepared for retirement and managing stress more effectively, compared to those who underwent individual coaching.



* Difference is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Exploration in Group Coaching Versus Insights in Individual Coaching

Coachees highlighted that team coaching tends to be less personalised due to its broader context. However, it still facilitates valuable learning by allowing individuals to observe how teammates navigate shared challenges. In contrast, individual coaching offers more tailored feedback and step-by-step guidance on specific tasks — an approach that is more challenging to replicate in a group setting. This observation aligns with Britton's (2015) findings, which suggest that group coaching encourages broader exploration, while individual coaching provides deeper, more personalised insights.⁴⁰

Cross-Department Team Coaching

Team coaching can also be extended across departments to address complex challenges by leveraging diverse expertise. This cross-functional approach often generates fresh insights through the exchange of varied perspectives,⁸ fostering collaborative problem-solving and innovation.

At UOB, the 10x Breakthrough Goal Team Coaching sessions inspire teams to think boldly, set ambitious goals, and achieve significant milestones. These sessions have supported the pursuit of transformative objectives, such as attaining the highest audit ratings across all overseas branches and enabling the creation of one million meaningful job opportunities across ASEAN to address pandemic-related job losses.

Notable achievements by 10x Breakthrough Goal Team Coaching coachees include:

- Over **290,000 job opportunities** created from 2020 to 2025
- The Foreign Direct Investment Advisory team's outreach led to **increased wholesale banking mandates, more workplace banking accounts opened, and higher wealth assets under management**
- All **overseas branches attained a 'Satisfactory' audit rating** for the year 2025

5.

CONCLUSION

Coaching is steadily evolving beyond structured executive programmes focused solely on leadership development. It is becoming an integral part of organisational culture, where coaching interactions are embedded into everyday conversations, supporting growth at all levels.² However, this shift is not yet universal. For coaching to become a cultural norm, it is essential that leaders first understand the business case for coaching and commit to it.⁸ Their buy-in sets the tone for the organisation, encouraging employees to embrace coaching as a meaningful approach to engagement and leadership development.

When embedded effectively, coaching can be a useful enabler for driving improvements in business outcomes while fostering professional and personal growth. It helps individuals become better versions of themselves, at work and in their personal lives. Coaching can equip individuals to navigate future challenges — such as **adapting to “business as unusual”, strengthening mental well-being, and rejuvenating an ageing workforce** — empowering them to thrive in an ever-evolving environment.

Coaching is good for today’s business

Coaching can be highly beneficial for businesses, delivering measurable business outcomes such as increased revenue and improved operational efficiency. It can also strengthen professional development, particularly in areas like management skills, which in turn enhances overall team productivity.

Coaching helps prepare for tomorrow’s business

Business As Unusual

In today’s rapidly evolving business landscape, shaped by generative AI advancements and geopolitical tensions, organisations are navigating unprecedented challenges. These disruptions demand innovation and agility to turn uncertainty into opportunities for growth.

Through knowledge sharing, thoughtful guidance, and constructive feedback, coaches can help coachees build confidence, reframe perspectives, and overcome obstacles. This support helps foster adaptability, enabling individuals to thrive in a dynamic and unpredictable environment.

Employee Mental Well-Being

At the same time, employee well-being is increasingly at risk due to heavy workloads and demanding schedules. These pressures often lead to disengagement, reduced job satisfaction, diminished self-efficacy, and hindered progress toward personal and professional goals.

Coaching can offer a safe and supportive space for emotional expression and reflection. By helping coachees reframe negative experiences, manage emotions, and resolve challenges more effectively, coaching can enhance mental resilience and overall well-being.

Ageing Workforce

Additionally, the ageing workforce presents unique challenges that organisations must proactively address. This includes tackling age-related biases and implementing effective succession planning to ensure smooth transitions and sustained growth. Coaching can play a valuable role by supporting coachees in reflecting on their career aspirations, enabling informed decisions about career paths and retirement planning. For leaders, coaching can facilitate legacy building and succession readiness, helping to secure the organisation’s future leadership pipeline.

Guide for organisations to optimise coaching culture

To adopt coaching effectively, organisations can refer to the **‘Coaching Checklist for Businesses’**, which outlines key organisational requirements and desirable behaviours and traits for coaches and coachees. This checklist supports coaching readiness and helps ensure a high-quality coaching relationship, enabling an ideal coach-coachee match.

In addition, organisations are encouraged to review the comparative benefits of different coaching modalities, whether delivered by internal or external coaches, or conducted in team versus individual formats. By assessing both coachee preferences and organisational needs, businesses can optimise their coaching culture to achieve more impactful outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Research Methodology

The study engaged **284 UOB staff** across 16 diverse locations, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, London, and Sydney, who participated in surveys and interviews. Participants included coachees, coaches, and accountability partners (APs). APs are colleagues such as direct supervisors, teammates, cross-functional partners, skip-level bosses, or HR partners, who can objectively observe changes in coachees' behaviours. To minimise socially desirable responses, all participant identities were kept anonymous throughout the research.

At the outset, coachees collaborated with their APs to set business and professional development goals using the **Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)** technique. The method supports coachees in defining clear goals by guiding them to develop a progressive range of outcomes, enabling structured evaluation and regular progress monitoring through a goal-setting worksheet.⁴¹

To measure organisational outcomes, validated scales were used, such as:

- The **New General Self-Efficacy Scale** assessed coachees' confidence in their abilities,⁴²
- The **Innovative Behaviour Measure** evaluated colleagues' innovativeness,⁴³
- The **Comprehensive Assessment of Team Member Effectiveness** gauged colleagues' team effectiveness.⁴⁴

Over the next six months, through surveys, coachees and APs tracked and rated coachees' progress toward their business and professional development goals as well as these organisational outcomes.

Surveys were administered at three intervals — startpoint, three months, and six months. In total, **195 coachees and 111 APs** completed at least one survey, and **120 coachees** completed the goal-setting worksheet. Statistical tests were conducted to identify significant changes across time for each variable.

Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with **44 coaches, coachees, and their colleagues** to uncover the traits and behaviours of successful coachees and coaches, as well as the qualities that contribute to successful coaching relationships. Using the built-in AI functions of the thematic coding software, **MaxQDA**, codes for these attributes were developed to provide a comprehensive overview of the themes considered essential for effective coaching.

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