

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

# COUNCIL

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# Executive Coaching – is it worthwhile?

What would it be worth to have a professional sounding board who has been where you're going?

As amalgamated councils are now bigger and more complex organisations, they require pro-active management to achieve a smooth transition. Amalgamations involve merging cultures, systems and people. This is often accompanied by an increasing sense of loneliness for those at the top, particularly as their every move is so closely scrutinised (and criticised) during times of inordinate change.

Support for these people is often best addressed through individualised professional coaching that contributes an independent, objective perspective and a productive collaborative experience.

Research has demonstrated a positive correlation between coaching and increased role effectiveness, promotion, job satisfaction, etc. For council executives, engaging a coach with local government experience will enhance outcomes.

There are three key transition points in a manager's career where coaching is best utilised: first managerial post, first general management role and first most senior executive role.

Another key transitional point is when, apart from the normal organisational business, the executive is charged with managing significant change or

a significant increase in business that demands alternative methods for getting things done.

The skills required for success at each transitional point are different from those used before. Coaching enhances the success rate of the transitions. In fact, if help is not available, many managers will struggle, and some will fail.

Andrew Mohl (the former AMP CEO) used externally-based executive coaches for himself and for others. He regards seeking help as a strength and integral to the continual learning process. He also believes it is futile to coach a person who thinks he/she knows it all.

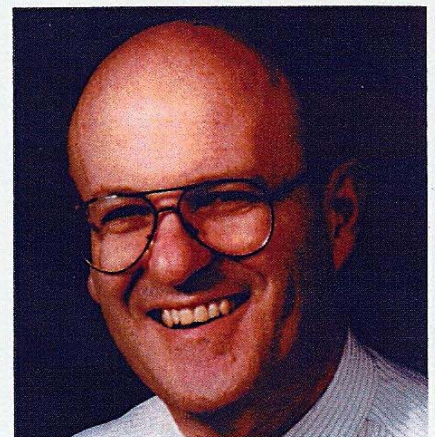
Coaching involves face-to-face sessions, plus regular phone or email contact. The approach is always positive and focuses on future improvement. The coach asks open questions, listens, reflects and responds appropriately. Self-assessment is encouraged, so criticism is minimised.

## Successful coaching is

- voluntary, with the "right fit or chemistry" between all involved
- facilitating learning and solution finding
- focused on results
- possible only in an organisation imbued with integrity

- not permanent
- about nurturing the right behaviours
- independent of performance management

Coaching involves a genuine commitment to development and learning, and provides timely information and experience. [\[2\]](#)



\*Bill Synnot (pictured) specialises in change management and executive coaching. His co-authored book (The Toolbox for Change) includes a section on mentoring/executive coaching. Peter Akers was a successful council executive both before and after the Victorian amalgamations. He brings a unique perspective to the topic. To secure more information on executive coaching email Jeff Dutton (jeff.dutton@decisionsxdesign.com.au).