

**Read, Michael J.** (2006, June). *Coach and Coachability: Development of an employee coachability measure*. Presented at the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada Meetings, Banff.

## **COACH AND COACHABILITY: DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE COACHABILITY MEASURE**

Coachability is a term used frequently in the world of sport. Most coaches grasp its inherent meaning without any scale or measurement device. However, with contracts exceeding hundreds of millions of dollars, sports organizations want to ensure that their athletes are the best fit for them. Thus, in the last 10 years, coachability has been researched in sports psychology, and the Athletic Coachability Scale (ACS) (Giacobbi, 2000), and the Athletic Performance Coachability Scale (APCS) (Miller, 2005) have been developed. Giacobbi, Roper, Whitney and Butryn (1999) conducted multiple interviews with NCAA athletic coaches and found coachability to be one of six indicators for athletic success. Being coachable meant “Being receptive to instruction, willing to make changes, organized...and more open.” (Giacobbi et al., 1999, p. 170) Most high-performance athletes have coaches, but do most high-performing employees or organizations? Graham Jones, who made the transition from sport psychologist to business consultant, believes that “Principles of elite performance in sport are easily transferable to the business context” (2002, p.1). Managers who have coaching sessions are thought to display behaviour and skills similar to athletic coaches (Orth, Wilkinson & Benfari, 1987). Organizational coaching is considered here as the business equivalent of traditional athletic coaching.

Addressing the stated need for more coaching research on individual differences and employee readiness for change (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas & Kucine, 2003), this study introduces the concept of employee coachability. A valid employee coachability scale (ECS) has many potential uses to organizations. First, as a selection criterion, coachability may help human resource professionals make better informed decisions at the point of hiring. For organizations trying to promote coaching cultures and coaching corporate strategies, hiring highly coachable employees would be desirable. Hiring coachable employees can assure the organization that the employee will likely respond positively to coaching interventions. Second, if coaching is being implemented in an organization, using an ECS may help filter the employees who may benefit the most from coaching programs. Finally, for many external coaches, finding the right coachee is a concern. The presence of a valid ECS may improve that process.

This study completes a difficult and important step in scale development; clearly specifying the domain boundaries of employee coachability. Consulting with the 18 corporate coaches provided expert reviews to help define and delineate the facets of the employee coachability construct. Because of the supposed differences in athletic and corporate coaching and coachability, this initial survey was necessary to realize the content domains of employee coachability. Overall, this study has begun to reveal what may be a critical problem in any development-based performance management system: if the employee is not coachable, will the feedback be accepted by the employee, and thus be effective? In relationships where the employee is not coachable, does the entire performance management system break down? What factors may contribute to coachability, and what can organizations do to promote it?