Academic Paper

Employee Coachability: New Insights to Increase Employee Adaptability, Performance, and Promotability in Organizations

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Abstract

Researchers, like practitioners, often examine managerial coaching in isolation, focusing on the coach without considering the impact those being coached (i.e., coachees) have on the success of the coaching process. Thus, utilising a survey-based design, this paper explicates the behaviours of highly coachable employees – proactively seeking, demonstrating receptivity to, and implementing constructive feedback – and examines critical outcomes they achieve, while controlling for the influence of effective managerial coaching behaviours. Our findings demonstrate employee coachability drives individual job performance, adaptability, and promotability to a greater extent than effective managerial coaching behaviours.

Introduction

In today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous work environment, managerial coaching proves vital support for facilitating continuous behavioural change, development, and performance improvement across employees (Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012; Ladyshewsky, 2010; Saleh & Watson, 2017). Mirroring the boom in coaching practices within organisations, academic interest in coaching grew considerably over the past 35 years (Hagen, 2012; Matsuo, 2018; Milner, Milner, & McCarthy, 2020). Researchers, like practitioners, though, often examine coaching in isolation, focusing on the coach without considering the impact those being coached (i.e., coachees) have on the success of the coaching process (Gregory & Levy, 2010; Shannahan, Bush, & Shannahan, 2013; Shannahan, Shannahan, & Bush, 2013; Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). While the manager's ability to effectively coach proves critical for successful coaching interactions,

research indicates that coachees are active, rather than passive, participants in the coaching process who can either enhance or undermine the effectiveness of coaching practices (Baker, 2007; Gregory & Levy, 2010; London & Smither, 2002). Thus, coachees' willingness and ability to seek, receive, act on, and change behaviour based on feedback provided during coaching interactions (i.e., their coachability) remains a critical, yet understudied factor in the coaching equation. Thus, a targeted examination of coachability allows for a more in-depth understanding of the coaching dynamic, which provides insights through which organisations may optimise coaching and coachability practices.

Research investigations on coachability already suggest promising benefits for individual and organisational performance (e.g., Ciuchta, Letwin, Stevenson, McMahon, & Huvaj, 2018; Shannahan, Bush & Shannahan, 2013a; Shannahan, Shannahan and Bush, 2013b). Furthermore, researchers and practitioners widely regard the ability of employees to adapt to novel situations in the workplace and thrive during times of change as more crucial now than ever before (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014; Huang, Ryan, Zabel, & Palmer, 2014). Employee adaptability involves rapidly modulating ones' behaviour to adjust to novel internal organisational issues and external environmental factors. The receptiveness to and subsequent utilisation of feedback provides employees the information necessary to rapidly adjust behaviours (Sawyer, 1992; Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007). As coachability fosters the seeking of, receptivity to, and implementation of feedback, it follows that coachability may influence employee adaptability.

These encouraging, albeit limited, research examinations and theoretical propositions underscore the value and importance of coachability for organisations. As such, human resource (HR) management practitioners identify coachability of prospective employees as an important consideration in the recruitment process (Laabs, 2000). Similarly, management professionals encourage recruiters to improve their hiring efficiency by evaluating candidates' coachability during interviews (Larson & Comstock, 1994; Murphy, 2012), suggesting a link between coachability and one's career trajectory. Furthermore, researchers support coachability training as an important method for elevating the coachability skillsets of existing employees (Brent, 2017).

To further understand and advance the concept of coachability and its critical importance for organisational effectiveness, researchers must clearly define and operationalise coachability, and examine its impact on key organisational outcomes. This study, therefore, explores coachability and contributes to the organisational coaching and coachability literature through an examination of coachee behaviours necessary for maximising organisational coaching and coachability practices. We also examine the incremental impact of coachability on critical outcomes above and beyond that achieved through effective managerial coaching behaviours alone. In other words, we assess whether an employee's coachability or a manager's coaching ability more strongly impacts the achievement of major outcomes (i.e., job performance, adaptability, promotability). In sum, we aim to: (1) highlight the importance of coachability for both research and practice; (2) establish a narrower, yet more generalisable conceptualisation of coachability for use across organisational contexts; (3) pinpoint the behaviours of highly coachable individuals; (4) examine critical outcomes driven by coachability; and (5) assess the incremental impact of coachability on key outcomes, above and beyond that of managerial coaching behaviours.

Literature and Hypotheses

Coachability Background

Unsurprisingly, the concept of coachability emerged from the athletics literature. Introduced to the sport sciences literature from clinical psychology in the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., Ogilvie & Tutko, 1966; Tutko & Richards, 1971), researchers suggested coachability as an essential quality for great athletic performance. Despite its proposed importance, little, if any, systematic research

existed on coachability. Filling this gap, Giacobbi (2000) formally conceptualised, operationalised, and examined the concept of athletic coachability. He defined coachability as a multidimensional, sport-specific construct characterised by motivation to improve one's sport skills, inquisitiveness, openness to learning, and trust in and respect for the coach and his or her training process.

While this research advances our understanding of the concept of coachability, we note Giacobbi's (2000) view of coachability as a "sport-specific" construct. This limited, context-specific focus neglects the importance of coachability for individuals outside of the athletic arena. Organisational experts, however, emphasise the importance of coachability for those outside of athletic contexts. For instance, organisational researchers and practitioners emphasise the importance of identifying and hiring highly coachable employees, as they provide incredible value to their organisations (Laabs, 2000; Larson & Comstock, 1994). Furthermore, research indicates a lack of coachability as the top area of new hire failure within contemporary organisations and urges managers to focus less on technical ability and more on coachability during the selection process to improve hiring success (Murphy, 2012). Highlighting the proposed value of coachability for individual and organisational success has thus prompted empirical coachability research investigations outside of athletic contexts.

Coachability Applied to Business Settings

Shannahan et al (2013a, 2013b) spearheaded coachability research in organisational contexts, wherein they examined the relationship between salesperson coachability and sales performance. Their research indicates that highly coachable salespeople achieve significantly higher levels of sales performance than their less coachable counterparts. Similarly, entrepreneurial scholars explored the impact of coachability on investors' willingness to invest in an entrepreneur's business venture(s). Findings from this research revealed that coachability is one of the most important, influential factors investors consider before investing in an entrepreneur's business venture (Ciuchta, Letwin, Stevenson, McMahon & Huvaj, 2018).

Misalignment Between Coachability Conceptualisation and Operationalisation

Although these research undertakings focused on different forms of coachability (i.e., salesperson, entrepreneurial), both studies highlight its critical impact and significance outside of athletic environments. Furthermore, these studies built on Giacobbi's (2000) initial athletic coachability definition by reconceptualising it to better fit the respective context. Specifically, in their application of athletic coachability to a sales context, Shannahan et al (2013a, 2013b) defined salesperson coachability as an individual difference that influences the degree to which salespeople are open to seeking, receiving, and using external resources to increase their sales performance in a personal selling context. Likewise, Ciuchta and colleagues (2018) defined entrepreneurial coachability as the degree to which entrepreneurs listen to key stakeholders, carefully consider feedback prior to responding, recognise their weaknesses, and willingly make changes to address those weaknesses.

While these conceptions focus on context-specific, disparate forms of coachability, they both capture similar core behaviours and provide a fertile foundation upon which to expand our knowledge of coachability. However, inconsistencies exist between the reconceptualisation and operationalisation of coachability outside of athletic contexts. Initial studies focused on coachability identified several behavioural indicators common across coachable individuals. For example, Giacobbi (2000) suggested intensity of effort, openness to learning, reactions to feedback, coping with criticism/feedback, working with teammates, and trust/respect for the manager as aspects of coachable athletes. Correspondingly, in their study examining salesperson coachability, Shannahan et al (2013a, 2013b) adapted the Athletic Coachability Scale (ACS), developed by Giacobbi (2000), for use in a sales context. The ACS measures the behavioural indicators of coachability suggested

by Giacobbi (2000) and listed above. While these behaviours surely remain important for individual development and performance across various contexts, including sales, they are too general and fail to focus on coachability as reconceptualised by contemporary coachability research (e.g., Ciuchta et al., 2018; Shannahan et al., 2013a, 2013b). For example, the notion that more effective, high-quality interactions with teammates is an inherent component of coachability assumes that coachability exists only in team-based contexts. Clearly, this presumption does not hold true, as, by definition, highly coachable individuals seek, demonstrate receptivity to, and implement feedback to drive development and improve performance (Ciuchta et al., 2018; Shannahan et al., 2013a; Shannahan et al., 2013b). So, although highly coachable individuals may work effectively with teammates, perhaps much more effectively than their less coachable teammates, this behaviour does not indicate one as highly coachable. Thus, to further our knowledge of coachability in organisational contexts, researchers and practitioners require an expanded and more accurate understanding of the concept and its impact.

Employee Coachability – Reconceptualised

To accomplish this objective, we propose a specific, yet more generalisable conceptualisation and operationalisation of coachability – employee coachability – which applies across organisational contexts. Specifically, we broaden the scope of coachability to expand beyond salespeople and entrepreneurs, while refining our measurement of coachability to exclusively capture the behaviours proposed to signify coachable individuals. To undertake this task, we thoroughly reviewed the relevant coaching and coachability literatures. More precisely, we scrutinised coachability definitions proposed by Giacobbi (2000), Shannahan et al. (2013a, 2013b), and Ciuchta et al. (2018) and derived common behavioural themes. These studies suggest coachability manifests in the exhibition of feedback seeking, feedback receptivity, and implementation of feedback behaviours. We, therefore, conceptualise employee coachability as a second-order factor, an individual difference influencing the degree to which employees seek, receive (i.e., demonstrate receptivity to), and implement constructive feedback to drive individual development and improve performance. We include the word "constructive" in our definition to indicate that highly coachable employees seek, demonstrate receptivity to, and implement the type of feedback truly necessary for development and performance improvement. Succinctly, an individual's level of coachability drives feedback seeking, receptivity, and implementation behaviours.

Coachability Outcomes

To improve our understanding around the concept of employee coachability and its importance for organisational effectiveness, researchers must examine its influence on key outcomes. Therefore, we explore whether employee coachability drives employee job performance, adaptability, and promotability. The following sections detail the impact of employee coachability on these major organisational outcomes.

Job Performance

By definition, highly coachable employees engage in increased feedback seeking, feedback receptivity, and transfer of feedback behaviours in order to facilitate individual development and improve performance (Shannahan et al., 2013a; 2013b). Thus, we suggest the motive underlying these coachability behaviours is instrumental, such that individuals seek more accurate, critical feedback (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015; Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003), and engage in these behaviours with the belief and expectation they will more effectively be able to drive individual development and elevated performance as a result. As highly coachable individuals demonstrate greater receptivity to feedback, this more accurate feedback will provide greater clarity about what others expect of them and how to perform their tasks in the organisation. In turn, this greater understanding increases the likelihood employees will be able to meet and exceed performance expectations (Anseel et al., 2015). Furthermore, as highly coachable employees,

relative to those less coachable, implement the feedback they receive, a greater likelihood exists they genuinely develop and improve job-necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Thus, we posit highly coachable individuals achieve elevated levels of job performance. In summary this leads us to Hypothesis 1: A positive relationship exists between employee coachability and job performance

Adaptability

As a result of the provision of effective, informational feedback and its subsequent receptivity, employees experience increased role, process, and goal clarity (Sawyer, 1992; Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007). This clarity should better position individuals to rapidly adjust their behaviours, especially in the face of unexpected situational or environmental jolts. Consequently, we posit that if highly coachable individuals encounter uncertain or unfamiliar situations (e.g., new tasks/strategies, change initiatives, company expansions), a greater likelihood exists they will proactively seek and internalise (i.e., demonstrate receptivity to) feedback to better understand how to perform in these new contexts. After receipt of the feedback, highly coachable individuals subsequently implement it, thereby facilitating quicker job-related adjustments (Anseel et al., 2015), behavioural change, and adaptability (Ashford, 1986). Thus, we propose highly coachable individuals are more adaptable than their less coachable counterparts as they proactively seek, internalise, and implement feedback to achieve clarity and drive performance in novel or ambiguous contexts. In summary this leads us to Hypothesis 2: A positive relationship exists between employee coachability and adaptability.

Promotability

To expand our coachability knowledge repository, we evaluate the impact of employee coachability on promotability. We propose highly coachable employees are more promotable than their less coachable peers, for a few reasons. First, researchers suggest promotability ratings centre not only on the ability, but the willingness of employees to perform at higher job levels (De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt, & Klehe, 2009). This captures the essence of coachability. Employees who proactively seek feedback and demonstrate receptivity signal a genuine desire to develop and improve. In other words, they demonstrate a willingness to perform at higher job levels. As such, managers discern and subsequently leverage these employee behaviours to determine next-role readiness more accurately.

Additionally, while these coachability behaviours signal a willingness to improve, they also prove crucial for achieving development and performance improvement (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2003). However, individuals cannot attain these desired outcomes without implementing the feedback. Thus, highly coachable employees better position themselves to truly develop current KSAs and achieve higher performance, as they act to implement the feedback. Furthermore, research shows the acquisition and improvement of a wide range of KSAs increases individuals' capacities for effective managerial action (London, 2002; De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt & Klehe, 2009). Thus, it follows that employees demonstrating coachability not only signal their willingness to develop and learn while in their current role but improve the KSAs viewed as necessary for success in advanced roles. Therefore, we assert coachable employees are more promotable than those less coachable. In summary this leads us to Hypothesis 3: A positive relationship exists between employee coachability and promotability.

Methodology

Participants & Organisational Context

We collected data from employees (i.e., coachees) and first-line managers (i.e., coaches) of a medium-sized global pharmaceutical organisation located in the United States. This organisation employs managerial coaching practices to facilitate employee development and performance. As such, daily and effective coaching constitutes a critical responsibility of managers in this organisation. Similarly, employees in this organisation understand the importance of coaching and being coached to drive individual development and performance.

Each coachee completed one survey, whereas coaches completed one survey for each direct report for whom they assume responsibility (e.g., a manager with eight direct reports completed eight surveys, one for each direct report). In total, we received 327 coachee responses and 413 manager responses (i.e., from 67 different managers). Using randomly generated 5-digit codes, we linked direct report and manager responses, leaving 327 total responses available for analysis. After cleaning the data, linking responses, and removing participants with unusable data (i.e., more than half of the survey missing responses), we analysed data from a final sample of 287 managers and employees. The total potential number of participants was 450. Thus, the final sample constitutes a 64% response rate.

Forty-four percent (44%) of participants indicated their gender as male, 52% indicated their gender as female, and 4% preferred not to indicate their gender. Participants' ages ranged from 24 years old to over 65 years old. Participants' tenure with the organisation ranged from less than 1 year to more than 10 years.

Procedure

To collect the data, we created two questionnaires: one completed by direct reports (i.e., coachees) and the other completed by managers (i.e., coaches). Coaches responded to items about their coachees' behaviours and outcomes. Coachees responded to items regarding their coach's enactment of managerial coaching behaviours. The Director of Leadership Development of the participating organisation distributed the questionnaires to participants via email.

The questionnaire for coachee completion comprised the following measures: coach-coachee relationship quality, feedback delivery, feedback quality, psychological safety, and feedback seeking environment. Feedback delivery and quality refer to the nature of feedback provided by the coach (e.g., thoughtfully delivered and directed at the employee's behaviour vs. abrasively delivered and directed at the person; specific, diagnostic vs. general feedback). Psychological safety and feedback seeking environment refer to whether the coach creates a team environment that enables development and coaching. We examined these specific behaviours because the coaching literature indicates they comprise some of the most effective managerial coaching behaviours (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Matsuo, 2018). Capturing this data allowed us to control for coaching behaviours in our analyses and determine the incremental impact of employee coachability on critical outcomes above and beyond that of effective coaching behaviours. The coach questionnaire included the following measures: feedback seeking behaviours, feedback receptivity, transfer of coaching/feedback (i.e., coachability), job performance, adaptability, and promotability. We administered this questionnaire to capture coach ratings of employees' coachability behaviours and outcomes.

The data collection effort occurred in two waves. The first wave took place over the course of one week, wherein coaches completed measures about their coachees. During the second wave, coachees completed measures about their coaches. We provided both direct reports and

managers one week to complete their respective questionnaires. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at DePaul University reviewed and granted approval for this project.

Measures

Coach-coachee relationship

The coach-coachee relationship is a relationship between a coach and coachee characterised by genuineness, effective communication, comfort with the relationship, and facilitative of development (Gregory & Levy, 2010). We utilised the 12-item Perceived Quality of the Coaching Relationship (PQECR) scale developed by Gregory & Levy (2010). Cronbach's alpha is 0.98, omega hierarchical is 0.93, and omega total is 0.98. We report omega hierarchical (ωh) and total (ωt), as these metrics prove superior to Cronbach's alpha (see Dunn, Baguley, & Brunsden, 2014). Specifically, omega hierarchical examines the unidimensionality of scales, while omega total estimates the total reliability of the test (Revelle, 2019). Furthermore, despite the issues associated with Cronbach's alpha, we report this metric because it remains an important and widely utilised reliability statistic in applied research (Sijtsma, 2009).

Questionnaire responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "I feel safe being open and honest with my supervisor," and "My supervisor enables me to develop as an employee of our organisation."

Feedback delivery and quality

To assess these two features of the feedback provided, we administered the 10-item (i.e., 5-items per dimension) feedback quality and feedback delivery dimensions of the Feedback Environment Scale (FES) constructed by Steelman and colleagues (2004). For the feedback quality dimension of the FES, Cronbach's alpha is 0.95, omega hierarchical is 0.92, and omega total is 0.96. For the feedback delivery dimension, Cronbach's alpha is 0.85, omega hierarchical is 0.81, and omega total is 0.89. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "My manager gives me useful feedback about my job performance" and "My manager is supportive when giving me feedback about my job performance."

Psychological safety

Psychological safety is the degree to which coachees' believe their work environment is safe to engage in risk-taking behaviours (e.g., implementing a new strategy). To examine this construct, we utilised the team psychological safety measure developed by Edmondson (1999). Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.83, omega hierarchical is 0.72, and omega total is 0.89. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "If you make a mistake on this [work] team, it is often held against you" and "It is safe to take a risk on this [work] team."

Feedback seeking environment

Feedback seeking environments refer to the promotion of or support for feedback seeking behaviours to drive individual development and performance improvement. To examine this construct, we administered the "promotes feedback seeking" dimension from the FES, which we detailed above. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.89, omega hierarchical is 0.85, and omega total is 0.92. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "My manager is often annoyed when I directly ask for performance feedback" and "I feel comfortable asking my manager for feedback about my work performance."

Employee coachability

Employee coachability is the degree to which individuals seek, receive, and implement constructive feedback to drive individual development and improve performance. Currently, an established measure in the literature does not exist to assess employee coachability as defined above. However, we utilised a combination of three measures – feedback seeking, receptivity, and transfer – to examine employees' level of coachability.

To assess the feedback seeking component of coachability, we used the feedback seeking measure presented by Dahling and colleagues (2012). Cronbach's alpha is 0.94, omega hierarchical is 0.9, and omega total is 0.96. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very infrequently) to 5 (very frequently). Sample items include: "[This coachee] seeks feedback on their performance after assignments?"

To examine the feedback receptivity component of coachability, we administered the feedback receptivity measure developed by Ryan and colleagues (2000). Cronbach's alpha is 0.84, omega hierarchical is 0.76, and omega total is 0.9. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "This employee makes a lot of excuses during the feedback discussion."

To measure the implementation of feedback component of coachability, we distributed the perceived transfer of training measure developed by Facteau and colleagues (1995). Cronbach's alpha is 0.94, omega hierarchical is 0.93, and omega total is 0.95. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We modified the referent and context of this measure so the coach could assess the coachee's transfer of feedback after coaching/feedback discussions. Sample items include: "This employee transfers the skills/principles learned during coaching interactions back to their job."

Job performance

Coachee job performance is the overall effectiveness of the coachee. Coaches utilised the coachee's last performance review to indicate the relative level of the coachee's performance (vs. the true rating of the coachee's performance). The one-item coachee job performance measure read: "This employee's performance falls in which of the following tiers?" Response options ranged from 1 (bottom-third of the company) to 3 (top-third of the company).

Coachee adaptability

Coachee adaptability is changing or modifying oneself or one's behaviour to better fit the new environment (Alavi, Wahab, Muhamad, & Shirani, 2014). To examine this outcome, we assessed adaptability through a 4-item adaptability measure developed by Alavi et al (2014). Cronbach's alpha for this measure is 0.93, omega hierarchical is 0.92, and omega total is 0.93. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include: "At work, this employee adjusts to new work procedures" and "At work, this employee can quickly switch from one project to another."

Promotability

Promotability refers to the manager's impressions of whether the coachee will, or should, achieve career advancement within their current organisation (Thacker & Wayne, 1995). To examine this outcome, we assessed promotability through a 3-item measure developed by Thacker and Wayne (1995). Since omega hierarchical (ωh) is not a useful index for 3-item measures (Viladrich, Angulo-Brunet, & Doval, 2017), we only report Cronbach's alpha and omega total for this measure. Cronbach's alpha is 0.86 and omega total is 0.87. Questionnaire responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items

include: "If I had to select a successor for my position, it would be this employee" and "I believe that this employee has high potential."

Results

Based on our conceptualisation and definition of employee coachability, we suggested coachability as a second-order factor influencing the degree to which employees seek, receive (i.e., demonstrate receptivity to), and implement constructive feedback to drive individual development and improve performance. To assess this proposition, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Results from the CFA demonstrate coachability as a second-order factor achieved good model fit: CFI = .959, TLI = .952, RMSEA = .072, SRMR = .038 (Kline, 2015). To further validate this factor structure relative to others, we ran three additional CFAs.

Specifically, we tested coachability as a second-order factor influencing (1) feedback seeking and feedback receptivity; (2) feedback receptivity and implementation; and (3) feedback seeking and implementation. Results from these CFAs demonstrate that all of these bifactor structural models are non-identified, indicating a two-factor solution does not fit the data. Thus, consistent with our postulation, these findings indicate that employee coachability is a second-order factor influencing whether individuals seek, receive (i.e., demonstrate receptivity to), and utilise feedback to drive development and improve performance. Following this analysis, we ran a series of multiple regression and relative weights analyses to test and further examine our hypotheses. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for all study variables.

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Feedback Delivery	5.89	1.03								
2. Feedback Quality	5.98	1.13	.77**							
3. Psychological Safety	5.75	1.03	.59**	.61**						
4. Feedback Seeking Environment	6.01	1.08	.77**	.82**	.66**					
5. Coach-Coachee Relationship	4.24	0.80	.78**	.87**	.67**	.85**				
6. Coachability	4.03	0.56	.43**	.45**	.29**	.45**	.52**			
7. Promotability	5.37	1.17	.34**	.30**	.24**	.30**	.39**	.66**		
8. Adaptability	4.14	0.70	.38**	.34**	.18**	.35**	.41**	.69**	.66**	
9. Performance	2.31	0.71	.20**	.16**	.10	.14*	.19**	.28**	.53**	.30**

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. * indicates *p* < .05. ** indicates *p* < .01

Hypothesis Testing and Relative Weights Analyses

We proposed employee coachability positively impacts employees' job performance, adaptability, and promotability. In this examination, we controlled for managerial coaching behaviours to assess the incremental influence of employee coachability on these critical outcomes above and beyond that of effective coaching behaviours. Furthermore, we conducted relative weights analyses to determine which predictor(s) (i.e., employee coachability, managerial coaching behaviours) more strongly drives each outcome (i.e., performance, adaptability, promotability).

Results strongly support Hypothesis 1, which suggested employee coachability positively influences job performance. Findings reveal, even when controlling for effective managerial coaching behaviours, employee coachability exhibits a significant, positive relationship with job performance (β = 0.242, SE = 0.067, p < .001). Table 2 displays these regression results. Next, we conducted a relative weights analysis, which provides the raw relative weights and the relative importance, or weight, of each predictor in the regression model as a percentage, all of which sum to 100%. We report the results of the relative weights analysis in Table 3. The results indicate

employee coachability, by far, exhibits the strongest relationship with performance. In sum, the data demonstrate that (1) employee coachability impacts job performance and (2) indicate coachability is a significantly stronger predictor of employee job performance than effective managerial coaching behaviours.

Table 2 Regression Results for Employee Job Performance

Regression Model	β	SE	z-value	p
Performance ~				
Coach-Coachee Relationship	0.108	0.145	0.745	0.457
Feedback Seeking Environment	-0.147	0.120	-1.232	0.219
Psychological Safety	-0.032	0.079	-0.402	0.688
Feedback Quality	-0.021	0.126	-0.170	0.865
Feedback Delivery	0.158	0.099	1.594	0.112
Employee Coachability	0.242	0.067	3.616	0.000***

Note. β indicates the standardised regression weights. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$

Table 3. Relative Contributions of Predictors of Employee Job Performance

Variable / Scale	Raw Relative Weights	Relative Weights as a % of R	β	SE
Coach-Coachee Relationship	0.0113	12.2	0.1079	0.1448
Feedback Seeking Environment	0.0060	6.47	-0.1472	0.1195
Psychological Safety	0.0022	2.37	-0.0318	0.0791
Feedback Quality	0.0060	6.47	-0.0213	0.1256
Feedback Delivery	0.0150	16.18	0.1584	0.0994
Employee Coachability	0.0524	56.53	0.2420	0.0669
	$R^2 = .0927$			

Hypothesis 2 posited that employee coachability exhibits a positive relationship with employee adaptability. Findings from our regression analysis, presented in Table 4, clearly demonstrate coachability impacts employees' adaptability, even when controlling for effective managerial coaching behaviours ($β = 0.647$, $SE = 0.050$, $p < .001$). Table 5 displays the output from the relative weights analysis. These findings clearly demonstrate employee coachability exhibits the strongest relationship with adaptability. Overall, the results indicate (1) coachability predicts employee adaptability and (2) employee coachability exhibits a significantly stronger impact on adaptability than effective managerial coaching behaviours.

Table 4 Regression Results for Employee Adaptability

Regression Model	β	SE	z-value	p
Adaptability ~				
Coach-Coachee Relationship	0.109	0.108	1.015	0.311
Feedback Seeking Environment	-0.002	0.089	-0.023	0.982
Psychological Safety	-0113	0.059	-1.926	0.055
Feedback Quality	-0.105	0.093	-1.128	0.260
Feedback Delivery	0.166	0.074	2.251	0.025*
Employee Coachability	0.647	0.042	13.016	0.000***

Note. β indicates the standardised regression weights. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. *** indicates $p < .001$

Table 5 Relative Contributions of Predictors of Employee Adaptability

Variable / Scale	Raw Relative Weights	Relative Weights as a % of R	β	SE
Coach-Coachee Relationship	0.0447	9.00	0.1092	0.1076
Feedback Seeking Environment	0.0262	5.25	-0.0020	0.0888
Psychological Safety	0.0119	2.38	-0.1133	0.0588
Feedback Quality	0.0239	4.79	-0.1053	0.0933
Feedback Delivery	0.0383	7.67	0.1662	0.0738
Employee Coachability	0.3542	71.00	0.6474	0.0497
	$R^2 = .4991$			

Results strongly support Hypothesis 3, which asserted employee coachability positively impacts promotability. The data, depicted in Table 6, shows coachability significantly influences promotability, even when controlling for coaching behaviours (β = 0.624, SE = 0.052, *p* < .001). Table 7 provides the relative weights analysis output. Markedly, employee coachability more strongly predicts promotability than any of the effective managerial coaching behaviours.

Table 6 Regression Results for Employee Promotability

Regression Model	β	SE	z-value	*p*
Promotability ~				
Coach-Coachee Relationship	0.022	0.113	1.949	0.052
Feedback Seeking Environment	-0.149	0.093	-1.605	0.110
Psychological Safety	0.038	0.062	0.619	0.536
Feedback Quality	-0.161	0.098	-1.647	0.101
Feedback Delivery	0.116	0.077	1.503	0.134
Employee Coachability	0.624	0.043	11.984	0.000***

Note. β indicates the standardised regression weights. * indicates p < .05. ** indicates p < .01. *** indicates p < .001.

Table 7 Relative Contributions of Predictors of Employee Promotability

Variable / Scale	Raw Relative Weights	Relative Weights as a % of R	β	SE
Coach-Coachee Relationship	0.0478	10.60	0.2196	0.1127
Feedback Seeking Environment	0.0199	4.41	-0.1493	0.0930
Psychological Safety	0.0107	2.37	0.0381	0.0616
Feedback Quality	0.0205	4.55	-0.1609	0.0977
Feedback Delivery	0.0271	6.01	0.1162	0.0773
Employee Coachability	0.3250	72.08	0.6241	0.0521
	$R^2 = .4509$			

Discussion

Employee coachability provides an innovative, effective method for organisations to improve and maximise coaching interactions and practices and promises important organisational benefits irrespective of whether organisations employ coaching practices. This research undertaking advances the organisational coaching and coachability literatures and practice by pinpointing the behaviours indicative of highly coachable employees, while also detailing the critical outcomes these individuals achieve. Specifically, we find highly coachable employees proactively seek feedback – as opposed to waiting to receive it; demonstrate receptivity to and accept constructive feedback – rather than becoming defensive to or devaluing it; and proactively implement the received feedback to drive development and improve performance – instead of not acting on the information, thereby stifling development and performance improvement. Additionally, this research establishes that employee coachability drives individual job performance, adaptability, and promotability to a significantly greater extent than managerial coaching behaviours.

While the importance of high job performance for organisational success does not require further explanation, this study clearly demonstrates the significant impact and influence of employee

coachability on job performance. As such, we urge practitioners to consider coachability as a critical factor to leverage for elevating employee job performance. Furthermore, seventy-seven percent (77%) of HR practitioners and leaders report their organisation remains in a constant state of change, with goals, priorities, and strategies continuously shifting (International Coaching Federation, 2018). As a result, researchers and practitioners widely regard the ability of employees to adapt to novel situations in the workplace and thrive during times of change as more crucial now than ever before (Cullen et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2014). Echoing these sentiments, organisational experts suggest agile and adaptable employees are indispensable for organisational success (Sony & Mekoth, 2016). Moreover, research indicates employee agility/adaptability as a vital driver of organisational effectiveness to create and sustain competitive advantages (Huang et al., 2014). This further emphasises the importance of employee coachability and indicates it may be a source of competitive advantage through greater employee adaptability.

Organisations also understand the importance of developing and sustaining a strong repository of human capital resources for achieving success and competitive advantage. As this study's findings indicate that employee coachability drives promotability, it follows that highly coachable employees provide organisations with stronger, faster developing talent benches. Thus, we assert coachability is a key for ensuring employee readiness for advanced roles and suggest organisations evaluate employees' coachability prior to selection into emerging leader and hi-potential employee development programmes.

The findings of this study also reveal coachee behaviours necessary for maximising the effectiveness of coaching interactions and practices in contemporary organisations. Providing informational feedback, forming high-quality relationships, and creating developmental learning environments comprise some of the most effective coaching behaviours. Regardless, however, our research indicates these effective coaching behaviours alone will not lead to desired outcomes; the provision of diagnostic feedback only results in elevated performance if the coachee internalises and implements said feedback to develop and improve. Thus, employees who enact these behaviours – highly coachable employees – drive and enhance the effectiveness of coaching practices. Consequently, we encourage organisations to focus heavily on both sides of the coaching equation (i.e., the coach AND coachee) to maximise coaching investments.

Given its importance both within and outside of coaching interactions, we recommend organisations adopt employee coachability as a competency to which they hire, train, develop, and evaluate employees. To hire highly coachable employees, organisations may develop behavioural interview questions or utilise situational judgment tests (SJTs) (Lievens & Motowidlo, 2016) specifically for coachability. Furthermore, as coachability manifests in feedback seeking, receptivity, and implementation of feedback behaviours, it follows that organisations can train employees (i.e., new-hires and existing employees alike) to exhibit these desirable behaviours. For example, employees may participate in targeted training focused on improving their ability to ask for feedback in a way that elicits the provision of specific, diagnostic information, rather than general, abstract feedback through the structure of their initial and follow-up questions. In sum, this research indicates that integrating coachability into organisations' HR practices is vital for individual employee, coaching practice, and organisational effectiveness and success.

Limitations/Future Directions

The limitations of this research investigation centre around the cross-sectional, survey-based design employed. The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw strong, causal inferences (Kozlowski, 2015). Furthermore, survey-based methods constitute obtrusive measurement techniques as they require the cooperation of respondents. While this does not intrinsically qualify as a limitation, survey-based studies and the resulting findings rest on the assumption respondents do not contaminate the data (Hill, White, & Wallace, 2014). However, due to the perceptual nature of these ratings (i.e., subjectivity) inherent in survey-based studies,

researchers suggest these methods prove susceptible to response biases (e.g., social desirability, consistency, carelessness). These biases may negatively impact the integrity of the data and subsequent findings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Furthermore, we captured employee job performance through a one-item measure. Research indicates single-item scales may face methodological concerns, such as reliability, validity, and sensitivity issues (de Vaus, 2014). Thus, we note these cautions as study limitations.

To advance the concept of employee coachability, we offer future directions for research exploration. While research focused on the concept of coachability remains in its infancy, initial studies (e.g., Ciuchta et al., 2018; Giacobbi, 2000; Shannahan et al., 2013a), including this undertaking, provide great insights into the behaviours of highly coachable individuals. However, to better understand why individuals behave in highly coachable ways and improve the identification and selection of coachable employees into organisations, we must identify the personality traits that underlie their behaviours. Initial research in this area explored select personality traits hypothesised to drive individuals' coachability (e.g., Giacobbi, 2000; Favor, 2011; Shannahan et al., 2013a). However, many of these studies focused on identifying traits that relate to athletic coachability as conceptualised and operationalised by Giacobbi (2000). Thus, to expand our coachability knowledge repository, we urge future researchers to examine the personality traits of highly coachable employees in organisational contexts. For example, whether individuals holding a learning goal orientation (LGO) – an individual's desire to learn for the sake of learning and personal development (VandeWalle, 1997) – demonstrate elevated levels of coachability relative to those who hold performance prove goal orientations (PPGO).

To capture a more complete understanding of the coaching dynamic, we suggest future researchers explore the interplay between coaching behaviours and employee coachability. For example, research may examine how the quality of the coach-coachee relationship or the way in which the coach provides feedback impacts an employee's coachability. Additionally, researchers may examine the influence of context and culture on an employee's coachability. Specifically, the impact of both organisational and societal cultures on coachability. For instance, exploring the impact of psychologically safe environments (i.e., organisational culture) on an employee's coachability. Or, evaluating the impact of coachability across high and low power-distance cultures. These findings may highlight optimal cultural features organisations can implement to support employees' coachability and indicate those that undermine or inhibit coachability. Furthermore, a cross-cultural examination of coachability advances our understanding of the concept and its importance across various populations. These findings may be particularly beneficial for multinational corporations (MNCs) employing coaching practices.

While existing research shows coachability impacts a variety of important organisational outcomes (e.g., performance, adaptability, promotability), future research must explore its wider influence. For instance, as organisations continue to rely heavily on teams and collaborative work structures to thrive in today's rapid, ever-changing environment, we recommend researchers examine the impact of employee coachability on teams. For example, whether employee coachability facilitates information sharing, cohesion, and collaboration in teams. These findings may improve team composition decisions, team functioning and processes, and, ultimately, team and organisational effectiveness.

Lastly, researchers contend that all constructs in organisational behaviour are inherently dynamic (George & Jones, 2000). As such, we propose researchers employ longitudinal designs to examine how coachability unfolds and evolves over time. For instance, research suggests employees seek less feedback as they age and become more tenured (Anseel et al., 2015). Thus, future research may explore how coachability changes as employees achieve vertical progression within their organisation.

Conclusion

We define employee coachability as an individual difference influencing the degree to which employees seek, receive (i.e., demonstrate receptivity to), and implement constructive feedback to drive individual development and improve performance. Overall, this study's findings demonstrate highly coachable employees achieve greater individual job performance, are significantly more adaptable, and are viewed as more promotable. As such, organisations should identify highly coachable individuals during the hiring process and elevate the skillsets of new hires and existing employees to become even more coachable. This provides an avenue through which organisations can maximise coaching investments, achieve greater effectiveness, and potentially create competitive advantages.

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