



# Executive Coaching Conversations: Face-to-Face or Virtual

**By Amanda Buschi, MBA, PCC,  
Executive Coach,  
Talent Management Consultant**

In today's fast-paced business environment, virtual coaching offers many practical advantages as an executive coaching solution.

As organizations increasingly turn to executive coaching for support and development, delivery options are expanding. Coaching is no longer limited to face-to-face conversations; telephone, Skype, and other webcam tools are decidedly on the rise. What impact does virtual coaching have on the coaching conversation?

As a bilingual Executive Coach I was recently asked to work with a client based in the Dominican Republic. Although the idea of a Caribbean excursion was certainly appealing, the travel costs associated with multiple 1-2 hour sessions were less attractive for the client. Through a mix of telephone and Skype conversations, the leader and I effectively addressed the myriad considerations for her to be successful in her new role. The advent of enhanced communications and new web-based technologies allowed for successful outcomes based on remote delivery.

A 2015 Executive Coaching survey underscored the increase in virtual coaching techniques. Some 40% of coaches and clients reported using webcam coaching at least sometimes, and 20% of coaching services overall are delivered through webcams. These numbers don't even include the more commonly used virtual coaching tool: the telephone.

A growing body of research\* on virtual coaching is another sign of its growth. Explored through the eyes of the client as well as the coach, confirmation that virtual coaching does not compromise outcomes is evident. Most studies indicate that virtual coaching is just as effective as face-to-face, and some studies report that telephone coaching can be even more powerful, as the lack of eye contact enhances intimacy and disclosure. Telephone conversations also can be easily scheduled for "just in time" conversations that increase touch-points and accountability between coachee and coach.

In addition to research supporting the efficacy of virtual coaching, some practical advantages are also worth noting:

Accommodating busy schedules. The global economy has resulted in travel schedules that often make regular, face-to-face conversations impractical. Rather than wait until schedules align, a virtual conversation can be just as effective while making location and time zone immaterial.

Digital natives prefer technology. Some leaders still prefer face-to-face, but as Gen Xers and Millennials assume more leadership roles, digital natives raised on FaceTime and Skype may indeed prefer technology over more conventional coaching delivery.

The best coach isn't necessarily the closest coach. Right Management makes it a practice to match the best coach to the leader in question, and that could mean reaching out to one of over 700 coaches worldwide, offering clients the option of a non-local coach for best results.

Behind closed doors. The increase in open architecture office space can make a telephone conversation in a conference room a more desirable approach than a face-to-face meeting.

A different type of conversation. Coaches listen differently when not watching for body language or other visual cues -- the pregnant pause that precipitates coaching's "Aha" moments can certainly be heard as well as seen.

Personally I have found a hybrid approach to be effective -- face-to-face conversations when possible in the early stages of relationship building and for closure, and virtual coaching for the sessions in between. As virtual coaching grows in popularity, even leaders hesitant about coaching by phone may find it to be equally effective -- and certainly worth a test drive for a session or two to see if it fits.



## About Right Management

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Right Management is the global career expert within ManpowerGroup (NYSE: MAN), providing tailored global workforce solutions that identify, develop and transition talent to optimize business performance. As career experts, we enable companies to win by helping employees build successful careers in the Human Age.

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### Milwaukee

100 Manpower Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
Phone: 1.800.237.4448  
[www.right.com](http://www.right.com)

