

# Gaining an Edge: Unlocking Royal Brunei Potential Through Coaching in the Airline Industry

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## Abstract

In the dynamic realm of aviation, Royal Brunei Airline (RBA) stands as a cornerstone, embodying Brunei Darussalam's pride and economic vitality. Faced with a competitive landscape and evolving customer expectations, RBA recognizes the need for continuous enhancement of internal capabilities. Coaching emerges as a transformative force, harnessing hidden talents and knowledge, with the potential to elevate both individual and collective performance. This study examines the impact of coaching initiatives at Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) on employee development, leadership capabilities, and organizational performance, with a focus on leadership, technical skills, and soft skills. As the national carrier of Brunei Darussalam, RBA operates in a highly competitive aviation industry, where the continuous enhancement of internal capabilities is critical to maintaining a competitive edge and achieving sustainable growth. RBA recognizes the importance of leadership, technical proficiency, and soft skills in responding to evolving market dynamics, technological advancements, and customer expectations. Despite the rising popularity of coaching programs across various industries, including aviation, there remains a significant gap in understanding the effectiveness of such interventions in enhancing employee performance. This study addresses that gap by evaluating RBA's past coaching initiatives, particularly its short-term executive coaching program (2014–2017) and the Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) for talent management and succession planning. Although RBA no longer has a structured coaching program, the research explores the potential for improving these initiatives to better meet the developmental needs of the workforce and align with RBA's strategic goals.

**Keywords:** Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA), Coaching, Aviation Industry, Leadership Development, Learning Theory, Competitive Edge, Knowledge-Driven Organization, Staff Development, Organizational Culture, Soft Skills Technical Skills

## Introduction

This research focuses on enhancing internal capabilities through coaching within Royal Brunei Airlines, Bernard, (2018). It aims to set the stage for the study by presenting the rationale

behind investigating the impact of coaching as a tool for enhancing internal capabilities. Specifically, it will provide an overview of the research objectives, the significance of the study within the context of Royal Brunei Airlines, and the critical areas of focus, including leadership development, improvement of technical skills, and enhancement of soft skills (Ballesteros-Sánchez et al., 2019).

The practice of coaching is currently developing more quickly than its theoretical underpinnings as a relatively young technique. Coaching practice needs to be better understood due to a lack of study, which hinders its commercial adoption. There is a lack of research-informed evidence on selecting appropriate selection criteria and evaluation benchmarks for executive coaches, addressing challenges faced by organizations (Lai et al., 2019).

According to Katz, (2021), comprehending the learning processes within a corporate coaching program is essential for setting realistic expectations and educating staff, including how they acquire and enhance their abilities throughout the process. Companies discovered the power of Executive Coaching as a complement to training or as a separate function. Initially hired to work with senior management, it expanded to include younger high-potential employees and middle managers. The goals largely remain to raise individual, team, and organizational performance. According to Anderson & Anderson (2016) and Zenger & Stinnett (2010), the current study would advance knowledge and encourage coaching as a practice to boost efficacy.

In the context of the aviation industry, the need for continuous enhancement of internal capabilities is evident. As a prominent airline operator, Royal Brunei Airlines faces the challenge of staying competitive in an ever-evolving market (Kong, 2020). The dynamic customer expectations, regulatory changes, and technological advancements that have marked the aviation sector underscore the significance of internal capabilities (Sekiguchi et al., 2019). The scenario is particularly relevant in Brunei Darussalam, where Royal Brunei Airlines plays a vital role in the country's connectivity (Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, 2018).

In today's highly competitive aviation industry, organizations like Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) face constant pressure to adapt to changing market dynamics, technological advancements, and evolving customer expectations (Cleary & Ison, 2021). To maintain a competitive edge and ensure sustainable growth, RBA recognizes the importance of enhancing its internal capabilities, particularly in leadership, technical skills, and soft skills among its workforce (Burke & Ng, 2016).

Leadership, technical proficiency, and soft skills are all integral components of organizational success in the aviation sector (Liang et al., 2018). Organizations are starting to realize that complex challenges call for a leader with a broad range of abilities to adapt and respond to the dynamics of a changing environment (Avolio et al., 2020). Effective leadership is crucial for guiding teams, providing directions, making strategic decisions, and fostering a culture of excellence and innovation within RBA (Day et al., 2014). Technical skills are essential for ensuring aircraft safe and efficient operation, maintenance procedures, and adherence to regulatory standards (Fan et al., 2019). Soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and

customer service, are equally important for fostering positive relationships with passengers, colleagues, and stakeholders (Gruber et al., 2017), particularly the frontline staff.

In recent years, the aviation industry has witnessed a growing recognition of the importance of coaching in the education and training of professional civil aviation pilots (Cokorilo, 2020). Cokorilo highlights the significance of introducing coaching programs to enhance the development of a professional and safety culture within the aviation industry (Cokorilo, 2020). Her study emphasizes the positive effects that coaching can have on the performance and capabilities of pilots, ultimately contributing to enhanced safety standards and operational excellence (Cokorilo, 2020).

Aviation safety is paramount in the airline industry, as pilots' performance directly impacts the safety and well-being of passengers on board. Given the high-risk liabilities associated with aviation operations, pilots must possess exceptional technical and robust soft skills, particularly in decision-making and emotional management (Fan et al., 2019). Coaching has emerged as a critical tool to ensure that pilots receive the necessary support and guidance to enhance their technical proficiency and develop essential soft skills (Cokorilo, 2020).

Coaching plays a pivotal role in the aviation industry by addressing critical psychological and emotional aspects that impact the performance and well-being of pilots and aviation professionals. Koglbauer's (2018) evaluation of a coaching program with ab initio student pilots highlights that coaching interventions significantly reduce fears of failure and concerns about disgracing oneself during flight training (Koglbauer, 2018). The psychological and emotional challenges, rooted in factors such as self-confidence, self-esteem, resilience, and emotional intelligence, are all essential components of soft skills crucial for success in aviation (Gruber et al., 2017). By providing targeted support, guidance, and mentorship, coaching programs empower aviation professionals to develop the necessary skills and mindset to navigate challenges and excel in their roles (Slabbert et al., 2021).

Incorporating coaching into aviation training curricula enhances the performance and well-being of pilots and contributes to enhanced safety standards and operational excellence within the aviation industry (Cokorilo, 2020). As such, the findings from Koglbauer's (2018) evaluation underscore the importance of coaching in the aviation industry, particularly in addressing psychological and emotional aspects that impact student pilots' performance and well-being. By incorporating coaching programs into aviation training curricula, airlines and training institutions can better support the development of future pilots and enhance safety standards within the industry (Koglbauer, 2018).

### **Literature Review: Gaining an Edge - Unlocking Royal Brunei Potential Through Coaching in The Airline Industry**

Examining the literature in detail reveals that coaching is still a relatively new profession with much room to grow within an organizational setting. In recent years, coaching within organizations has gained significant attention to enhance staff performance and overall organizational effectiveness. The literature presents a variety of perspectives on how coaching influences individual and organizational outcomes.

The study by Ribeiro et al. (2020) provides evidence that managerial coaching skills positively impact employees' affective commitment and individual performance, with affective commitment serving as a mediator between coaching skills and performance. The study suggests that when managers effectively coach their employees, it leads to a stronger emotional attachment to the organization, enhancing performance.

Similarly, Bernard, (2018), regarding Coaching High Workplace Performance, discusses the benefits of coaching on work performance, mainly through rational emotive and cognitive-behavior (RE-CB) coaching. Such coaching not only improves executive performance but also contributes to reduced work stress and increased well being, resilience, and goal attainment. The paper also highlights the role of psychological capital, such as resilience and optimism, in enhancing work performance. Research conducted in ShanghaiDong, (2021) indicates that coaching leadership significantly influences employees' organizational identity and impacts their performance. Coaching underscores the importance of leadership in fostering a strong sense of belonging and identity within the organization.

Based on data collected in Shanghai, the study demonstrates that coaching leadership indirectly affects employee performance, with organizational identity mediating. The study suggests promoting coaching leadership, fostering organizational identity, and keeping pace with evolving leadership practices to enhance employee performance and strengthen the organization.

Coaching within organizations creates efficient teams, focusing on employee motivation and delegation. This leads to a healthy environment and autonomous, self-taught working teams that contribute to building a successful organization (Bîrlădeanu, 2022).

Exercising coaching within organizations creates efficient teams, giving them sense and direction regarding actions, with an increased and consequent focus on the employees' motivational approach and on the ability to delegate effectively. The teamwork cultivates a healthy environment with autonomous, self-taught working teams, which activate conscientious aspects that lead to building a successful organization because "no one can whistle a symphony, it takes a whole orchestra to play it." (Luccock).

Like many others, the aviation industry recognizes the importance of enhancing staff performance through various methods, including coaching. Coaching in aviation focuses on developing leadership, technical skills, and soft skills within the safety culture and Safety Management Systems (SMS) framework. The aviation industry is unique in that safety is paramount, and integrating modern coaching methods plays a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing this safety culture. Modern coaching methods, such as the GROW and Co-Active models, advocate improving pilot education by focusing on individual development rather than merely process-oriented training. This approach fosters a professional and safety-oriented culture in aviation, which is essential for the industry's success and sustainability (Čokorilo, 2020).

Modern coaching methods emphasize a holistic approach to development, focusing on the individual's personal growth alongside technical training. The GROW model, which stands for Goals, Reality, Options, and Will, is a widely used framework in coaching that helps individuals

set and achieve personal and professional goals. In the aviation context, this model encourages pilots and other aviation staff to reflect on their current skills and knowledge, set realistic and achievable goals, explore various options for development, and commit to a plan of action. This structured approach enhances individual performance and contributes to the overall safety and efficiency of aviation operations.

Similarly, the Co-Active coaching model, which emphasizes collaboration and active participation, is effective in aviation training. This model focuses on building a solid coach-protégé relationship, where both parties fully engage in the development process. By fostering open communication and mutual respect, the Co-Active model helps aviation professionals develop critical soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, essential for safe and effective operations. Integrating these modern coaching methods in civil aviation pilot education significantly improves development capacities and safety culture, positively affecting the industry's professional and safety culture (Čokorilo, 2020).

A study by Chala and Bouranta (2021) demonstrates the significant impact of soft skills on performance in industries parallel to aviation, such as the maritime sector. The study highlights that adaptability, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork are critical soft skills that empirically enhance employee contextual performance. These skills are particularly relevant in high-stakes environments like aviation, where effective communication and teamwork can differentiate success and failure. Adaptability is a crucial skill in the aviation industry, as professionals must often respond to unexpected situations and rapidly changing environments. Training programs include adaptability coaching. They help aviation staff become more flexible and responsive, which improves their overall performance and contributes to a safer operating environment.

Communication skills are equally important, as clear and effective communication is vital for safe and efficient flight operations. Coaching enhances communication skills ensures that pilots, air traffic controllers, and other aviation professionals can convey critical information accurately and efficiently. Problem-solving skills are linked to higher employee income, suggesting that there is a tangible value in developing these skills. In aviation, problem-solving abilities are essential for identifying and addressing issues before they escalate into serious problems.

By enhancing these skills through targeted coaching, aviation professionals can improve their decision-making abilities, leading to safer and more efficient operations. Teamwork is another vital soft skill, as aviation operations often involve coordinated efforts from multiple individuals and teams. Coaching that emphasizes teamwork helps build stronger, more cohesive teams that can work together effectively to achieve common goals.

In conclusion, integrating modern coaching techniques tailored to individual needs in the aviation industry is crucial for advancing pilot education and promoting a safety-oriented professional culture. By focusing on personal development alongside technical training, these coaching methods foster a holistic approach to professional growth that enhances individual performance and safety.

Additionally, the development of soft skills, notably adaptability, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, is beneficial for improving employee performance and has a positive correlation with income, indicating the broader benefits of such skills in the workplace. Investing in comprehensive coaching programs that address technical and soft skills is essential for the continued success and advancement of the aviation industry. This approach ensures that aviation professionals are well-equipped to meet the challenges of their roles and contribute to a safer, more efficient industry.

#### *Alignment with Organizational Objectives*

One of the critical findings in the literature is the emphasis on aligning coaching goals with organizational objectives to maximize the impact of the coaching process (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009). At RBA, this alignment ensures that coaching efforts enhance 76 individual performance and contribute to the airline's broader strategic goals. This strategic alignment helps create a cohesive and unified approach to professional development, ensuring that all coaching activities drive towards the same overarching objectives.

The impact of these structured coaching processes is multifaceted. Employees become better equipped to handle the complexities of their roles, including technical and soft skills. For instance, pilots receive coaching in flight simulator sessions to improve decision-making skills and handle complex scenarios effectively. As provided by the former CEO: "Biannual simulator rides involve training and checking (pass or fail). Coaching is a constant element embedded during briefing, simulator sessions, and especially at the end when debriefing is conducted. Coaching is always offered, particularly for company first officers preparing to upgrade to the captain level.

We cover handling and managing the flight safely, efficiently, and economically, measured against the importance of other soft skills (communication, leadership, teamwork, situational awareness, knowledge, procedures, problem-solving, and decision-making). Flying skills are constantly observed, both manually and automated." Besides training in the simulator, RB pilots also receive an annual assessment of their line flying called Line Check, where coaching is also offered. This continuous cycle of feedback and coaching helps maintain high performance and safety standards, which are critical in the aviation industry.

#### *Broader Implications of Coaching*

The emphasis on skill development, knowledge acquisition, and goal attainment within the coaching framework ensures that employees are well-prepared to meet the demands of their roles. Moreover, the focus on aligning individual goals with organizational objectives fosters a culture of continuous improvement and strategic alignment. The situation not only enhances the immediate performance of employees but also contributes to the long-term success and competitiveness of the airline. In conclusion, the structured coaching process at RBA, supported by expert coaches and aligned with organizational objectives, plays a pivotal role in enhancing the capabilities and performance of its staff.

By employing various tailored coaching techniques, RBA ensures that its employees are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the aviation industry, thereby contributing to the airline's overall success and sustainability. The integration of coaching as a strategic management tool underscores its importance in fostering a motivated, skilled, and high-



performing workforce. The coaching process involves a structured series of interactions between coaches and employees. The airline must emphasize the importance of internal and external coaches who are experts in their respective fields (Jones & Gorell, 2019).

The coaches provide constructive feedback, set clear objectives, and employ various techniques. It is tailored to the participant's specific needs. Coaching methods encompass active listening, powerful questioning, and targeted feedback. Coaches focus on skill development, knowledge acquisition, and goal attainment to ensure that employees are equipped to meet the demands of their roles in a constantly evolving industry (Theeboom et al., 2014). Additionally, RBA emphasizes the significance of aligning coaching goals with organizational objectives to maximize the impact of the coaching process (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009).

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Investing in comprehensive coaching programs that address technical and soft skills is essential for the continued success and advancement of the aviation industry. This approach ensures that aviation professionals are well-equipped to meet the challenges of their roles and contribute to a safer, more efficient industry. The airlines also emphasize the development of local talent to ensure a continuous supply of trained pilots. Customer service personnel receive guidance to enhance communication and conflict resolution, ensuring passengers have a positive experience. Ground staff and maintenance crews undergo coaching to reinforce safety protocols and ensure regulatory compliance, contributing to a safe operational Environment. (Yue, & Ferguson, 2019)

The underpinning theory of "Learning Theory in the Context of Coaching and Staffs in Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA)" focuses on how coaching interventions can facilitate learning and development among staff members within RBA. Learning theory, in this context, encompasses various psychological and educational frameworks that explain how individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Applying learning theory to coaching within RBA helps optimize the effectiveness of coaching initiatives, ensuring that they align with the principles of adult learning and organizational development.

**Behaviorism:** Behaviorism posits that learning occurs through observable behaviors and responses to stimuli in the environment. In the context of coaching at RBA, behaviorism suggests that coaching interventions should focus on specific, measurable behaviors that lead to improved performance. For example, coaching may target customer service interactions, safety procedures, or decision-making in critical situations. By providing clear feedback and reinforcement, coaches can shape and reinforce desired behaviors among staff members.

**Social Learning Theory:** Social learning theory emphasizes the role of observation and modeling in learning. In coaching at RBA, this theory implies that staff members can learn from observing and interacting with their peers, supervisors, and coaches. Coaches may facilitate opportunities for staff to observe and learn from successful behaviors and practices, fostering a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement.

**Adult Learning Theory:** In the 1960s, educators began studying adult learning theories to differentiate adult learners from children. This led to the development of various theoretical perspectives on learning, distinguishing adult education from early childhood education. Adult learning emphasizes immediate, practical knowledge, competence, and skills. Early studies by behavioral psychologists described learning as a behavioral reaction. By the mid-20th century, three main adult learning theories emerged: andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning, all rooted in the humanistic learning philosophy, emphasizing individual development and progress.

**Application in RBA:** Applying learning theory to coaching initiatives at RBA involves tailoring coaching approaches to align with these principles. Coaches should design interventions that consider the specific learning styles, preferences, and needs of staff members. Additionally, incorporating opportunities for practice, feedback, and reflection can enhance the learning process and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills to real-world job contexts.



By grounding coaching practices in sound learning theory, RBA can maximize the impact of coaching initiatives, ultimately contributing to enhanced staff performance, organizational effectiveness, and the attainment of strategic goals.

### **Methodology**

In today's competitive and ever-evolving business environment, the achievement of organizational success is contingent upon a steadfast dedication to ongoing learning and professional growth. The aforementioned objective has motivated Royal Brunei to initiate a process of transformation aimed at evolving into a knowledge-centric learning organization. This study aims to explore the comprehensive nature of this transition, with a specific emphasis on the crucial function of coaching in enhancing the talents of employees. The research also examines the leadership capabilities inside RBA, with the goal of determining its effectiveness in generating a competitive advantage through a knowledge-focused strategy.

In order to obtain a thorough understanding, a research paradigm that combines qualitative and quantitative procedures, known as mixed-methods, is employed. This methodology facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate and diverse processes in operation, so establishing a basis for well-informed decision-making and strategic formulation. This introductory section establishes the foundation for a comprehensive examination of the research ideas, inquiries, and the methodological framework that will serve as the basis for this study. Through an exploration of ontological, epistemological, and methodological factors, the objective of this research endeavor is to provide insightful viewpoints to the ongoing discussion around organizational learning and growth.

The whole group about whom you wish to make conclusions is referred to as a population. The particular group from which you will gather data is known as a sample. The sample size is always less than the population as a whole. The sampling were six management and senior management team from people and performance and other divisions across the organization. The sampling aimed to capture the perspective of the management team towards coaching. In addition to the qualitative sampling, there were 200 employees completed the survey of the importance of coaching. The sampling was taken from all across the divisions in order to obtain all rounded perspective of the staff pertaining to the importance of coaching.

### **Data Collection**

The study aims to identify a diverse unit of personnel from various departments within Royal Brunei using qualitative data collection methods like interviews or focus groups. The sample encompassed individuals at various hierarchical levels. The management were included in the study, with a sample size of 5-7 participants. Quantitative data collection through were done with a random sample to ensure representativeness.

Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data gathered by the two-level management team. The interview transcripts, observation notes, and other non- textual resources underwent rigorous searching, organization, coding, and categorization during analysis

### **Data Analysis**

This study uses a mixed-methods research design to explore Royal Brunei's organizational learning and coaching initiatives. Qualitative data will be collected through interviews and focus groups, followed by thematic analysis and constant comparison. Quantitative data were collected through surveys and descriptive statistics. Comparative analyses will examine differences in perceptions and attitudes towards knowledge-driven learning and coaching implementation. The findings will be integrated during the interpretation phase, with triangulation used to validate findings from different data sources.

The integrated analysis will culminate in a comprehensive narrative that captures the intricacies of Royal Brunei's organizational learning journey and the impact of coaching initiatives. The study aims to leverage the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of Royal Brunei's learning efforts and the role of coaching in enhancing staff capabilities.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The findings of this studies demonstrated the perspective of the management team in RBA towards the importance of coaching. The middle manager come from human resource perspective. They strongly believe that a good leader has a great influence over the staff. However, influence could be both from the perspective of positive as well as negative impact over their subordinate. It is the leader that set the terms and tone of the work place. In addition, trust is considered the main factor that play a major role in the work relationship. Although influence could vary from leader to leader, but staff experience could differ depending on their experience they seem to see leader from a different perspective.

All of the senior management also agreed that there is a positive relationship between leader's capabilities and internal capabilities. One believes that positive leadership are able to provide good direction, and that capable leader could motivate the staff. However, one of them add on that the capabilities of the leader is the factor which influence staff to follow them and it should not be due to the position alone.

Based on all the two groups' answers, there is a strong similarity as all agreed on the positive relationship between leadership and internal capabilities.

Everyone in the middle management team agree that a good leader has a great influence on staff performance within the organisation. One person strongly agrees because a good leader should be able to know the correct attitude and skills in order for them to influence the staff performance. However, one staff differ because depending on the department some leader could influence in both good and negative influence. This can be a situation where the staff will follow the leader despite which direction and perspective the leader takes. It would be ideal if the leader know how to handle problems and complex situation because it will have an influence on the staff performance.

**Coaching Interventions at Royal Brunei Airlines:** The coaching interventions implemented at Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) yielded significant impacts on various aspects of organizational development and individual performance. This section presents the key findings and discusses their implications in the context of unlocking the potential of RBA.

**Improvements in Operational Efficiency:** Coaching interventions at RBA led to noticeable enhancements in operational efficiency. Through targeted coaching sessions, staff members demonstrated improved adherence to safety protocols, more efficient decision-making in high-stress situations, and a reduction in operational errors. These improvements align with the criticality of effective leadership and decision-making in the airline industry (Smith, 2018). The integration of learning theory principles, such as behaviorism and cognitive theory, played a crucial role in shaping these outcomes. By focusing on observable behaviors and stimulating critical thinking processes, coaching interventions fostered a culture of continuous improvement within the organization.

**Leadership Development and Employee Engagement:** The coaching initiatives at RBA also proved instrumental in leadership development and employee engagement. Leaders who participated in coaching sessions exhibited enhanced strategic thinking, improved communication with their teams, and a heightened ability to adapt to industry changes. These results are consistent with the principles of adult learning theory, which emphasizes learner-centered approaches and self-directed learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Additionally, the application of social learning theory, through peer interactions and observational learning, contributed to the positive shifts in leadership behaviors. This, in turn, positively influenced employee engagement, creating a more motivated and committed workforce.

The interviews demonstrated the relationship between leaders and staff capabilities:

1. Senior Vice President Operational: “good leadership has great influence on staff performance. I believe that a good leader should walk the talk and not only direct the staff but do what they themselves teach the staff.”
2. Manager People Performance: “I strongly believe that a good leader has a great influence over the staff.”
3. Manager Strategy and business development: “I believe that strong leadership will be able to provide good direction and that capable leader could motivate the staff.”
4. Manager Performance: Based on my experience, trust is important otherwise the staff will not follow and relationship play a major role for the staff performance to be affected.

**Career Development and Organizational Growth:** Coaching interventions demonstrated a profound impact on career development among RBA staff members. The adoption of adult learning theory principles, particularly self-directed learning and reflective practices, empowered individuals to take ownership of their professional growth. This led to a notable increase in staff members' confidence in their abilities and aspirations for career advancement. Furthermore, the collaborative learning environment fostered by coaching aligned with constructivist theory, allowing individuals to construct their own knowledge and understanding of their career paths (Vygotsky, 1978). These results not only benefit individual career trajectories but also contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of the organization.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While the coaching interventions demonstrated substantial positive impacts, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. These may include potential challenges in scalability and resource allocation. Future research could focus on refining coaching methodologies to

address these constraints, as well as exploring additional learning theories or combining multiple theories for an even more comprehensive approach.

### **Recommendation**

The research provides several conclusions and implications that clarify the coaching process, support the development of staff skills, and improve performance. Accordingly, the study provides suggestions to improve the coaching practice, and the existing staff skills development approach based on the following factors.

The study centred on the following objectives:

1. To investigate how coaching impacts the development of leadership competencies, including positive influence, decision making, providing direction and communication among managers and supervisors at Royal Brunei Airlines.
2. To evaluate the contribution of coaching to enhancing technical knowledge among staff members in operational roles at Royal Brunei Airlines and to analyse the resulting impact on job performance metrics such as proactiveness, creativity, and innovativeness.
3. To examine the influence of coaching in improving soft skills, particularly in managing emotions, fostering teamwork, building resilience, and enhancing adaptability among employees in Royal Brunei Airlines.

The study's analysis provides recommendations for the RBA Management and People and Performance departments. The focus is on facilitating the adoption of the GROW model integrated with Adult Learning Theory in the coaching program. This approach, with its emphasis on structured coaching process initiatives, has the potential to enhance staff performance significantly.

### *Integrated Coaching Process*

The GROW model, a structured framework for coaching conversations, underpins this integrated coaching process. The GROW model, which stands for Goal, Reality, Options, and Way Forward, ensures clarity, focus, and accountability in the coaching process. By aligning coaching interventions with the principles of the GROW model, RBA can effectively address the specific developmental needs outlined in the research objectives, providing a reassuring structure to the coaching process.

### *Objective 1*

Examining the effectiveness of coaching in fostering leadership skills among RBA employees involves utilizing the GROW model to guide coaching conversations. For instance, a coach might work with an employee to clarify their leadership goals (Goal), such as improving team communication, assessing their current leadership capabilities and challenges (Reality) like managing conflicts, exploring different strategies and approaches for leadership development (Options) such as team building exercises, and establish concrete action plans to enhance leadership effectiveness (Way Forward) like implementing regular team meetings.

### *Objective 2*

Assessing the impact of coaching on enhancing technical knowledge and job performance. It requires a structured approach using the GROW model. Coaches help employees define their technical proficiency goals (Goal), assess their current skill level and performance gaps (Reality), explore various learning opportunities and resources to acquire new knowledge and

skills (Options) and develop actionable steps to apply their learning in their roles (Way Forward). Simultaneously, there is an increase in their work performance - proactive, innovative and creative. They will also understand their job scope.

### *Objective 3*

Exploring the role of coaching in nurturing soft skills essential for workplace success involves leveraging the GROW model to facilitate skill development. Coaches can assist employees in setting specific goals related to soft skill improvement (Goal), assessing their current strengths and areas for improvement in soft skills (Reality), brainstorming strategies and techniques for enhancing soft skills (Options), and creating a plan of action to practice and integrate the skills into their daily work (Way Forward).

### **Internal Coach Training and Certification**

RBA's investment in training and certifying internal coaches is not just a suggestion but a necessity to ensure the sustainability, standards, and uniformity of coaching initiatives. Research findings have highlighted the lack of consistency and uniformity in the coaching process, making this investment an urgent and important step for RBA.

### **Implementation**

RBA provides comprehensive training programs and professional certification pathways for employees interested in becoming internal coaches. It equips them with the necessary coaching skills, competencies, and ethical guidelines to effectively support their colleagues' development and drive organizational performance. By implementing the coaching framework, RBA fosters a culture of continuous learning and growth, empowers employees to achieve their full potential, and positions the organization for long-term success in the aviation industry.

### **Functional Coaching Initiatives**

RBA should implement functional coaching initiatives in the coaching program. The coach should tailor the program specifically to technical functions, empowering the technical teams to excel in their roles, drive innovation, and contribute to the organization's overall success. The data analysis findings discovered that the current coaching process needs to support the staff's proactive and innovative behaviour. Although the findings indicate that Coaching does not make a person more resilient, functional coaching supports the development of skills.

### **Assessment and Goal Setting**

Conduct individual assessments with technical team members to identify their current skill levels, strengths, and areas for development. Collaboratively set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals aligned with departmental objectives and personal aspirations. This process not only aligns individual efforts with the team's goals but also fosters a sense of personal growth and fulfilment as these goals are achieved.

### **Technical Skills Workshops**

The skills focus on interactive workshops and training sessions on specific technical competencies relevant to the department's functions. These workshops are designed to be practical and relevant, instilling a sense of confidence and competence in the team members. Next, invite subject matter experts or internal trainers to facilitate sessions on topics such as

software proficiency, equipment operation, troubleshooting techniques, and industry best practices.

### **One-to-One Coaching Sessions**

Pair each technical team member with a dedicated coach with expertise in their specialization. Conduct regular one-on-one coaching sessions to provide personalized attention, feedback, and support tailored to the individual's unique needs and goals.

### **Problem-Solving and Innovation Labs**

Establish problem-solving and innovation labs where technical team members collaborate in real-world challenges and projects. Encourage creativity, experimentation, and out-of-the-box thinking to drive continuous improvement and foster a culture of innovation within the department.

### **Conclusions**

#### *The Integrated Framework*

The recommended coaching framework integrating the GROW model and principles of andragogy provides a structured approach for Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) to enhance leadership, technical skills, and soft skills among its employees. By aligning coaching initiatives with the four critical steps of the GROW model—Goal Setting, Reality Checking, Obstacles and Options, and Way Forward—along with relevant andragogy principles such as self-directed learning, experiential learning, problem-centred learning, and collaborative learning, RBA can create a holistic learning environment that empowers employees to drive their development and contribute to organizational success.

#### *Certification for Internal Coach*

Obtaining certification as an internal coach presents an opportunity for organizations to cultivate a coaching culture and unlock their workforce's full potential. By equipping internal coaches with the necessary skills, knowledge, and credentials, organizations can enhance employee development, improve performance, and foster a supportive and empowering work environment. Certification provides a structured framework for internal coaches to effectively guide and support their colleagues, ultimately driving individual growth and organizational success.

#### *Functional Coaching*

In summary, implementing a Functional Coaching Program explicitly tailored to technical functions represents a strategic investment in enhancing the organization's technical skills, problem-solving abilities, and innovation. Organizations can optimize operational efficiency, drive continuous improvement, and achieve excellence in their technical functions by providing targeted coaching and support to technical team members. Functional coaching fosters a culture of learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement, positioning the organization for long-term success in today's competitive business landscape.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that there may be gaps in this research and areas for future exploration. For example, further investigation could investigate the effectiveness of specific coaching interventions tailored to the unique needs of different employee groups within RBA, such as frontline staff, middle managers, and senior executives. Additionally,



exploring the long-term impact of coaching on employee retention, job satisfaction, and organizational culture could provide valuable insights into the broader benefits of coaching beyond skill development.

Overall, the recommended coaching framework serves as a foundational blueprint for RBA to cultivate a continuous learning and growth culture, positioning the organization for sustained success in the dynamic aviation industry. Continued research and refinement of coaching practices are essential to ensure ongoing alignment with organizational goals and evolving employee needs.

### **Significant Findings**

The study analyzed how protege embarked on learning in the coaching process. The findings concluded that the internal thought process changed the protege's frame of mind, influencing changes in the protege's actions, behaviours, mindset, values and others. Protege's frame of mind depends on the awareness of internal capacity, flexibility, craftsmanship spirit, self-efficacy, consciousness and interdependence. When the protege's state of mind is high in a particular area, he or she displays behaviours and actions that reflect their level.

### **Implication**

The study gives new perspectives on staff development initiatives through a three dimensionally structured coaching process that empowers the staff to grow personally and self-develop. According to the findings, this study implies that knowledge and practice benefit various parties.

#### *Implication for Knowledge*

The research constantly emphasized the elements of self-directed and experiential learning, which is the key to the staff's adult learning approach. The process encourages understanding one's needs at a personal level so that staff can approach problems from different angles and perspectives, which leads to growth opportunities for learning and development.

Regarding the process that encourages staff to reflect on their previous experience, the coaching process provides a learning opportunity for staff to reflect on and understand the implications of their experience and what helped them grow and develop throughout their work journey. Simultaneously, the coaching process provides a conducive environment where they feel safe and encourage open communication, sharing past experiences to overcome challenges and provide the support needed to learn and improve themselves for better work performance.

The coaching process provided learning and staff development from three perspectives. It provided opportunities to improve leadership, technical knowledge, and soft skills, eventually leading them to perform their jobs at a higher level of proficiency. However, self-thought severe learning opportunities will only occur if the staff understands the importance of learning and its benefits.

The research further investigates the initial learning experiences during the coaching process. The results showed that staff inner belief development changed their attitude, affecting their behaviours, mentality, values, and other areas. The knowledge of internal capability,

adaptability, and interrelationship determines the staff mindset. The staff exhibited behaviours and activities that echoed their level of awareness in the same area because it elevated their mental state.

*This Study Advances Theoretical Understanding in Several Keyways*

**Expanding Social Learning Theory:** This research underscores the role of social learning in fostering a reflective and collaborative learning environment where employees can safely share experiences and learn from one another. In IR 4.0, where collaborative technology and data-driven decision-making are central, the findings contribute to social learning theory by showing how coaching can enhance collective learning and support a culture of shared growth and open communication. These insights add to the knowledge base by connecting social learning to practical skills acquisition and emotional intelligence within a structured coaching framework.

**Contributing to Sustainable Performance and Organizational Development Theory:** By highlighting the link between coaching and sustainable business performance, the study suggests that structured coaching is integral to fostering a culture of ongoing improvement and adaptability. The findings reveal that coaching, as an organizational development tool, can reinforce an organization's sustainable performance by developing resilient, technically skilled, and emotionally intelligent employees who are well-equipped for the challenges of IR 4.0. This theoretical implication aligns with the need for organizations to integrate personal development with strategic goals, offering a pathway for sustaining high performance in a dynamic industry.

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