

# Anatomy of an Award-Winning Coaching Program

2021 Brandon Hall Award Winning Programs



**BetterUp**

# Introduction

Every year thousands of companies strive to improve their workplace and create better outcomes through HR practices like leadership development, talent management, well-being, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. A small subset of these companies experience such great results that they decide to submit their programs for an award—and an even smaller subset wins.

**The Brandon Hall Group**, an independent HCM research and analyst firm, operates the largest and longest-running awards program in Human Capital Management. A panel of veteran, independent senior industry experts, Brandon Hall Group analysts, and executives evaluate award entries based upon these criteria: fit the need, design of the program, functionality, innovation, and overall measurable benefits.

In 2021, BetterUp entered award submissions in partnership with three very different companies: John Muir Health, WarnerMedia, and a Global Consulting Firm.

We're proud to announce that all three programs won awards — and we're even more excited about the transformation that occurred within these organizations as a result of our partnership.



These awards validate the ability of coaching at scale to empower individuals in leading their organizations through trying times while helping them balance work and personal life. As a relative newcomer to the HR toolkit, coaching at scale has yet to yield the established educational resources and industry best practices that typically support organizational implementations. This guide shares lessons from the three award-winning coaching programs to shed light on the wide variety of organizational needs that coaching can address to deliver your employees the personalized support they need to become better workers and better humans.

## Brandon Hall Group 2021 Awards to BetterUp partners



### **John Muir Health**

*Human Resources, Best Benefits,  
Wellness and Well-Being Program,  
Silver Award*



### **WarnerMedia**

*Leadership Development,  
Best Advance in Leadership  
Development, Silver Award*



### **Global Consulting Firm**

*Leadership Development,  
Best Advance in Senior Manager  
Development, Gold Award*

# How to Design an Award-Winning Coaching Program

BetterUp didn't set out to design three award-winning coaching programs in one year, but we did set out to deliver upon our mission: to unlock greater purpose, passion, and clarity for people everywhere. Stemming from our core value of Empathy, we know that innovation starts with understanding—and we go to great lengths to understand our customers' needs. Only then can we design and deliver a coaching program that delivers award-winning results. Here's how we do it.

## Consider the business context

Every business faces different challenges and experiences the impact of societal and industry trends in different ways. Because coaching addresses the individual, companies need to consider how these factors affect employees so that they can deliver the most effective coaching program to those who need it most.

### Case in point

In 2020, John Muir Health Hospital employees faced added caregiver burnout due to rapidly changing pandemic protocols and visitation restrictions. The pandemic impacted the Global Consulting Firm in a different way; its Leadership Development Program participants were restricted from meeting in-person and its strong in-person culture was upended, forcing leaders to establish new ways of working with their teams.

### Reflection Questions

*What external trends are impacting your company at the moment?  
How do these trickle down to day-to-day work for employees?*

*What internal and external factors might be causing a shift or disruption in employees' responsibilities and/or mindsets?*

# Identify organizational needs

Employer-sponsored coaching does more than address the needs of individuals; it addresses individuals in the context of the culture and structure of the organization in which they work. As such, a coaching program can be designed to deliver learning and bring about behavior change that enhances established values and ways of working.

Deciding who receives coaching is just as important as how you design the coaching program. Because most companies start with a group of coaching participants, care must be given to deciding who is in that group.

## Case in point

Coaching was a core component of the leadership development model at WarnerMedia prior to bringing on BetterUp; managers already received training in coaching techniques such as active listening. In seeking to choose who would receive BetterUp coaching, it identified three criteria by which managers could be nominated.

By contrast, the impacts of the pandemic were so broad at John Muir Health that the organization offered coaching to all employees as part of its wellness program. To reduce attrition and absenteeism, this level of support was considered crucial to operations and continuing its reputation as a provider of world-class healthcare.

## Reflection Questions

*What existing cultural attributes, development frameworks, or company values at your company are compatible with coaching? How could coaching help support the embodiment of those qualities? For more, take a look at the BetterUp Whole Person Model.*

*Which groups of employees at your organization have the most impact on other employees? On customers? Which groups need additional support given the current external or internal business environment?*

# Set goals

Once you understand the organizational situation and have identified the coaching cohort, it's time to set goals to design and roll out an effective coaching program.

## The goals should:

- 1 *Align to the company's needs.*
- 2 *Be addressable by a coaching program.*
- 3 *Be measurable.*

## Case in point

The goals of the Global Consulting Firm's leadership program were to develop self, develop others, and develop as one organization. This framework offered a guide for the coaching program design and metrics, all of which a dedicated account team at BetterUp helps build.

At John Muir Health, the overall goal was to drive a measurable improvement in employee well-being, which meant supporting their most acute needs as employees and caregivers for their families.

## Reflection Questions

*What measurement and assessment frameworks (if any) does your company currently employ? What measurement frameworks are offered by your coaching partner?*

*Imagine the ongoing impacts of the coaching program. What results would you like to see?*

# Program design

While 1:1 coaching is the center of most coaching programs, coaching providers may offer additional services such as on-demand coaching for specialized issues, group coaching, and digital learning journeys. To be most effective, Coaches are always briefed on a company's program goals and organizational culture.

## Case in point

At the Global Consulting Firm, BetterUp 1-1 coaching in conjunction with BetterUp's Whole Person Model assessment matched the goal of "develop self." To help participants develop others, it utilized BetterUp Coaching Circles. To develop as one organization, the program included a reflection component with the Coach. Coaching was aligned to the duration of the annual Leadership Development Program.

Because WarnerMedia had a unique situation due to many internal and external organizational changes, BetterUp chose to employ and onboard a pool of dedicated Coaches. To embed the behaviors in WarnerMedia's new competency framework, the 6-month program led participants through three phases: awareness, growth, and reflection.

## Reflection Questions

*What modalities of focused work would be best for your employee group? Consider educational needs, 1-1 support, group learning opportunities, and models for learning progression.*

*As you look at these factors, consider how they map to your organizational goals and existing frameworks or models.*

*What program duration and frequency of coaching match your budget and goals?*

# Rollout

Organizational support is needed to ensure that participants utilize the resources they are offered. Participating in coaching may take participants away from work, and some people may be resistant due to a stigma around mental health. Additionally, some programs are most effective when managers participate in their employees' development. For these reasons, a coaching program may require a coordinated awareness-building initiative.

## Case in point

To launch its wellness-oriented coaching program with BetterUp, John Muir Health leveraged successful approaches from past company-wide initiatives. This included a mix of digital and on-site communications, as well as leadership evangelism to amplify network effects.

WarnerMedia needed to build awareness among HR business partners, leaders, and coaching participants. Senior leader advocacy, a series of webinars, internal communication campaigns, live orientations, and post-launch communications all helped drive BetterUp activation and engagement.

## Reflection Questions

*Who needs to know about BetterUp and how will they find out?*

*What existing channels can be leveraged for communications?  
What new initiatives will need to be taken?*

*Which leaders will be most effective in advocating for the program?*

# Examine Results

The individualized attention offered by BetterUp is usually so well-received that participants immediately begin sharing positive feedback. Where the rubber meets the road, however, is looking at progress against benchmarks over time. Another way results can offer insight is by examining trends in topics discussed in coaching sessions. Aggregated data provides clues into employee needs and offers insight into areas to be addressed for the whole company. While completely anonymous, the aggregate feedback provides a powerful, real-time roadmap for how HR and People teams can continue to act and deliver in real-time for the betterment of their employees.

## Case in point

John Muir Health employees started below BetterUp's benchmark across all well-being dimensions. They surpassed the benchmark in two areas in just 90 days and increased overall wellness by 9% for the duration of the program. These results offer a beacon of hope that stress and burnout can be mitigated for healthcare employees during a global pandemic. And, most importantly, that by giving employees a resource to delve into their well-being, they then feel more empowered, healthy and positive at work. It's all connected.

The Global Consulting Firm utilized the real-time insights offered by the BetterUp People Analytics Dashboard. This information was extremely valuable in helping the team make real-time adjustments to the Leadership Development Program as participants navigated the effects of the pandemic.

More than 3 in 4 managers at WarnerMedia reported growth for their direct reports across a variety of dimensions. These included: aligning others around a clear strategy, ability to adapt to change, and creating an inclusive work environment.

## Reflection Questions

*When you devote time to healthy practices, what are the changes that you see in yourself at work?*

*Consider the ripple effects of improvements in individuals' well-being and performance. How could this impact your organization as a whole?*

# Conclusion

As you can see, implementing coaching at scale isn't a one-size-fits-all scenario. It requires careful consideration, planning, and ongoing analysis to effectively transform your organization by equipping employees with personalized support.

*To learn more about BetterUp's award-winning coaching and development offerings, visit*

**<https://www.betterup.com/customers>**