

# How coaching can transform a whole organization

Why real coaching impact starts small, spreads fast, and sticks—backed by real data





# One coach. One leader. One conversation that changes everything.

At Torch, we've seen it happen again and again: a single coaching engagement sets off a ripple effect. It starts with one leader showing up differently and spreads across teams, relationships, and business outcomes. But not all coaching creates this kind of impact.

Too often, coaching is siloed, misaligned, or treated like a perk for the lucky few. It becomes a one-off instead of a multiplier. When that happens, organizations miss out on the real power of coaching—change that starts small, spreads fast, and sticks.

This need for effective coaching is more urgent than ever, with research showing only **32% of leaders feel "pretty prepared"** to tackle today's leadership demands, like AI adoption and rapid change, while **58% remain neutral** or feel unprepared.

## When leaders burn out, everyone pays

Leadership today demands more than traditional training can deliver. In a world where market shifts happen overnight and AI transforms industries in real-time, leaders face unprecedented pressure—with **71% reporting increased stress and 40% contemplating** walking away from leadership entirely. This leadership crisis comes at a staggering cost: **\$9 trillion** annually due to disengagement and performance gaps. Effective coaching isn't just a development tool—it's the critical lifeline that helps leaders navigate complexity with confidence, unlocking the human potential that technology alone can never replicate.



“Torch transformed how we develop leaders. The impact is felt across teams, from stronger connections to better results.”

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Gina Greenwalt, Director - Culture & People Development, Twitch

# What is the coaching ripple effect—and why should organizations care?

When coaching works, the impact doesn't stop with the person being coached. It radiates outward. Leaders start showing up differently—with more clarity, empathy, and intention—and their teams respond in kind. That's the coaching ripple effect: a chain reaction of positive change that moves from individual to team to organization.

## **And it matters more than ever.**

Organizations can't afford cookie cutter investments that only scratch the surface. Coaching needs to deliver value at every level. It has to scale, stick, and show up in business results. While the average training and leadership development program sees just 12% of concepts applied on the job, personalized contextual coaching drives 88% of participants to make meaningful behavior changes within 60 days. Coaching doesn't just teach, it transforms.

## **What is contextual coaching?**

**Contextual coaching connects leadership development to your business reality.**

Instead of generic best practices, contextual coaching supports the specific capabilities needed to solve your organization's unique problems.

When coaching is aligned with your business context, individual growth leads to lasting impact across your entire organization.

The numbers tell the story:

- ✦ **94%** of direct reports notice positive changes in their manager after coaching.
- ✦ Teams led by coached leaders report **15% higher engagement**.
- ✦ Organizations implementing coaching see **30-50% higher retention rates** among key talent.

These aren't just statistics, they're business outcomes that directly impact performance.

That's why we set out to answer a critical question:

## Does coaching actually drive meaningful impact across individuals, teams, and organizations?

This guide brings together data from multiple surveys, testimony from direct reports, and conversations with hundreds of leaders across industries—those who've received coaching, led teams through it, and seen firsthand how powerful (or ineffective) coaching can be.

**We're not just measuring outcomes. We're learning when coaching truly makes a difference—and how to deliver that impact at scale.**

The data tells a clear story: when coaching builds the right capacities, it drives measurable impact—from faster time-to-market to better customer experiences. You'll also see what separates truly transformative coaching from efforts that fall flat.



# What coaching can unlock

It's not just about personal growth—it's about performance, influence, and the ripple effect leaders create around them. When coaching is done well, it unlocks real change in how people think, collaborate, and lead.

## What leaders are saying

In our surveys, leaders consistently point to the same benefits from coaching:

- ✦ **Increased self-awareness that transforms decision-making**  
Leaders develop a clearer understanding of their strengths, blind spots, and impact on others, allowing them to make more intentional choices in how they show up.
- ✦ **The ability to respond rather than react under pressure**  
Coaching builds the capacity to pause between stimulus and response, especially in high-stakes situations where emotions run high.
- ✦ **Laser focus on what truly matters**  
Leaders learn to cut through noise and complexity to identify and prioritize the initiatives that will create the greatest impact.
- ✦ **Deeper trust that unlocks team potential**  
Coaching helps leaders create psychological safety, making it possible for teams to take smarter risks and collaborate more effectively.
- ✦ **Confidence to lead at the next level**  
Leaders develop the courage and capabilities to step into bigger challenges and more complex responsibilities.

These changes aren't just personal wins, they improve team performance. Leaders who receive coaching bring those shifts into every 1:1, every project, every decision. As one leader put it, "Leaders start showing up differently with more clarity, empathy, and intention—and their teams respond in kind." And that's where the ripple effect begins.



“Great leaders become a secure base for others by creating trust and by providing energy and support to encourage their employees to take risks and seize new opportunities.”

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**George Kohrieser**, Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior at the Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland

# The upgrade that changes everything? Shifting from skills to capacities.

Think about it: The last time you mastered a new technique, how long did it actually serve you before the world shifted again? That's the challenge with traditional leadership development—skills have expiration dates, but capacities grow with you through whatever comes next.

When we talk with leaders who've experienced real coaching, they don't just mention getting better at giving feedback or running meetings. They talk about profound shifts in how they see the world and respond to challenges.

**"I don't just handle problems differently," one leader told us, "I see different problems and opportunities in the first place."**

This isn't just wishful thinking—it's what today's leaders are actively seeking. Nearly 35% of respondents in our leadership survey specifically want coaching to help them navigate complexity. Not because they want to check a box, but because they're feeling the weight of leading through constant change. As one leader put it: "I feel like the best leaders I can imagine give people space to make decisions, listen and are open to new ideas, and allow space for some risk taking and exploration while having their teams back."

Think of leadership skills like apps you download for specific challenges. But leadership capacities? They're more like a system upgrade to reframe how you think, connect, and create impact. **Only focusing on skill development is like downloading new apps onto an old phone and expecting it to work differently.**

Leadership isn't about memorizing techniques—it's about navigating complexity, adapting to change, and leading through uncertainty. Leadership capacities are your internal GPS when there's no map to follow. These capacities give leaders the:

- ✦ **Confidence to make decisions when there's no clear answer**
- ✦ **Awareness to notice patterns others miss**
- ✦ **Resilience to stay centered when everything's changing**
- ✦ **Wisdom to know when to push forward and when to pause**

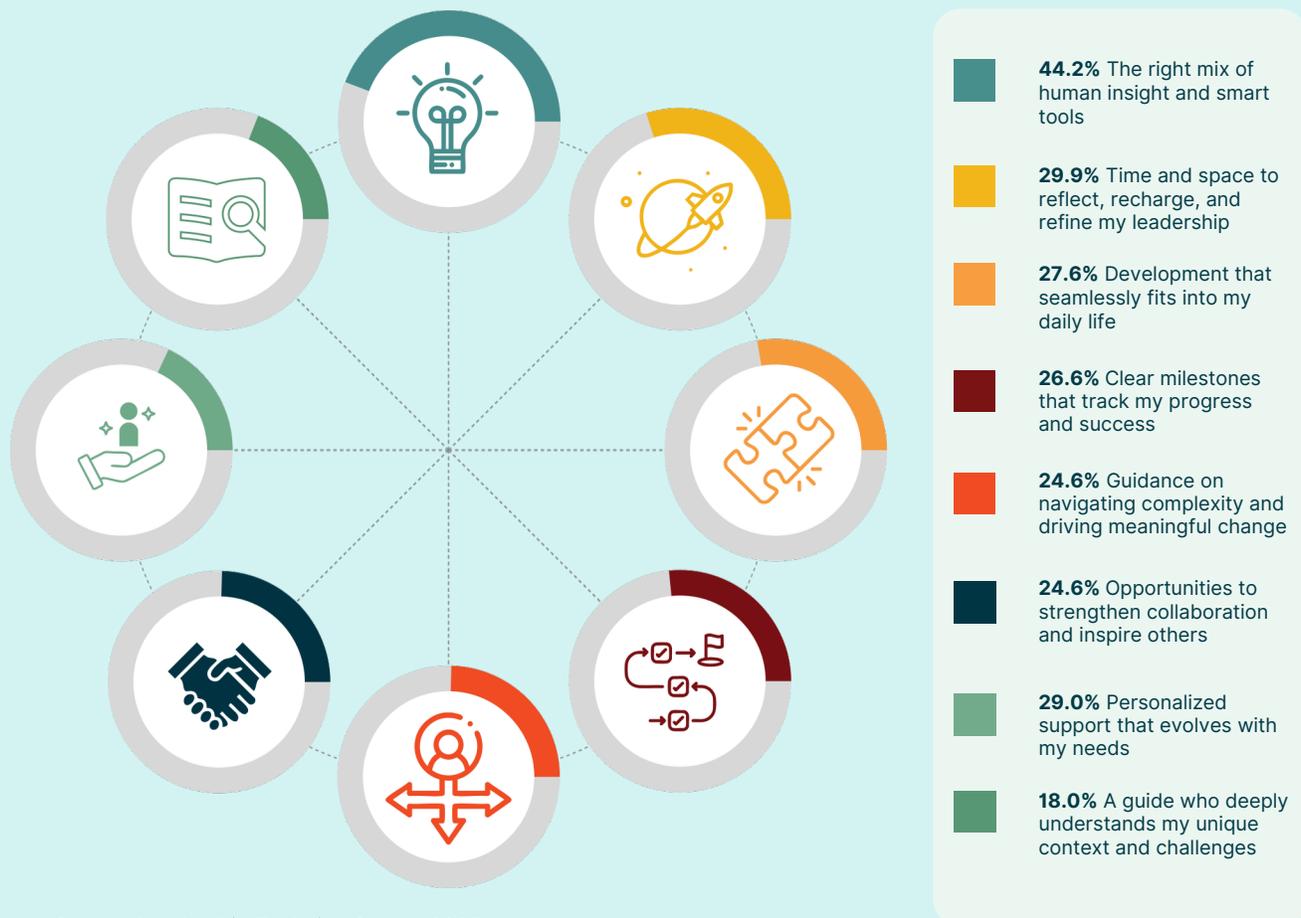
**You don't develop these capacities overnight or in a two-hour workshop.** They emerge through conversations that actually matter—ones that challenge your thinking, expand your perspective, and directly connect to your real-world challenges. In fact, **60%** of leaders reported coaching was extremely or very effective, compared to traditional leadership training.

Future-focused leadership development isn't about one-size-fits-all solutions. It invests in adaptive coaching models, fosters mental resilience, and encourages continuous experimentation. Leaders need frameworks and tools that are flexible, context-aware, and designed to fit into their daily workflows—because that's where real transformation happens.

**When the leader shows up differently, the entire team's energy shifts.** People feel it. They respond differently. They bring more of themselves to work. And suddenly, the whole system starts changing—not because someone followed a prescribed formula, but because they evolved how they show up in the world.

And that's the beauty of focusing on capacities rather than just skills. Skills solve today's specific challenges. Capacities transform how you handle everything that comes your way—both the challenges you can see and the ones you can't yet imagine.

## What kind of support would help you grow into the leader you want to be?



Source: Leadership Evolution Survey 2025

# Coaching creates ripple effects in four ways

Our research uncovered four powerful insights about how coaching transforms not just leaders, but their teams and entire organizations. These findings emerged from hundreds of responses from leaders across industries who've experienced coaching firsthand:

## **01. Teams notice when leaders grow and it changes how they show up**

94% of respondents saw positive changes in their manager after they received coaching. The biggest shift? Communication. Leaders became more thoughtful, more present, and more effective at navigating difficult conversations—changes that transformed team dynamics.

## **02. Coaching doesn't just help leaders grow—it helps them grow others**

91% of leaders reported meaningful growth in their own skills, mindsets, and leadership capacities. But it didn't stop there. Many became more intentional about developing their people, creating more opportunities for growth across their teams.

## **03. The ripple effect scales up to the organizational level**

Respondents didn't just report improved engagement and team trust—they linked coaching to tangible business outcomes like higher retention, better performance, and even revenue growth. The ripple effect is real, and it can show up in your bottom line.

## **04. Time matters. Longer coaching = deeper impact**

The more time leaders spent in coaching, the more pronounced the ripple effect. Deeper engagements drove more visible change in both the leader's behavior and the systems around them—from stronger teams to more aligned decision-making across functions. Quick fixes fade; transformation takes time.

## **The takeaway?**

When coaching is done right, when it's contextual, sustained, and aligned with your business, leaders grow in ways that fuel transformation at every level. Let's break down how each of these ripple effects works, starting with what direct reports notice when their manager gets coached.



# 1. Teams notice when leaders grow and it changes how they show up

The ripple effect starts with the people who see leaders every day. When a leader starts showing up differently, direct reports don't just notice, they feel it. That's where the coaching ripple effect begins. Our research found something striking: an overwhelming 94% of direct reports saw positive changes in their manager after coaching. And the shift that stood out above all others? Communication.

And the data supports that communication is key. With 64.1% of team members valuing leaders who own their mistakes and learn from them, coaching unlocks exactly the kind of vulnerability and growth mindset teams are hungry for. Leaders themselves recognize this too—57.4% identify using communication to "build bridges of trust across every divide" as essential to their effectiveness.

## What direct reports are saying

In our surveys, the improvements that direct reports shared weren't so subtle. Managers became more transparent, more present, and more skilled at navigating those make-or-break moments when tensions run high. They listened more deeply. Gave direction with clarity and context. Delivered tough feedback with genuine care. **In fact, six of the ten most commonly reported positive changes directly related to communication.**

Communication isn't just one aspect of good people management, it might just be the most important. According to Gallup, employees who feel their manager is an effective communicator are 4 times more likely to be engaged at work.

This is a clear signal for leaders everywhere: If you want to be seen as a stronger, more effective leader, start by sharpening how you communicate. Coaching can help you do that—and more.

## 10 ways my manager improved after coaching

When we asked direct reports what changed after their manager received coaching, these ten improvements rose right to the top: When we asked direct reports what changed after their manager received coaching, these ten improvements rose right to the top:

- ✦ Better manager/leader overall
- ✦ More effectively communicates with others
- ✦ More open to feedback
- ✦ Asks more questions
- ✦ Better at giving useful feedback
- ✦ Practices more active listening
- ✦ Demonstrates more empathy
- ✦ Better at managing difficult conversations
- ✦ Is more patient with others
- ✦ Better advocate for their team

Notice the pattern? Six of the top ten improvements relate to communication—showing just how critical this capacity is to effective leadership.

## 2. Coaching doesn't just help leaders grow—it helps them grow others

Let's be honest, coaching is often viewed as a private perk for the corner office. But our data shows something more powerful. When a leader gets coached, they don't just grow themselves. They grow their people.

A remarkable 91% of leaders in our research reported meaningful growth in their own skills, mindsets, and leadership capacities through coaching. And they didn't keep those gains to themselves. They brought their new perspective and energy into every conversation, decision, and team interaction. And it translated into how they coached, supported, and stretch the people around them.

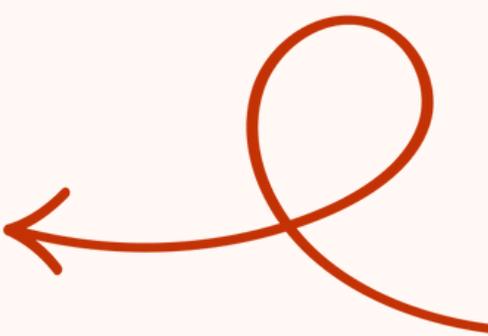
The numbers tell the story. After their manager experienced coaching:

- ✦ **65%** of employees say they can bring more of themselves to work
- ✦ **64%** feel their contributions are valued more often
- ✦ **63%** agree that they feel more valued for their unique skills

One direct report captured what we've seen countless times: "Since my manager's coaching, the standout change at work is the evident shift in how our team communicates. Meetings have transformed into focused, open, and inclusive sessions, valuing every team member's input. This shift has nurtured better collaboration."

In a world where 44% of workers' skills will need to transform in the next five years, yesterday's approach to leadership development won't cut it. Leaders need to be equipped to build both short-term skills and long-term capacities, for themselves and their teams.

# Coaching helps leaders develop:



## \* **Communication that creates innovation**

When leaders master the art of real presence—truly listening, managing their energy, and navigating tough conversations with confidence—everything changes. The proof? 72% of direct reports say they now feel safer offering differing opinions, even in disagreement with their manager. That's not just better communication—it's the foundation for innovation.

## \* **Learning that never stops**

Coached leaders don't just grow themselves—they create environments where growth is expected, celebrated, and constant. The shift is dramatic: 67% of respondents say they're more likely to pursue new skill development and view setbacks as valuable learning opportunities. One coaching relationship can transform an entire team's relationship with growth.

## \* **Leadership that multiplies**

The days of the lone hero leader are over. Coaching helps leaders become multipliers who intentionally develop others, build genuine trust, and create the conditions where collaboration flourishes naturally. Great leadership isn't about being the smartest person in the room—it's about making everyone in the room smarter together.

## \* **Thinking that cuts through complexity**

In the thick of information overload, clarity is a superpower. Coached leaders develop the ability to see patterns others miss, make bolder decisions with incomplete information, and navigate uncertainty with confidence. Their teams notice—41% report visible improvement in their manager's strategic thinking after receiving coaching.

When coaching builds these fundamental capacities, not just tactical skills, leaders become catalysts for transformation that extends far beyond their own performance and even their own teams. That's not just good for people. It's good for business.

# 3. The ripple effect scales up to the organizational level

When leaders evolve, the whole system shifts. When done right, coaching creates ripple effects that extend far beyond individual growth and team development. The ultimate ripple is the transformation of company culture to a coaching culture.

## What is a coaching culture?

A coaching culture is an environment where new behaviors learned in coaching (like active listening and delivering feedback) are actively recognized and rewarded with practices, processes and systems across the organization.

Put simply, a coaching culture is where personal growth and business performance advance together because "how we do things around here" includes helping each other evolve.

Organizations that embed coaching into their culture don't just see better retention numbers or engagement scores. They unlock the kind of measurable outcomes that make boards and executive teams take notice:

- ✦ **Improved financial performance**  
Coached leaders spot growth opportunities earlier and deliver more consistent results quarter after quarter.
- ✦ **Deeper customer connection**  
Their teams stay closer to the market, respond faster to customer needs, and build the kind of loyalty that withstands competition.
- ✦ **Smarter operations**  
Decision quality improves, resources get allocated with greater precision, and workflows become naturally more efficient.
- ✦ **Innovation that moves faster**  
Cross-functional walls come down. Collaboration flourishes. Ideas travel from concept to market with fewer roadblocks.
- ✦ **Leadership that multiplies itself**  
Coaching becomes a force multiplier, developing capacity at every level rather than just at the top.
- ✦ **Change that doesn't break people**  
Teams navigate disruption with less friction, faster recovery, and the resilience to keep performing through uncertainty.
- ✦ **Strategic agility**  
Leaders think bigger, adapt more quickly, and align others around a shared purpose, even when the path forward isn't clear.

## **Adaptable leaders. Evolving organizations. Lasting impact.**

These last two outcomes go hand in hand with broader leadership research showing that nearly 45% of leaders cite ongoing change as their biggest hurdle, making the ability to adapt to change quickly and guide others through uncertainty more critical than ever.

The ripple effect at this scale doesn't happen by accident. It happens when organizations treat coaching not as a perk, but as a strategic investment in how work gets done.

When leaders grow with the right support, they unlock new potential in the people and systems around them. And when that becomes the norm—not the exception—organizations evolve into something far more capable: adaptable, human-centered, and built for whatever comes next.



“There is a broad realization that great leaders, mentors, and coaches help companies achieve better performance. [Great leadership is] a business imperative. It's a value proposition. It drives financial outcomes and provides organizations with a strategic edge in the talent marketplace,”

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**Ajit Chouhan**

Senior Director of Human Resources, Hewlett Packard Enterprise



## 4. The ripple effect strengthens with time

When it comes to coaching, quick wins are great, but real transformation takes time. Our research shows that the longer a leader is coached, the deeper and more expansive the ripple effect becomes.

Leaders who commit to coaching for seven months or more don't just level up their skills—they transform how they show up in the world. They make smarter strategic calls, navigate uncertainty with grace, and model the kind of leadership that creates ripples throughout their teams. Their people feel it too—reporting higher satisfaction, greater psychological safety, and more confidence in their futures.



“Leadership development isn't just a one-time two-week course and then you level up. Leadership is a deeper challenge, and they need consistent support.”

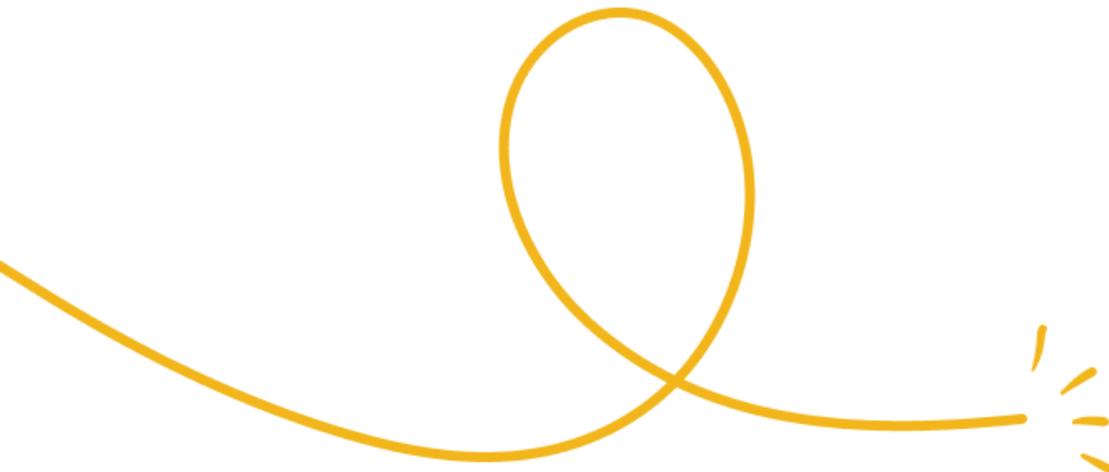
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**Ajit Chouhan**

Senior Director of Human Resources, Hewlett Packard Enterprise

And organizations? They see the multiplier effect: stronger leadership pipelines, smoother cross-functional work, and teams that can bend without breaking when change hits (which it always does).

This isn't just what we believe—it's what our data proves. Coaching's impact compounds over time, creating returns that grow exponentially. Like dropping a stone in water, the ripples keep spreading—building capacity that lasts and multiplies through your entire organization.



# How contextual coaching amplifies the ripple effect

Not all coaching creates real change. When leaders are coached in isolation, they might grow personally but remain stuck in systems that hold them back. If this happens, these newly coached leaders will flee your organization.

## That's what makes contextual coaching different.

At Torch, we coach in context. We get to know your leaders' actual challenges, align with your business goals, and connect every conversation to what matters now. We believe great coaching doesn't just develop individuals—it transforms organizations by building capacities that spread and stick.

Because when coaching is grounded in real-world complexity, it doesn't just make better leaders—it makes better workplaces.

### The danger of old-fashioned "out of context" coaching:

Leadership development content is not always tied to what the organization is seeking to achieve. The majority (69%) of all respondents describe their existing leadership development strategy as either only somewhat aligned or not aligned with their organization's overall business strategy.

Here's how contextual coaching works, and why it works so well:

#### ✦ It starts with real business context

Our coaches aren't just skilled listeners. They're fluent in the language of business. They understand your priorities and challenges, and they connect every conversation to what matters most—so leaders can apply what they learn immediately.

#### ✦ It builds lasting capacities, not just short-term skills

We're not here to teach leaders how to run a better meeting. We're here to help them become the kind of people who can lead through complexity, uncertainty, and growth. That means building capacities like adaptability, systemic thinking, and strategic clarity.

#### ✦ It creates a two-way feedback loop

While keeping coaching conversations confidential, we surface patterns across coaching engagements that help you see what's shifting—and where your culture or systems may need support. That way, the growth of your people informs the evolution of your organization.

#### ✦ It happens in the flow of work

Leaders don't have to step out of their day-to-day to get coached. Contextual coaching meets them in it, making the insights more relevant, the growth more real, and the impact more immediate.

The result? A dual transformation. Leaders grow in ways that ripple out across their teams. Organizations gain visibility into what's really happening, and the capacity to evolve in response.

# Why Torch?

## Leadership that shapes what's next

Real transformation doesn't happen in isolation—it ripples outward. Every organization is navigating its own journey—unique goals, complex challenges, and a future you're working hard to build.

We partner with you to develop leaders who don't just adapt to change—they drive it.

This is the Torch difference.



### \* **A true partnership approach**

We don't just deliver coaching—we work closely with your team to align it with your strategic goals from day one. We act as your thought partner in change.

### \* **Exceptional coaches who've been there**

Our coaches are experienced leaders first and foremost. They've led teams, managed complexity, and navigated tough transitions. That lived experience makes all the difference.

### \* **Contextual coaching feedback loop**

We gather insights (while keeping coaching sessions private) to help you see what's really happening in your organization—where growth is happening and where support is still needed.

### \* **Capacities that stick**

We don't just teach skills. We help leaders build fundamental leadership capacities—like emotional intelligence, adaptability, and systemic thinking—that help them lead through whatever comes next.

### \* **We practice what we coach**

Our team experiences the same reimagined coaching we deliver to our customers. It's how we stay grounded in growth, hold ourselves accountable, and keep evolving—just like the leaders we support.

# Create your own ripple effect

The most powerful coaching doesn't just transform individual leaders—it creates waves of change that reshape entire organizations. When leadership evolves, everything changes: teams collaborate more effectively, innovation accelerates, and results follow.

## Ready to see what real leadership transformation looks like?

- ✦ **Develop leadership capacities that last**  
Go beyond quick fixes to build the fundamental abilities your leaders need to navigate complexity and drive meaningful change
- ✦ **Turn individual growth into organizational evolution**  
Watch as improved communication, deeper trust, and clearer thinking spread from person to person
- ✦ **Connect coaching directly to business outcomes**  
See the impact in retention, performance, innovation, and your bottom line



## Torch

Don't settle for leadership development that stays on the surface. Partner with Torch to create the kind of coaching that starts with one conversation—and transforms everything.

Because in today's rapidly changing world, your organization doesn't just need better leaders. It needs leaders who evolve as fast as tomorrow.

**Let's build something that matters.**

**[Talk to us about coaching that creates real impact →](#)**



## How we gathered insights for this guide

To understand the ripple effect of coaching at scale, we pulled together insights from three major research efforts:

- 01. The Ripple Effect Survey**, conducted online in partnership with global research firm Censuswide, captured input from 85 direct reports across more than 2,500 organizations and 22 industries—from startups to enterprises with over 10,000 employees. Each respondent had reported to the same leader before, during, and after their coaching journey, offering a rare lens into real behavior change over time.
- 02. The Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey**, sponsored by Torch, explored how coaching and mentoring shape leadership effectiveness. It gathered insights from 665 people leaders in the HBR audience, providing a broader view of coaching's perceived value and organizational impact.
- 02. The Leadership Evolution Report 2025**, our annual research deep dive, included responses from 568 U.S.-based leaders across industries, company sizes, and leadership levels—from C-suite to emerging managers. Their insights reveal both the evolving pressures leaders face and the capacities they're building to meet them.

Together, these sources offer a rich, grounded view of what effective coaching really looks like—and how it's helping leaders rise to today's challenges.