

Leaders in London often find that growth lands all at once. A product catches on in multiple markets, a funding round closes, two senior hires accept offers, and suddenly the company doubles in headcount. The headlines feel exciting. The calendar less so. Decisions become bottlenecks, teams second guess priorities, and critical clients start noticing small slips. What looked like a simple matter of adding resources becomes a leadership problem in the shape of missed signals, fuzzy accountability, and an operating tempo that can't keep up.

I have coached founders, CEOs, and executive teams across London's tech, professional services, and creative sectors through those exact months when growth stops being fun. There is a repeatable pattern to the issues, but the fit to your culture, your board, and your people always matters more than any framework. Good coaching meets you where the complexity sharpens, then helps you build a leadership system that scales.



**What changes between 20 and 200 employees**

At 20 employees, leaders carry the context in their heads. You can make decisions in the kitchen, shout across desks, and resolve almost any conflict in an afternoon. At 200, the context fragments. People who never enter the same building need to coordinate on deliverables that depend on each other week by week. Managers hire other managers. Time zones matter. You cannot keep the business coherent with effort alone. You need an operating rhythm and a leadership bench that can run it.

A Shoreditch fintech I coached went from 35 to 140 people in 18 months after a Series B. The CEO had been a gifted product thinker, but as the team scaled he turned into the escalation point for disputes he had no time to hear. Product and sales argued about commitments to an enterprise pilot. Engineering was shipping features that marketing had not positioned. No one was failing, but the system was. Over three months, we put in place a decision log for cross functional bets, a simple ruleset for when to escalate, and a weekly revenue and roadmap review with fixed inputs. The output was not a miracle. It was a 12 percent improvement in on time delivery within two quarters and a noticeable drop in Friday night firefighting.

Growth creates new work. Leaders who thrived on ideation and speed must learn to allocate attention, design meetings that do real work, and make choices that stick even when they are unpopular. That is the pivot an Executive Coach helps you land.

## **Executive Coach, Leadership Coach, Business Coach: what each actually does**

Titles overlap in the market. In practice:

- A Leadership Coach typically focuses on the individual leader's behaviors, presence, and influence. Think executive presence in boardrooms, clear feedback to direct reports, and habit change in areas like delegation and listening.
- An Executive Coach usually works at the intersection of the leader and the business. We tie personal growth to strategic outcomes, align the top team, and help the CEO or functional head design an operating model that scales. I often coordinate with the chair or lead investor to keep sponsorship clear without compromising confidentiality.
- A Business Coach tends to emphasize commercial levers, go to market tactics, and financial discipline. Many are former operators who help you tune pricing, pipeline, and unit economics.

All three can be valuable. When a London company is scaling fast, the edge typically sits with an Executive Coach who can span the human and the structural. You will still work on influence and confidence, but always in service of a concrete plan to run the business better.

## **The London factor**

London gives you capital, talent, proximity to global clients, and a mature regulatory ecosystem. It also gives you competition for attention, a compressed workday across European and US time zones, and boards that expect sharp reporting and clean governance.

- Investors: Many London investors are active partners. They expect you to run a board pack like a FTSE CFO would, even if you only hired your first finance director last quarter. Coaching helps founders and functional heads translate product stories into metrics that sophisticated investors trust.
- Multicultural teams: It is routine to have twelve nationalities on a 100 person team. That diversity pays off in creativity and market empathy, as long as you intentionally state norms around conflict and decision velocity. Coaching supports leaders in naming those norms, not leaving them implicit.

- Regulation: Whether your world touches FCA oversight, NHS procurement, or data residency, you must balance speed with compliance. A coach can help set pace with governance controls that are right sized, not suffocating.

London also compresses career ladders. Ambitious managers expect development fast. If you do not provide clear paths and stretch roles, the firm down the street will. Leadership Training and targeted coaching become retention tools as much as performance levers.

## **Common growth traps I see in London scale ups**

- Hiring leaders without redesigning the work: You bring in a seasoned VP and then keep the old decision pathways. The new hire becomes a messenger instead of an owner.
- Fuzzy prioritization masked by busyness: Teams run hot, but the roadmap shifts weekly. You mistake activity for progress and erode trust with customers.
- Board and exec team out of sync: The board wants unit economics, the exec team talks features and headcount. Meetings become translation exercises.
- Delegation by abdication: You hand off outcomes without the scaffolding of clear metrics, cadences, and decision rights. The work boomerangs back in a crisis.
- Culture slogans without guardrails: You say you value autonomy, then add heavyweight approvals after one mistake. People stop taking initiative.

Each of these can be solved, but not by slogans. They need operating design, expectation setting, and consistent follow through.

## **What a coaching engagement actually looks like**

A typical coaching engagement for a leader in a fast growing London business runs six to twelve months. We start with a clear goal tied to the business. Reduce late stage churn in the enterprise pipeline by tightening cross functional handoffs. Stabilize engineering hiring after a dip in offer acceptance. Prepare a first time CFO to be effective with a board that includes two US funds and a chair with plc experience.

I gather inputs through brief stakeholder interviews and, where useful, a 360 review. We agree on outcomes and working agreements, including confidentiality boundaries. If a sponsor, often the CEO or chair, is involved, I hold quarterly check ins to share progress at a level that respects the coaching container.

Cadence matters. Early on, we meet weekly or fortnightly. As the system takes root, we might shift to monthly check ins and targeted sessions before critical events such as a board meeting or senior offsite. I often shadow one or two leadership meetings to observe dynamics in the wild. It is remarkable what you learn from a single product review or forecast call.

Tools are simple by design. A one page operating system that shows the rhythm of the week, month, and quarter, with owners and inputs. A decision log that records big bets with the date, decision maker, and test plan. A delegation ladder that names what you truly own versus what you advise or inform. These create shared language and shorten loops.

## **Building the bench: coaching plus Leadership Training**

Individual coaching scales impact when the broader management team learns shared skills. That is where Leadership Training comes in. I see the best results when companies resist the urge to buy an off the shelf course

and instead create a short, focused curriculum around current pain points.

For a media scale up in Camden, we ran a four week manager program on feedback and performance decisions because the company had avoided tough calls during hypergrowth. We paired short workshops with practical homework. Each manager ran a script for a difficult conversation, then debriefed the actual result the next week. Offer letter acceptance improved the next quarter, not because the brand changed, but because high performers saw that underperformance had a cost. People stayed because standards were clear.

Training and coaching are complements. The training sets common language, the coaching personalizes application. A Leadership Coach working with high potential managers can turn a generic skill module into a career inflection point by helping someone apply it to a gnarly, live situation.



**Techniques that hold up under pressure**

Methods only earn their place if they survive contact with the real world. The following have done that for me across London clients:

- **Operating cadence:** A weekly exec meeting that prioritizes three topics tied to outcomes, not status. A monthly business review that freezes data at a known cutoff, keeps slides constant, and limits commentary to variance and decision requests. A quarterly offsite that handles strategy trade offs, team health, and key risks, with pre reads and post decisions sent the next day. When done right, this rhythm eliminates endless ad hoc check ins.
- **Decision clarity:** Record the top five decisions each month, with the decision maker, date, alternatives considered, and the test that will tell you if it worked. This transparency reduces shadow debates and lets you revisit choices without the drama of he said she said.
- **Team topologies and handoffs:** In product and engineering, pick a team design that matches your domain and risk. Stream aligned for speed, enablement for shared services, platform to reduce cognitive load. Write service level expectations for handoffs so teams know what good looks like, not just what to build.
- **Delegation ladder:** Name five levels from tell to empower. Decide where each direct report sits for the next quarter on their key areas. Review monthly. Leaders overestimate how clearly they delegate. Writing it down closes the gap.
- **Meeting design:** Kill recurring meetings that no longer do work. Shorten 60 minute sessions to 45 to give people breathing room. Make pre reads real by sending them 24 hours in advance and refusing to walk through them line by line. Protect a no meeting block twice a week for deep work. You reclaim hours without any technology magic.

These practices are not glamorous. They work because they keep people focused and create speed without chaos.

## **Managing up: board relationships without the theatrics**

London boards mix styles. A founder friendly early investor may share the table with a later stage fund that wants data heavy packs and sharp variance analysis, plus an independent chair with plc scars who cares about governance. The CEO who treats the board like a quarterly exam will lose time and credibility. The one who uses the board as a force multiplier will make better decisions and raise faster when needed.

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We build a pack that aligns with the company's north star and the board's appetite. Keep the structure stable for at least three quarters to show trends. Present three to five decisions you want help with, not twenty slides of commentary. Clarify the forward look so the board sees risks before they bite. When a miss happens, own it with a brief, specific narrative and a plan. If finance is new, pair the CFO with an adviser who can sanity check the pack the first two cycles. The point is not polish. It is trust.

I also encourage CEOs to have one to ones with each board member between meetings. Not to gossip, but to build context. That makes the formal session more efficient and the relationship more resilient if you ever need to pivot hard.

# Cross functional alignment in a hybrid city

Hybrid work is real in London. Teams split time between home and office, and some roles are now fully remote. Alignment suffers when people rely on osmosis. It also suffers when leaders attempt to re create full office dynamics through meetings, rather than clearer artifacts.

We standardize a handful of living documents. The company priorities for the quarter on a single page, with owners and success metrics. The sales to delivery playbook for top customer segments. The incident response guide for service failures. Each has a named steward, review cadence, and change history. We keep them in the same place and link them in onboarding. You would be surprised how many escalations vanish when people can find the source of truth without Slacking five channels.

On in office days, make co presence count. Hold workshops that truly benefit from being in the same room. Use whiteboards for complex flows. Stack one to ones to reinforce relationships. On remote days, respect deep work. Senior leaders set the tone by not spray and praying messages across every platform.

## Retention, energy, and the human limits of pace

Rapid growth taxes people. London adds long commutes, family obligations, and the quiet pressure to perform in a city where everyone you know seems to be doing something impressive. Leaders who care about performance must care about energy, both their own and their team's.

Simple habits protect capacity. Reserve a 90 minute block most mornings for the work only you can do. Decide your last meeting time and hold it for a quarter, not week by week. If you travel across time zones, build a re entry plan that includes a day of low visibility work so you can reset before making big calls. Signal to your team that health days are real by taking one yourself and not sneaking back online.

I sometimes work with leaders to define a personal scoreboard. Three to five measures that matter for the next quarter. Not steps or sleep, though those help, but business aligned energy markers. Example: number of hours spent with customers, number of high stakes conversations prepared the day before, number of truly empty evenings per week. Track it quietly. Adjust. You cannot pour from an empty cup.

## Measuring impact and showing ROI

Boards and CFOs rightly ask what coaching delivers. The answer should be specific. We set baseline metrics tied to the goal and check in quarterly. Common examples:

- Reduction in decision cycle time on cross functional bets. Measured from proposal to decision, target a 25 to 40 percent reduction over two quarters.
- Improvement in forecast accuracy. For companies with lumpy enterprise sales, aim to tighten the range by half within six months.
- Hiring and retention shifts. Reduce regretted attrition in key roles by two to three departures per year, which has a clear cost saving when you account for backfill and ramp.
- Meeting load and throughput. Move weekly exec meeting from 120 minutes to 75 with no loss in outcomes. Free an hour per exec per week is roughly a half day of leadership time back across the team.
- Employee pulse scores on clarity and trust. A three to five point lift on questions that link to alignment signals that the operating system is bedding in.

We complement numbers with observable behavior change. Does the COO run the monthly review without chasing inputs? Do product and sales align on a single definition of commit and behave accordingly? Are conflicts

surfaced early and resolved close to the work? Those shifts sustain performance.

## When coaching is not the answer

It is important to say no when needed. Coaching will not fix a cap table dispute between founders that has turned personal. It will not save a business model that never penciled out. If a leader is unwilling to let go of critical decisions, no process will make up the gap. When misalignment sits at the ownership level, you need legal and governance tools. When capability gaps are extreme, you may need to hire, not coach. A responsible Executive Coach will surface those calls early.

Coaching also falters when treated as a performance punishment. Do not send a leader to a coach as a last warning in disguise. Address performance transparently. If there is a plausible growth path, then coaching can help. If not, be honest about the decision you have already made.

## Choosing the right coach in the London market

- Relevant operating context: Look for someone who has worked with companies at your stage and complexity. A former plc exec may or may not fit a 150 person startup. Ask for examples specific to your sector or go to market motion.
- Sponsor alignment and confidentiality: Agree on what will be shared with the sponsor and what stays in the room. Clear boundaries strengthen trust on both sides.
- Method and measurement: Expect a simple, structured approach with agreed outcomes and a way to measure progress. If it is all vibes, keep looking.
- Chemistry without flattery: You want someone who gets you and will challenge you. If you leave every session feeling only affirmed, you are not getting your money's worth.
- Network and referrals: A well connected coach can introduce mentors, interim leaders, or specialist advisers. That can shorten searches and smooth rough patches.

Do not over index on brand names. Fit beats fame. If possible, run a paid trial session and ask yourself two questions afterward: Did I think differently about my hardest problem, and do I want to do the work this coach will ask of me?

## Case windows: snapshots from the field

A late stage healthtech in Southwark had a clinical leadership team unused to commercial pressure. Revenue lagged despite strong outcomes. We built a simple structure where clinical leads co owned a revenue metric alongside a commercial partner. Coaching focused on decision confidence and narrative. Within a quarter, sales cycles shortened by two weeks, not by pushing harder, but by bringing clinicians into earlier conversations with a clear role.

A consumer subscription app near King's Cross struggled with the jump from 50 to 120 people. Slack was replaced hallway chats. We instituted a rule that any thread with more than five back and forth messages moved to a 15 minute huddle. The CEO learned to intervene once at the right altitude rather than three times at the wrong one. The company cut internal chatter by about 18 percent over two months and saw feature handoffs improve.

A professional services firm in the City needed partner succession. Senior partners held relationships close. Rising leaders felt shut out. Through a blend of Executive Coach sessions and targeted Leadership Training, we built a

client transition playbook, set monthly joint meetings with key accounts, and tied part of partner comp to documented handoffs. Within a year, two successors were ready enough that the founder could step back from day to day work without client attrition.



## The quiet power of disciplined leadership

Rapid growth rewards teams that pair ambition with discipline. The discipline is not about adding bureaucracy for its own sake. It is about clarity, clean decisions, and a cadence that lets people do their best work. An Executive Coach helps you build that system while you are still running the race, and helps you grow as a leader so the system does not outgrow you.

If you are a London leader in the middle of a hard scaling chapter, the questions that matter are practical. What will we stop doing next quarter. Where do decisions really get made. Which managers do we need to turn into leaders in the next six months, and what support will make that [Business Executive Coaching](#) happen. Whether you call it an Executive Coach, a Leadership Coach, or a Business Coach, the right partner will help you answer those questions in your own language, then hold you to the answers until the business reflects them.