

Introduction to Coaching

What is Coaching?

- A skill which can be applied to unlock others' potential to maximise their performance
- A form of on-the-job learning which uses work to provide opportunities for planned development and guidance
- Involves helping people to learn for themselves, rather than teaching them
- Steering the individual in the right direction

It is also:

- Development at work in which:
 - Problems are turned into learning situations
 - In a planned way
 - Under guidance

Why is Coaching Important?

Although an Olympic champion is world class, he/she spends a lot of time with his/her coach to constantly improve on performance. Most people understand that the very best performers in the world still want and need coaching to improve still further. They know that otherwise they will be surpassed by others and that however good they are, they can still do better. Is that not the same in business?

Some examples of how coaching can provide benefit are:

- To develop people
- To use experience more fully
- To develop specific skills
- To change or encourage particular attitudes or behaviours
- To reinforce areas of knowledge
- To share experience and expertise
- To provide support during temporary situations
- To motivate and guide
- To prepare people to take on more responsibility

Coaching is Not About Power and Status

Because it is *Performer Centred*, coaching releases the coach from the need to be an expert. Top sports people rely on their coach, even though they may not have the same high athletic levels of the sportsperson. These coaches clearly cannot 'coach downwards' from a position of expertise and power, and yet they can improve performance. Coaching allows them to coach upwards; and if this is possible, so is sideways coaching (between peers) and outward coaching (with customers/clients).

Coaching can be really successful even if you are not an expert. However, coaching can also be by experts, for example a sales supervisor coaching a market developer, or by someone who isn't expert in the field. These skills can apply either way and the key is in developing the individual.

Benefits for the Coach

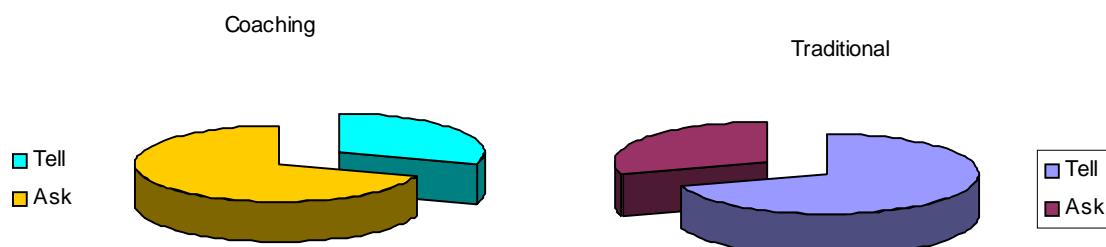
Coaching is not just a "one way street", it is also beneficial for the coach, presenting opportunities to learn from the experience

Ultimately you will only learn how to coach by coaching. As you begin to take a caring interest in the development of others you will learn from each person you coach what works and what doesn't. Coaching is an art, and as with any art it takes time, effort and practice to gain mastery.

The Communication Spectrum

- Often people's style of management is biased towards telling. This is almost certainly because we experience this all our lives, and simply copy what we know. And of course, there are advantages of telling. When participants in training courses are asked, they will say telling is quick, it is appropriate when teaching or sharing information, it is vital in emergency (e.g. Fire! Get out!), and that managers who tell and instruct a lot are perceived as confident leaders. It is also likely that early in a job assignment, people need more information about what to do and may need a more directive style of communication.
- However, the disadvantages are:
 - their people feel little involvement
 - information is forgotten or discounted
 - initiative is stifled
 - there is a perceived lack of trust in staff, and
 - the style can breed either 'yes-men' or mutineers.
- Managers who use this style can be thought of as autocratic and dictatorial. This style also does not contemplate information people need to learn and grow, but rather what we think they need without their input.
- A more balanced style would combine telling with asking. Those who fear that too much questioning means loss of control need to recognise that this is a false idea. Through questioning, you provide the performer with control because he/she chooses the way forward, has high awareness, is facilitated and is 100% responsible; whilst you, the coach, on hearing details of the performer's views and plans, gain confidence in his/her intention to carry it out and have the opportunity to check it against parameters/constraints, etc., and retain control because he/she knows exactly what is to be done.

The Communications Balance



Summary of Essential Skills and Attributes Needed in Coaching

- Create an environment which is both safe and sufficiently challenging
- Put yourself in the “shoes of the other person”, and use your imagination or to put it another way, look at the situation *from the other's point of view*.
- Show you are interested by maintaining eye contact and a friendly expression
- Be alert to the tone of voice being used. Sometimes it is more important *how* something is said (and done) than precisely *what*. This can be a two-way concern so be alert to your own tone also.
- Encourage the learner to describe ideas and opinions freely by using prompts as 'Yes, 'I see', 'So what happened then?'
- Listen actively, paraphrase to ensure you understand the message.
- Show the learner that you sympathise with his or her feelings – however they are expressed!
- Don't take the learner's views personally, and try not to get defensive in response to any aggression.
- Make a habit of keeping notes, because relying on your memory can be dangerous.
- When dealing with complicated situations try to summarise your understanding
- Don't be too quick to come to conclusions or to start giving advice.
- Don't argue or interrupt.
- Build
 - On ideas
 - Use positive response
 - Avoid reproach
 - Build on experience
- Perception
 - Recognise the effect of climate
 - Recognise the effect of management styles
 - Consider history of relationships and expectations