

Leadership Coaching for Performance Business

By Angus McLeod, PhD.

Coaching is in vogue. Once restricted to tennis and football, the business coach is now here to stay, in fact, if you are a senior executive without one, some people might assume that you are not in the top flight!

Well, that's rubbish of course but coaching is growing massively. Look up 'coaching' on the Amazon.com web-site and they come up with almost 2,000 book titles many of which are business related! But is coaching good for you? Some big corporations have invested. Why do they do it? What does it entail? Are you weak or enlightened to have one?

Managers who hire coaches are the enlightened ones. They are making a statement about their flexibility, openness to feedback and commitment to improved leadership and communication. Coaching skills (unlike mentoring (see box) assists the manager to find THEIR OWN solutions, methods and motivations to succeed. Not only this, but a good coach will effectively train the manager to self-coach! The manager learns the methods and the coach is redundant!

Coaching: Helping people to move on their thinking and actions towards their (own and corporate) goals. This by using the managers own strategies and three types of 'intervention': challenge, questioning and silence. Yes, silence. This last sounds daft until you remember that 'the penny drops' in silence and rarely in the midst of words!

Mentoring: Good mentoring embraces coaching skills but the mentor is often more experienced than the manager and so offers 'advice' or better, choices of action that the manager might take. Choices enable the manager to think about their own solution and thus be more motivated than buying into the ideas of a highly paid clever-dick.

Coaches help managers to self-challenge their own thinking. They encourage the manager to new perceptions and to a greater understanding of their own motivation (and that of their key colleagues). Self-determination leads to greater confidence and productivity too. Managers learn how to have motivating concepts of where their goals are and how they will get there. Coaching can also help with inner conflicts and actual ones with staff.

Coaching Example:

Philip knew that he had to get a report done for his team but kept putting it off. Time was running out. Fortunately he had an appointment with his coach. The coach could see a conflict between the part of Philip that wants to succeed and that part that was failing or 'following' rather than being proactive.

Philip's coach asked my 'Leaders Question' "What does that do for you" several times, using each answer to re-phrase the next question:

Coach: You say that you want to write the report. What will writing that report do for you?

Philip: I will feel I have done what was expected, or better than that.

Coach: So, when the report is done better than expected, what will that do for you?
Philip: It will be good to see its reception at the meeting next week.
Coach: And when you are at the meeting seeing the good reception to your report, what does that do for you?
Philip: I always exceed the expectation of others, I set high standards for myself, I can do this.

Philip's coach asked my 'Followers Question' "What stops you" several times, using each answer to re-phrase the next question:

Coach You say that you cannot get started with the report, so what stops you?
Philip: It's too big a thing, too many unknowns.
Coach: So, up to now, it seems to be too big and there are too many unknowns? What is it about that, that stops you?
Philip: I need to break it down into parts and get some information off the web and from other departments
Coach: And by breaking it down into parts and getting some information off the web and from.....
Philip: I've got it. I've got it! Can we move on?

By appealing to the two aspects of Philip's dilemma, the coach has helped to stimulate and encourage both Philip's 'follower' and his 'leader'. Philip is no longer following, he is raring to go!

Finding a coach:

Coaches can best be found by referral, failing that, contact the ANLP on 0870 870 4970 and they can refer you, but seek references! Coaching fees and engagements vary but it should be possible to acquire professionally excellent coaching from £150-£250 an hour, less if several people are being coached on the same day on the same premises.

Angus McLeod is a coach and trainer and author of 'Me, Myself, My Team' published by Crown House March 2000.

Contact: ourinfo@angusmcleod.com

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