

Mindsets for the Coach

Coach with Attitude!

By Dr Angus McLeod

When store-detectives are involved in a conflict situation and then go directly back to the shop-floor, a high proportion of them are involved in another conflict situation within the next fifteen minutes. The stress of the first incident establishes a 'mindset' that effectively precipitates the next conflict. Many Security Directors in retail now understand this and the best of them provide a break where the Detective can psychologically 'unload' or relax on their own before heading back to work.

This story shows that our state determines the outcome of our interactions with others. NLP trained consultants will have had experiences of state's influence over both behaviour and outcomes. They will recognize the importance of state in human interaction. If we think we will lose, we tend to lose. If we are faced with a potential road accident and focus on a tree or oncoming car, that is where we tend to go. If we believe we must 'fix' our coachee, we will try and do this. That is not coaching!

These examples illustrate that unless you already have an effective and anchored state for coaching, it might be useful to consider your state of being before coaching. Coaching is not simply a set of tools. Coaching requires (in street vernacular) 'attitude!' We might remember too that the process of coaching starts before the coachee arrives.

Values and Empowering Beliefs

Values and beliefs, underpinned by one's sense of identity make of a mindset and provide the 'attitude' for coaching. Appropriate empowering beliefs help establish a healthy mind-set for coaching. 'Appropriate' since, for example, a belief that "all my interventions are the best" might empower me but will not lead to my continuing development. The following may be more useful in a coaching dynamic:

I Believe that:

- I value myself and my coachee
- I offer my coachee opportunities for their growth and learning
- coaches and coachees both learn from their interaction
- I am an effective coach when I maintain a healthy rapport with the coachee
- an effective coach is only a catalyst for learning and change, not a force for it
- the coachee has the resources necessary for their learning
- silences belong to the coachee, not the coach

I Believe that I can:

- offer choices in my questioning (not solutions and not instructions)
- offer permission to myself and the coachee
- offer the coachee my best active attention at all times
- remain as flexible in my thinking and actions as possible
- check the coachee's commitment and their confidence level

In preparing to coach, it could be useful to establish your own set of empowering beliefs, remembering that these must also be empowering for the coachee too!

Underpinning Values and Beliefs

Identity is also a factor in the coach's mindset. Sometimes, accepted traits of identity can work against the ideal coach. These might include the following:

- Impatient
- Intolerant
- Care-less
- Arrogant
- Wildly creative
- Self-doubting
- Shy

Simple affirmations are useful in changing state and hence talking your way through a set of affirmations can be part of the mantra of coaching preparation. John Abalufia the Opera Director and Producer advises the use of a mantra as an empowering phrase. It should embrace all the positive aspects for coaching in a personal and significant way. This will be a single sentence that carries the key messages about being an effective coach for you. Here are some examples:

- I am the instrument for change
- I guide by servant leadership
- I will support their journey to their chosen goal and will not carry them there

Other coaches use animal totems (like the owl and dolphin) that inspire care, thoughtfulness and wisdom. The coach takes the essence of their thoughts and feelings about the positive attributes of the animal into the coaching dynamic. All these methods help to create the mindset.

In an ideal world the coach would be a congruent individual whose coaching style was entirely fluid with their way of being in the world. In reality, any of us could bring our desire to achieve, stress, impatience or anxiety into the coaching dynamic and thereby reduce the effectiveness of our interaction. In that ideal world the coach will also have feedback from clients and from other coaches. Regrettably, many do not.

“Coaching requires (in street vernacular) attitude!”

Very few of us have the ideal profile of a coach at all times, so most of us could improve our coaching state by attending to weaknesses in the profile before coaching. So, if you know you have a sense of being that is not ideal for the coaching state, what might you do about it? NLP provides tools for changing state and for anchoring those preferred states to re-install at will. Many of my readers will be familiar with these and I do not propose to develop them here. I refer readers to the NLP literature including some of my own (given below). Mindsets, like attitude affects the response of the people we interact with. The intelligent coach will be checking out their state before they get near the coachee.

Refs:

Fundamentals for the Coach, *Rapport* V37 (15-16) 1997

Fundamentals for the Coachee, *Rapport* V40, (37) 1998

Passion for Coaching, *Rapport* V53 (42-45) 2001

Me, Myself, My Team, Crown House 2000.

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