

What is 'Corporate and Personal Coaching'?

The Concept

Corporate and Personal Coaching (also known as 'Non Directive Coaching' for reasons explained later) is the second fastest growing industry and fastest growing personal development tool in the world. The techniques have grown rapidly in Britain over the past 12 years, having achieved many notable successes, particularly in the corporate environment. Corporate Coaching is a significant skill set in relation to achieving successful organisational improvement.

Coaching creates the capacity for continuous improvement, development and success, through enabling and supporting people and organisations to make the best use of their knowledge, insight, vision, creativity, sensibility, determination, external resources and vast ability to learn and develop. Coaching recognises the vast potential of human capability, understands what restrains this and how to unleash it and significantly reduces the internal and external 'interference', which exists between peoples potential and their performance ¹.

Research and history shows us that individuals and organisations rarely achieve lasting improvement when people are merely 'told about' concepts and practices or 'made' to change. However lasting and powerful change is achieved when people....

- recognise the need to improve and believe that improvement and achievement are entirely possible
- develop clear and compelling goals
- identify strengths and areas for improvement in a positive, non-threatening way, recognising that this will lead to improvement, rather than focussing on 'criticism', 'failure', 'error' or 'problem'
- become aware of the current situation from an 'outside-in' perspective (like moving from inside traffic gridlock to seeing it from above)
- think in an innovative way about solutions
- use positive role models of best practice
- plan actions in a clear and concise manner
- focus with determination on implementing and maintaining the identified change
- recognise and reward success in achieving the goals

Coaches achieve the above by applying leading-edge continuous improvement and development tools and techniques on a one-to-one (in person or via the telephone) or group basis.

¹ The equation 'Potential minus interference equals performance' was established by Timothy Gallwey, initially in the book 'The Inner Game of Tennis', and forms the basis for Inner Game Coaching; this had a profound influence on Corporate Coaching

Coaching is centred on goals. It focuses the individual or organisation on moving forward and achievement, rather than dwelling upon past behaviour and 'failures' (it is not counselling). Coaching is not a casual discussion; it is hard work! Through Coaching the organisation or individual completes tangible actions – small steps which add up to the overall goal. This approach makes Coaching very well suited to the challenges of the modern corporate environment.

At its best, Coaching is 'non-directive': it does not teach, advise, seek to control people or impose solutions. Rather, it enables people to use their internal and external resources to pursue their goals effectively. This technique is at the heart of successful Coaching and differentiates it from consultancy, training, traditional teaching and traditional management (and most sports 'coaching!'). Research and practice have shown that this approach achieves sustainable positive change, enabling organisations and individuals to achieve and maintain goals that they had previously thought were not possible.

The success of these techniques has led to Coaching being used in a considerable number of areas both in and outside of the corporate environment, including performance improvement personal development, change management, performance management, communications, team development, career development, personal wealth, stress, relationships and, most recently, lifestyle and work/life balance changes. Coaching is used to overcome many traditional individual and organisational barriers to sustainable improvement and change.

'Mentoring'

The concept of Mentoring has crept into the corporate business and wider personal development toolkit over the last 10 years. The concept is often confused with Coaching and mistakenly used interchangeably.

The term originates from Greek mythology, in which it is reported that Odysseus, when setting out for Troy, entrusted his house and the education of his son – Telemachus - to his friend – Mentor. "Tell him all you know" Odysseus said, and thus created a valuable personal development tool and unwittingly **set the limitation that Coaching overcomes!**

The Benefits of Coaching for Organisations

Corporate Coaching is used in a number of different ways to achieve real value for the organisation and its people, including the following:

1. Achieved performance goals at organisation, team and individual levels
2. Improved effectiveness and efficiency
3. Successful change
4. More effective leadership
5. Improved teamwork and partnership working
6. Achieving high impact communication
7. Implementation of robust and valuable performance management and continuous improvement systems
8. Maximising the investment in formal training (the International Personnel Management Association's research into training and development showed that, following training, employee productivity increased by just over 22%, whereas training combined with coaching produces an increase in productivity of 88%)
9. Increased motivation and positive orientation to work
10. Improved critical decision making
11. Greater creativity
12. Reduced stress
13. Improved time management
14. Improved work/life balance and workforce health
15. Greater self awareness, self confidence, self esteem and insight into personal development

Why is Corporate Coaching Growing?

- Increased time pressures
- Increased pressure to perform
- The changing world of business
- A growing awareness of the limitations of traditional management styles and personal development techniques (e.g. formal training)
- Growing recognition of a responsibility and need to achieve sustainable staff satisfaction and well-being (e.g. health and work/life balance)

The Techniques

Coaches do not impose their solutions, opinions or products on the organisation; they use leading-edge continuous improvement and personal development tools and techniques (e.g. GROW Model, NLP, Inner Game, Self Assessment models, improvement planning) to achieve the following:

- create an 'outside-in' perspective, in which solutions and actions are seen very clearly
- challenge the normal way of doing and thinking about things
- create an atmosphere of openness, honesty and the desired (but rarely achieved) states of 'relaxed concentration' and 'flow'
- bring out the skills and knowledge of the people involved
- develop ownership among the people involved
- provide a sounding board
- hold people accountable to actions whilst maintaining rapport

The process of asking challenging questions is extremely powerful. The person responding has to think through the subject to arrive at an answer and then listen to the answer. This process crystallises people's thinking and prompts them to re-think and develop their views. At the same moment as the person asking the questions reaches an understanding, so the person giving the answer reaches a new insight. Because it has come from an increased self awareness (it is not an imposed solution), this insight prompts actions. As the Cameroon Proverb says: **"He who asks the questions, cannot avoid the answers"**.

When playing this role, your suggestions and experiences can be valuable (e.g. mentoring), if you make it clear that these are merely options to be 'thrown into the mix' and if you ask for people's permission to give this input. For this reason, senior managers are often not best placed to play this role, although an understanding of the concepts, techniques and tools is valuable.