



Coaching

Learning guide

Coaching

Introduction

Many individuals and organisations are turning to coaching as the most effective way for managers to 'make the best of their best asset' - their people.

At Ashridge, we take a particular approach to coaching. We believe that:

- coaching need not only start from a problem ('remedial'): you can coach somebody even if they are performing well already
- the coach (the manager) need not know all the answers themselves; so the manager's own performance level need not be a limiting factor on the performance of the learner.

In these two respects we differ from the view of many older sources, especially American ones. When you study any of the materials in this learning guide you will find it useful to see for yourself which approach each source has taken.

Where to start?

Begin by reading through the overview of coaching and browse the development activities, which give a number of practical ideas and tips for implementing a coaching approach.

If you have a little more time, have a look at some of the recommended resource. The various videos take different approaches: choose one which best matches your interests. For more details, try the books, some of which are available for purchase in the LRC Bookshop.

Resources

Videos

Coaching to Improve Performance (1993), Performance Consultants, parts 1 and 2:20 mins each.

David Whitaker, David Hemery and Sir John Whitmore discuss the benefits of applying their sports coaching model to a business context. Part one introduces these ideas, and includes a powerful demonstration of the difference between telling and coaching (using the 'GROW' model). In part two, David Whitaker visits a British building society, and uses his coaching skills to help real people (whom he does not know) to improve their performance in their jobs (with which he is not familiar).

Coaching the Team with Warren Bennis (1991), BBC, part 1: 16 mins, part 2: 18 mins.

Two contrasting organisations, which are turning to an empowering, coaching approach: the British Royal Marines, and the American office furniture manufacturer Steelcase. Offers a refreshing challenge to one's stereotyped view of military and industrial leadership!

Helping Others to Achieve (1999), BBC Worldwide (20 Steps To Better Management Series), 15 mins

Real life case study example of a manager who coaches one of her team to take over some of her current responsibilities in order to free her up to develop her own role. The second section goes on to look at how performance management and particularly the setting of objectives are important to help with the continuous motivation of staff.

Coaching for Results (1994), BBC, 25 mins + self study and resources videos

Looks at coaching from the perspective of the coach as well as the person being coached. It shows how questioning and active listening - core skills of coaching - can be applied throughout the organisation. Through the format of drama (which is a little bit wooden!), documentary interviews and a real-life coaching session, this package reinforces some key principles essential for coaching: maintaining the employee's self-image, attacking problems not people, and seeking the employee's input.

Journal articles

Brent, Mike (2004), *Why don't more managers coach?*, Training Journal, January, p6-9.

Critchley, Bill (2003), *Best practice in coaching part 3: How the coach can innovate*, Training Magazine, March, p22-23.

Hall, Douglas T. et al (1999), *What really happens in executive coaching*, Organizational Dynamics, Vol 27(3), p39-53.

Johnson, Roy (2003), *Coaching and leadership: the inside view*, Training Journal, October, p12-15.

Ludeman, Kate; Erlandson, Eddie (2004), *Coaching the alpha male*, Harvard Business Review, May, p58-67.

Rosinski, Philippe (2004), *Global leadership: coaching across cultures*, Critical Eye, June-August, p10-13.

Sills, Charlotte; Critchley, Bill (2003), *Best practice in coaching part 4: Pause for reflection*, Training Magazine, April, p30-31.

Sills, Charlotte (2003), *Best practice in coaching part 2: Towards the coaching relationship*, Training Magazine, February, p32-34.

Smith, Ina (2003), *Best practice in coaching part 1: Towards best practice*, Training Magazine, January, p26-27.

Smith, Ina (2003), *Best practice in coaching part 5: Client confidential*, Training Magazine, May, p24-25.

Information files

There are information files containing a number of newspaper and journal articles on the following areas:

- Coaching.
- Feedback techniques.
- Leadership.
- Motivation.
- Performance management.

Books

** Books marked with asterisks are available for sale from the LRC Bookshop.
Mail Order service available: Tel: +44 (0)1442 841159.
Fax: +44 (0)1442 841211. Email: celia.tucker@ashridge.org.uk.

Downey, Myles (2003), *Effective coaching: Lessons from the coaches' coach*, Texere Publishing.

Ashridge shelf reference: **JMC(DOW)****

This book strips away the theory and academic definitions in favour of practical exercises, stories, anecdotes and conversations, leaving the ability to coach in the readers' hands. This extensively revised edition features an entirely new section on *Understanding Organizational Change*, which deals with the reality of coaching within organizations.

Kinlaw, Dennis (1999), *Coaching for Commitment*, Pfeiffer Wiley.

Ashridge shelf reference: **JMC(KIN)****

Dennis Kinlaw gives you the insight you need to improve performance by empowering your colleagues. In today's employee-centred organisations, the opportunities for leadership no longer rest with managers and supervisors alone - everyone needs to be a coach! With Kinlaw's help, you can teach people in all types of organisations to, build commitment to tasks, encourage successful project completion, enhance job satisfaction . . . and much more!

Gallwey, Tim (1997), *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Random House.

This book challenges you to re-examine your fundamental motivations for going to work in the morning and your definitions of work once you're there. You will be able to look at work in a whole new way.

Landsberg, Max (2003), *The Tao of coaching*, Profile Books Ltd.

Ashridge shelf reference: JMC(LAN)**

This best-selling and classic business book, now revised and re-launched, takes you through the stages needed to implement coaching to maximum effect. Easy to read and apply, the book provides the techniques and tools of coaching that are vital for anyone who wants to develop a team of people who will perform effectively and who will relish working with you. Since its publication in 1996, it has become the bible for the coaching manager.

Flaherty, James (1999), *Coaching: Evoking Excellence In Others*, Butterworth Heinemann.

Ashridge shelf reference: JMC(FLA)**

A book on coaching that moves beyond an 'advice from the sidelines' approach to the subject. The author convincingly shows that the only way to truly help people grow is to help them in developing new practices and new language, and that the only way to coach effectively is to enter into a reciprocal relationship where coach and coachee engage in a dance of mutual influence and growth. The contents of the text extend far beyond the concept of coaching into the fundamental meaning of what it means to be of help to those who are pursuing their own personal best.

Fleming, Ian; Taylor, Allan, J.D. (1998), *The Coaching Pocketbook*, Management Pocketbooks.

Ashridge shelf reference: JMC (FLE)**

This book presents a pocketbook of tips and techniques on how to coach others to achieve outstanding performance. Contents include: what is coaching?, helping skills, a structure for coaching, coaching skills, coaching opportunities and potential pitfalls.

Rosinski, Philippe (2003), *Coaching Across Cultures: New Tools for Leveraging National, Corporate and Professional Differences*, Nicholas Brealey.

Coaching and intercultural communication have coexisted as separate, parallel disciplines. Author Philippe Rosinski has woven the two disciplines together into a coherent and accessible whole in this book. It is filled with examples from multinational companies, and includes coaching tools with exercises that put into practice the cultural concepts presented. This book will help the reader become aware of his or her own national and corporate cultural orientations and how they affect the way s/he coaches.

Whitmore, John (2002), *Coaching for Performance*, Nicholas Brealey.

Ashridge shelf reference: JMC(WHI)**

This edition includes additional chapters on incorporating meaning and purpose into work, into goal-setting, and a spiritual approach to coaching, together with a final section on *Coaching the Organizations' Culture*. Adopted by many of the world's major corporations, this work also argues for using questions, rather than instructions and commands, and following the GROW sequence - Goals, Reality, Options, Will - to generate prompt action and peak performance. It explores the dynamics of team development and it positions coaching as the essential team leadership skill.

Useful websites

The Coaching and Mentoring Network

<http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk>

This site aims to "keep you informed of the latest developments in coaching and mentoring." It is directed at providers of coaching as well as those seeking coaching services and tries to make information about coaching and mentoring more accessible. The most useful section of the site is the Resource Centre, which contains full-text articles, case studies, recommended books on coaching, interviews with coaches, and news about coaching research and events.

The site also provides a referral service to help potential clients find coaches and mentors at both business and personal levels. This takes the form of a searchable database, which provides contact details and background information on the coaches. Advice on choosing the right coaching service is also provided.

This is a very useful site that directs you to a wide range of information about coaching services.

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council

<http://www.emccouncil.org>

EMCC exists to promote good practice and the expectation of good practice in mentoring and coaching across Europe. The website contains some free publications but most require membership to access. Sir John Whitmore and David Clutterbuck are among the Executive Board of the organisation.

Overview

Introduction

This overview of coaching (the **THEORY**) covers the following topics:

- a review of what managerial coaching actually is, why it is important, and how it is different from other management techniques.
- an overview of the key factors to be considered when introducing a coaching approach.
- face-to-face coaching skills.
- different coaching styles, and matching these to the situation.

What is 'managerial coaching'?

Below are some characteristics of an effective coaching manager (in other words, how you would recognise one if you saw one). The list is a mix of the skills, knowledge and attitudes which we would observe in such a coach.

- *coaching managers believe that their 'added value' in their organisation is to enable their staff to perform to their full potential*

We challenge you to reflect on your 'added value': what do *you* do which your manager can't do? What do *you* do which your staff can't do? What is your unique contribution? It is often assumed that it is the primary task of managers to solve their staff's problems for them (especially technical problems). But the successful coach realises that this is ineffective, because:

- (a) you are probably managing some people who know more about the technical or professional aspects of their job than you do;
- (b) even if you *do* share that technical background, they may well be more up-to-date than you, given the speed at which technology moves today;
- (c) and in any case they may never learn to solve problems for themselves if you always do it for them.

- *coaching managers believe that coaching is the best way to help their staff to perform better*

Coaching does not need to start with a learner's 'performance problem' (**remedial coaching**). A manager can equally well coach an excellent performer to achieve even better results (**developmental coaching**). This point is important, because much that has been written about coaching (especially in America) has a built-in assumption that coaching is about curing problems.

- *coaching managers identify tasks for their learners which **at the same time** (a) are real, current and important (ie, work which **needs** to be done), and (b) can also act as a relevant vehicle for the learning of the staff member*

It is this second set of learning goals which distinguishes coaching from delegation. When delegating, the manager arranges for a task to be carried out by a member of staff, but is not primarily concerned about the longer-term development of that person.

- *coaching managers focus on the learning needs of the learner, and not exclusively on their own wish to **teach** something*

Churchill once remarked – 'I enjoy learning, but on the whole I hate being taught!'

- *coaching managers prefer a **hands-off** approach where possible*

This means 'helping people with your hands in your pockets!' Although there are certainly situations where the coach may need to be directive (eg, where safety or legal rules are involved), it is usually much more effective to guide, support, question, challenge, stimulate and facilitate.

- *coaching managers believe that they can coach people to do things which they themselves **cannot** do*

In the world of **sport** we accept that the best coach is not usually the best performer. But it is a common excuse for a manager to say – ‘I can't coach him to do his job any better, because he already does it better than *I* could!’ Coaching people beyond your own personal limits is one of the core coaching skills, and this is explored further below.

A British Olympic athlete expressed these characteristics well when she said, *‘When I was competing for my country, my coach's role was to enable me to perform with distinction.’*

When is coaching appropriate?

There are many situations where coaching skills are needed, for example:

- new managers taking on their first people-management role can make coaching part of their natural way of working.
- managers with many years of experience can benefit from reflecting on their people-management style, and can acquire any necessary extra coaching skills.
- individuals who act as mentors to staff outside their direct control will find that a coaching approach is the most effective way to help the other person to learn.
- managers of cross-functional or project teams may not be responsible for the **formal** appraisal and longer-term development of their team members; but a coaching approach will help them in their day-to-day role (especially when their team members have specialist skills and knowledge with which the manager is less familiar).
- managers and specialists in supporting functions (eg, human resource management, finance, information systems) often need to help their colleagues from other areas to understand key concepts and frameworks: coaching skills will help them to carry out this role more effectively.
- even trainers who conduct 'classic' classroom programmes will find it useful to develop the non-directive coaching skills needed to balance their formal instructional skills.

- *'Counselling'* can also be said to be part of the manager's role. Like coaching, this too is *'facilitative'* rather than *'directive'*. But, unlike coaching, it usually starts with a *problem*, and also does not usually have learning as its main goal. However, many of the key skills are similar.

Why coach?

There are many individual managers who find coaching an effective and attractive way to develop the performance of their staff. But in addition to such personal initiatives, there are many organisations which are adopting a coaching approach. Usually this is part of a broader *'culture-change'* towards a more empowering and less directive management style. They are equipping their supervisors and managers to act as coaches, and they are also preparing staff members to be coached. They are convinced that coaching is the most **cost-effective** way to develop people, because:

- real work is being carried out at the same time as learning is taking place.
- a hands-off coaching approach stimulates commitment, independence and innovation in staff at all levels.
- coaching provides instant feedback about the learner's performance, and therefore accelerates the learning and performance improvement processes.
- coaching is an essential tool for managing people in new types of structure, for example cross-functional teams (perhaps in *'re-engineered'* business processes), project teams, self-directed work teams, or where managers have wider spans of control as the result of a *'delaying'* exercise.
- coaching is a natural outcome of a *'competences'* approach: either because coaching itself is defined as a key competence, or because coaching is needed by managers as a means of helping their staff to develop other competences.
- coaching meets the expectations and wishes of many of today's younger staff.
- coaching can prepare successors for current managers.

- compared to off-the-job training courses, coaching reduces both external costs (fees and expenses) and internal costs (a staff member being absent): every manager becomes a 'learning provider' on the job.

Barriers and obstacles - real and perceived

If coaching is so attractive and effective, why is it not more widespread? Here are some of the reasons (stated or unstated) why some managers don't do more coaching:

- 'I don't have the necessary technical knowledge to coach my staff.'
*(This shows a fundamental misunderstanding of what coaching can really achieve. Perhaps this is because some managers think that coaching means **telling and teaching** rather than **helping to learn**. Maybe their staff, too, have an expectation that 'The Boss Knows Best')*
- 'I don't have the time to coach'
(The classic vicious circle of: 'I'm overworked - so I don't have time to coach - so I do it all myself - so I'm overworked!')
- 'I won't get the visibility or the credit if I coach my people to excellent performance'
- 'I will lose control if I coach instead of teach'
- 'I am not confident that I have good coaching skills'
- 'If I get too close to the learner, I won't feel able to take any tough decisions which might be needed'
- 'I enjoy my work too much to want to share it'
- 'Coaching isn't recognised or rewarded in this organisation'
- 'If I coach my people too well, they will be a threat to me'
- 'If I coach my people too well, they will leave me'
- 'I prefer my people to remain dependent on me, so I don't want to coach them'.

You should be aware that coaching does take *some* time. But it does not require as much as you might fear, and your investment will be richly repaid as your staff develop their skills and independence.

And there is an undeniable element of *risk* - because anybody learning anything new may make some mistakes when first applying it. But you can *calculate* the risk (does the potential benefit justify the possible price to be paid?), and you can *reduce* the risk to a minimum through your coaching insights and skills.

Some mistakes to avoid when implementing coaching

For senior managers:

- expecting supervisors and managers to become enthusiastic coaches when they do not see *their own* managers (like you?) acting as coaches.
- expecting managers to coach when they do not believe that the time and energy which they invest will be recognised or rewarded.
- demanding changes in behaviour (like coaching) without ensuring that the organisation's systems, procedures and practices are in line with (and actually encourage and reward) the new behaviours.
- not providing training (or coaching) support for managers to equip them with the skills and confidence to act as coaches.

For individual coaches:

- offering (or imposing) solutions before the learner has time to find their *own* solution.
- imposing coaching when it is not wanted.
- assuming that everybody learns in the same way as you do.
- adopting a style of coaching that is actually disguised 'directing' - 'pseudo-coaching'.
- starting a coaching project, but not completing it with an in-depth learning review.
- starting a coaching project, but taking over or interfering so that the learner feels no ownership of their own learning.
- pushing a learner to undertake an activity without adequate resources or preparations.
- not listening to the learner's ideas (do you, the coach, really have a monopoly of creativity and wisdom?).

- not obtaining the learner's commitment and enthusiasm: forgetting to ask the question 'Why should they *want* to be coached?'
- handling the learner's mistakes in such a way that they feel punished or humiliated.

A route map of the coaching territory

This diagram shows a route-map for the whole of the coaching territory. Its individual elements are summarised below:



The coach

Before managers start coaching their staff in a systematic and purposeful way, they need a fair measure of honest self-awareness, in particular concerning:

- their own key role and added value in their organisation.
- their own personal goals, motivations and intentions in this process.
- an understanding of the different coaching roles which they can play.
- the styles and skills which they can bring to these coaching roles.
- their own stage of personal development, and their own reactions to being coached by other people (eg by their own manager).

The learner

The coaching manager also needs an insight into the learner, and should consider, for example:

- the learner's motivation and personal goals related to the learning process.
- any concerns and anxieties which the learner may have about this.
- their 'learning style', which may be very different from the coach's.
- how to help them to develop learning skills.
- how to select a suitable learner for a particular experience.
- possible blockages which could interfere with the learning process.

Coaching in action

The heart of the process is of course the actual coaching itself. Here there are many tools, models, checklists and ideas which the manager can turn to for help (some are included below). These include models of the learning process, the setting of learning objectives, the face-to-face skills of working with somebody to help them to acquire the necessary skills, and the ability to find creative *opportunities* to coach.

The coaching relationship

The coach in both business and non-business situations needs to develop and maintain a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the learner. Without this, the most polished coaching skills will have little impact. This means creating a climate in which there are clearly understood and agreed expectations in such areas as risk-taking, making mistakes, confidentiality, openness, common goals. It means that feedback is given (and welcomed) *in both directions*.

The organisation

The coach, the learner, their relationship and the actual coaching activities, all take place in an organisational context. The effective manager as coach understands why the organisation supports a coaching approach (or perhaps

doesn't), and is aware of organisational factors which help or which hinder the coaching process - and how to work with these.

Core coaching skills

This is a summary of the most important coaching skills.

Mental skills

- **Observation and analysis** - the ability to watch a learner in action, to conclude what is needed for them to raise their level of performance still higher, and to identify the best way to help them.
- **Structuring the coaching process** - selecting the right approach for each individual learner, preparing carefully, deciding when and how to intervene, agreeing realistic but challenging goals and plans.

Interpersonal skills

- **Questioning** - *the absolutely 'number one' skill*. The effective coach usually prefers to use questioning rather than telling in order to:
 - raise the learner's awareness of their development needs
 - create enthusiasm in the learner to be coached
 - help the learner to take ownership of their own learning
 - help the learner to set their own goals
 - help the learner to make realistic action plans
 - help the learner to find solutions and answers for themselves
 - build the learner's commitment to implement their plans and reach their goals
 - to support the learner in applying and in refining further what they have learnt.

In the development activities section of this guide, we show you the '**GROW**' model, which is a useful and practical framework for questioning.

- **Listening** - there is obviously no point in asking questions without the skill of listening to the answers! This also includes tuning in to the *unspoken* messages from the learner: being sensitive to their tone of voice, body language, personal wishes, expectations and emotions.

- **Giving and receiving feedback** - people often feel uncomfortable about giving direct feedback, whether positive or negative (and are even less comfortable about receiving it!). Yet staff often complain that they are starved of feedback, and would appreciate more of it - even if it is negative. A coach needs to *give* feedback to the learner about their performance - and should try to *receive* feedback about the effectiveness of their coaching style (*'Am I giving you enough support?' 'Do you want more time to find your own solution?' 'Would it have been better if I had made a suggestion?'*)

- **Communicating** - even if the manager prefers to use a **questioning** approach to coaching, there will be times when they must pass on information, ideas and instructions in a more directive way.

- **Motivating** - coaches must motivate the learner by showing their own enthusiasm for coaching, their respect for the learner, their wish and expectation that the learner will succeed, their appreciation for success.

Coaching styles

Effective coaches are aware of their own preferred way of working (personal style), and are also aware of the impact which this might have on the learner. They are able to adopt a style which would not be their preferred approach if they judge that this is the right thing to do in a particular situation.

There are many models of management style and personal style, and there are many valuable instruments which can help coaches to look more objectively at their own preferences and behaviours.

One such model, which is particularly relevant to coaching, is the 'Six Category Interventions Model' of John Heron. It was originally developed as a tool for improving *any* 'helping relationship'; so 'intervention' means any contact between two people where one person is trying to help the other in some way.

In this model, there are six intentions which a 'helper' might have towards their 'client'. Applying this to coaching, these six styles are described in the following table. They fall into two main categories: **DIRECTIVE** ('*PUSH*' styles, where the coach takes the leading role on behalf of the learner - the first three interventions) and **FACILITATIVE** ('*PULL*' styles, where the coach helps the learner to be autonomous and to take responsibility for themselves and for their own learning - the last three interventions).

Coaching styles

Style	Pull or push	What it is	When to use it	Examples (what you might say)
Prescribing	Push	giving directions, advice and/or recommendations to the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the learner lacks confidence - If the learner is unable to direct their own learning yet - If there are legal, safety, ethical, quality guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Remember to include these figures in your report' 'Have you talked to marketing about this?' 'I suggest that you attend this training course' 'Our policy is to do it this way'
Informing	Push	giving information and knowledge to the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Showing where to find extra help, information - Supply missing facts - Explaining what just happened - Telling your own experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'You can find the information in this report' 'If you need help, you can get it by pressing F1' 'John will not support you because it adds to his group's costs' 'At my first presentation I forgot to check the equipment!'

Confronting	Push	challenging the learner's assumptions; stimulating their awareness of their own behaviour, attitudes or beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To show consequences of the learner's actions - To challenge the learner to re-think assumptions - To raise the learner's awareness of others' perceptions - To boost the learner's confidence by affirming success 	<i>'We missed delivery to the customer because of your mistake'</i> <i>'Are you assuming that it's the same problem as last year?'</i> <i>'He felt insulted by your reaction to his idea'</i> <i>'I've received very good comments about your last report'</i>
Cathartic	Pull	helping the learner to release tension, and to discharge or come to terms with emotions which are blocking their progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if the learner is afraid of risk or failure - if the learner feels incompetent - if the learner is frustrated, demotivated, angry 	<i>'Why are you not very confident about this?'</i> <i>'What is the problem here?'</i> <i>'I have the impression that you don't agree with this . . .'</i> <i>'Tell me about it . . .'</i>
Catalytic	Pull	helping the learner to self-discovery, to self-directed learning, and to owning and solving their own problems (without becoming involved in their change yourself)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to achieve a deeper level of understanding - to encourage the learner to take responsibility - to promote motivation and commitment <p><i>(the 'Classic' coaching style)</i></p>	<i>'What advice would you give to the next person to do this?'</i> <i>'How do you intend to start?'</i> <i>'What would you do differently next time?'</i> <i>'How important is this to you?'</i>
Supporting	Pull	building the learner's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to build morale and self-confidence - to encourage risk-taking - to reward success, promote further learning 	<i>'You did a great job with those figures'</i> <i>'I'm here next week if you need any more help'</i> <i>'I'm confident that you'll make a big success of it'</i> <i>'Don't worry if some of the details are missing at this stage'</i>

Each of these interventions may be needed at different times during a coaching project. What is needed from the coach is to select the right approach, and to use it with sensitivity and skill.

Depending on other facets of your natural style and personality, you will find some of these interventions easier and more comfortable than others. For example, if you are a hard-driving, results-oriented manager (if so, this is probably regarded as one of your strengths!) you may well find it difficult to adopt the cathartic or catalytic approaches, since these require you to coach in an indirect and hands-off manner. If, on the other hand, you are a more 'people-oriented' manager, you might find it difficult to give people challenging feedback and to confront their mistakes and assumptions when necessary.

So the core message of this model (and indeed of *all* models of personal style) is that the most effective coach is the one with the *widest range of options* which they can select. Flexibility is indeed one of the key attributes of a successful coach.

Development activities

Here are some practical ideas, tips and checklists to help you get started with a coaching activity - especially if you are unsure where to start.

Finding opportunities for coaching

As a trigger you could think about **yourself**, your **learner**, or your **organisation**.

Starting with you, the coach

Which of the tasks that *you* currently perform could in fact be delegated as coaching assignments for one of your staff? Consider, for example:

Decisions which you make most frequently - delegating some of these would give you the biggest 'payoff' in terms of saving your own time.

Tasks which you enjoy the most - have you perhaps kept these for yourself when they should have been delegated or shared a long time ago?

Tasks which you don't enjoy - it is possible that somebody else might actually enjoy doing something which you find boring or which no longer challenges you!

Tasks in which you are particularly competent - isn't it time to coach other people to acquire some of these competencies? (How can *you* be released for promotion if your personal skills and knowledge are irreplaceable?)

Tasks in which you are less competent - there are surely some tasks which your staff could do better than you can. Coach them to do so!

Starting with the learner

Looking at their present job - how could your learner be coached to perform even better in their current job? This might mean 'remedial coaching' (where you have identified that they have some sort of 'performance problem'), or 'developmental coaching' (where a learner who is already a good performer is coached to broaden their job, to extend their repertoire of skills or to take on more responsibility).

Looking to their future - what new skills or knowledge does the learner need for their *next* possible job?

Starting with the organisation

Instead of starting by considering the *individuals* concerned (you and the learner), you could start by looking at the current and future needs of your *organisation*.

For example, there might be plans to introduce a new computer testing system, or to expand the current range of products or services, or to set up a quality improvement team. Could these plans act as a trigger to find a *learning project* for a member of your staff?

If so, it will be important to remember to identify *two different types of objectives*: task objectives and learning objectives. Without the former, you may miss some real practical benefits to your organisation; without the latter you may waste the opportunity for some real learning and development for the individuals concerned.

The diary challenge

- *Step one* - look back in your diary for the last three months. Can you find anything which *you* did yourself, but which (with the wisdom of hindsight) could have been used as a learning opportunity for one of your staff? Was it essential that it was *YOU* who solved that problem, organised that meeting, made that presentation, met a customer, received some visitors, concluded a negotiation, joined a working party?
- *Step two* - now look *ahead* in your diary for the next few months. What is written there as a task for *you*, but which you could instead coach one of your staff to do?

Delegation (in your absence)

Do you plan to be away from work at some time - to attend a training course, to go to a supplier, to make a business visit, to take a holiday? If so, you will no doubt delegate some key tasks to your staff to handle in your absence. Some of these will be fairly routine, and are unlikely to inspire anybody to heights of creativity or learning: so 'coaching' would not be the right word to use.

But with some forethought and preparation, your impending absence gives you an opportunity to delegate more *important* work to somebody - provided that you are prepared to take the time to coach them. You could even *plan* to be absent at a critical time, in order to persuade a hesitant learner to take on a new task!

Remember - whenever you do a task which somebody else could do, you prevent yourself from doing a task which only you can do!

Before you start

To ensure that you yourself are ready and motivated to start this coaching project, we recommend that you ask yourself a number of searching questions, such as:

- will there be a clear business benefit?
- will my own manager recognise my efforts?
- will it reduce my own workload in the longer term?
- will I get personal satisfaction from it?
- can I organise my own time in order to do it?
- will the learner welcome being coached?
- am I confident about my own coaching skills?
- will my colleagues accept that my time is well-spent?

Unless most of your answers are 'yes', it might be better not to start any significant coaching project yet. First take some time to develop a strategy to overcome the obstacles which you have identified.

Using coaching skills - effective questioning: the 'GROW' model

Questioning has been identified above as the core skill for coaching.

The 'GROW' model described here is a framework and checklist of the sort of questions which a coach can ask the learner. When using these questions:

- use whatever words fit your natural style and language: there is no need to repeat the exact wording in this checklist!
- jump in and out of the questions according to what is appropriate: you do not always need to follow the sequence of letters G-R-O-W.
- you can coach both individuals and also teams in this way.
- the questions can be used at the start of a coaching session, to set goals and clarify expectations; during the session to draw out the learning; or after a session to summarise/consolidate the learning.
- you do not need to use every one of these questions in every coaching session; indeed, you may on some occasions not use any questions at all! Whilst a questioning approach is usually the most effective, there will be times when the learner wants clear direction, information or feedback from you, in which case excessive questioning may simply irritate or frustrate them.

GROW: goal, reality, options, will

G GOAL

setting goals for the learning project in general, or for this particular coaching session:

- what exactly do you want to achieve (short/long term)?
- is any part of it measurable?
- how will you know if you reach your goal?
- by when do you want to achieve it?
- how much of this is within your own control?
- Is the goal positive, desirable, challenging, achievable for you?
- how would you rate your achievements so far, in this respect?
- do you want to break down the overall goal into more manageable sub-goals?

R REALITY

testing and raising awareness of the situation right now:

- why haven't you reached this goal already?
- what actions have you already taken (if any) to try to reach this goal?
- what have you learnt from that?
- who else do you *need* in order for you to reach this goal?
- who else will be *affected* if you reach this goal? Will there be 'winners' and 'losers'?
- do you know anybody else who seems to be successful in achieving this sort of goal? If so, what can you learn from them?
- what constraints *inside yourself* are holding you back from this goal?
- what constraints *outside yourself* are holding you back from this goal?
- how might you overcome these?
- what is *really* stopping you?
- what might you do to sabotage your own efforts to reach this goal?

O OPTIONS

finding alternative strategies, solutions, answers:

- what could you *do* as the next step (or perhaps the first step) to meeting your goal?
- what else could you do? And what else? (keep repeating this!)
- if time was not a factor - what could you do?
- if resources were not a factor - what could you do?
- if there was no 'history' and no 'politics' - what could you do?
- what would happen if you did nothing?
- is there anybody whom you admire or respect who does this really well? What do they do which you could try?

W WILL

testing your commitment to your goal, making concrete, realistic plans to reach it:

- where does this goal fit the personal priorities in your life at present?
- do you have *other* priorities which will take your energy and motivation?

- which of all the options will you choose? (Maybe several)
- how will that help you to achieve your goal?
- who else needs to know about your plan? How will you inform them?
- what obstacles do you expect to meet? How will you overcome them?
- how would you score *your own level of commitment* to achieving this goal, on a scale of 0 to 10? (0 - 'absolutely not!', 10 - 'totally committed!')
- if your commitment score is less than 8 - will you actually get started? Would it not be better to drop the idea and find something which you *really* want? Do you need to feel *guilty* if you drop it? Should you break it down into smaller steps?

With acknowledgements to John Whitmore, 'Coaching For Performance', Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London

Making a coaching and development plan

The format below is offered as a guideline for you to prepare a coaching and development plan for one of your staff. You should adapt it to apply it more directly to your own situation.

The questions have been designed to help you to coach a member of your staff to improved performance in their present job. However, most of these questions can also be applied to coaching people for their longer-term development.

1. Select a 'key result area' of their current job where they could be even more effective.

(Your coaching plan should help them to improve their job performance; it will be more motivating for them if it is 'developmental' rather than 'remedial': ie, helping them to build new skills and experience rather than correcting errors or apparent weaknesses).

2. Within this key result area, identify a specific learning objective which would contribute to enhanced performance.

3. What sort of development activity are they likely to find attractive?

Think about their preferred learning style and their likely preferences

4. How can you present this plan to them in a positive way and win their commitment?

5. What specific goals will you set:

(a) for the task?

(b) for the learning?

6. What review process will you set up?

7. What resources will the learner need, and from whom?

8. Who else might be affected by this plan? How can you get their support?

The coach's checklist

This list will help you to check that you have not missed something important when planning your coaching project.

Your personal preparation

Review your own job (perhaps with your manager), and identify:

- your own duties and responsibilities
- your own key result areas ('outputs' not 'inputs', results not activities)
- your own objectives ('hard' and 'soft')
- the difference between your managerial tasks and your non-managerial tasks
- the tasks, work, projects, assignments which you can and should use for delegation and/or coaching.

Planning the coaching

Aspects of the coaching project to plan **in advance** (and to communicate to your staff):

- the objectives and results to be achieved
- completion dates, timescales
- standards and quality measures
- decisions to be made
- authority level to be assigned
- financial and other resources needed
- how involved you yourself want to be
- what feedback you want, and when
- the person whom you will be coaching.

Selecting the right person

- to whose job does the task actually belong?
- who has the interest or ability to do it?
- who will find it challenging?
- who will be developed by the assignment?
- who has not been coached in the past?
- who is best qualified?
- who has the time?

Giving the coaching assignment

- describe the task and the results expected
- identify and agree learning goals
- agree the amount and frequency of feedback (taking their wishes into account also)
- define resources and constraints
- tell other people who is in charge of the assignment.

Following up

- maintain reasonable reporting and review schedules; having agreed authority levels, respect them; communicate openly
- support your people to the extent that they need and want
- give encouragement and reinforce success
- recognise achievement
- get personally involved only if really necessary.

Summary

1. Evaluate the risks of coaching against the potential benefits

2. Stretch people, but don't break them

Do they have the resources, knowledge, skills and time to do it? Otherwise, what you intend to be motivating might instead be felt as threatening and stressful.

3. Pace your coaching

Coaching too quickly and too slowly can each bring risks. If a child is learning to swim, you don't throw it in the deep end of the pool and walk away!

4. Agree on clear and specific TASK objectives

Both parties must be absolutely clear on what is and what is not included in the coaching task. This includes defining success criteria: how will they know when they have done a good job?

5. Agree on clear and specific LEARNING objectives

Be clear also about the learning which you expect to be obtained from this coaching.

6. Monitor progress

Keep them on track, give support, show your interest and commitment.

7. Review afterwards

*Take enough time for this. You should include a review both of the task and of the learning - measuring success against **both** types of objectives which you set before you started.*

8. Look for opportunities

They may not be obvious: be creative! Check your diary for opportunities!

This learning guide was written by Richard Phillips, a client and programme director at Ashridge.