

Coaching Overview

What is Personal Coaching?

Coaching is a form of learning, where a person - a coach - supports someone else - a coachee - to create learning and self-development in a way that benefits them.

Why do people have coaching?

People enlist the services of a coach because they want to improve their situation and achieve goals. They want to learn new ways of thinking and approaching situations, in order to get better results. Common goals might be being more organised and effective at work, gaining confidence in certain situations, or simply relating to other people more effectively.

A skilled coach uses a combination of observation, questioning, listening and feedback to create a conversation rich in insight and learning. For the coachee, they will experience a focus and attention that enable them to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of their own circumstances. In addition, they'll also create new ways to resolve issues, produce better results and generally achieve their goals more easily.

Common benefits people experience from coaching include:

- improved sense of direction and focus
- increased knowledge of self/self-awareness
- improved ability to relate to and influence others
- increased motivation
- improved personal effectiveness e.g. focused effort
- increased resourcefulness/resilience e.g. ability to handle change

What coaching is Not

Coaching is none of the following:

Structured training e.g. classroom learning

Structured training relates to a fixed agenda of learning, and a prepared approach to making that learning happen. For example, if you were being trained in a classroom to use a computer, the trainer would often use a structured approach to making sure you learnt a certain amount of information, within a certain time frame.

Coaching follows a more flexible format, according to the coachee's objectives. Both the coachee and the coach influence the direction and content of sessions. Coaching also places real responsibility for learning on the individual and encourages learning to continue after the session.

Therapy, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy

Whilst coaching is not therapy, and should not be viewed as therapy, it does provide a viable alternative to people who may have previously considered some form of counselling to resolve a situation. For example, coaching promotes a greater self-awareness, and fuller appreciation of our own situations and circumstances. Sometimes, change can be promoted by a simple shift in perspectives. Barriers of self-belief such as "I can't" or "I don't" can be challenged in order to encourage fresh approaches and ideas.

A way of someone else solving your problems for you

Coaching is based on the principle that an individual is ultimately responsible for their lives and the results they're getting. If we acknowledge that we are responsible for something, it follows that we have power and influence over it. For example, if you're not getting the results at work that you want, a coach might encourage you to:

- understand that situation more clearly
- develop new ideas or approaches for such situations
- take constructive action that gets you the results you want

What a coach will not do is instruct you to go and do something specific, or go and do it for you. If they did, the coach would be taking responsibility - and so power - away from you.

Mentoring

If what you are looking for is someone to tell you how they got where they are today; tell you how to get on in your career and solve your problems for you then you are probably looking for a mentor.

For more information about mentoring see:

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/hr/learning/individuals/index.html#mentor>

Differences between mentoring and coaching

MENTORING	COACHING
Ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time	Relationship generally has a set duration
Can be more informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentee needs some advice, guidance or support	Generally more structured in nature and meetings are scheduled on a regular basis
More long-term and takes a broader view of the person	Short-term (sometimes time-bounded) and focused on specific development areas/issues
Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the 'mentee'. Often a senior person in the organisation who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities	Coaching is generally not performed on the basis that the coach needs to have direct experience of their client's formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills-focused
Focus is on career and personal development	Focus is generally on development/issues at work
Agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles	The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals
Mentoring revolves more around developing the mentee professionally	Coaching revolves more around specific development areas/issues

'Coaching and buying coaching services' CIPD , Jessica Jarvis

What You Can Expect From Your Coach

The role of coach provides a kind of support distinct from any other. Your coach will focus solely on your situations with the kind of attention and commitment that you rarely experience elsewhere.

Your coach will listen to you, with a genuine curiosity to understand who you are, what you think and generally how you experience the world. Your coach will reflect back to you, with the kind of objective assessment that creates real clarity. During conversations, your coach will encourage you to rise to challenges, overcome obstacles and get into action.

A coaching relationship is like no other, simply because of its combination of objective detachment and commitment to the goals of the individual. Because the relationship is based on trust and openness, the contents of your discussions will be confidential. Where a third party has requested the coaching for you, we will agree with you the best way to keep them involved or updated.

What Your Coach Will Expect From You

In return, your coach will encourage you to stay committed to the coaching process. That means showing up for sessions, taking your own notes where appropriate, and keeping any agreements you make during sessions.

In addition, your coach needs you to be open to the potential of coaching. That means contributing to conversations honestly and openly. For example, if something isn't working, your coach needs to know. If you have concerns or problems, voice them. If you know why a problem is occurring, say so. The strength and power of coaching relates strongly to the level of openness and trust between the coach and the coachee.