

COACHING: THE MYTHS VERSUS THE REALITY

The reason for the chasm between the *expectations* of Coaching and the *actual results* has to do with a lack of understanding of “**what Coaching is**” and “**what Coaching isn’t**”, states Dan Kowalski and Suzanne Matteson (HR.com, 2003). As you decide whether coaching is a smart talent development strategy, considers these Myth and d Realities.

What Coaching Is Not:

Coaching Is Not an Organizational Panacea

*Coaching is not intended nor is it capable of curing all of an organization’s woes or all of a person’s warts. Coaching, when used in a targeted way, can provide great benefits to an individual and to an organization. If, however, there are other events that may be interfering with business outcomes, such as lack of vision, poor marketing or product development, then Coaching will be an effective tool *only if it is one of a portfolio of interventions that need to be made.**

Coaching Is Not a Substitute for Bad Management

Poor communications, unclear expectations, under funded resources, and a rewards system not aligned with performance, team and business outcomes are obstacles that may lead to less than optimal individual performance. Organizations need to assess and address any underlying organizational climate factors. *Otherwise, an individual may be singled out when a systemic organizational intervention may be needed first or concurrent with the coaching.*

Coaching Is Not a Substitute for Ongoing, Candid Feedback

Some organizations try to use the Executive Coach to “deliver a message” to an employee. For a development or performance message to be effective the one who has the most responsibility for delivering the message – the individual’s direct manager or supervisor, must deliver it. The coach does interpret the message and clarify its meaning after the initial foundation meeting. The coach helps the individual look at situations from other perspectives in order to design and evaluate alternative approaches. Additionally, the coach

can be instrumental in guiding the individual to prepare an effective Action Plan. *If the manager abdicates the responsibility for message delivery to someone else, then this may be a sign that the direct supervisor could also benefit from a coach.*

Coaching Is Not an “11th Hour Reprieve”

If you have let the situation go this far, it is probably too late! *The Coaching Process requires behavioral change to be successful and behavioral change requires time. There are situations in which after the very first meeting between the coach and the employee the supervisor asks, “Is he or she fixed yet?” Although the Coaching Process should be time limited (it is not intended as career-long hand-holding), it should also not be a game of “beat the clock”.*

Coaching Is Not Psychotherapy

Coaching can be helpful in situations where an individual needs guidance in how to handle issues relative to a business setting. Although there can be applications to other settings, the Coaching Process is not intended to be therapy for deep-seated problems.

What Coaching Is:

Coaching Is a Process and an Alliance built around 4 C’s”.

The “first C” is Commitment on the part of the individual to be coached. The individual needs to commit to see him or herself objectively, “owning his or her part of the problem”, and working at designing and implementing action items on a regular basis. The individual needs to commit *not just to learn something new* but also to implement something new.

The “second C” is Commitment on the part of the direct supervisor or manager. The direct supervisor needs to be objective in the *problem definition stage*, to provide *candid feedback* and to encourage the individual to *implement and sustain behavioral changes.*

The “third C” is Commitment on the part of the organization to see the individual in a new way. *The individual needs time and space to apply their learnings.* If the organization cannot be open to seeing someone in a new way, then the individual will be “playing against a stacked deck” and no amount of improvement will be good enough.

The “fourth C” is Consequences – both positive and negative. *Individuals change for two reasons – to receive a reward or to avoid a punishment.* Individuals engage in the coaching process need to know the rewards for new or improved behaviors. The individual also needs to know the consequences if the behavior/attitude does not change.

Coaching Is an Investment

Coaching requires time and effort on the part of the individual. It also represents an investment by the organization in the individual. By providing coaching, the organization has clearly stated that *the long-term benefit of the effort clearly surpasses the short-term cost.*

Coaching Is Hard Work for the Individual

Many of our behaviors are the result of years of repetition. Often, behaviors that were rewarded or tolerated are now interfering with obtaining business outcomes. Inertia, however, is an extremely powerful force! *It takes hard work to change habits or attitudes!*

Coaching Culminates in a Developmental Action Plan

What gets measured is done! A critical component of a Coaching Alliance is the completion and implementation of a Developmental Action Plan. The process of writing the Plan lends it a seriousness of purpose. The Plan is presented to the direct supervisor to *clearly identifying which behaviors the individual will work on and what the direct supervisor can do to support success.*

Coaching Should Link the Developmental Action Plan to “the Annual Objectives”

The lessons that the individual learns as part of the coaching in a business context is not just

“learning for learning’s sake”. Yes, an important by-product of a coaching alliance is the personal growth that occurs as part of the process. The lessons learned are linked to the performance, team and business objectives and his or her Developmental Action Plan. **The individual’s Objectives are the “What”** (increase market share, decrease timelines, develop new products or services, etc.) **a person has to do. Their Developmental Action Plan is “How”** (understand and serve customers better, lead teams more effectively, enhance influencing skills, etc.) **they are going to do it.**

Coaching Is a Learning and Growth Process for the Coach.

For the coaching intervention to be successful, the coach is flexing his or her style, skills or behaviors in relation to the individual’s situation. *The coach’s actions and behaviors will “speak louder than words” ever could.*

Coaching when used appropriately can have a dramatic impact on an individual and on an organization. For many, **receiving coaching can be their most significant career altering activity.** *Dedication on the part of the individual, along with the skill and flexibility of the coach, can lead to increases in productivity, higher levels of morale and a focused and committed workforce.*

The original article found on HR.com Nov 2003.

For more information about EQ Matters,



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