

WHAT IS COACHING?

ABSTRACT

Since its mainstream introduction in the 1980's, coaching has rapidly become an essential element of 21st century organisational life. It is unsurpassed as an adjunct tool for personal development, performance improvement, behavioural change and cultural transformation. To be coached, coachable and (increasingly for leaders) to be able to coach, are now standard requirements for businesses wishing to survive and thrive in a complex and uncertain environment. Given the efficacy of coaching as both a process and a paradigm it is unsurprising that many individuals and organisations today are choosing to work hand-in-hand with fully trained, professional executive coaches.

Dr. I.M Metcalfe
Melbourne, 2011

One of the primary challenges of the 21st century business leader in these complex and turbulent times is to sustain organisational performance through the growth and development of others - to access the discretionary effort of the workforce through inspiration, engagement and empowerment. This is where coaching comes into its own.

Coaching is one of the principal tools modern organisations have for developing their people. It provides the necessary reflective processes and feedback mechanisms for self-improvement through solution focus, reorientation (of paradigms and belief systems) and behavioural modification. Coaching is now routinely used with executive leaders, business management teams and individuals to improve capability, productivity, performance and leadership skills in general, and to enable transformational change.

"WHAT EXACTLY IS COACHING?" (AS OPPOSED TO MENTORING, PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT, LEADERSHIP AND SO ON)

A coach is a skilled professional who creates a safe and trusting environment and helps others develop and improve their self-awareness, knowledge and capabilities towards a specific goal or end. Coaching is the psychological framework, process, toolset and discipline which enables this to happen.

Travis Kemp¹ an Australian psychologist and coaching researcher, defines coaching as: "both a process and a relationship through which a trained practitioner facilitates changes in their clients' thinking, behaviour and/or performance via self-directed and experiential methods which supports their achievement of stated objectives.

Coaching is a learning and development methodology



WHAT IS COACHING?

focused on the enhancement of life experience, work performance and wellbeing for individuals, groups and organisations with no clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress”

Coaching differs from other forms of personal and organisational intervention in a number of ways. Importantly coaching is personally focused and centred on the belief that the individual (or group) has the answers within, and the coach merely (albeit skilfully) facilitates the necessary questioning and reflection to release these solutions.

The coach acts as a trusted facilitator who delivers pertinent, accurate and timely feedback to challenge an individual or team to adopt new ways of thinking or new behaviours, while holding the coachees accountable for their actions and commitments through individual assessment and guidance. Coaches create the atmosphere and safe space in which a deep and meaningful dialogue can take place and feedback can be readily accepted. The coach asks those questions we really should be asking ourselves all the time – holding up a mirror so that we can see ourselves more clearly.

Mentors and managers on the other hand are more subject-experts and teachers who can assist individuals learn hard skills and suggest solutions to the problems they face.

The ultimate goal of coaching and the coach-coachee relationship is to enable people to learn more about themselves and to help them change their own behaviours, as required.

1 Dr. Travis Kemp is one of Australia's leading executive coaches and leadership development facilitators, and is the managing director and lead psychologist of The Teleran Group Pty Ltd.

WHY USED A QUALIFIED COACH?

Coaching succeeds where other forms of organisational intervention fail, but having said that, coaching is best used as one element in a comprehensive and holistic package of organisational development techniques for personal advancement, learning and leadership development, cultural renewal and organisational transformation. Fully qualified external and internal coaches have become integral to the success of organisations in the 21st century, with many businesses relying of the coaching mindset and methodology to maintain and promote organisational vision, values and culture.

As a corollary to this is the question: “Why become a Coach?” (- be it external or internal). Coaching is a fulfilling and satisfying role for those people who wish to help others develop and succeed. Coaching is now also seen as a profession in itself (ie; external executive coaching); as a pathway for organisational advancement and in many businesses as an essential competency requirement in the toolbox of all leaders, throughout the organisation.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COACHING?

The briefest answer is “Yes”.

Coaching comes in many forms mainly differentiated by the purpose the coach fulfils. The tools, techniques and mechanisms used however, remain substantially unchanged. The most common forms of coaching include: sporting coaches, life or spiritual coaches, specialist weight-loss coaches etc., and in the business field: executive coaches, leadership coaches, team coaches and management coaches.

Management coaching is essentially different to leadership coaching - generally focusing on those aspects of management related to the specific roles managers play. In particular those to do with communication, delegation, performance, conflict handling and decision-making. This coaching can be corrective, finding ways to overcome behaviours which may interfere with the productive output of the individual, team or company. Leadership and executive coaching on the other hand is almost entirely developmental and involves the “inner work” (personal mastery, emotional intelligence, resonance, relationship building) of the aspiring leader.



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WHAT IS COACHING?



"IS IT EFFECTIVE?" (DOES COACHING WORK?)

All forms of coaching are to some extent effective if used for the right purposes and by well-trained facilitators. Coaching is particularly useful and cost effective when applied to personal development, organisational learning and cultural transformation. From a global perspective, many medium to large organisations have a dedicated coaching training budget and track expenditure against organisational performance metrics. These companies have discovered that coaching provides exceptional return-on-investment and its efficacy is unchallenged.

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Melbourne, 2011




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Ian is recognised as a leading thinker in the areas of Creative & Integral Leadership, Cultural Renewal and Organisational Change. A self-confessed polymath and maven by nature; Ian has been described as a talented academic, an accomplished program leader (in the finance and insurance industries), and a senior manager with extensive experience with the implementation of institutional change and organisational learning and development. Ian partners with other leading Australian OD experts and researchers to provide Liquid Learning's annual Master Classes in Coaching, Leadership and Organisational Change. In addition to operating his own business & community oriented consultancy - Adaptive Learning, Ian is also a member of a network of working thinkers who provide advice, media commentary, workshop facilitation and keynote speeches on creativity, innovation, problem solving and cultural change to local and international organisations.



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