



What is Coaching?

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Coaching is about facilitating the performance, learning and development of another. It enables people to perform better by building on their current knowledge. You are not trying to 'teach' a person when coaching. It is about allowing that individual to learn by unlocking their potential and maximising performance

Coaching is a conversation, or series of conversations, between two people. Such conversations benefit the learner's thinking, actions and learning in a way that would have been unlikely if they had not had the discussion.

A coach is able to work alongside individuals to improve their performance at work, regardless of whether or not they could do that work themselves. They help people to see opportunities for improvement and practical ways forward for themselves.

A coach uses a blend of observation, talking, listening, questioning and reflecting back to the learner. During the conversation, the coach encourages the learner to identify goals and objectives, to rise to challenges, to overcome obstacles and to move to action. When things don't go well, the coach supports the learner and helps them to reflect on their learning from the experience. When things go well, they help the learner to pinpoint what worked so they can do it again.

Coaching is being adopted by many organisations as a style of management. Managers are learning to use coaching with their staff through being coached themselves. Instead of directing staff and giving detailed instructions on how to approach a task, they enable their staff to resolve challenges for themselves by providing support, challenge, feedback and guidance, but rarely answers.

The manager's focus is on enabling their staff to perform independently of them and to take personal responsibility for their own success. Time is spent on objective setting, one-to-one meetings and team meetings. Managers who coach improve staff productivity, morale and job satisfaction. They find that their staff are less dependant on them, which in turn reduces pressure on themselves and frees up time to focus on other priorities. Thus, coaching is a process that benefits the manager, their staff and the organisation.

A Coach:

Facilitates exploration and learning

Observes, listens and questions to raise the learner's self awareness

Suspends their judgement and their inclination to give direction

Enables the learner to set their own goals, to identify actions that they are committed to, and to assess their own progress

Encourages the learner to develop personal responsibility and accountability and to continually improve their performance

The Manager as Coach

It is important to define what is required of a manager when performing the role of coach. In order to do this, it is best to examine all management activity of which there are three key areas.



These three activities are complimentary and are required to help you achieve your business objectives, by enabling your team to perform at their best.

When you are leading, you create and share a vision of the future with your team and ensure that their activities are consistent with bringing about that change.

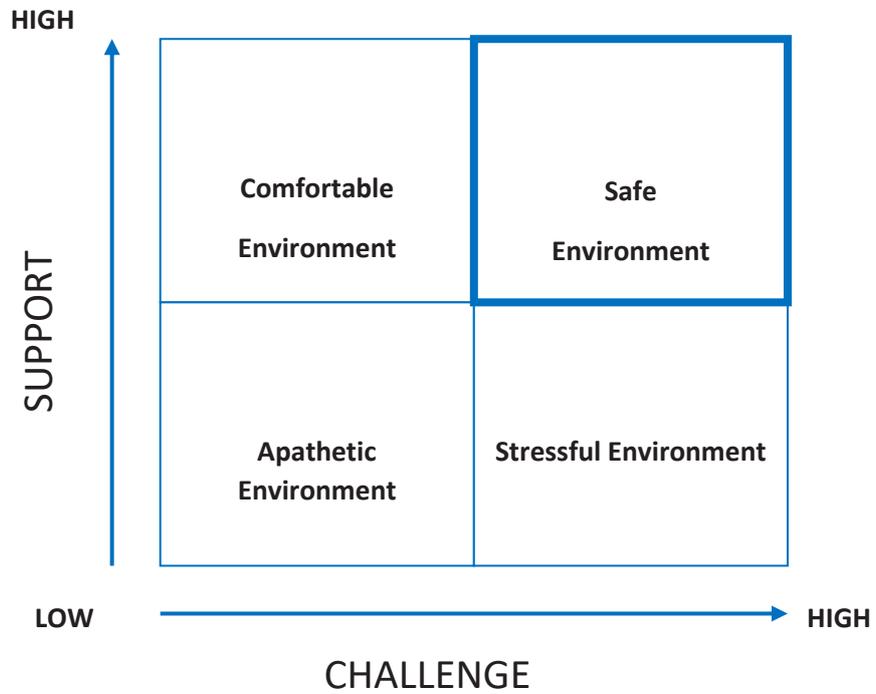
When you are managing, you deliver results to the organisation by controlling the work of the team, by agreeing and monitoring such things as budgets, timescales and quality levels.

When you are coaching, you support your team members in their learning, to enable them to develop the skills, knowledge and attitude necessary to successfully deliver their job responsibilities and goals.

The circles in the diagram overlap because some of the processes and skills that are used in one area are also used in another.

Problems arise when the manager is not clear about which approach is appropriate in a particular situation. For example, if a coaching approach is used when deadlines are tight or a crisis has arisen, precious time may be lost. If a management approach is used when a team member has made a mistake, the learning opportunity will be missed and the mistake may be repeated.

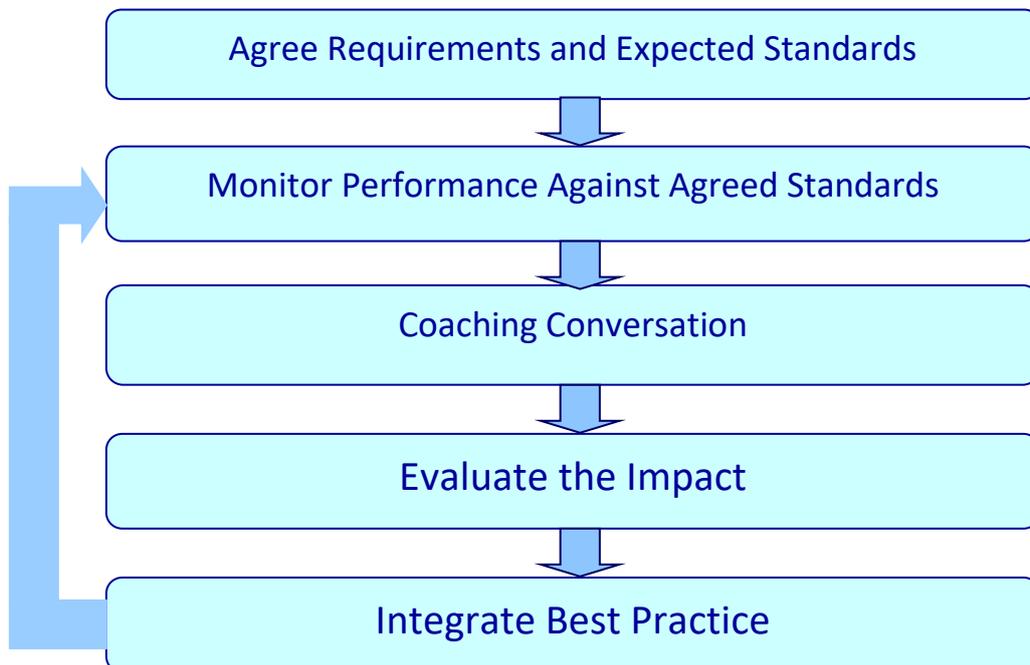
The Coaching Environment



A Procedure for Coaching Success

The actual process of coaching is a relatively simple one. However, without proper planning and preparation it can often be disastrous. Team members are often 'coached' with no awareness of what is expected of them in the first place. This can create confusion, frustration and eventual stress.

In order to avoid this happening it is useful to follow a procedure, not just for the actual coaching session, but for the entire process. The following is a method of doing this in a results driven environment.



Agree requirements and expected standards – Here we should clearly define and agree the job role and the standards of performance and the skills/behaviours necessary to achieve them.

Monitor performance against agreed standards – Once we have the performance standards in place, it becomes easier to monitor performance against them. Here we should establish if the individual is meeting the requirements of the role.

Coaching conversation – Here we should use effective communication methods to maximise the outcome of the session and explore development actions. This task has become easier as the individual now knows what is expected of them in the role and what they need to work towards. The outcome from this session is a focused action plan. (This stage uses the GROW model for coaching).

Evaluate the impact – This stage is about evaluating the success of the coaching session. Assessing what the individual is doing differently and the effects this is having on their results. Here you should

also test the effectiveness of your own coaching methods. What success are you having? Do you need to alter your coaching behaviour?

Integrate best practice – This last stage is where you integrate the successes you have achieved. Too often we only evaluate things when they go wrong. Ask yourself, what is going right and how can we include that in our day to day work?

Once you have reached the final stage you should return to the monitoring stage. It is not necessary to agree roles continually (in most circumstances). However, you may wish to do this from time to time.

This procedure expands somewhat on usual coaching theory of focusing on all elements within the 'coaching conversation'. However, if we lay down the correct foundations and create a coaching environment of total openness and awareness of requirements, the coaching process becomes much easier to follow for both the coachee and the coach.



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