

An Introduction to Coaching

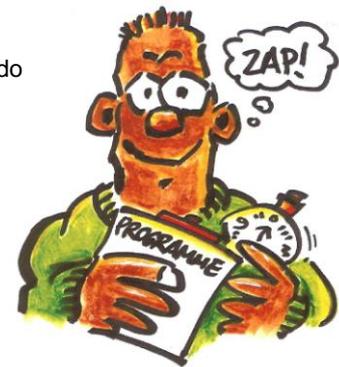
Much recent research into learning suggests that a developmental approach, focusing on coaching can deliver lasting results in changing behaviour and improving the performance of both individuals and teams. Coaching creates a climate for change and enables managers to help their reports to identify their own solutions and 'to want to bother' to go through the pain that change brings.

It is important to understand that a Coach does not necessarily have to be able to do a task in order to be able to coach someone else to do it better. For this reason, it is key that managers are able to understand what high quality coaching entails and are then willing to add the Coach's skills to their personal toolkit.

"If I solve your problem, then I am doing the job and taking away your opportunity to grow... and even worse, I am probably giving yesterday's solutions."
Sir John Harvey-Jones

Coaching can be used for:

1. **Retrospective development** – helping a colleague to do what they do in a faster, better or higher quality way.
2. **Forward looking development** – helping a colleague to come to terms with, plan and then deliver some new task or project, which at first seems to be overwhelming or insurmountable.
3. **Corrective action** – helping a colleague to understand what is expected of them and coaching them through the steps that they will need to make, in order to deliver to the required standards.



Opportunities to Coach – Coaching may take place when:

- an employee is not performing a task as efficiently or effectively as they might
- an employee is not working to standard or expresses a desire to improve
- an employee needs skill development
- there is a need to proactively drive a development plan or improve on competencies
- job procedures or criteria change or there is an opportunity for an employee to grow into a new role
- an employee has potential that might otherwise be untapped
- an employee is ready for career advancement
- an employee needs encouragement, shape or support in developing, in line with the company's needs
- there is a need for interpersonal behaviour to change
- an employee is not 'in tune' with the culture or value system of the organisation
- an employee is violating company policy
- an employee lacks motivation or has a morale problem
- formal training has already taken place and an employee now needs help in implementing a new skill

The Link between Coaching and Delegation

Look for opportunities to delegate and coach your colleagues to success. Think about the tasks that **you** currently work on and the decisions that you currently make. Which of these could be delegated as coaching assignments to one of your staff? Re-assessing your strategy in these areas could provide you and your business with a huge 'payoff' in the longer term.

Ask yourself:

What are the functional tasks that I enjoy doing the most? – Have you kept these for yourself, when they should have been delegated or shared amongst your colleagues a long time ago?

What are the functional tasks that I enjoy doing the least? – Might one of your team enjoy doing some of the things which you now find boring or mundane? It could be the case that things which are no longer a challenge for you might be a developmental stretch for them.

What are the tasks in which I am particularly skilled, experienced or qualified? – Would any of your team benefit from being coached to acquire some of these competencies too? How can **you** be released for promotion if your personal skills and knowledge are irreplaceable?

What are the tasks in which I am less skilled, experienced or qualified? – Are there any tasks which colleagues could do better or faster than you can? Coach them and watch them grow!

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A coaching approach is often based on using a questioning style – This is not just to enable the questioner to get information, but also because it:

- creates an open and sharing **ENVIRONMENT** between Coach and Coachee
- sharpens the Coachee's **FOCUS** from the general to the specific
- develops the Coachee's **AWARENESS** of what is going on and what might be possible
- helps the Coachee to find their own **ANSWERS**
- enables the Coachee to take **OWNERSHIP** of the process
- stimulates the Coachee to take **RESPONSIBILITY** for the actions that need to be taken

If you are intending to Coach more, use the following steps to keep you on track:

Step 1

5 Top Tips about the process:

- Tip 1** **Evaluate** the risks of coaching against the potential benefits. Is coaching the right tool?
- Tip 2** **Stretch people**, but think through your tactics. Do they have the resources, knowledge, skills and time to do the task? Getting this wrong may mean that what you intend to be motivating might instead be felt as threatening and stressful.
- Tip 3** **Agree on SMART task goals and objectives** – both parties must be absolutely clear on what is (and what is not) included in the coaching task. You must define success criteria, otherwise how will either of you know when the performer has done a good job?
- Tip 4** **Agree on SMART learning goals and objectives** – you must both be clear about the learning that you expect to be gained from this coaching.
- Tip 5** **Monitor progress** – proactively keep them on track. Offer your support. Show your interest, your commitment and your passion. Ensure that good records are kept and follow up. Agreeing and then recognising progress will be highly motivational.

Step 2

5 Top Tips from their (the Coachee's) perspective:

- Tip 1** **Always** start with the Coachee's agenda.
- Tip 2** **Build rapport** – reflect their feelings, their language and their body language.
- Tip 3** **Treat them with respect** – be patient, open-minded and non-judgemental.
- Tip 4** **Ask permission** before making inputs or suggestions of your own.
- Tip 5** **Remember** that Coachees often have the solutions to their own problems and are more likely to be committed to solutions that they have apparently thought of and developed themselves.

Step 3

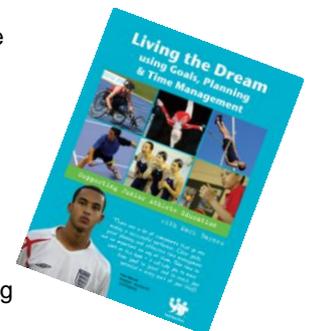
5 Top Tips from your (the Coach's) Perspective:

- Tip 1** **Look for coaching opportunities** – they may not always be obvious, so be proactive, open-minded and creative!
- Tip 2** **Ask predominantly open questions** to raise the awareness and responsibility of the Coachee. Remember most effective questions begin with 'What?' Avoid 'Why?'
- Tip 3** **Listen** with your full attention and with empathy. Listen for key words and themes and follow up on them. Spend at least 80% of your time listening.
- Tip 4** **Pace your coaching** – coaching too quickly or too slowly can both bring risks. Adjust your preferred coaching style to suit the Coachee.
- Tip 5** **Take time for a thorough review** and next step planning. Give value to the process and make yours a 'coaching culture'.

This extract is taken from a series of more than 30 Hints & Tips, created by Mark Barnes of Step System International Limited.

Step System creates and supplies coaching and training interventions, supported by blended learning and focused publications, delivering success in the areas of personal, team and organisational development.

Linked to our work with sportspeople and teams, we have a number of other Coaching Hints & Tips for both prospective and experienced Coaches. Mark's booklet, commissioned by the Youth Sports Trust, **Living the Dream** is also available on request.



Next Step

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