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A simple introduction to coaching in organizations and business settings

W J Fear 2015

Overview

Welcome to the unit on coaching in organizations and business settings. This unit provides you with a brief overview of the core principles, skills, and capabilities required for coaching. It is set in the context of organizations and businesses, but it is important to recognise that the core principles, skills and capabilities are universal.

The market for coaching in organizational settings has grown massively over the past couple of decades, as have the models, approaches, and sets of questions and techniques. What we do in this module, however, is go back to the tried and tested basics. In simple terms, the models techniques and so on that you apply are not going to deliver consistent benefits to your clients, if they deliver any benefits at all. It is those deep seated understandings and skills that make the difference. This is explained in some of the video clips provided and in the books listed under recommended reading.

Objectives

When you have completed this unit you should:

- Have a grasp of the basic skills and capabilities of what is required for a successful coaching intervention in an organizational or business setting;
- Be aware of your own development needs;
- Have a deeper appreciation the intricacies of coaching.

Recommended Reading

It is worth investing in these books as ‘classic texts’ if you want to pursue coaching, or other person-to-person interventions, as a long term practice.

- Carl Rogers. *Client Centred Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*, 2003. Make sure you buy a copy of the book written by Carl Rogers. Don’t be put off by the word ‘therapy’ in the title or its use in the book. Rogers’s approach is based firmly on how to bring about behavioural change in a person-to-person intervention and the principles and approach he presents are central to the practice of the world’s top coaches.
- Gerard Egan. *The Skilled Helper*. This book is now in its tenth edition, but the essential model and the core components have not really changed. This is a timeless model that can be adapted to situations and circumstances. As with Rogers, don’t be put off by the word ‘Helper’ in the title. If you want to improve performance in an organization you are going to have to help people to get there.
- Marshall Goldsmith, Laurence Lyons, and Alyssa Feas. *Coaching for Leadership*, 2000. This book is packed full of anecdotes, examples, advice and case studies from some of the worlds leading executive coaches. It provides a fantastic insight into the world of executive coaching and many of the lessons are transferable to other situations. There is no better set of examples of ‘what it is actually like’.

Resources on the Web

- Carl Rogers. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Rogers
- Person Centred Therapy. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Person-centered_therapy
- Person-Environment Fit.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Person%E2%80%93environment_fit
- Job Satisfaction. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_satisfaction

Youtube video clips

- Carl Rogers on empathy and problem of soundbite techniques.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMi7uY83z-U> You should pay careful attention to the point Rogers makes here, especially to help understand that the relationship you develop with the client cannot be achieved by a series of soundbite-like techniques. There is a lot more to it than this.
- Marshall Goldsmith on coaching leaders to support line reports
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYhws73vm0c> Goldsmith focusses on six questions for coaching leaders at the risk of making them seem like soundbite techniques. But note how these questions related to the skills and capabilities identified by Rogers and Egan. There are further sets of video clips following this one but they have not been considered for this unit.
- Henry Kimsey on what it is like to be a top organizational/leadership coach
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3HEOEDYaSU> This is an unusual and honest insight into the experience of being one of the world's top 30 listed executive coaches from an unconventional figure.
- Kristi Hedges provides an interesting take on empathy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqdO_6UDcsk Again, consider this in relation to the work of Rogers and Egan.
- Bonnie Marcus provides a simple view on the importance of having clear goals and being confident about them https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_fyYBwaUuw
- An example of the GROW model in practice
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6f3X2PEsV-Q>
- A quick view on the importance of coaching supervision -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJ9AEftb8YY>

Session One

Introduction

Coaching and mentoring are ubiquitous in organizations around the world. Line managers are expected to be coaches. Almost everybody is expected to be a mentor. What does this mean? Is it a good thing? Is this really coaching and mentoring?

In this Module we will discuss Coaching: what it is, one of the popular, basic models - the GROW model, and some of the key points and considerations for the practice of Coaching in the workplace. The first thing we need to do is distinguish between coaching and mentoring. This distinction is taken seriously by all professional bodies, the CIPD for example, even though it is not a clear cut distinction. One of the reasons for this is that coaching in organizations sometimes makes use of techniques and approaches that are used in counselling, and, like counselling, professional coaching requires the coach to have some degree of training, appreciation of the relevant theories and models, and some level of supervision. Also, unlike typical mentoring, coaching does not require the coach to have experience in what they are coaching about. This will become clear during the module.

Coaching and Mentoring

Within organizations it is generally accepted that coaching tends to be a short term process that targets particular skills in order to improve performance. There are many problems with this understanding, but it is generally accepted as holding in the context of business and commercial organizations. It does not hold, for example, in relation to sport where coaching is continuous and ongoing and does not really hold in relation to healthcare where coaching is more geared towards behavioural change.

Mentoring in organizations is usually considered a more holistic approach and the mentor is a guide and confidante who helps the mentee develop on a personal level within the organization. Mentors are usually expected to have experience of the environment the mentee is in and the sort of tasks, problems, and requirements the mentee is experiencing. In this sense mentoring is similar to peer-to-peer tutoring used in education.

In an organizational context it difficult to make firm distinctions between coaching the mentoring and the two often overlap. In addition, much for what passes for coaching in organizations is closer to informal training and development, tutoring, performance management and career development.

Does the distinction matter?

How important is it to distinguish between coaching and mentoring? One response could be that it is not at all important. This holds true to a large extent when coaching and mentoring are used throughout the organization as a means of generic support and development without clear goals. So, for example, it is common for organizations to expect line managers to be coaches. What does this mean? What this seems to refer to is the requirement for line managers to communicate regularly with their staff and support them, especially with regard to problem solving and career development and progression. Similarly it is common, now, for organizations to set up ‘mentoring programmes’ where members of staff are paired up with the intention that the more experienced or senior member should act as a guide and confidante for their peer/s. Neither of these instances would fall into the category of either professional mentoring or coaching. In these instances it makes little difference if we talk about a coaching or mentoring programme as there is typically a lack of adequate formal training and supervision in both cases.

At a professional level there is a strong argument for distinguishing between coaching and mentoring as the requirements, skills, and expectations are different. This does not mean we can draw a clear boundary between them. We can, however, distinguish between what is required for coaching and what is required for mentoring.

An example

An example of the difference between coaching and mentoring may help. Let’s say you want to go on an adventure walk in the mountains of Latin America. A coach will help you prepare for the event, develop a training program with you and support you to achieve your training goals, help you make the necessary preparations and otherwise generally make sure you have the necessary skills, such as map reading, to achieve your goals. If you wanted a mentor you

would probably want to pick someone who had either done the trip you were planning, or a similar one, and they may even come with you as your guide. You would be relying on their knowledge and experience of having done the walk themselves. A coach, however, would be helping you to develop the skills you need to do it yourself.

Key features

Coaching and mentoring overlap and share some of the same key features so before moving on to coaching it is worth highlighting these shared features.

Both coaching and mentoring:

- Take account of the needs of the individual in the context of their job, role, and organization;
- are ongoing relationships (mentoring is typically one-to-one; coaching in organizations is usually one-to-one but, as in sports, there is scope for team coaching);
- provide support and guidance for individuals to develop the skills and capabilities to find their own solutions.

Individual benefits include:

- Improved skills
- Increased self confidence and awareness
- Relationship with a guide and confidante
- Insight into own behaviours and learning styles

Organizational benefits include:

- Increased work performance
- Internal relationships between colleagues
- More skilled and confident workforce

Both coaching and mentoring depend on being able to build a relationship between both parties. Both the coach/mentor and the coachee/mentee have a role to play.

The coach/mentor should:

- Take responsibility for the logistics such as suitable times, location, and frequency of sessions;
- Address any power issues (the coach/mentor should not assume they have a superior or more powerful role in the relationship)
- Ensure they use appropriate methods and techniques of intervention and guidance
- Ensure confidentiality
- Summarise and record learning points

As noted earlier, a coach does not need to be familiar with the area, job, and tasks and so on of the coachee but a mentor would usually work in the role of a guide and confidant so could reasonably be expected to have this knowledge and experience.

Coaches and mentors should also be aware that issues may arise that are sensitive and deeply personal. The coach or mentor needs to remain alert to this and to refer the coachee/mentee on to appropriate support when this does occur.

Ground rules

A few simple ground rules should be applied to the coach/mentor relationship. These include:

- Completing tasks set at previous sessions
- Be honest and open (this applies to both coachee/mentee and coach/mentor)
- Have a clear overall goal for the sessions and make sure this is agreed
- Respect each other both in and outside of the sessions
- Ensure good timekeeping: turn up on time and finish on time.

Quiz

Coaching and mentoring are:

- a) The same thing
- b) Completely different things
- c) They overlap and are not clearly separate

Coaching is more geared towards:

- a) The achievement of clear goals
- b) Job related skills
- c) Personal development in the context of the organization

Mentoring is more geared towards:

- a) The achievement of clear goals
- b) Job related skills
- c) Personal development in the context of the organization

Coaching the mentoring share the following key features:

- a) They are expensive
- b) They are ongoing relationships
- c) They require experience of the area, activities and tasks the coachee/mentee is seeking to develop
- d) They require confidentiality
- e) They require the coach/mentor to be supervised within a professional framework

Ground rules for both coaching and mentoring include:

- a) The coachee/mentee should already be performing above a set benchmark
- b) Ensure good time keeping
- c) Set clear goals
- d) Personal issues should be shared outside of the sessions

Session Two: The GROW Model

In the introduction we discussed coaching and mentoring. The remainder of the module focusses specifically on coaching. It is important to remember that we are discussing coaching in an organizational context and that coaching in other settings, such as sport, health, and vocational rehabilitation may have different models and processes. The overall principles and underlying theory and evidence are the same, however. The differences between most other settings and coaching in organizations are the degree of overlap between coaching and mentoring, the less structured approach, and the short term view applied in much organizational coaching.

Most coaching interventions use some form of model to guide the intervention. A simple and popular model that summarises the process of coaching is the GROW model. Each letter in the model stands for something, and there are a number of different versions of the model. Bear in mind it is a summary model rather than a distinct theoretical model and thus it serves mainly as a guide to the process.

The GROW model

- G – Goal. The goal is the end point of the process and needs to be defined clearly enough for the client to know when they have reached it. The goal should be set by the client, but in organizations goals are usually set in relation to performance and achievement within the organization according to the organizations objectives. This is often overlooked but is probably one of the most important understandings in setting goals.
- R- Reality. The current situation. Where is the client now in relation to their desired goal. How realistic is their goal: is it too ambitious, not ambitious enough; do they need to develop further skills and capabilities; do they have the necessary and sufficient resources available or will they need to acquire more; and so on?
- – Obstacles/Options. Obstacles. What are the barriers or obstacles to the client achieving their goal? Have they all been identified? Are they real or just a question of perception? Will the client make the effort to overcome them? Options. What options

does the client have with regard to the obstacles or barriers? Do they need to tackle them head on or find other ways around them? Are there alternative courses of action?

- W – Way forward. This is also referred to as Action Planning. The client, together with the coach, needs to develop a clear course of action and document it. The action plan should have clear activities and sub-goals that will lead to the achievement of the overall goal. The coach should be able to go through the action plan during the meetings with their client and see whether or not the client has achieved their goals and provide feedback to the client. However, the client should also be monitoring their own performance by using the action plan. This element, continual monitoring of performance and immediate and delayed feedback, are a critical component of coaching that is often overlooked in the weaker coaching interventions.

Another important element of coaching is that, unlike an approach often taken in mentoring, it is less about giving advice and instruction and more about asking questions that help the client find solutions for themselves. Here are some simple examples of the sorts of questions that can be used with the different parts of the model.

Goal setting

When the client talks about goals they want to achieve ask:

- How will you know that you have achieved that goal?
- How will you know the problem is solved?

Reality

Get the client to describe their current reality by asking them ‘where are you now/what is your current situation?’ Keep in mind qualifying questions such as:

- What is happening now?
- What, who, when, how often?
- What is the effect or result of that?

Exploring the Obstacles and Options

- Start by identifying the barriers or obstacles with questions such as:
- What is stopping you from achieving your goal?
- Why do you see that as an obstacle?

The consider options using questions such as:

- What else could you do?
- What could you differently?
- What would happen if the obstacle/barrier was removed?
- What are the benefits and consequences of the options?

Way Forward/Action Planning

It is important to support the client to develop a clear action plan. This could be tightly structured or a simple set of notes or objectives. The key thing is that both the client and coach should be able to monitor progress towards the goal through the completion of tasks and the achievement of sub-goals or objectives.

Questions to ask include:

- What will you do now?
- How will this help you progress towards your goal?
- What steps do you need to take by when?
- How will you know if you are making progress?

Criticism of the GROW model and similar models. There are a number of criticisms of the GROW model and other similar models. These include not exploring deeper meaningful matters that impact on the clients' life, being goal focussed at the expense of wider considerations, failing to take account of long term consequences, and so on.

Video Clips

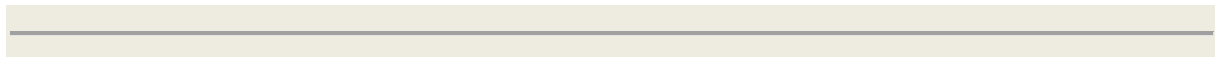
Watch the clips:

- An example of the GROW model in practice
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6f3X2PEsV-Q>
- Bonnie Marcus provides a simple view on the importance of having clear goals and being confident about them https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_fyYBwaUuw

Exercise

Develop your own GROW model for a simple problem you want to overcome. Think of something you want to achieve and use the GROW model to develop an action plan.

- How easy/hard was this?
- Did you stick to your action plan?
- How often did you monitor your progress; did you keep a written record of your progress?
- What does this experience tell you about using the model?



Session Three: Attributes and Behaviours of the Coach

There are a number of different coaching tools that can be used at different stages. For example, psychometric tools can be used to set goals, assess the current reality, and determine obstacles. Templates can be used for action plans, rather than developing a bespoke action plan for each client. Log books can be kept by clients to monitor their progress towards their goals. Video diaries can be used throughout the process. Group exercises can provide powerful feedback. The choice of which tools to use when will depend on the coaches level of training, their experience, and their familiarity with the different tools, and the availability and appropriateness of the tools.

It is often said, however, that the most important tool in the coaching process is the self. That is, the coach is the tool used by the client to achieve their goals. In this understanding coaching is very much a ‘bottom up’ process, or at the very least a relationship between equals. It is the client who is in control and decides upon and sets goals. The coach facilitates the clients progress towards the goals, but is not responsible for them.

In this section we will discuss the role of the self as a tool in the coaching relationship, for one simple reason. It is a tool you always have available.

The skill set

Using the self as tool requires a skill set similar to those skills used in counselling: listening skills, empathy, the ability to ask sensible questions, authenticity, and so on. The difference is that in therapeutic counselling the client often does not know what the problem is and has a significant level of emotional distress attached to the problem. In coaching the problems are defined, or bounded, as: a) How to achieve the goal; and b) staying on track.

Within the coaching literature a set of attributes and behaviours have been identified as characteristic of good coaches. Of course, different people will have these in varying degrees and when and how to exercise them will depend on the situation. Nonetheless they remain a good set of characteristics and behaviours for development as a competent coach.

Attributes:

- Good listening skills that utilise empathy as discussed by Rogers and Egan and in the video clip by Kristi Hedges; this includes an instinct or intuition for the nature of the problem and the client's needs in their current and emerging context; a willingness to learn from mistakes; demonstration of authenticity and 'appropriate self-management' in keeping with that expected from the client.
- An awareness of own emotions and a willingness to accept the coachee's emotions and the context in which they occur; this context includes the coaching sessions and the workplace.
- An ability and willingness to develop and grow an awareness, understanding and sophisticated knowledge and appreciation of the coachees circumstances, environment and situation.
- The skill and capability to elicit and understand the client's beliefs and values that impact on their behavior; a willingness to explore and understand the coaches frame of reference.
- The ability to facilitate the coaches understanding of their reality while at the same time suspending judgement of the coachee, their situation, and others; the capability to use the skills identified by Rogers and Egan to help the client make sense of their situation and make their goals real. (E.g see the video clip by Henry Kimsey.)
- The ability to develop a relationship based on trust with the coachee and an appreciation of the ethics, potential conflict of interest, and implications of such a relationship.

Behaviours:

The coach needs to be able to demonstrate and elicit a set of behaviours as follows:

- They need to be authentic and honest and work collaboratively in an equal partnership with the client/coachee; the coach does not provide top down instruction but facilitates the clients development in terms of achieving their goals.
- The coach should exercise a 'no praise' approach and be willing, instead, to provide 'challenging' feedback; they should facilitate the setting of actionable and achievable

goals/objectives by the client/coachee; the coach should be careful to prevent their personal agenda, values, beliefs and so on being part of the coaching relationship per se; the coach should be accessible within agreed and appropriate boundaries.

- The coach should be willing to form a strong, bounded, and supportive relationship with the client during the coaching period; they need to maintain a professional demeanor and behavior any coaching methods, theories, and models that they use should be accessible to the client, and both the coach and the client should recognize that these are simply tools to facilitate the process.

Exercise

Look through the attributes and behaviours characteristic of good coaches. Make a list of your attributes and behaviours that you think are relevant to coaching. Can you match these to the attributes and behaviours given here? What score would you give yourself out of 10 for each relevant attribute and behaviour? What score out of 10 do you think someone who knows you well would give you?

Session Four: Individual Skills and Capabilities of the Coach and the relationship between Individuals and Organizations

There are two ways of using theories. One is to develop a theory of something – a theory of coaching, for example. The other is to use theories as tools in your practice. It is the second use that concerns us here.

A theory of coaching would seek to tell us what coaching is, how it works, whether or not it works, and so on. We have already touched on this in the previous section, but from a practical point of view is not a great deal of help.

Theories as tools to help and support practice are, however, of great benefit. They allow you to assess the situation, evaluate your own practice, develop a shared understanding with your clients, and assess other methods, techniques and interventions.

There are a large number of theories we can use as tools in coaching, and it would not be possible to cover one in any great depth here, that'll own all of them. So we'll focus on introducing just a few examples of well-known theories that have been tried and tested in the field. We will break them into individual theories – theories concerned with the behaviour of individuals – and organization theories – theories concerned with the behaviour of individuals in organizational settings. We will look, briefly, at just a couple of examples of each.

Individual skills and capabilities

Almost any theory of individual and/or group behaviour can be applied to coaching, and most have been. A good theory will help you, and the client, understand the process you are engaged with and will help you and the client to evaluate the process and check that they are achieving their goals. This does not mean you need to explain the theory in depth to the client, but it helps to have some sort of framework to structure your practice.

Historically two theories that were widely used in high level executive coaching were Carl Rogers's theory of Person-centred learning and Gerard Egan's Skilled Helper Model. Both of these approaches focus on the client learning – developing skills and capabilities – and

achieving the goals they want to achieve. The coach is an important element in this but the coach facilitates and guides the process leaving the client in control.

Rogers gives three core qualities that the coach, the learning facilitator, needs:

- 1) Realness or authenticity on the part of the coach;
- 2) Prize, accept and trust the learner/client; and
- 3) Empathic understanding (seeing things from the client's point of view).

Rogers also said that the coach/facilitator should strive towards the following:

- 1) Set the initial mood or climate of the relationship and the context;
- 2) Elicit and clarify the purposes or goals of the client;
- 3) Acknowledge that the clients motivation is their desire to achieve meaningful goals;
- 4) Make available a wide range of resources for the client;
- 5) The coach should see themselves as a flexible resource for the client;
- 6) Respect and accept the intellectual and emotional responses of the client accordingly;
- 7) The coach learns from the client as much as the client learns from the coach – there is equal participation;
- 8) The coach openly shares their own thoughts, feelings and experiences accordingly;
- 9) Remain alert to strong feelings;
- 10) The coach should recognise and accept their own limitations.

This approach and understanding has been widely applied in all areas of established coaching in both one-to-one and group settings. The underlying principle is that coaching is about learning and it is up to the client to learn. Indeed, the principle is that the client is facilitated to develop learning skills – they learn to learn – rather than the coach transmitting some sort of wisdom or skill.

Gerard Egan's model, as usually presented, is more of a stage process model of 'what to do'. It is underpinned by substantial theory but people tend to be more aware of the pragmatic model. It is important to acknowledge that in his work Egan presents this as an iterative model rather than a strictly linear model. Nonetheless, it is presented here as successive stages.

Egan's model is presented as three stages: exploration, challenging, and action planning.

- Exploration. This is a 'where are you now' exploration with the client. It focusses on the current situation and allows them to reflect on their situation. Egan emphasises the importance of listening skills, empathy, focussing and questioning, and the coach remaining non-judgmental and impartial. This is the time when the client 'tells their story'.
- Challenging. In this stage the coach challenges the client's perceptions and current point of view. They encourage the client to work out what the problem is, how it might look from someone else's point of view, and to identify future goals. It is at this stage where the client identifies 'what I want'.
- Action planning. In this stage the coach facilitates the setting of goals or objectives. Egan used SMART objectives. That is, they needed to be:
 - Simple
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Relevant
 - Timely

The point is that the client and the coach need to know what steps the client will take and be able to keep track of them. The goals also need to be in keeping the context of the client and take them to where they want to go.

In practice high level and experienced coaches tend to use these approaches in combination as they are a good fit.

There are any number of additional theories that may be used as tools and models by the coach but the work of Rogers and Egan remain important as a set of core approaches and understandings and are still widely used – for good reason; they work.

Web Resources

Look at the web pages:

- Carl Rogers. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Rogers
- Person Centred Therapy. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Person-centered_therapy

Organizations and the Individual

When coaching within an organization in a commercial or business setting theories that help understand organizations and how they work can be useful. Two useful theories are Person-Environment Fit and Job Satisfaction. These theories have different guises and are often broken down into smaller sub-theories. Here we present a basic overview.

In simple terms Person-Environment Fit is the degree to which the person matches their environment. The key assumption is that the better fit between person and environment the more positive the outcomes including satisfaction, performance and wellbeing. Person characteristics include personality, values, goals, capabilities, physiological requirements, and so on. Environment characteristics include rewards, demands of a job or a role, cultural values, other individuals, and so on. Within the main there are a number of sub-theories such as the fit between the person and their specific job, the person and the organization, and so on.

PE-fit can be used to help contextual the client and understand their current situation. The coach may then facilitate the client to establish a better fit with their environment either by making changes themselves or seeking to change their environment, or part of it, in some way. Alternatively, the coach may work with the client to facilitate the client's develop for a new environment; a position on the board, for example.

Job Satisfaction is the theory that the more satisfied someone is in their job, or role, the more productive they are. The parallel between PE-fit and Job Satisfaction should be clear, although Job Satisfaction tends to focus more on the individual and their relationship with a specific job or role.

While Job Satisfaction is considered a theory in its own right there are, as with PE-fit, a number of sub-theories that try to find ways of explaining why and how Job Satisfaction makes a difference. The main principle, however, remains the same. When you get pleasure for doing the job you are doing you feel more satisfied and fulfilled and this tends to result in improved performance. In simple terms satisfaction is a measure of what one has in/from a job compared to what one wants from a job.

Job Satisfaction can be used to help understand where or not a client is satisfied with their job and if not what they want from it that would make them satisfied. It can also be used to frame the goals a client sets and whether or not they will find those goals satisfy them if they are realised.

Theories such as PE-fit and Job Satisfaction tend to be important in organizational settings as they help explain organizational situations. They are widely used, and equally widely critiqued, in organizational settings.

There are, of course, many other theories of organizations and organizational settings that apply to coaching. We have briefly touched on these two theories as they are widely known and are often an integral part of people's understandings about how individuals function in an organizational setting.

Web Resources

Look at the web pages:

- Person-Environment Fit. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Person%E2%80%93environment_fit
- Job Satisfaction. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_satisfaction

Exercise

- 1) On a sheet of paper go through Egan's model for yourself. Write down, briefly, where you are now, what you would like to change, and draw up a simple action plan for change with a set of SMART goals.
- 2) Answer the following questions with a few short sentences each:
 - a) How good a fit are you with: 1) your current organization; 2) your team or work group; 3) your current job/role?
 - b) How satisfied are you with your current Job; what would need to change for you to be completely satisfied; if those changes were made how long would you be satisfied for; if you were completely satisfied with your job how much, and in what way, would your performance improve?



Section Five: Coaching roles in organizations

The Line Manager as Coach

For many years there has been an expectation in organizations that line managers will act as coaches, mentors, counsellors, leaders, and exhibit a wide range of complex and sophisticated interpersonal skills. At the same time few, if any, organizations provide their staff with a grounding in the basic principles, skills, and capabilities required to deliver on this promise.

Of all these skills and practical disciplines coaching is perhaps the one most often voiced with regard to middle managers. What this usually means is that the manager should look after the day-to-day basic training needs of their employees and manager their overall wellbeing in order to ensure a good level of PE-fit and high levels of Job Satisfaction.

There is no doubt that being aware of the core principles and capabilities required for coaching will serve a line manager well and will also benefit their staff. It improves communication, leads to more open conversations, and allows for the identification of skills shortages and how to address them.

With the above in mind it makes sense for managers to familiarise themselves with the principles of coaching and develop some of the core capabilities, perhaps even have some basic training and develop lines of supervision. Learning to be authentic and to solve interpersonal problems through the use of Egan's model will likely resolve many incidents of work conflict and improve overall performance.

However, the line manager should bear in mind that they, too, need support and should not underestimate the demands placed on them when they develop and apply these skills and capabilities. When a line manager develops and using their coaching skills in situ they should expect to enter into a long term development relationship – much like a sports coach has with an athlete – rather than seeing it is a 'problem solving device'.

Video clips

Watch the clip:

- Marshall Goldsmith on coaching leaders to support line reports
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYhws73vm0c> Goldsmith focusses on six questions for coaching leaders at the risk of making them seem like soundbite techniques. But note how these questions related to the skills and capabilities identified by Rogers and Egan. There are further sets of video clips following this one but they have not been considered for this unit.

Exercise: You as a coach

Looking back over the previous sections answer the following questions:

- How good are your listening skills? Give an example to support this.
- How aware are you of your own and others' emotions, especially in difficult situations? Give an example to support this.
- Analyse your current situation and describe it. What emotions do you experience when doing this?
- What are the working conditions of your staff/peers/colleagues and how well do they understand the current situation?
- What happens when something goes wrong in your department/organization? How is the situation typically resolved?
- How do you manage when a member of staff, a colleague, or a peer shares difficult information with you? Give an example to support this.

The Role of HR in Coaching

Human Resource professionals have a long history of both developing coaching programmes within organizations and commissioning coaching for groups and individuals. Internal programmes often include assumptions, for example, that all line managers should be

coaches, or that some sort of mass coaching-cum-mentoring programme should be introduced for the good of the organization.

Unfortunately there is little, if anything, to support either the notion that all line managers should be coaches or that mass coaching-cum-mentoring programmes bring any benefits. There is good support for the benefit of individual coaching programmes, especially for high level executives, but these are typically situation, task and time bounded rather than long term developmental programmes.

However, programmes that introduce and develop the basic skills and principles of coaching among managers are likely to bring benefits as ultimately they can lead to improved communication at all levels and better quality working relationships.

Furthermore, the HR profession has a long history of developing and providing a range of sensible and effective coaching programmes and interventions and has a wide range of resources to draw on. Good HR departments are likely, at the least, to be able to provide solid advice and guidance and, if required, commission and/or develop good quality coaching provision.

Exercise: Coaching Provision by HR Professionals

- How would you go about commissioning a coaching provision from your HR support team; what would you ask for and why?
- As an HR professional (if you are one) how would you: a) develop an internal coaching provision; b) commission a coaching provision?

Coaching for Senior Executives and Skilled Professionals

Coaching provision for senior executives and skilled professionals is a long established provision and requires a great degree of expertise and competence. There is a strong market for senior executives both for situation and task specific requirements and to some extent as an ongoing requirement. Coaching for skilled professionals, from singers through actors through sports teams to individual athletes is well established as a long term and ongoing

provision, but less well established for skilled workers in organizational settings. Why this is the case is not clear.

Coaching for senior executives is often blurred with mentoring and frequently takes the form of an ex-insider, someone who has held a similar senior position, providing some support and guidance. There is the mistaken assumption that if you have performed well in a situation you are in a good position to coach others either in, or coming into, that situation. This is rarely the case. It does make for potentially good mentoring and peer-tutoring, but it does not have a direct bearing on good quality coaching.

Coaching for senior executives will, however, depend much on the requirements of both the situation and the individual. There may only be scope for a limited intervention and senior executives engaged in high levels of routine operation may not want ongoing performance related coaching as part of their support.

What little is written about senior executive coaching shows it to be diverse, blended with mentoring, having engagement with the clients environment, and requiring a high level of competence in the skills and processes described by Rogers and Egan.

One of the recognised risks of executive coaching is that it has the scope to lead to significant change in the executives behaviour and to affect their goals and aspirations. For example, there is an executive coaching organization whose contracts require both the client and the organization to acknowledge that the intervention may lead to the executive leaving the organization (presumably as they seek a better PE-fit and higher levels of Job Satisfaction based on personal goals).

Exercise: Coaching for Senior Executives

You have been asked to devise a coaching intervention for one of the two following scenarios. Write out a brief of around one or two pages saying what you propose, how you would go about, and justify this approach.

Scenario One

Two organizations are merging. They will be creating a new board. The smaller organization, Humble Pie, has significant status but is effectively bankrupt. However, given their history and standing and their long traditions the existing board members need to get some seats on the new board. What sort of requirements do you think these clients have and how will you go about meeting those needs?

Scenario Two

A senior executive has been promoted within a multinational and now has responsibility for the organizations commercial operations in Angola. Their new position will eventually lead to a position on the board, if they are successful in the post. They will have to relocate from Europe to Angola. What sort of requirements is this client likely to have, what sort of challenges are they likely to face, and what sort of provision can you make to facilitate their rising to this challenge.



Section Six: Evaluating Coaching?

Evaluation is a value based assessment of merit, worth, and/or significance of an object.

When evaluating an intervention, such as coaching, we would typically ask whether or not it was efficacious. That is, was the desired change bought about. This might seem quite simple if, for example, the client sets a small number of SMART goals or objectives. We simply ask, did the client meet these objectives? But what if they would have met them anyway, without the input of the coach. They might even have exceeded them without the input of the coach. And who is the client if you are a line manager? And who is the client if you coach on behalf of an organization? And should we be assuming that the client's performance is an appropriate measure or assessment of the coach's performance?

An appropriate evaluation would be based on the client's assessment of the coaches performance. But what happens when the coach has performed well and the client doesn't either recognise or appreciate this?

In sum, it is by no means straightforward to evaluate a coaching intervention. Sports coaches are regularly fired regardless of the quality of their provision, and the sister profession of counselling has struggled with evaluation for many decades.

One of the distinctions we can make in evaluation is between outcomes and process. We can, for example, evaluate the outcomes of an intervention. This is not the same as saying 'were the objectives met'. Rather, a proper evaluation asks a more open question: what were the outcomes of the evaluation; which of these outcomes was intended and/or anticipated, if any; which of these outcomes were unintended/unanticipated; what is the merit, significance, and worth of each outcome? We may, for example, find some unanticipated outcomes of great worth and we may find that some of the intended outcomes turn out not be of great value.

When we evaluate a process we can look at both the fidelity of the process and the value of the process itself. Some interventions, for example, need to be delivered in a relatively proscribed way in order to be efficacious. On the other hand, it may be that flexibility in the process is what provides the efficacy. And, furthermore, it may be that engaging with the process is of value regardless of the outcomes. Process evaluations are far from common.

This is probably due to the assumed difficulty of conducting such an evaluation and the difficulty with measurement when compared to an outcome evaluation.

What does the evidence tell us?

The evidence for the efficacy of coaching, as for counselling, is mixed. Overall there does seem to be good evidence, albeit limited, that when a skilled and capable coach delivers an appropriate intervention, based on solid theory, with a high degree of fidelity there are measurable outcomes over the longer term. One example of this is JOBS 2 program that was evaluated in the academic literature over many years in the US and Europe. JOBS 2 was a group coaching intervention in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation. However, its efficacy depended in part on the fidelity of the process and in part on the facilitators having a high level of education and skill in a specific discipline (psychology).

On the other hand, recent more practice oriented studies, such as the ‘Practical Methods for Evaluating Coaching’ study by the IES published in 2005 highlighted the importance of understanding the needs of the coachee and the needs of the organization: they may not coincide. A core finding was the requirement for strong supervision of the coach and the distinction between coaching by coaches internal to the organization and to those external to the organization.

Similarly, the ‘Real-world coaching evaluation A guide for practitioners’, published by the CIPD in 2010 highlighted just how difficult it is to evaluate coaching when the focus is on the bottom line or ROI.

Generally speaking coaching is widespread and receives a lot of support. However, we have seen a similar growth in popularity with counselling and therapeutic interventions which result in large numbers of people entering the field of practice without being aware of the implications, skill requirements, and demands of practice. Not everyone makes a good coach and not everybody is prepared for the demands of being a coach. A repeated and core finding is that quality of coaching intervention depends largely on the quality of the supervision provided to the coach.

Outcomes of coaching are largely the benefits accrued by the coachee rather than the benefits to the organization. The attendant assumption is that as the coachee benefits so their performance improves and benefits the organization in turn. This can be linked back to theories of PE-fit and Job Satisfaction.

Video clips

Watch the following clips:

- Carl Rogers on empathy and problem of soundbite techniques.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMi7uY83z-U> You should pay careful attention to the point Rogers makes here, especially to help understand that the relationship you develop with the client cannot be achieved by a series of soundbite-like techniques. There is a lot more to it than this.
- Henry Kimsey on what it is like to be a top organizational/leadership coach
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3HEOEDYaSU> This is an unusual and honest insight into the experience of being one of the world's top 30 listed executive coaches from an unconventional figure.
- Kristi Hedges provides an interesting take on empathy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqdO_6UDcsk Again, consider this in relation to the work of Rogers and Egan.
- A quick view on the importance of coaching supervision -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ9AEftb8YY>

Some remaining questions and considerations

One of the big unanswered questions remaining today is on the efficacy of coaching in individual and group situations across various settings and differing scenarios. This question takes on importance given the huge rise in the provision of coaching in organizations. What is clear is that we are seeing the same pattern as we saw with the provision of counselling services and, indeed, the core principles of coaching are no different from the core principles of counselling; to facilitate the client to set meaningful and relevant goals that they can achieve within a realistic time frame thereby building their self-efficacy with regard to the

presenting problem. What we know from the field of counselling, however, is that few people are able to provide good quality counselling provision to a range of clients over time and that the essential key component is good quality supervision. However, good supervision alone is not enough to ensure good efficacy of the intervention.

With a massive growth in the provision of coaching it is inevitable that the provision will lack efficacy as a whole, even within a single organization. However, when we look at small scale, expertly delivered, focussed interventions we are likely to find a reasonable level of efficacy over the medium term (around six months), and some exceptional levels of efficacy especially when working with people who are already high performers.

Yet another question that is rarely tackled concerns the ethics of coaching. Within organizations it is often unclear whether the client is the coachee, the organization, or senior management. Coachees may experience difficult choices as a result of coaching including, for example, the realisation that they are a poor fit with their environment or that they need to make substantial changes in order to improve their job satisfaction. This may be at odds with the objectives of senior management. Coachees may also reveal information that is pertinent to the organization and yet it is revealed in confidence to the coach. The coach faces an ethical dilemma when the client boundaries are unclear about what they do in such a situation. This can be seemingly resolved with clear contracts and position statements but, as with all ethical questions, grey areas will remain. Little has been reported on this either in the literature or among practitioners.

Finally, we can, to some extent, assume that all coaching within an organization and/or in relation to work and/or performance is some or other form of career coaching. Should, therefore, all coaches be aware of the career coaching models and theories? Surely this would enable them to take a longer term perspective rather than a short term problem-solving approach?

In the final analysis coaching is all about learning. It is a form of training – training to learn. There are a number of useful schools, approaches, theories, skills, capabilities, techniques and so on. It is useful to distinguish between individual considerations and organizational considerations. We have theories that describe and explain the behaviour of individuals that can be usefully applied to coaching, and we have theories that describe and explain the

behaviour of organizations and of individuals in an organizational setting. We also have numerous models and theories of coaching, of which we highlighted one: the GROW model. What should have become clear is that the work of Carl Rogers and Gerard Egan continue to underpin high quality person-to-person interventions whether at an individual or group level.

Exercise

The following are a series of ‘challenge’ questions designed to encourage you to think critically about coaching as an intervention and how it might be deployed.

- 1) When providing executive coaching do you think this would be better: a) as either an individual or group provision; and b) delivered by an internal coach/coaches or sub-contracted to an external coach/coaches? Why? Explain your reasoning based on what you have learned in this course.
- 2) Should line managers be expected to coach their staff? What does this imply for line managers and for their staff? Who will supervise the line managers in terms of their coaching provision?
- 3) Do you think executive coaching leads to improved performance? What makes you say this?
- 4) What are your organizations key objectives? Do these objectives match the organizations values? How would you go about setting up a coaching programme in order to align executives values and objectives with the organizations values and objectives? What sorts of difficulties do you think might emerge from this? How will you manage these difficulties?
- 5) If you were asked to set up a coaching provision in your organization tomorrow what would you say? What sort of information would you ask for? What resources would you request and how would you justify those resources?