

Rhybudd o Hawlfraint

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- argraffu copi;

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Rhaid i bob copi (gan gynnwys rhai electronig) gynnwys y Rhybudd o Hawlfraint hwn a rhaid eu dinistrio a/neu eu dileu os a phan fydd y Brifysgol yn mynnu hynny.

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Mae gan yr awdur (ac mae'r term hwn yn cynnwys artistiaid a chreawdwyr gweledol eraill) hawliau moesol yn y gwaith ac ni chaiff staff na myfyrwyr achosi, neu ganiatáu, afluniad, anffurfiad nac unrhyw addasiad arall i'r gwaith, nac unrhyw driniaeth niweidiol arall ohono, a fyddai'n rhagfarnu anrhydedd neu enw da'r awdur.

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Chapter 8

Coaching in the workplace

So far in this book I have covered the underlying principles, key models and many of the skills of effective coaching and I have tried to give a sense of what coaching looks like in practice. In this chapter I intend to show how coaching fits in the organisational context and the line-manager's role. Crucially I want to discuss how to use coaching for the benefit of the organisation and the player. Up till now it has not been necessary to distinguish between the needs of the professional coach and those of the line-manager. As we begin to think about how coaching fits in the workplace it becomes necessary to distinguish between the two roles. So, in this chapter I will present most of the content from the line-manager's perspective. I have chosen to do this not only because it is the primary application of coaching (there are more line-managers than coaches – just about) but also because a professional coach working in organisations needs to have a good understanding of the line-manager's role as most of the people they coach are line-managers. To restore the balance, Chapter 11, 'Coaching in context', is presented from the professional coach's perspective, as the content is a little more pertinent to that audience.

In this chapter I also want to present an argument that concerns the line-manager's role and the place of coaching within it. My desire to do this comes from a recent conversation during a workshop when I asked the participants, all line-managers, what the purpose of line-management was. Specifically, I asked this question:

'When whoever it was invented the notion of line-management, what was the problem they were trying to solve?'. I did not get a very good answer. Indeed, as we discussed it further and notions of coaching emerged, one guy looked up and said 'but this is not how I think of my job.' And there lies the problem. Most managers think of their job in terms of their trade, discipline or profession. The manager title is thought about in terms of status and increased remuneration; it is not really thought about as a new set of responsibilities. My evidence for this assertion is the observation that few managers get out of bed in the morning and think 'what can I do today to help my team be brilliant?'. It's just not their job as they see it. So the argument concerns the nature of line-management and the place of coaching and it starts with some observations about a fundamental dynamic in any work organisation: the relationship between the individual employee and the organisation itself.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE ORGANISATION

Individuals join organisations so that they can achieve some of their goals. These goals can be simple: to make enough money to pay the mortgage; or they may be complex: to satisfy their need to make a meaningful contribution. Equally, these goals can be well thought through and clear, or reactive and ambiguous.

Organisations employ individuals so that the organisation can fulfil its mission and achieve its goals. Typically the goals are, if not clear, at least explicit and so those responsible seek people who will fit in, have the right skills and compatible values. Organisations are typically more diligent in identifying the right person than individuals are in identifying the right organisation – or in understanding their own needs and goals.

A successful relationship between an individual and an organisation is achieved when both parties achieve their own goals. This is

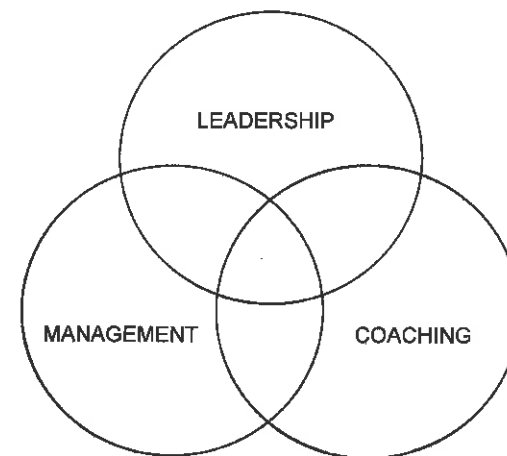


Diagram 7. The elements of the line-manager's role.

a fundamental dynamic in any organisation; if it is entirely neglected people leave and, ultimately, there is no organisation.

The individual has obviously a significant responsibility in ensuring the success of the relationship, as does the organisation. The organisation will give authority to a number of people to ensure that its responsibility is met. Some of this is laid at the door of the HR professionals. But by far the greatest share of the organisation's responsibility rests with the line-manager. It is their job to ensure that both parties' needs are satisfied. There are three generic elements to the line-manager's role that enable this to happen: leadership, management and coaching (Diagram 7).

LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND COACHING

In the past fifteen years the notion that leadership is part of the line-manager's role has come to be accepted in most organisations. We (the world of business and management, that is) have separated out that part of the role and examined it, defined the component skills,

written them into the job description and the values statements, and created training and development programmes. Now what is emerging is that coaching is another critical element of the line-manager's role. The evidence for this is to be found in the press articles, books and conferences that have proliferated in the last ten years and in the ever-increasing demand for coaching-skills development programmes. And so, in a fashion similar to that in which leadership has been distinguished from management, we need to separate coaching from management and leadership.

Much has been written about leadership and I do not want to get into that discussion here. Suffice it to say that by leadership I mean the element of the role that is concerned with the future. It is concerned with creating a vision, with maintaining that vision and with identifying actions in the present that will deliver the vision. Role modelling fits here too; the living values, and portraying the values of the organisation.

In this model the management element of the role is concerned with ensuring that the subordinate performs their role within certain parameters. These parameters include:

- The type and nature of the organisation's business (an employee of a kitchenware manufacturer cannot, on a whim, start taking orders for a new line of musical instruments)
- The purpose and goals of the organisation
- The requirements of the specific job
 - Performance standards; management processes
 - The cultural norms and any accepted rules of the company.

As I pointed out in the Introduction, I refer to what we traditionally call 'managers' as 'line-managers'. I do this because 'managing' is a subset of the role; it is not all of it. There is an emerging practice of calling line-managers 'team leaders' or 'coaches'. In many cases, principally where the 'coach' has a management function, this is a

mistake as it simply repeats the initial error – defining the role by one of its subsets. In some organisations where there has been an initiative to develop a coaching culture, line-managers have seemingly lost the right to manage; they can only coach, often resulting in a loss of appropriate control and endless conversations on issues that are not negotiable.

Coaching, as I have said before but in other ways, is the series of conversations that help a person perform closer to their potential, understand their role or task, help them learn what they need to learn in order to complete the role or task successfully, develop them for the next role, and on a good day help them achieve fulfilment at work and, maybe, a little joy.

In a workshop I might ask the participants to identify all the activities, interactions and conversations that are the day-to-day content of the three circles of leadership, management and coaching. Here is a typical list:

- Leadership
 - conversations about organisational mission, vision, goals, values
 - role modelling behaviours, values
 - inspiring and motivating.
- Management
 - appraisals
 - setting individual and departmental goals
 - recruitment interviews
 - creating personal development plans
 - agreeing parameters of projects, tasks
 - disciplinary meetings.
- Coaching
 - conversations about how to deliver goals, plans, etc., agreed in a previous management
 - giving feedback, making suggestions, offering advice
 - on-the-job training.

At a recent workshop one of the participants, the Sales Director from a sizeable travel agency chain, literally stood up and declared 'I see, I have one management meeting a year with each member of my team to establish the goals and the rest of the time I coach them to achieve the goals.' He did appreciate that this was something of an over-simplification but he had understood the point and that he needed to invest a greater proportion of his time in coaching. The partner in charge of a major regional head office of one of the Big Four (it may of course be three by the time you read this) accountancies learned something different. He signed out of a workshop with these words: 'You may not have made my life any easier, but you have certainly made it more simple.' He realised that the conversations that he had avoided with his fellow partners concerning the clarification of their business goals and non-performance in relation to them were critical issues to the success of the office. He knew that he had a management task to complete, defining the goals, before coaching became possible. He also did not expect the conversations to be without friction.

There is an interesting paradox here. If people do not have clear goals it is extremely difficult to be successful and even more difficult to discuss performance. Forcing the issue, having the discussion, being really clear about goals and what is acceptable and what is not, removes a mass of interference, removes the ill-feeling that often accompanies under-performance, and enables best performance.

Later in this chapter I will develop this model of leadership, management and coaching, but before I do that I need to introduce the notion of authority as it pertains to organisations.

ORGANISATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL AUTHORITY

There is an underlying issue here that relates to these three elements. This is the issue of authority. By authority I mean the power

to decree something, by right or office, and to get it done by oneself or others. In order to be an effective line-manager it is imperative to understand the nature of authority and where it lies. Misunderstanding these issues will affect performance in a work organisation and is critical to a line-manager's capacity to ensure the satisfaction of both the organisation and the individual employee. Here are some examples.

In the past (I hope), the culture in most organisations was very authoritarian – 'command and control' being the predominant management style. Look at the words we use: 'subordinate' and 'empowerment'. How I hate that latter word. People are by their very nature powerful. That we have to 'empower' them suggests that their power has in some way been diminished or taken away. We have, through our culture, our institutions of state and religion, and particularly our educational systems, trained people to submit to authority. And there are consequences. Under a strongly hierarchical, authoritative 'regime' people do not take responsibility, do not take risks, are not creative, are not proactive. Rather they wait to be told. This is not how to get the best from people – 'our greatest asset'. This is misplaced authority.

On the other hand, many people do not understand that when they join an organisation, they sign up to play in that organisation's 'game' and to play by its rules. I know this because very few people take the time in the recruitment phase to understand the organisation they are joining. The closest most people get to making a real choice is to select a profession or particular industry to work in. Otherwise the agreement around the pay package or salary is about as far as it gets. And, again in most cases, this is perfectly understandable. You've left school, college or university and have debts to pay off. Or there's a family, a mortgage. Pragmatism is the only operable philosophy. It works because the money is sufficient to make it worth staying. So you get on with it, do as you're told and get to pay the bills. Clearly this is not true for everyone. The point

I am trying to make is that most people do not 'stand in their authority', and take responsibility. The consequence of this is people who experience little fulfilment at work, who are thus difficult to motivate and who perform with mediocrity.

I remember giving an address to a conference. The delegates were all senior managers and executives, mostly male and getting towards middle age. These were people who were used to exercising power, many controlling budgets of millions of pounds. So I asked them who made the decision about where they took their holidays in that particular year. There was a short pause and then an embarrassed laugh, no, a giggle, ran around the room. These guys exercised absolutely no authority about how they were going to spend two or three weeks of the year (weeks that they had probably fought hard for in negotiating their salary package). And most of them had gone to places that would not have been their first choice and done things they would not join a queue of two for. And they had not even come to a compromise on the matter – they had simply capitulated. In the name of a quiet life.

Organisations can assume too much authority, individuals too little, although there is a spin on this. I notice that the generation that is currently entering the workforce has a completely different relationship with authority than I, for one, ever did. They are more assertive, assume more 'rights' and are less willing to 'toe the line'. This is in itself a compelling reason to adopt something other than a 'command and control' management style because in a world where attracting the best staff is increasingly an issue, the best will not stay in an unduly authoritarian organisation.

There is an appropriate balance to be struck between individual and organizational authority, and the line-manager, caught in the middle, needs to understand how to strike it. Sometimes individuals get together with other individuals and agree to share authority so that they can achieve something together that they cannot achieve apart. Like a marriage. And in order that it is successful the

individual parties have to surrender some of their authority to the whole. Similarly, organisations and individuals can get together. It's a business relationship called employment.

Individuals have authority. By this I mean that there are areas of their lives where they can make decisions and execute them without reference to others. Organisations have authority too. They can declare the business they are in, establish goals and strategies and execute them.

One way to understand how the matter of authority impacts on organisational life is to draw a vertical line through the middle of the three overlapping circles shown in Diagram 7; then you can begin to see where this balance lies. The left-hand side of the line (Diagram 8) represents those things that are the concern of the organisation: it's needs, aims and objectives. On this side of the line the organisation has authority. When you join an organisation you sign up to that authority. The area on the right-hand side of the line

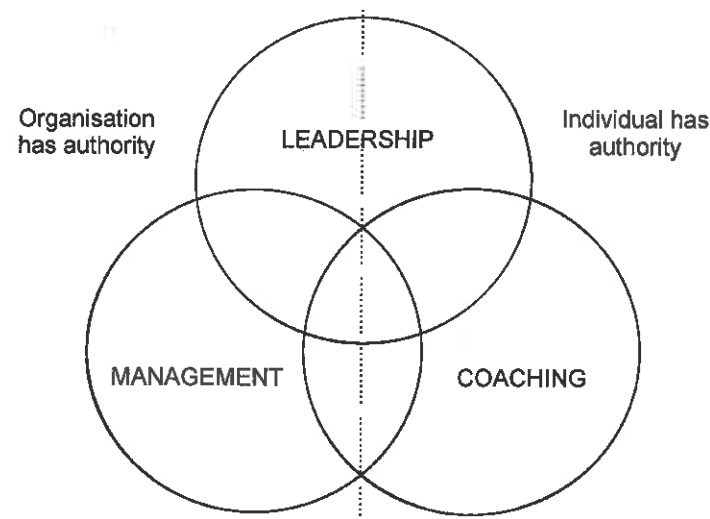


Diagram 8. The elements of the line-manager's role classified according to authority.

represents those things that are the concern of the individual: their needs, aims and objectives. On this side of the line, the individual has authority.

It is overly simplistic but nevertheless useful shorthand to suggest that *what* an individual employee does sits on the left-hand side in the authority of the organisation. Clearly this is best agreed (the manager using coaching skills to understand the individual) rather than decreed. *How* the *what* gets executed sits for the most part on the right-hand side of the line, in the authority of the individual employee.

Let me draw a parallel with the game of tennis. When a player stands on a tennis court he implicitly signs up to the rules of the game as laid down by the International Tennis Federation. The player cannot change the size of the court, or the height of the net, or alter the rules. He cannot, for instance, decide to kick the ball. If he does the game ceases to be tennis. In addition to the player there are a number of other people on the tennis court; his opponent, the umpire and the coach. The umpire and the coach are of interest in this analogy, not the opponent. The umpire's role is essentially about compliance. It is his job to ensure that the rules of the game are adhered to. In this sense it is analogous to the management element of the of the line-manager's role. The coach's role is different. His job is to ensure that the player gives his best performance and learns and improves from one match to the next. And it is obviously analogous to the coaching aspect of the line-manager's role.

The very different roles of the umpire and the coach suggest a different kind of relationship with the player, and different corresponding behaviours. The umpire's relationship is invested with authority, given by the governing body. It is a directive, command-and-control interactive style. Appropriately: if the rules were not enforced there would be no game.

The coach's relationship is altogether different. The content of the conversations between the coach and the player concerns

matters that are within the authority of the player; whether he hits a backhand with one or two hands on the racket or whether he adopts an aggressive serve-and-volley strategy or a back-court, counter-hitting approach. On the right-hand side of the diagram, where the individual has authority, instructing or telling that individual is less effective than listening and asking questions such that they come to their own solution or insight. This is the fundamental reason why coaching is predominantly a non-directive activity.

The word *authority* can give us an insight here. It has the same Latin root as the word *author*: a writer, someone who creates. The root is *auctum* which means, amongst other things, to produce, to increase, to cause to grow (*Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles*). An author writes his own book. A manager dictating the book to be written would soon wear the patience of the writer, turning them into a mere scribe, thus destroying their motivation and in time their very ability to be creative.

In the past the failure to distinguish between the managing and the coaching elements has caused a kind of leakage. Line-managers try to handle performance and learning with a management style, command and control, rather than a more facilitative style. This derives from the fact that for most people those whom they have encountered who have been charged with helping them perform or learn effectively have also had a management responsibility. Teachers teach but they also ensure discipline in the class and at certain times pass judgement on their pupils' efforts, judgements that dictate the immediate future. This is true for line-managers too. And for the most part neither professional has recognised that the style appropriate to the one works less well for the other. One leaks into the other. The umpire and the coach in the tennis analogy have it easier as the role is split between them while the line-manager has to 'wear both hats'. There is a school of thought that proposes 'managing with a coaching style'. There have also been many articles with titles that are variations of 'The manager as coach'. This is

another form of leakage. In one company that I know of it is almost impossible for a line-manager to give a direct instruction to a member of staff; they have to coach. I think this is just clumsy or incomplete thinking and can have the effect of undermining the line-manager and, ultimately, coaching itself. It is important to separate the circles one from the other.

Interestingly, when we distinguish both sides of the vertical line the management element takes up less time; as you place authority where it mostly belongs – with the player – the need to manage diminishes. It does not go away, but it takes less time. There is, it seems, a somewhat worrying corollary of this. Some years ago I ran a workshop for the UK management team of a well-known fast food chain with the intent of introducing them to coaching. The workshop was difficult; there was polite engagement but no passion, which is unusual. It was only afterwards when I reflected back on the event that I saw what had happened. You see, from their perspective there is only one way to cook a burger and quality (if that is what you call it) and consistency are everything. The shop-floor culture, one of managing, not coaching, had engulfed the leadership team. Clearly, if there is little or no need to coach then there should be little or no coaching; in some jobs standardisation is key to success. The problem here was that the leadership style had become very directive, resulting in a culture where risk was avoided and innovation suppressed. It is difficult for such a business to diversify.

These ideas about authority also relate to the third circle, leadership, where the line down the middle retains its validity. Sometimes it will be appropriate for a leader to make a clear and unequivocal statement about a direction to take, or to take a difficult decision without referring to others. At other times they may adopt a more facilitative, coaching, approach to a leadership issue and elicit a decision from others.

In summary let me suggest that there are a number of issues to be borne in mind for a line-manager:

- Line-managers need to manage and have a responsibility to both the employee and the organisation to do so.
- Line-managers, as part of managing, need to agree clear goals for their direct reports (*What*). Interestingly, while this is clearly a management task, using coaching skills to identify the goals in the first case is always more effective.
- Line-managers need to hold their direct reports to account for the goals that have been agreed.
- Once the goals have been agreed, and any other parameters surrounding their role such as values and behaviours, the line-manager coaches the direct report to achieve the agreed goals (*How*).
- Line-managers need to lead, to keep present in the minds of their direct reports the overarching aims of the organisation and be role-models for the desired values and behaviours.

I remind you of the ideas of flow in Chapter Four and you can see that line-management that embraces leadership, management and coaching can help create flow. Some of the conditions of flow are as follows:

- There are clear goals every step of the way.
- There is immediate feedback to one's actions.
- There is a balance between the challenges and the skills required.
- Action and awareness are merged.
- Distractions are excluded from consciousness.
- There is no worry of failure.
- Self-consciousness disappears.
- The activity becomes autotelic.

If you are reading this book from the perspective of a professional coach then you need to understand these guidelines and ensure that, if it is relevant to the objectives agreed with the player, they

also understand these issues. The notion of authority in organisations is also important for the professional coach. The coach needs to understand that it is the organisation that is the client and therefore has a right and responsibility to influence the goals for any coaching intervention. The coaching itself, which will focus mostly on how to achieve the goals, is in the authority of the player and thus remains confidential. I will come back to this issue with more detail in the next chapter.

Having described at some length the place of coaching in the line-manager's role in a relatively theoretical manner, it is time to get practical again and to describe in detail how to apply it.

COACHING OPPORTUNITIES

The skills involved in coaching can be applied in many different ways and in many different environments, from the workplace to the schoolroom to the sports fields. As you internalise the skills and make them your own you will find that they show up in many aspects of your life. One of the exciting things about The School of Coaching is watching the participants progress through the programme and report at the various workshops how what they have learned has shown up in all areas of their lives: the consultant who was having a difficult meeting with a client and who was inspired to change the meeting into a coaching session; the Director of Training who found herself listening to her husband; the Senior Executive who began acknowledging the real talent and creativity his teenage daughter possessed. For me these are some of the more inspiring stories, not because they are so important and meaningful – which they are – but because it is a real demonstration that something has changed at a very fundamental level in the participants. These stories signal a shift from an earlier approach that was founded in the need to be in control, to be right, to fix, to heal, to make better (pick any one) to an

approach that acknowledges the extraordinary capacity of human beings in which the primary skill is simply removing interference.

This, however, is a book about coaching in the workplace and there are obvious applications for the skills which is useful to examine. In the next few sections I want to give you some pictures of how a line-manager might use coaching skills.

Some coaching happens in a rather formal fashion. There is a clear and explicit agreement to coach between the coach and the player and it typically happens off-line, outside normal work activities. Coaching also takes place in a more informal way as part of the general run of play. It happens between colleagues at all levels in the organisation, between peers, between a line-manager and direct reports. It does not respect hierarchy; I remember asking a former boss just before a critical meeting what his ideal outcome from the meeting was. One successful meeting later he acknowledged the value of the question and how it had helped us retain focus in the meeting. Informal coaching does not necessarily require a clear agreement between coach and player (although most relationships work better when the parties know what is expected of them). Informal coaching happens on the spur of the moment. In the canteen a colleague indicates that he is having a difficult time with a particular client or with some aspect of a project. A member of staff complains that they will never get the job done on time. Both of these are opportunities for coaching. The conversation described in the opening chapter was just such an opportunity, one that could have been missed, and that Henry dismissed with 'It's bound to get better.' The possibilities for increased performance, for learning and for innovation that have been lost in this way are beyond number. At The School of Coaching in some workshops we get the participants to pair up and to give three-minute coaching sessions. They are always surprised at how much can be achieved in such a short space of time. This three-minute exercise was developed with a client in the USA, an international strategic management consul-

tancy, where the only coaching you got from your partner occurred as you held the door of the taxi open for them. It became known as 'kerbside coaching'. At the School we have re-named it 'corridor coaching' partly because that would seem to present more opportunities (not subject to the weather) and partly because of the desire not to be associated with other kerbside professions.

It is in situations such as these that the line-manager who coaches shows up most clearly and can have a profound and lasting effect on the performance and learning of his direct reports. And frankly it is a significantly more rewarding way of doing business. When this happens an organisation truly has a 'coaching culture'. As the Human Resource Director of an international beverage producer and distributor observed, 'This is not about Innovation with a capital "I" in our business but rather about hundreds and hundreds of innovations, small "i", all across the organisation, in every conversation.'

The remainder of this chapter discusses some of the principal applications, again presented from a line-manager's perspective.

Line-manager coaching direct reports

The most obvious of all applications in the workplace is that of a line-manager coaching those who report to him or her, whether in the formal or informal sense. This book and in particular this chapter is a plea to take the coaching element more seriously so that the player performs more effectively, learns and get some fulfilment. As I said earlier, coaching where there is a line-management relationship presents some difficulties in that the line-manager has power in the face of which it can be awkward to create an environment of trust. Another difficulty is that the player may simply want to be directed, and may not want to have to think for himself and to take responsibility. These difficulties are not insurmountable and some of them are addressed in the section headed 'Obstacles and pitfalls for the line-manager' in the following chapter.

Coaching in the management processes

Most organisations have a number of management processes that lend themselves to coaching, in particular the people-management processes such as performance reviews, appraisals, development reviews, objective setting meetings and progress reviews. It staggers me that in this day and age there are still organisations where the line-manager sets the subordinate's goals. I can think of few quicker, more sure-fire ways to erode motivation and undermine responsibility. Most organisations are more enlightened than that and allow for self-assessment on the part of the subordinate and for them to identify their own goals. Both of these are perfect opportunities to wrap coaching around management processes. Think about the really critical conversations, the ones that have significant impact in organisations, for example conversations to set objectives, to agree budgets, to establish or review projects. Imagine if these conversations were 'redesigned' as coaching conversations. Take the budgeting process. The direct report is sent off to prepare a budget. After a while they come back with their best effort and are told to strip out ten percent of the costs, and what about the new product launch? So there's another iteration and probably another. In this process time is wasted, enthusiasm eroded and the relationship between line-manager and direct report undermined. And there is little or no learning. With effective coaching these consequences would be less likely to accrue, a great boost to organisational effectiveness.

Coaching during major change

One of the debilitating side-effects of major change, be it organisational or cultural, is fear and uncertainty. This results in large numbers of people looking for answers to an array of questions, usually from the leadership group. Adopting a coaching approach has a number of benefits. First, it has the effect of putting ownership and

control back into the hands of the player and this can lessen anxiety. Secondly, in change situations where there are often no right answers, coaching will draw out possibilities and options from which the best can be selected. Thirdly, it gives some respite to the leaders as others begin to take responsibility and join in the game. Leaders can't, and shouldn't, do it all.

Before and after training events

Coaching can be used to great effect to ensure that someone gets full value from a training programme. The manager or trainer can coach a delegate prior to the event so that he is very clear about his learning objectives. When the event is completed a further coaching session can consolidate the learning and ensure that it gets applied in the workplace to best effect. There is evidence that suggests that the effectiveness of training can be increased by the order of twenty-five percent in this way.

Coaching as part of leadership

Effective leadership is so dependent on the personality of the leader and the followers, the culture of the organisation and the nature of the business that I am not going to be foolish and make a statement about good leadership. What I will say is that when there is an alignment between what inspires an individual, the job they are doing and the direction of the company, then people at all levels can give of their best freely, communication becomes easier and phenomenal results accrue. A coaching approach, that directly involves staff in the direction the business is taking and the shape of their job, can be part of what creates that alignment.

Coaching can also be used to gain buy-in to organisational values and behaviours. For instance, working with a player to identify her own values and then helping her relate these to the organisation's

values and finding those elements that are congruent, and those that are not, will bring the values to life in a meaningful way, particularly if there is room for debate – and influencing – around those elements where there is discomfort.

Coaching on projects

Coaching is a great way to go about delivering projects within time and within budget. It is very similar to coaching teams (Chapter 10) and so I refer you to that chapter.

Coaching upwards

'Is it possible to coach my boss?' is a question frequently asked at coaching skills workshops. The answer is that anyone can be coached – if they are willing. What is interesting, I think, is what is behind the question. This is usually a different question: 'How can I change my boss's behaviour?' To this question there is a different answer: you cannot change anyone else's behaviour, only they can. What you can do is give them some feedback. If they are willing to hear the feedback and understand it then coaching may be appropriate. After that they have the right to choose their coach, which may or may not be the person giving the feedback. In my experience it is unusual for a boss to be willing to be coached by a subordinate, but not unheard of. When it does happen it is a tremendously powerful signal that the boss is truly open to learning and meaningful communication, the impact of which extends well beyond the person who volunteered the feedback in the first place. This scenario fits into my loose definition of formal coaching. Coaching upwards in the informal sense can happen much more easily and frequently but is dependent on the prevailing culture in the organisation and on just how much a control junky – or how desperate – the person 'upwards' of you is.

Coaching peers

Coaching between friends and within a peer group is perhaps the easiest environment in which to coach in the sense that there are the fewest obstacles to an effective relationship. This is because it is less likely than in a line relationship that there are competing agendas or that the coach has an investment in the outcome (other than that the session should be successful, which is an obstacle in itself).

Some organisations have instituted a system of 'buddy' coaching or co-coaching. The notion here is that two people who have some training in coaching skills support each other in the pursuit of performance or learning objectives. As you might imagine, some of the pairings meet once or twice and then the pressures of work override the initial good intentions. Other pairings maintain the practice even when the individuals move on to other parts of the business or to other countries, resorting to the phone for their coaching fix. I know of at least one case where the buddy coaching relationship has persisted after both protagonists have moved to new companies.

Mentoring

In principle, mentoring is concerned with longer-term career issues, while coaching is more concerned with more immediate performance issues. The point to be made here is that the models, tools and skills that are critical to coaching as I have described them will also make a more effective mentor. A mentor who is reliant on, say, an avuncular style and dependent on having had significant experience of the organisation, business and life may well provide great benefit and be a wonderful person to be with. However, at the very least such a mentor would need to be able to listen effectively in order to ensure that the pearls of wisdom were indeed pearls in the eyes of the recipient. On a more positive note a mentor who has vast experience, and can use it to good effect, and who can also employ

a non-directive approach when appropriate will have much greater impact.

Outside the workplace there are many other opportunities to use coaching.

Coaching your partner

'Don't do your professional stuff on me.' I have heard those words a few times, not without justification, for coaching a partner can seem intrusive and patronising. Effective coaching requires that there is a relationship in which the coach can divorce (there's a joke there somewhere) himself or herself from the outcome and from what is going on for the player. In a relationship in which two people have a commitment to each other and whose lives have become entwined, such a separation is often difficult and sometimes virtually impossible. However, acknowledging that there are some quite tough obstacles to the use of coaching within say, a marital relationship, it is not impossible and may even be a sign of a healthy and mature relationship. The key is to identify and talk about the obstacles before doing any coaching.

Coaching children

Coaching other people's children is almost the easiest of all applications and the most fun. In my relationship with my stepdaughter, Victoria, my coaching skills have played an important part, particularly when it comes to homework, as I have already indicated with the 'overdue essay' story (Chapter 4). In general terms, when she gets stuck with something the truth is that she probably knows more about the topic than I, so helping her think it through is the most valuable assistance I can give. (I also happen to believe that homework is for her to do and not me, so if I use coaching she gets

to write her own essay and use her own prolific imagination.) Coaching and all the skills involved have a wonderful place in the relationship with children. In the teenage years, where nothing seems to work, the least you can do is listen. I will not pretend to have been always successful in this domain.

Coaching yourself

In a sense you are coaching yourself all the time. When you take your nose out of this book to ponder some point, be it a new insight or a disagreement you have with something that I have written, one could argue that you are coaching yourself. When you take time out to consider a project you are engaged in or ask yourself 'Hold on, how do I really want this to be?' you are coaching yourself. Some of the most valuable time that I spend on behalf of my own clients is when I take the dog for a walk – I just have not yet found a way of charging for it, although I guess I could set the dog's expenses against my tax bill. However, there are limitations to a person's ability to coach himself or herself. Coaching is about raising awareness. If I consider an issue on my own and in isolation at a certain level I will be trapped by my own patterns of thought. From the inside I cannot see me. Part of why coaching works is because, in that moment when the player communicates to another and is understood, the thoughts are externalised and a certain distance is achieved between the player and their thoughts and emotions. If you recall the analogy of the man in his car in the traffic jam (Chapter 6), he is now on the bus, upstairs on the front seat, just noticing.

There are some techniques that you can use to externalise your thoughts and achieve some objectivity. For instance, a former colleague tells the story of an argument he had with his wife. At some point, in desperation, he left the house, as he tells it letting the front door do the talking. Once outside on the pavement he brought his

breathing into focus and relaxed somewhat. He then proceeded to coach himself. Inspired, this is what he did. He walked first on the left-hand side of the pavement and from this position, this physical place, he was coach and asked questions. Having asked the question he then moved to the right-hand side of the pavement from which place, as player, he answered the questions. While this was difficult for other pavement users and upsetting for the neighbours who must have thought him to be drunk as he weaved his way around the block, my colleague did get to some resolution. Another technique which works quite well is to write your thoughts down on paper, using the GROW model to structure the ideas.

Opportunities to coach are all around us. I suggest you start by simply noticing them and then, when you have the right permissions, take them: they are opportunities for achievement, fulfilment and joy.