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Coaching and Mentoring

Introduction

This briefing paper discusses the definition and concept of coaching and mentoring as well as the different types available and how they can be implemented into organisations. It will explore the different factors that need to be considered on implementation as well as how line managers can support coaching and mentoring. Finally it will review different research to assess the potential benefits of coaching and mentoring and how it organisations and wcan support strategies and practices to achieve positive organisational outcomes and objectives.

Coaching and mentoring concepts

Coaching and mentoring (C&M) are learning and development approaches based on the use of one-to-one conversations to develop an individual's skills, knowledge and performance (CIPD 2020a). There are both similarities and distinctions between two terms which we will explore further.

Cox et al (2014) note that "Coaching is a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders". (Cox et al, 2014, p.1).

The CIPD (2020a) defines coaching as a way to produce optimal performance and improvements through focusing on specific skills and goals. Whitmore (2017) believed that coaching is about unlocking an individual's potential in order to maximise their performance through assisting them to learn instead of teaching them. Whilst Clutterbuck (2004, cited in Armstrong and Taylor, 2020, p.677) stated that coaching mainly focused on performance within a current role with the emphasis on skills development. Coaching takes place during conversations where the coach uses effective listening and questioning and offers constructive challenge or observations and provides helpful feedback (Starr, 2011). Coaching is a skilled activity, and should be delivered by trained individuals such as line managers (CIPD, 2020a).

The CIPD (2020a) agrees that coaching in organisations contains the following characteristics:

- A non-directive form of development.
- Focuses on improving performance and developing an individual.
- Prioritises work performance but personal factors can be included.
- Has both organisational and individual goals.
- Provides individuals the opportunity to assess their strengths and areas for development.

Mentoring is guidance provided by a 'mentor' who provides advice and support in order to help an individual to learn and develop (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020). Usually a more experienced colleague shares their knowledge to support the development of a less experienced member of staff (CIPD, 2020a).

Mentoring often uses the skills of questioning, listening, defining and paraphrasing that are associated with coaching (CIPD, 2020a). Mentoring is mainly concerned with longer-term career concerns, while coaching is focused on immediate performance issues (Downey, 2013). Mentors can become trusted advisers and role models who provide support and encouragement to their mentees. They can offer suggestions and share general and specific knowledge and experiences, in order to help their mentees improve their skills and advance their careers (Mindtools, no date a).

Both good coaches and mentors will have the following skills (Gilbert and Whittleworth, 2009):

- The ability to ask effective questions ie. open questions
- Active listening
- Attuned to non verbal language ie. body language
- Ability to give provide clear feedback
- Be non judgmental
- Empathetic
- Ability to build rapport

Stanier (2016) explores 7 specific high-impact questions to frame coaching discussion. They are open ended questions designed to incite action as opposed to using 'why' questions which require explanations and can

often trigger a defensive response. Active listening and providing clear constructive feedback are also big factors in coaching and mentoring; specific feedback that is free of judgement is a key feature of coaching (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2014).

Coaching and mentoring: similarities and differences

There are many similarities between C&M, firstly they both explore needs, motivations and skills in order to help the individual achieve real and lasting change. They enable reflection in order to encourage change which in turn produces valued outcomes, with the individual achieving something that they care about, in order to make a positive change in their working life or career (Connor and Pokora, 2012).

Both approaches use questioning techniques to aid the thought process to determine solutions rather than a directive or problem solving approach and focus on observations and listening to gain an understanding of the individual's position. Although, both can be directive or non directive; they also take a goal setting approach and encourage a commitment to undertaking and personal development and lasting change.

They also both preserve unconditional positive regard and are supportive and non judgmental to the individual. Finally, they should ensure that the individual does not develop an unhealthy dependence on the C&M relationship.

The main difference between C&M is that coaching is deemed to be short term or have a set duration (Connor and Pokora, 2012). Whereas mentoring is a longer process which can often last up to a year. This is because it takes time for the mentor and mentee to build a relationship, so the mentee feels safe and secure in sharing problems that may be hindering their success. Coaching is task based whereas mentoring is based on relationships. Coaching looks at specific problems in order for the coach to assist in developing skills and helping the coachee realise what tasks they need to complete in order to solve the problem. Coaching is driven by performance in order to guide the coachee to improve within their role. Mentoring relationships require mutual respect in order to be successful. This perception also highlights the difference between the role of a line manager and a mentor.

A coach does not need to have direct experience of the coachee's occupational role, unless the coaching is role specific. A mentor tends to be more a senior, experienced and qualified member of the organisation than the mentee, they pass on knowledge and can potentially create previously unattainable opportunities (Connor and Pokora, 2012).

Connor and Pokora (2012, p.15) note that in practice, coaching and mentoring often overlap, therefore organisations should look at a hybrid approach. The hybrid approach gives us the best of both worlds; a mentor relationship can be open-ended whereas the coaching relationship is used to address specific issues and once this has been addressed, both parties can move on. A hybrid scenario can develop when the coach/mentor role blurs and some issues are handled in a coaching fashion, but as the relationship is maintained and both parties continue working long-term on challenges and opportunities (Richards, 2015).

Both coaching and mentoring can be compared with skills attributed to counsellors. Counselling or therapy usually involves analysing a specific problem through discussion, listening and questioning. It is a non directive way of helping someone to cope with a problem which is heavily focused on the listening skills of the counselor. The main difference is that coaching aids performance improvement and generating desired results, whereas counselling will focus on specific problems, for example mental illness (Starr, 2011), whilst looking for emotional resolutions. A mentor supports the individual to take responsibility for their development (Clutterbuck, 2014).

Coaching can be useful for putting together a life plan and understanding aims and goals. It can help to build a positive life/work balance that fulfils us, thus improving health and well-being. Coaching is also an appropriate

way to advance our ability to relate to others, increasing self awareness and improving self-discipline and motivation. However, coaching is not appropriate for issues such as addiction to drugs or alcohol, personal trauma and mental illnesses (Starr, 2011). Counselling or therapy is better suited to these issues.

One to one training is about the transfer of knowledge and the teaching of skills (Warshawski, no date), in the hope that learners will remember knowledge so it can be applied. Training is often formal, structured and learning focused and relies on 'telling' rather than asking. The key to coaching is the facilitation of understanding; the coach encourages the knowledge that is already within the individual. A trainer typically sets the topic, goals and the learning method. C&M can be tailored to individual needs in order to develop personal qualities and competencies (Mindtools, no date).

Coaching can be used to ensure that an individual gets full value from a training programme. The line manager or trainer can coach an individual prior to the training event in order to clearly outline the learning objectives. On completion of the training a further coaching session can consolidate the learning with evidence suggesting that the effectiveness of training can potentially be increased by 25% (Downey, 2003).

Organisations should also consider integrating other learning and development initiatives such as employee engagement; wellbeing programmes; e-learning and self directed learning; focus groups and team building days.

Implementing coaching and mentoring into organisations

C&M approaches or model(s) can be used to provide a map for the journey, for both the coach/mentor and the individual. Connor and Pokora (2012, p.12) note that "It does not fully describe the landscape of the journey, but rather it provides reference points and a sense of direction".

There are a number of well known models of coaching that can help to provide a framework for the coaching discussion. The best known is the GROW model which is both simple and dynamic and emphasises performance and outcomes. GROW stands for:

- Goal- The coach and coachee should agree on a specific topic and objective. What do you want to achieve?
- Reality- both should offer a self assessment of the current reality and underpin with examples
- Options / Obstacles- Suggestions of options and potential obstacles are highlighted and choices are made based on this
- Will / Way Forward- The coach and coachee finally agree on actions and commit to a timeframe for completion (Landsberg, 2015).

The OSCAR model is very similar to the GROW model but there is more emphasis on the final review stage.

- Outcome – the goal.
- Situation - the current state or affairs
- Choices - available options to move towards the goal
- Action - what steps will get you to the desired goal
- Review- milestones to keep you on track eg. How will progress be measured?

When setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals based on the above models we can consider Motivation theory, which highlights that appropriately stretching goals are a powerful way to change behaviours. A 'stretched' goal is neither too hard nor too easy to achieve. This approach can be a powerful motivator when the goal has been self-determined rather than enforced (Connor and Pokora, 2012).

Often line managers as coaches may not have the time or knowledge to undertake a full coaching session, this is where the 'Instant pay off coaching' model can be useful. This coaching model can be completed quickly and can assist the coachee's in overcoming a situation. The coach needs to ask the individual to specifically outline the problem and then ask them to describe the desired outcome without problem solving for them. Both should list potential roadblocks and sort them into groups: blocks that exist in the coachee; blocks that exist in others and blocks associated with the situation. Following this task approach, actions and timings can be agreed (Landsberg, 2015).

Clutterbuck (2014) outlines various mentoring models that can be implemented in an organisation, with the Developmental Mentoring model tending to take dominance. This model emphasises co-learning and is based on a non-directive approach to helping people to help themselves. One definition that reflects this model is “To help and support people to manage their own learning ...to maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person that they want to be (Parsloe, 1992, cited in Clutterbuck, 2014, p. 6).

Peer-Based Mentoring is where colleagues or peers meet in small groups to help mentor one another. During these meetings they can discuss interests and share feedback and best practice within an organisation to enable them to hone skills or advance their career (Creighton, 2018). This would be something that would be interesting to implement at ECD, I believe that some peer groups such as store managers do already have informal groups and channels where they discuss best practice and ask each other for advice within their role so we could look to put something more substantial in place for them to support them in their roles.

In most cases a mentor is a more senior and experienced person than the mentee. In reverse mentoring we often see a junior or younger and less senior individual becoming the mentor. This model recognises different skills gaps (Mindtools, no date b), a good example at ECD is a younger member of the team mentoring a senior manager in using new company IT systems. This method can play a big role in bringing together different generations of the workforce. When looking at implementing reverse mentoring we should first look at potential good matches; consider that some senior employees may think that younger mentors have valuable knowledge to share coupled with the fact that they may be adverse to receiving feedback. The reverse mentor will also need to be confident as they will need to give feedback to older or senior colleagues (Mindtools, no date b). I believe that a reverse mentoring programme could be successful at ECD as it will reinforce our organisational culture of openness and seeking input from employees throughout the organisation in making important decisions (Jordan and Sorell, 2019).

The role of line managers

The role of line managers is always a big focus when implementing any new initiatives within an organisation. Line managers that embrace leadership, management and coaching can help create what Downey (2003) refers to as ‘flow’. Some of the conditions of flow are that there are clear goals throughout; a good balance between challenges and skills, in the moment feedback; a merging of actions and awareness so self-consciousness decreases and there are no concerns of failure (Downey, 2003).

Line managers will play a large part in implementing C&M as they are well placed to provide on the spot assistance. They will also know their team well and understand their strengths and weaknesses and potentially understand how to enable that person to find the solution to their problem. When line managers promote an understanding of their employee’s strengths and weaknesses through constructive feedback and developing self-awareness it can improve relationships (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2014). Both initiatives require a large amount of commitment so the line manager needs to be prepared to be flexible and accessible in order to provide support when needed.

Landsberg’s (2015) musings on the manager-coach examines the coachee’s readiness to undertake a particular task, in both their willingness and skills. Not all situations will be suited to coaching or mentoring sessions, line managers should be able to distinguish if their employee is not ready or in the right frame of mind to be coached. The ‘manager-coach’ should communicate openly; value people over tasks; take a team approach and accept the uncertain nature of the working environment.

Ideally line managers should be applying coaching as a day-to-day management activity. Theorists argue that line managers are not always effective in coaching their employees due to the power relationship. Remember that the coaching relationship requires impartiality and non-judgement (CIPD, 2020a).

Line managers as coaches and mentors can be beneficial to the organisation, however we need to carefully select and train people to be mentors and coaches. Not all candidates will be suited to a coaching or mentoring role. The selection criteria that candidates should be able to demonstrate include:

- Good verbal and written communication skills – They need to have the ability to listen, summarise information and have experience of giving feedback as well as the ability to compose documents and summary notes.
- Good knowledge of mentoring and coaching subjects - ie. leadership, conflict resolution, managing difficult people and presentation skills.

Organisations should develop and agree a procedure to screen applicants and also ensure that these candidates are allowed time to be released from their own duties in order to successfully coach/mentor others.

Other benefits can include a more committed and better performing team; better and more open communication; improved work relationships and increased creativity.

A potential barrier to the line manager as coach is that some line managers may have responsibility for large teams meaning that it can be difficult to foster good working relationships with so many employees, especially if the organisation has a high staff turnover or pressing work priorities. Line managers with large and difficult work loads may struggle to find the time to commit to coaching and mentoring initiatives.

There can also be an inequality in who gets access to C&M as well as barriers due to organisational culture. Managers can concentrate coaching on certain individuals, potentially due to the manager believing an individual has more performance issues, or a greater potential (Clutterbuck, 2012).

The skill level of the manager can be an issue. Clutterbuck (2012) also believes that managers cannot be taught to coach in one intensive training session but require months of practice to build skill and confidence.

Internal & External factors to consider

There are many factors to consider when looking to implement C&M programmes into an organisation. Firstly there are the different approaches to coaching such as internal and external. Internal coaches can be very beneficial as individuals will often be already known and have interacted with the coachees, meaning that there is a greater opportunity to get to know the coachee and build a relationship of trust and respect. A big factor to consider is that there are no direct costs incurred with implementing an internal coach as opposed to the use of an external one. However, disadvantages of internal coaches include potential time restraints and the coach being taken away from their other responsibilities, which could have an adverse effect on team performance.

External coaches will have specialist skills and experience and can offer a safe and open environment to coachees. Their time will be dedicated to coaching and they will be unaffected by organisational culture. The main disadvantages of using an external coach are the potentially high costs and time consumed in identifying a suitable provider. External providers are also unlikely to be unaware of the organisation's business model, industry and company culture meaning that external coaches may not be a good fit and a potential waste of money if desired outcomes are not achieved.

We should also think about what we want to achieve from implementing a coaching and mentoring strategy, how it will fit in with other strategies and how we will measure the success. A coaching and mentoring strategy should be integrated into existing strategies such as learning and development, health and wellbeing, performance management and talent planning. This is where organisational culture plays a big part and can support ECD's core values and mission of valuing both our customers and colleagues.

Organisations are affected by many different factors, including organisation size, sector, market conditions, as well as the state of the current economy. Therefore policies and strategy need to be both vertically and horizontally aligned and take into account these factors (Johns and Ellis, 2016).

A recent example of how an external factor has affected us is the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Our organisation saw rapid change and shift in the way we do business. We now have a combination of people working from home and employees still working within our operations in order to get products to our customers. We saw a huge increase in online demand when non essential retail closed as a result of the national lockdown(s), leaving no option but to furlough our retail employees. We had to adapt and arrange technology/equipment so employees could work from home, make the workplace COVID secure and hire additional warehouse staff to cope with the demand. This meant that previous high priority initiatives had to be put on the backburner to cope with the ongoing crisis. In a crisis implementing C&M initiatives can be difficult, basic conversations and meetings have moved online via telephone, video calls and chat rooms. Coaching someone remotely is difficult, as it is much harder to pick up on non verbal cues than if you were face to face.

A CIPD (2020c) survey found that employees feeling anxious about returning to the workplace, this is something that ECD could focus on. HR and line managers could support by coaching staff to return to the workplace when it is safe to do so.

Other external factors to think about are regulations and professional codes practice, for example, GDPR (*General Data Protection Regulation*, 2018), safeguarding and confidentiality. It is important to establish a coaching contract which includes an agreement of objectives, the measurement of outcomes, feedback procedures and confidentiality (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2014). The NHS (no date) outline that a coaching contract should be discussed, agreed and recorded in writing with a copy for both participants. It should also be regularly reviewed to ensure expectations are still being met and amendments made if required. This process ensures that the relationship develops effectively and that both coach and coachees needs are met (NHS, no date).

Ethical practice safeguards and enhances C&M, when principles such as respect for autonomy; acting in the individuals best interest; acting fairly and working within agreed boundaries are adhered to this helps the individual to feel secure and safeguards the interests of both parties (Connor and Pokora, 2012).

When considering providing training or sourcing coaches we should look at formal academic qualifications and membership to coaching/mentoring professional bodies such as the International Coach Federation (ICF) or the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

Coaching and mentoring Summary

People who coach reap many rewards, the main one being the satisfaction of helping an individual develop and grow. A good coach will end up creating more time for themselves as the skills that the coach will have developed with their coachees will mean that they will be in a position to delegate more (Landsberg, 2015). The coach's team will also benefit from increased performance as they will have dedicated time on developing skills and performance. It also helps to build interpersonal skills meaning that coaches and mentors are better at interacting with people.

According to the NHS (2014) there are a number of benefits experienced by people who have taken part in coaching or mentoring:

- Increased performance
- Improved sense of direction and focus
- Increased knowledge and self-awareness
- Enhanced ability to relate to and influence others
- Increased motivation
- Increased creativity and resourcefulness
- Increased confidence

Coaching has also been found to increase job satisfaction and helps coachees to improve their ability to deal with problems, be more agile as well as make them feel closer to other people (Hicks, Carter and Sinclair, 2013).

Coaching and mentoring programmes will affect various stakeholders, including; Employees (coaches/mentees); Line managers (coach/mentor/coaches/mentee); Shareholders; Customers and Suppliers. This means that such programmes can support the achievement of organisational objectives such as;

- Better employee engagement and performance
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Increased organisational effectiveness
- Increased business innovation and creativity
- Improved communication

Clutterbuck (2014) describes how mentoring can benefit recruitment and talent planning, research found that retention rates of employees who had participated in a mentoring programme increased by more than 60% in previous years.

O2 Retail UK has a high standard of customer service and have seen positive results from improved customer satisfaction. The method uses mystery shoppers to film interactions with employees. The video is then shared

with the store manager with instructions on how to coach the sales advisor on ways to improve with emphasis always being on positive performance (Sparrow, 2007).

Research by Hicks, Carter and Sinclair (2013) looks at how coaching can improve well-being. Their study found that prior to coaching well-being at work scores were low, but after a period of coaching perceptions of well-being increased (Hicks, Carter and Sinclair, 2013)

Conclusion

In conclusion we have explored the definition and concept of coaching and mentoring as well as some of the different types available and how they can be implemented into our organisation and the factors we need to consider in doing so. We have looked at how line managers can support coaching and mentoring and assess the potential benefits of coaching and mentoring and how it can support strategy to achieve positive organisational outcomes and objectives.

ECD should consider creating specific policies and best practices to create specific coaching roles if we wish to implement coaching and mentoring to a meaningful degree. Most importantly we need to understand that coaches and mentors will require support themselves through training and even with employee assist programmes for emotional support. Finally all new programmes should be integrated into existing organisational strategies.

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