

Coaching styles

Direct

The coach identifies a task, and explains the expected level of performance. The coach gives very specific instructions or directions regarding the performance of the task. The coach monitors execution of the task by the learner. On completion, the coach gives feedback and helps the learner to think and plan how to do better the next time.

Techniques	Tools
Verbal instruction Show and tell Observation Performance monitoring Two-way feedback	Written instructions/guidance Diagrams Flow charts Quality standards Planning tools Handbooks

Note: The coach should not spend a long period of time in this directive role – the aim is to make people less and less dependent as they grow and develop.

Guide

The coach offers specific advice or demonstrates how to perform a task, or how to behave in a certain situation and then provides opportunity for the learner to do the same. The coach will refer the learner to any procedures or standards that apply. The coach may encourage the learner to take a structured approach to performing the activity. The coach tends to say things like “You ought to do.... You should do... Don’t forget to ... You had better not do....”

On completion, they discuss what has happened to reinforce understanding and learning, and will identify ways of improving performance next time.

Techniques	Tools
Demonstration Shadowing Reflective review	Organisational policies Procedures Standards Planning tools Management models

Motivate (Exciting)

The coach’s aim is to engage and motivate the learner, and it may be necessary to begin by “selling” the benefits of learning and development. The learner needs to be involved in the process, and typically, the coach suggests areas for the learner to think about. For example, “When you carry out this task you might want to think about health and safety requirements...” The coach steers the learner towards the correct course of action, as in “You could consider these options...” or “You could try this..” This helps to build learner confidence, self-esteem and motivation. It is important that the coach ensures that the learner has the resources necessary to carry out activities as well as providing guidance and encouragement.

Feedback is given in the form of reflective review.

Techniques	Tools
Discussion Questioning Problem solving Reflective review Summarising and paraphrasing	Planning tools Decision-making models

Delegate (Non-directive)

The non-directive coaching is about helping the learner to think things through for themselves. Tasks are typically delegated, and reviewed. The coach helps the learner to define the task and objectives, and encourages him/her to determine how best to execute it. The coach shares knowledge and resources but does not fill in all of the details. This leaves room for initiative and gives the learner an opportunity to exercise creativity. Progress against longer term, more complex tasks is regularly reviewed, and on completion reflection and self-analysis of performance is encouraged.

Techniques	Tools
Discussion Probing Listening Funnelling information Summarising and paraphrasing Reflective review and analysis	Planning tools Decision-making models



Skill/will Matrix

High will	eager Guide	independent Delegate (non-directive)
	dependent Direct	reluctant Motivate (excite)
Low will		
Low skill		High skill

Relationships

i) The line manager as coach

The main issue here is power and authority. The line manager role is vested with authority and power, and those who coach are placed above the coachee in the hierarchy.

In the coaching relationship, the exercise of power and authority has to be carefully balanced against behaviours that engender trust, honesty openness and transparency. Line managers will sometimes be required to give very direct instructions, to control and discipline. They might adopt a command and control style. However, whilst this style might be appropriate in a management situation is likely to be less effective in a coaching situation. And equally, a facilitative style which is appropriate in a coaching situation will not be appropriate in a disciplinary situation.

Line managers may find contracting useful in terms of distinguishing between the management role and the coaching role, clarifying obligations related to coaching, and securing commitment from both sides.

ii) Internal v external coaching relationships

There are also issues around power and authority for other internal coaches and external coaches. Coaches who are not line managers may be psychologically placed above the people they are coaching – either by themselves or by the coachee. This applies to internal coaches who are not line managing the coachee and, arguably to a greater extent, to external coaches.

Our culture, state and religious institutions, work organisations and particularly our educational systems have trained people to submit to authority, with the result that people in the workplace often defer to authority, are risk averse, and are reactive rather than proactive. This is the opposite of how we want them to be in a coaching situation.

(Although research suggests that the generation currently entering the workforce have different expectations and are generally more assertive, claim more rights and are less willing to subject themselves)

Exercise – what problems might occur in relation to power and authority of the coach and how might these be overcome?

External coaches and mentors and contracts

It is usual for external coaches, to draw up a coaching contract. Professional coaches have contracts which include costs, as well as aims and objectives, regularity of meetings, communication methods, topics for discussion, confidentiality, venues, and boundaries

iii) Mentoring evolving from coaching

We have seen this illustrated in Clutterbuck's model.

If the relationship is evolving from coaching to mentoring, the parties will already know quite a lot about each other, but it is still useful to set time aside to re-define the relationship.

The nature of mentoring is that it should be a much less formal relationship than coaching and less structured, and we should avoid making an essentially informal relationship too bureaucratic. A sensible approach is to clarify expectations and to come to an agreement about the frequency and nature of meetings.

iv) Classic mentoring

It is common practice to establish a mentoring contract, whereby mentors and their mentee, set down in writing detailed guidelines for meetings, discussions, timetables, records etc, and sign a formal agreement. This is bureaucratic, and there is no evidence that having such formal arrangements enhances the relationship or produces better outcomes than informal process.

However, if you are entering into a mentoring relationship with someone you don't know well, it is vitally important to establish the relationship clearly. Some clarity is essential, and addressing a few basic questions can be helpful to mentor and mentee. External mentors would work on the basis of a formal contract with the client whether an individual or the organization.

Pillars of Effective Relationships

In broad terms, the foundations for effective relationships are very similar.

Trust

The coachee/mentee must be able to trust the coach or mentor fully. The key issues are:

Confidentiality – what is disclosed is not repeated

Respect – ideas, fears, beliefs will not be dismissed or ridiculed

Intention – the coach or mentor genuinely wants to assist learning, development and performance improvement

The coach and mentor also need to trust the coachee/mentee, and the issues here are

Engagement – they are committed to the process and wants to be coached/mentored

Truthfulness – they will be as truthful as possible

Honesty

Coachees and mentees must be honest about their beliefs, perceptions, responsibilities and actions

Coaches and mentors also need to be honest in expressing points of view on an action plan, idea or behaviour, and when giving feedback.

However, care must be taken when expressing personal opinions, or being judgmental, particularly in labelling, as in “you are...”

As a general rule, if a coachee asks for the coach’s opinion the coach should ask why they are seeking it and also ask the coachee for their own view first.

In a mentoring situation, it is more usual for a mentee to seek their mentor’s view, opinion or advice.

Openness

Openness does not mean that people must bare their souls to each other. It means that all the information, thoughts and ideas needed to make progress on a particular topic are revealed and brought into discussion. There will be issues that the coachee or mentee will not wish to reveal, and there will also be issues of confidentiality for both parties. If these arise then they must be honest about being unable to be open – “I cannot discuss this because...”

Transparency

Transparency is the “why” of coaching or mentoring – why are we looking at, dealing with this or discussing that. Transparency helps to build trust and develop understanding. It also has to do with expressing intentions. It is important that both parties understand each other’s intentions. The coach’s or mentor’s intentions might be expressed in the following way:

“I’m giving you this feedback because I think it will broaden your understanding”

Coaches and mentors can also help their learners to be transparent, honest and truthful with themselves and address any hidden agendas by questioning intentions, as in:

“I’m sorry, could you run through this again for me, because I don’t understand what you’re trying to achieve in pursuing this course of action”

Mentors should also express their own intentions when advising a certain course of action, explaining the reasons behind their advice.

Key Issues Arising

There are some challenges associated with both the coaching role and the mentoring role

- Managing expectations and conflicting objectives (individual and organisational)
- Learning styles and coaching styles/approaches
- Equality and diversity
- Attitudes and values
- Behaviour
- Ethics

Managing expectations and conflicting objectives (individual and organisational)

Can largely be addressed at the outset by establishing roles expectations and objectives. Can be problematic when individual and organizational objectives are not aligned, and may be especially difficult for external coaches and mentors who have to be clear about who the client is to avoid getting caught in crossfire. May take on a mediatory role.

Learning styles and coaching styles/approaches

We have already discussed the main issues around this i.e learner styles, learner skill/will, and need to match coaching approaches and styles. May find it helpful to take on consider some of Knowles ideas about adult learning

Equality and diversity

There are legal, moral and business reasons for recognising diversity and ensuring fairness in the workplace.

Exercise What can coaches/mentors do to promote equality of opportunity?

Values and beliefs

There is an onus on coaches and mentors to promote the organisational culture – the way we do things here, and the organisation values – what’s important to us. Internally, this may involve exploring how these fit with their own values and beliefs. However, we need to be careful that we don’t impose our personal values, beliefs and attitudes on those we are working with. There is potential to offend people who hold different values and beliefs to us. For example, demonstrating political bias when explaining a task “We have to do this because this rotten government has imposed it on us” or making derogatory remarks about a particular religion.

For external coaches and mentors, the challenge is arguably more difficult, as there may be the potential for three-way conflict between the organisation’s values and beliefs, the individual’s and their own.

There may be many questions around the client relationship:

Who is the client - the organization or the individual?

Is there a contract and what are the terms?

Are the individual’s values and beliefs aligned to those of the organization?

Are my own values and beliefs compatible with theirs?

Coaches and mentors have to exercise wisdom and judgement, not only to maintain a good working relationship with their learners and the organisation but also to avoid the threat of litigation.

Attitudes

Workplace coaches and mentors have to have the right mindset. In their hearts they must want to help people, and they should be generous-spirited people. They can have a major influence on the attitudes of those they are coaching or mentoring so it is vital that they display good attitudes themselves. Positive coaching attitudes are:

Pro-active – plans ahead

Practical – focuses on the achievable

Solution focused – looks for options

Self-starting – strong motivation

Responsible – sees the job through to the end

Takes initiative – makes decisions

Behaviour

There is a strong emphasis on leading by example, and this includes general conduct, adherence to policies and procedures, and maintaining performance standards.

Coaches and mentors have a responsibility to behave in an appropriate manner towards the person being coached or mentored and towards other members of staff, and must not cross boundaries, for example sexual boundaries.