NAVIGATING ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION OF COACHING AND MENTORING DYNAMICS

Reflective analysis of a coaching exercise

University of Wales Trinity St David

Module Coaching and mentoring BMSW6007

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1. Introduction

In the new business environment, concepts like motivation, professional training, self-development and education became very important because of the relation with the needs of the individual as employee and the direct impact on the performance of the organization as described by theories like Maslow' Hierarchy of needs (Hicks, 2018). Different methods and strategies to achieve these concepts are usually used by management, to improve knowledge, skills and abilities of different individuals within the organization with the main objective to tap in the full potential of the employee. These methods and strategies are known as learning interventions.

Some of the well-known and most efficient learning interventions are coaching and mentoring. These play a critical role in increasing resilience and managing change within the organization, through support and guidance in tackling difficult situations, change and skills development. Coaching is a task-oriented process where, through communication, continuous constructive feedback and interpersonal connection based on empathy and trust, appears a transfer of knowledge regarding skills, procedures between one experienced person (coach) and one less experienced (coachee) (Serrat, 2017). Mentoring is a long-term collaboration through which two people exchange ideas, experiences, information, practical advice (Schichtel, 2009), and where the more experienced person, the mentor, is considered to have more expertise in the field.

Other learning interventions are also valuable to the organizational performance. Online courses offer flexibility and accessibility focusing on independent development. Cross-training and and job rotations provide a strong incentive for skill diversification and functional learning (Hernaus, 2021).

2. Similarities and differences between different learning interventions in the organizational context

Reflecting on different types of learning interventions in an organizational context we can detect similarities and differences. All of them have the purpose of facilitating growth and enhance a person's set of skills required to successfully completely different tasks in personal or professional life. However, they differ in the method of delivering, focus, duration, objective.

2.1. Coaching vs mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are very similar approaches, involving two individuals, one experienced, called coach or mentor and one with less experience, called coachee or mentee, that build a relation based on the mutual interest of unlocking potential and enhance different sets of skills of the coachee.

However, one of the first differences is "the origin". The coach is usually a person from outside of the organization, with specific training in coaching, while the mentor is normally somebody from the organization, with a high level of experience (Kenworthy, 2015).

The duration and the focus are other characteristics where differences can be observed. While coaching is a short-term relation with the goal of providing structured improvement and multiskill development, mentoring is a long-term relationship with accent on guidance and confidential advice in career decision making, through important pieces of information coming from the mentor's experience (Serrat, 2017).

While coaching usually develops by transmitting information from the coach towards the coachee to enhance the seconds' abilities and skills helping him to reach high performance and level of development, mentoring involves information sharing and mutual development for both counterparts, providing learning opportunities for both participants where the mentee is supposed to reach a level of knowledge similar of the mentor (CIPD Trust, 2023).

While traditionally, both coaching and mentoring were one – to – one programs, recently group coaching gained a lot of visibility providing the possibility to effectively train groups and teams in a short duration. However, this type of coaching is suitable mostly for lower-level positions, where a high number of employees require specific skill enhancement without a high difficulty (CIPD, 2020).

Other types of learning interventions, such as self-development provide an environment where different individuals can self-develop with the assistance of a mentor or coach, through access to different materials like online resources, videos, study materials. Similar with coaching, these are designed to enhance different skills and abilities required at the workplace or in society and are designed for short duration with a focus on preparing the learner for mostly entry level jobs with low level of difficulty. While they offer flexibility and adaptability in terms of location and accessibility, these types of interventions require an assessment for competition as feedback and provide only basic development progress, being necessary to be followed by coaching or mentoring sessions to further expand and enhance the skills and abilities for more specific jobs (CIPD, 2020).

While both coaching and mentoring focus on individuals and the skills necessary for each are similar, there are some important differences. As a coach, a person must be organizational goal oriented, clear and direct communicator, active listener, task-oriented feedback provider, motivator, adaptable and flexible (Jones, et al., 2016) (Grant, 2017).

Meanwhile, as a mentor, the goals must pe aligned to the mentee's development goals, the communication style is more conversational with personal examples and providing advice, feedback is provided in a broad manner focused on career progression, professional behaviors and personal growth (Allen, et al., 2004)

3. The Line Manager as a Coach/Mentor

The role of line manager, also known as front-line manager or direct manager is very important in any organization as it involves implementation of the strategies and supervision of all activities in an efficient way to achieve the organizational goal. In order to do this, a line manager must be able to identify and enhance the skills of the team members, create a positive environment and effectively communicate the objectives. All these factors are directly linked to the job satisfaction, performance, engagement and organizational effectiveness (PLOYHART & MOLITERNO, 2011) which require that line managers to assume also the roles of a coach and mentor for the members of their teams.

As a coach, the line manager can impact the performance of the team by guiding its members toward specific skills enhancement and development, setting clear goals and procedures and by providing constructive feedback. Through this process, he can obtain an immediate boost in task efficiency and, even more, can positively impact job satisfaction and loyalty of the employees in a short time (Jones, et al., 2016). Reflecting on these findings, assuming the coach role by the line manager is essential can be

considered as an investment in the human resource as it increases employee retention and performance by developing the skills required to achieve the organizational goals.

On long term, the line manager must assume also the mentor role, which allows him to guide the team members in their career path towards positions inside the organization accordingly with their specific set of skills and abilities which should be continuously developed and enriched. This ensures an increased satisfaction and employee retention on long term as well as access to highly skilled workforce suitable for leading roles in the organization (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014).

The impact of the two roles combined, known as "dual-focused" leadership as described by Day (2000), in the organizational environment is significant as it shapes the workplace culture characterized by continuous improvement through investment in the human resource in line with the organizational objectives (Wang & Howell, 2010).

4. Examples of Coaching and Mentoring during the Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, coaching and mentoring in the workplace have proven to be essential lifelines, offering dynamic and adaptive support to individuals and teams. The strategic use of technology has played an important role in this transformation, as coaches and mentors transitioned to virtual platforms, utilizing tools such as video conferencing, collaborative platforms and virtual whiteboards (Dirani, et al., 2020). This shift not only allowed coaching and mentoring sessions to continue uninterrupted but also enabled face-to-face interactions, preserving the personal connection that is vital for effective relationships (Lee, 2021).

Coaches and mentors proved their resilience by adapting their techniques to the new virtual environment, actively engaging workforce through effective communication, active listening, powerful questioning, and timely feedback through digital channels (Turesky, et al., 2020). They have increased their impact by providing resources for self-reflection, personal growth, and stress management. By offering curated materials, online training, and reflective exercises, coaches and mentors helped individuals to navigate the challenges they face in their personal and professional lives with resilience and motivation (Camacho & Legare, 2021) . Mindfulness and stress management techniques have become integral components of coaching and mentoring sessions, equipping individuals with practical strategies to manage heightened stress levels and foster overall well-being (Junn, et al., 2022).

In addition to their coaching and mentoring roles, professionals in the work environment created a sense of community and connection by creating virtual support networks. Through their innovation, empathy, and understanding of evolving needs, coaches and mentors offered guidance and support in the dynamic work work environment to both employees or unemployed workforce (Camacho & Legare, 2021).

5. Personal Performance in the Peer Coaching Exercise

When I worked with Madalina using the Landsberg Model in our coaching session, I found it to be a really valuable experience. It taught me a lot about effective coaching techniques and how to apply coaching models in real-life situations. I was pleased to see that my studying and understanding of the Landsberg Model paid off because I was able to use it successfully during our conversation. I made sure to ask Madalina about her goals and if she was familiar with the model, which helped us to have a clear

understanding and work together towards a structured coaching process. Together, we were able to establish clear goals, assess the current situation, identify any obstacles, and create a plan of action.

A big strength of mine is that I know how to ask the right questions. During my conversation with Madalina, I used different types of questions to really get to the heart of her issues. I asked open-ended questions to help her share her thoughts more openly, probing questions to dig deeper into her challenges with scheduling software, upselling, and time management, and closed questions to get specific answers. These questions helped me understand her situation better and gave me a comprehensive view of what she's going through. And whenever I had suggestions or ideas, I always asked for her permission first. I believe in respecting her autonomy and giving her the space to solve her own problems.

Throughout the scenario, I made sure to stay focused and always kept a positive mindset. I didn't let anything distract me from Madalina's goal, and I showed her that I was really listening. I also used body language and encouraging words to create a supportive and friendly coaching environment.

One great thing about Madalina's progress was that she created a detailed action plan that included specific deadlines. By working together, we were able to establish goals for enhancing her software skills, improving her upselling techniques, advancing her career, and managing her time effectively. This plan acted as a roadmap for her growth, giving her structure and guidance. We also decided to have check-ins every two weeks to track her progress and make any necessary changes along the way. This showed our dedication to continuously support her and adapt to her needs.

When it comes to skills that can be applied to different situations, the coaching conversation went really well. It was done in a friendly yet professional way, making Madalina feel comfortable enough to open up about her challenges. This led to a discussion focused on finding solutions. The coach made sure Madalina did most of the talking, which helped her come up with her own solutions. This gave her a strong sense of responsibility for her own personal development.

When I look back, the coaching scenario showed that I was able to use the Landsberg Model well. I asked good questions, stayed focused, and connected with the person I was coaching. But I can always get better by working on my questioning skills and learning more coaching techniques for different situations. This experience reminds me that coaching is always changing and it's important to adjust to what each person needs.

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