



What is Coaching?

Broadly speaking, the coaching process is information gathering, goal / problem definition / desired state identification, priorities, exploration of options, intervention, evaluation, and ultimately the achievement of the defined outcome.

The client and the coach collaborate to formulate a positive and uniquely tailored program to build awareness of and develop the coachee's strengths, assess weaknesses, and identify possible adjustments and growth opportunities.

The client has all or is able to find all the answers. The coach enables the client to find these answers from within themselves and through external sources. The coach facilitates a powerful relationship between the client and coach. As coach, we "honour the client as the expert in his/her life and work, and believe that every client is creative, resourceful and whole".

Coaching is both a diagnostic and a developmental process. The coaching relationship begins with defining the desired outcomes in relation to the current outcomes, in order to determine the performance gap. Once the gap is understood, the behaviours causing the gap, and the coachee's characteristics, such as skill, knowledge, personality, values, and beliefs leading to the behaviour, are diagnosed, followed by suitable coaching interventions to bring about change.

This process takes place in a developmental relationship that assists coachee's in understanding their patterns of behaviour that are positively or negatively influencing the desired outcomes. Coaching is also developmental process to help managers and leaders work through the challenging tasks of managing and leading (Hargrove, 1995; Hudson, 1999; Ruzich, 2003).

Part of the purpose of the coach, coachee relationship, is to develop new skills, knowledge, and / or awareness. The intent of the relationship is to gain insight that will help the coachee learn how to do something differently or better. Since the relationship focuses on understanding patterns of behaviour, the new skill, knowledge, and / or awareness should be visible by others in the behaviour or actions of the leader. Frederic Hudson (1999) suggests that helping leaders manage change is one of the fundamental functions of coaching.

The purpose of examining the patterns of behaviour is to impact the outcomes a coachee is generating. The outcomes can be anything from financial and interpersonal outcomes to impact on employees, or customer / team relationship outcomes. For example, suppose the leader was well liked by everyone in the organization yet was not producing the results required of his / her division. Coaching would help the leader identify the behaviours that were positively influencing likeability and also the behaviours that negatively influence results.

Once identified, new behaviours to generate better results would be suggested and practiced. Similarly, Hargrove (1995) suggests that coaching is used by organizations to create a culture of high performance, change, and learning.

A leader's job is to create the culture, manage change, and help the people who report to them learn and develop. Coaching may be used to help the leader develop the ability and / or get clarity about how to manage the culture, change, and learning.

Important to the definition of coaching is a theory of personal control (Bell & Straw, 1989). Bell

& Straw's research introduced the idea that certain leadership characteristics lead to different leadership behaviours, which create different outcomes and cultures. Coaching plays a powerful part in enhancing this critical element of effective leadership.

Effective interpersonal communication is one of the key outputs of coaching. A coach can provide such psychosocial functions as role modelling, acceptance / confirmation, counselling and friendship (Hudson, 1999; O'Neill, 2000). According to O'Neill (2000), the coach also provides three additional functions that pertain to a leader's responsibility, namely; help a leader communicate in his or her territory, build relationships and facilitate interactions, and produce results and outcomes.

Part of the function of a coach is to help the coachee achieve specified desired outcomes for developmental or performance reasons. The coach should help the coachee identify areas where they might not be doing well (Hall, 1999). The coach provides the process for diagnosing the gap, behaviour, and characteristics that are keeping the coachee from achieving the specified desired outcomes and then helps design a developmental process to close the gap.