

## Chapter 1

# Coaching for Performance

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Finding out what Performance Coaching is – and isn't
  - ▶ Ensuring that you're cut out for the job
  - ▶ Understanding the Performance Coaching process
  - ▶ Applying Performance Coaching in the real world
  - ▶ Putting a structure in place
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**W**hat is Performance Coaching, and are you the right person to be delivering it? This chapter gives you the answers. We explain the Performance Coaching process and how to apply it in day-to-day corporate life.

## *Defining Performance Coaching*

How many flavours of coaching have you heard of? We have life coaching, business coaching, executive coaching, career coaching, personal coaching, corporate coaching, sports coaching, and coaching psychology, to name just a few. They all have the positive purpose of skilfully enabling someone to change and achieve valued goals but it seems almost everyone who coaches invents a new title for himself. So what are the distinguishing characteristics of Performance Coaching?

Sir John Whitmore, in his book *Performance Coaching*, states that: 'Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.' Performance Coaching means:

- ✓ Accessing potential
- ✓ Facilitating the individual to make the changes required
- ✓ Maximising performance
- ✓ Helping people acquire skills and develop
- ✓ Using specific communication techniques

The Performance Coach works with people, often colleagues, using coaching methods to enhance their existing behaviours and develop new ones central to personal and professional success and, in business situations, the success of the organisation.

Performance relates to effectiveness in terms of leadership, decision-making, relationships, creativity, stress, time management, meetings, and dealing with day-to-day tasks and aims to significantly increase your colleague's effectiveness.

Performance coaching uses many models and theories from business and psychology as well as from general management approaches. Put simply, Performance Coaching is all about making an individual more effective and efficient.

Coaching can be useful in the following situations:

- ✓ Something going right – a success is a good opportunity to build confidence and guarantee repeated success
- ✓ Something going wrong – mistakes and failures create opportunities for development
- ✓ Planned delegation
- ✓ A new job, or a new role within an existing job
- ✓ Talent management
- ✓ Special projects
- ✓ Attending meetings

Information about all these scenarios is included in this book.

## Seeing how it all started

Sports coaching usually gets the credit for having started the whole coaching business. If you suffered through school PE lessons, however, you may wonder if sports coaching ever made it further than the elite sportsmen and women of Olympian levels. Tim Galwey, writer of the *Inner Game* book series, applied cognitive

psychology techniques to the sports field, working on the thought processes of players in order to increase their skill at the sport of their choice. Athletes who trained this way took their skills out into a variety of other applications where they thought coaching may transform performance, and Performance Coaching was born.

# What Performance Coaching Is Not

Sadly, people can make mistakes when trying to Performance Coach. In this section we warn you against inappropriate or ineffective approaches and beliefs about Performance Coaching.



Coaching is still largely unregulated rather than an established profession.

## *The remedial class*

Coaching often used to be perceived as remedial; sorting out problems and putting things right. All coaching has an element of removing blocks to success – the ideas or behaviours that stand in the way of your colleague's best efforts. However, in Performance Coaching, the basic assumption is that your colleague has the capacity to perform even better, rather than that he must rectify issues. Performance Coaching is not about:

- ✓ Highlighting flaws or weaknesses
- ✓ Correcting failures
- ✓ Managing poor performance

Performance Coaching is about helping individuals be the best they are able to be. Sometimes this means helping someone improve his performance to the required standard. Coaching can also mean working with a talented individual to develop his skills even further. The idea that Performance Coaching is always about catching up is only part of the story. Many colleagues who go through the coaching process do so to ensure they are able to continue to develop their considerable skills.

## *The psychiatrist's chair*

Performance Coaching isn't your opportunity to grab a pipe, install a couch, and draw out deep-seated issues in an Eastern European accent. Everyone has problems. Delving into the origins of issues as a precursor to working them out and fixing them may be interesting. However, Performance Coaching takes the premise that your colleague 'ain't broke' and that he has the reserves he needs to move forward through coaching. Performance Coaching is about the future rather than the past.

## *The 'I didn't get where I am today by . . . ' spot*

One of the Videoarts teaching videos, featuring the comedy actor John Cleese, used to start this way: 'Let me give you a piece of advice from my experience. Never give anyone a piece of advice from your experience.'

Old-fashioned mentoring used to use this technique of benefiting from another's experience. Performance Coaching is not about exhorting people to listen to your wisdom, mistakes, and experience. Instead, Performance Coaching means helping people to improve their existing skills and develop new ones.

## *Looking at an Overview of the Coaching Process*

Traditional styles of management may be effective some of the time but are limited in their ability to effectively access people's potential. The 'command and tell' style tends to work best when the boss remains on the premises. When the boss is absent, people are less likely to be self-activated, preferring to wait and be told what to do because they know that's what's going to happen in the long run. Old-fashioned management that treats people like children results in childish behaviour such as 'the cat's away, the mice will play'. Performance Coaching as a management tool gives back to the individual the responsibility for his own development and career.

A myriad of opportunities for coaching present themselves on a daily basis. *Water cooler coaching* involves coaching on the hoof; in the train, at the photocopier, wherever necessary, as the situation unfolds. On other occasions, setting aside designated time to coach a colleague about his development and future is a mark of true respect and good management.

For example, your colleague may be struggling with a new piece of work. In the old-school style of management you'd tell him what to do and how to do it. However, as a manager who using Performance Coaching skills, you may decide to sit down with the individual and encourage him to consider ways in which he can deal with the task in hand. This type of approach encourages your colleague to think through situations rather than simply do what he's been told.

## *Checking Your Potential as a Performance Coach*

Everyone has potential. However, no one can do everything, otherwise we'd all be geniuses, as well as exhausted!

However experienced or knowledgeable you are, at times and for a variety of reasons you won't be able to meet all the demands that are made of you as a Performance Coach.

- ✓ **Too much to do and too little time!** On occasions, you won't have the time to meet the needs of your colleague. In such situations, help the person concerned access a range of additional sources of help, from external coaching to internal training programmes. In this type of situation, limit your time, energy, and input to simply guiding the process.
- ✓ **Not got a clue!** If someone presents with difficulties that are outside your competence level, helping the person concerned is impossible. In such cases, refer your colleague to the appropriate source of help. Don't be ashamed to admit a lack of experience or knowledge.
- ✓ **Oh no – not you!** At times you may find your colleague difficult to communicate with. You may have to manage the person concerned, but managing someone is quite different to providing any kind of in-depth Performance Coaching support.

Additionally, your colleague may simply not warm to you for whatever reason. In such cases, save yourself a great deal of emotional conflict and provide your colleague with the best chance of success by referring him on to someone more compatible with him.

- ✓ **You're fired!** In cases where formal disciplinary action is taking place or is likely to take place, it's unlikely that you can develop the appropriate coaching climate. At best your colleague is likely to feel stressed and at worst antagonistic towards you. He may see you as responsible for his current situation or acting as an agent for the organisation.

In addition, it is confusing for you, as the Performance Coach, if you have to deliver bad news from a managerial perspective one minute and be supportive as the Performance Coach the next. Instead, you need to find the right person or combination of services to best meet the needs of the individual.

EXAMPLE



## Reality check: You're not superhuman

Here are a few examples of situations where the Performance Coach needs to consider finding someone else to coach a colleague, however briefly:

- ✓ **Amal** had been promoted into a new role that required him to present to large audiences. Previously competent enough with small groups, he wasn't highly inspirational in the way he needed to be to get commitment to big changes. Having worked on the fundamentals of public speaking, confidence, and body language with his coach, Amal had polished his speaking style quite a bit – but not quite enough. After discussion, Amal agreed to bring in the big guns – a voice coach who, by working with the way Amal stood, breathed, and projected his voice, transformed the sense of gravitas he emitted on stage.
- ✓ **Jonathan** was entering his early 40s. His weight had been gradually increasing and he had little time for regular systematic exercise. His diet and drinking were excessive because of all the business entertaining he

did. Constant travel and crossing time zones meant Jonathan's sleep patterns were seriously disturbed. His coach was conscious of the strain Jonathan was under. In a throw-away remark, Jonathan mentioned that his own father had died aged 41 of a heart condition. Recognising that health was a crucial issue for Jonathan, the coach encouraged him to work with a sports science coach to devise an exercise and diet programme that fitted in with his demanding lifestyle.

- ✓ **Susan** began to talk more often about the strain in her marriage because of the demands of her job. Her coach had tried to help her juggle her goals to achieve a balance but it became obvious that the strain between Susan and her husband was not letting up. Through coaching, Susan realised that she needed counselling and her coach helped her assess who'd be best to approach for help.

Remember, looking for the best specialist help for your colleague isn't weakness on your part.

REMEMBER



You cannot be all things to all people. Make sure that you play to your own strengths fully so that you can develop others to their fullest.

TIP



You can usually gain a lot of assistance by working in conjunction with your Human Resource, Learning and Development, or Occupational Health colleagues, who already have a lot of the contacts you seek.

## Balancing In-House and External Coaching

Performance Coaching can take place *in-house*, where you're an employee of the organisation as well as a Performance Coach, or you're directly appointed as Performance Coach without any other organisational responsibility. External coaching is where coaches are commissioned and brought into the organisation to undertake specific coaching assignments. Each has benefits and drawbacks:

- ✓ **Internal Performance Coaches.** In-house coaches already have knowledge of the culture, history, and politics of the organisation. They are available, less expensive, and more easily managed by the organisation. Individuals can also benefit from developing long-term relationships with their coaches. An internal coach can help develop a coaching culture within an organisation in a way that an external coach cannot.
- ✓ **External coaches.** External coaches benefit from their independence, objectivity, and wider range of experience. They're often able to provide sensitive feedback to senior staff, which an internal coach would find harder to do. External coaches are perceived as being more confidential. Colleagues may also find that an external coach is able to give a new perspective because he's able to view the bigger picture. External coaches are perceived as being unbiased because they're not involved in or part of the day-to-day culture and benefits of the organisation.

### 'People are our most valued asset' – yeah, right!

You hear companies say that people are their most valued asset all the time, but when does it actually mean anything? Companies are haemorrhaging money on a daily basis through inadequate use of their people's talents – round people in square holes, competent workers demotivated by micro-managing bosses, people overworked and bored at the same time, the over-promoted finding themselves out of their depth. This kind of management does not make sound business sense.

A survey by Towers Perrin in 2006 of 86,000 employees in 16 countries came up with these

shocking statistics on employee engagement levels:

- ✓ 24 per cent of people were disengaged
- ✓ 62 per cent were moderately engaged
- ✓ 14 per cent were highly engaged

Engaging people in the workplace is the easiest way to improve the performance of both individuals and the organisation. You can use Performance Coaching as the obvious tool to encourage engagement.

This book helps you focus on your Performance Coaching skills as a manager rather than as an external Performance Coach.

## *Overcoming Resistance to Coaching*

If coaching is so terrific and has such great results, then why doesn't it happen? Sadly, many other activities are really good – such as eating healthily and taking exercise – but people somehow just don't get around to doing them. Good habits don't always automatically make their way into our behavioural repertoire.

You may encounter resistance to Performance Coaching from your manager, colleagues, or the company.

Here are just some of the arguments that may be going through your employer's mind:

- ✓ **There just isn't time.** Taking time for coaching can save time in the long run. One of our coaches was working with Andrew, a senior manager, known as a bit of an Attila the Hun. Andrew said: 'I can see that this soft stuff may be effective but I just don't have time in the real world.' The coach rather cleverly asked him to role-play how he would normally deal with a situation and then again how he would deal with it using the Performance Coaching approach. Both were videotaped. Andrew normally spoke sternly to the individual, which led to an argument that wasted time and left both of them frustrated. In the re-run, Andrew listened to what his colleague was saying and used open questions to elicit answers. He spoke in a quieter tone. The issue was sorted far more quickly and amicably, leading Andrew to recognise the benefits of changing his style of communicating. Idea sold!
- ✓ **I'm not sure that this coaching really works.** Why would your company believe in Performance Coaching if they're not convinced of the benefits? Your company may not see sufficient evidence of the return on investment (ROI) for coaching and because considerable time and money is spent on coaching, your company may want to be reassured that the outcomes are valuable. Many companies using both internal and external coaching fail to set up objective systems of measurement, and certainly measuring the impact of investments in people is notoriously difficult.

Across all the data available is general agreement that Performance Coaching pays for itself six times over. Here are a few examples:

- In 2001, Metrix Global was employed to undertake a Return on Investment Study at Nortel and computed a return of 530 per cent based on 43 interviews, or 790 per cent taking into account the impact on staff retention.

- *CA Magazine*, in a March 2004 article, reported that Price Waterhouse Coopers has been using coaching worldwide since 1998 and estimates its return at six to one.
- In 2004 Manchester Consulting (US) reviewed 100 coached clients and also showed a six times return. The review (published in the *Manchester Review*) notes that significant business results were:
  - Improved productivity (53 per cent)
  - Better quality work product (48 per cent)
  - Greater organisational strength (48 per cent)
  - Better relationships with direct reports (77 per cent)
  - Better relationships with supervisors (71 per cent)
  - Improved teamwork (67 per cent)
  - Better relationships with peers (63 per cent)
  - Greater job satisfaction (61 per cent)

Six to one is an enormous ROI. If you get even a fraction of that success through coaching, you're probably going to be extremely satisfied. The techniques have been tested for many years.

- ✓ **Will your behaviour at work change?** If adopting a coaching style seems out of character for you, your colleagues may justifiably be wary of the changes and be unsure about how you can sustain your new style. Be absolutely honest about why you're using coaching and the contexts in which you plan to coach people. You can even give permission for people to point out any occasions when you may lapse from Performance Coaching style. Coaching is a legitimate, work-related activity.
- ✓ **How confidential is this discussion?** People are more likely to open up and give personal opinions and information when a Performance Coaching approach is used. You need to reassure people about how you use such data. Is it to end up on their Human Resources record and affect their chances of advancement or next bonus? If so, they are likely to remain pretty tight-lipped. All parties agree the boundaries in which confidentiality will operate. We consider confidentiality in more detail in Chapter 4.

## Structuring the Process

Unlike most social interactions, professional communication is planned communication. When you're coaching, keep a clear idea of where you're going, what you're trying to achieve, and how much time you have available. In this section we give a coaching structure and associated tools to help you shape your Performance Coaching. Chapter 3 gives you a more in-depth structure to work from.

## Taking stock

You probably do more coaching than you realise. Reflect for a few moments and consider the following:

- ✓ Over the last month, when have you used coaching techniques?
- ✓ Who was involved?
- ✓ What was your purpose?
- ✓ What went well?
- ✓ What could have been better?
- ✓ What was the outcome?
- ✓ What outcome did you want?
- ✓ Where do you see giving coaching as being of most use to you?
- ✓ What specific people do you have in mind to coach?
- ✓ What do you feel your best coaching skills are?
- ✓ What do you need to take away from this experience?

## *Agreeing aims: Are we on the same page?*

The first stage of the Performance Coaching process is to agree the aims of the coaching activity with your colleague. This discussion need not be a lengthy process but make sure that you're both on the same page and that the agreed aims are achievable. Ask for your colleague's understanding of the purpose and possible outcome of the Performance Coaching. How realistic is it? Careful exploration at this stage avoids a false start and disappointment on both sides when goals are not achieved.

The primary aim of Performance Coaching is to improve performance. For the coaching to be successful, you need to agree detailed specific aims for the various elements that make up the area identified for development. You must also ensure that these aims are measurable and have agreed completion dates. (For more on setting goals, see Chapter 3).

## *Awareness: Where am I right now?*

In Performance Coaching, you must ensure real awareness of what's currently happening for yourself and your colleague before embarking on a process of change. As Performance Coach, you can guide colleagues to a clearer understanding of their situation. Don't make assumptions. Talk with the people being coached about what you see happening and try to get them to understand and agree.



Clarity about what is happening at the moment is perhaps the most important aspect of coaching. You don't always have to know why something is happening – what's important is discovering how you can coach your colleague to do things differently in order to improve. Knowing what is happening now is the starting point in recognising the gap between where you are and where you want to be.

## *Analysis: What are my options?*

The next step is to analyse what you've observed and what your colleague has experienced. From this analysis, you can discuss and evaluate the options to determine what can be done differently. Your aim is for your colleague to recognise things that he can do for himself.



During the analysis stage the aim is for you and your colleague to get ideas from the experience, not to find fault or focus on errors.

## *Action: So, what can I change?*

In Performance Coaching, the action stage is an opportunity to discuss options rather than a test or challenge that you put your colleague through. To make the action stage effective, you can prompt your colleague to work out what he can do with your support.

You may find that your role is to encourage your colleague to test out new horizons, or to rein in his impulsive desire to try everything. Being able to calibrate actions to the exact abilities and stage of the individual is more likely to ensure success at each stage.

Although action is the bit of the process that gets things done and is highly visible, make sure that you fully explore the other stages so that you can be sure that the actions are the right ones at the right time.

## *Assessment: How did I do?*

After coaching, the final element of the process is assessing the performance to enable further progress. The first opinion that matters here is that of your colleague. How does he feel he did? How realistic is he in his assessment? If you're dealing with a perfectionist, he may believe nothing has been achieved and he may regard the whole exercise as a failure. Your job is to be the voice of reason, challenging assumptions and demanding more balance in his assessment. Honest feedback and positive reinforcement are vital at this stage.

Use the assessment as a review mechanism to evaluate the degree of success achieved and the insights gained, and to identify further opportunities for improvement. The assessment also gives you the chance to reflect on your own development and performance.

Perhaps your colleague has an over-inflated sense of achievement. In such cases you need to help your colleague evaluate the outcomes he's achieved and, if possible, to seek external feedback from others.



When Performance Coaching, recognise that the people you coach may often have greater skill and ability in their specific field than you do, but that without your impartial eye and experience they may find it difficult to improve. For example, Wimbledon finalists are usually far better players than their coaches, but the coaching makes all the difference.

## *Activity: Here's the script!*

Of course, you wouldn't dream of slavishly sticking to a script during actual coaching. However, sometimes a clear structure and examples can be useful – and a good discipline. Try working through the questions in Table 1-1 with your colleague and see just how far you can get. Adapt the questions to your own style of language where necessary. Record your answers and check whether they achieved your purpose. The Appendix has a blank form that you can photocopy and fill in.

| <b>Table 1-1 Coaching Questions for Different Stages</b> |                                     |                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stage</b>                                             | <b>Sample Questions</b>             | <b>Purpose</b>                                   |
| <b>Stage 1: Agreeing Aims</b>                            | What are you trying to achieve?     | Clear objectives                                 |
|                                                          | When are you going to do it?        | Agreed dates                                     |
|                                                          | How will you know you've succeeded? | Measurement                                      |
| <b>Stage 2: Awareness</b>                                | What is happening now?              | Clear picture of current actions                 |
|                                                          | What have you done so far?          | Review of relevant achievements however slight   |
|                                                          | What are the consequences?          | Effect of current actions                        |
|                                                          | What do you want to be different?   | Where your colleague is and where he wants to be |

| <i><b>Stage</b></i>        | <i><b>Sample Questions</b></i>             | <i><b>Purpose</b></i>       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Stage 3: Analysis</b>   | What can you change?                       | Identify possibilities      |
|                            | What are the options?                      | Broaden vision              |
|                            | How can you change it?                     | Seek solutions              |
|                            | What are the risks?                        | Evaluate choices            |
|                            | What are the barriers?                     | Obstacles to overcome       |
| <b>Stage 4: Action</b>     | What are you going to do?                  | Clear action steps          |
|                            | Who is going to do what?                   | Define responsibilities     |
|                            | When are you going to do it?               | Agree milestones            |
|                            | What do you need to help you?              | Determine support           |
| <b>Stage 5: Assessment</b> | What actually happened?                    | Clarify outcomes            |
|                            | Was this what you wanted?                  | Evaluate degree of success  |
|                            | What have you gained from this experience? | Discoveries made            |
|                            | How can you improve?                       | Establish further potential |

EXAMPLE



## Different strokes for different folks

Here are a few illustrations of how Performance Coaching can help many different people:

- ✓ **James.** You know that James just carried out an excellent piece of work for your key client. Why would you want to carry out Performance Coaching? 'If it ain't broke don't fix it' would be a common cry. On the contrary, this success is an excellent opportunity for coaching. Ask James questions such as, 'What went right with this client?', 'What was the most critical activity?', 'What would you do differently?', and 'Which of your particular behaviours led to the success?'. In this way, you lock in the components of success and build James's confidence so that he performs even better next time.
- ✓ **Helen.** Helen shows great promise, has met all her targets, and is beginning to grow out of her current job. Now is the time to start coaching her to take over some of the activities you, as her manager, normally carry out. Perhaps you want her to take your place at a key meeting. Prior to the meeting, coach her using questions such as, 'What do you expect the key issues to be?', 'How
- would you need to prepare in order to feel confident about taking part in the discussion?', and 'What would you need to do to feel that you'd performed at your best?'
- ✓ **Louise.** Although she has excellent qualifications and has done good work, you're sure that Louise is capable of a great deal more. You suspect that low confidence is holding her back. You want to help her develop, so you need to focus on ensuring that she's aware of her successes and can build on these by expanding her repertoire. Start by asking her, 'How do you feel you're getting on?', 'What has been a real success?', 'What would develop your confidence?', and 'What help do you need to reach your potential?'
- ✓ **Sanjeev.** Sanjeev is full of energy, has no idea how to say 'no', and usually pulls things off even though he sometimes has to stay up all night. In order to keep his performance more consistent and help him to go the distance, you need to challenge him about prioritising. Ask, 'What is the key issue here?' and 'How can you select the critical things to focus on?'