

How Do I Coach Someone Who Doesn't Want To Be Coached?

This is a question that crops up on every coaching workshop I run so it's clearly a common concern shared by many managers. Do you feel that way? And is it holding you back from even trying?

There are several underlying issues that need to be addressed:

1. What are your reasons for believing that someone wouldn't want to be coached?
2. How do you genuinely feel about coaching and its application?
3. What's your relationship like with that person?
4. Putting aside coaching for a moment, how effectively are you managing that person day to day?

I ask this, for it's usually raised in the context of line manager and direct report. The implication from the question is that coaching is a negative thing, perhaps regarded as remedial and only employed when someone's underperforming. It could be quite easy, in fact, for a member of staff to think that, because people's understanding of what coaching is varies enormously.

It's worth considering your own attitude to coaching. For example, do you regard it as a constructive, supportive style of conversation or as a way of dealing with people who aren't quite up to scratch? Your attitude will influence how, when and who you coach and could be limiting the huge range of possibilities for using a coaching style of conversation during any given day.

And, most importantly of all, in my opinion, is how you are carrying out the core elements of your management role. How strong is your relationship with that member of staff? What action are you taking to strengthen it further? How much faith do you have in their ability to do a good job? How are you helping them to achieve at least the minimum expected level of performance? If you were starting from scratch with that person, how differently might you act and behave towards them?

There are usually two sides to every story. Check that you're not imagining perceived barriers, or that you're not the cause of the barrier.

When I met Graham Alexander (the creator of the world-renowned GROW Model) recently, I grabbed the opportunity to ask him how he responds to this very question. His response was straightforward:

"What are you, the line manager, doing to get that individual to a state of readiness to be coached? That's your management challenge."

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