

How to Introduce Coaching to Your Team

You've attended a coaching skills workshop. You feel inspired. You've been coached and found it thoroughly beneficial. Now you're wondering how you can use coaching in real life with your team. You start pondering your options:

- I could just start asking more open questions.
- I could build coaching into regular meetings.
- I could look out for 'Coachable Moments'.
- I could find other ways just to build it in without them really noticing, or
- I could tell my team I've been on a course and I'm going to be coaching them from now on.

In our experience, the majority of managers shy away from the direct approach. They're nervous about people's reactions. So much so that some almost talk themselves out of coaching anyone at all, in case it's noticed. "What will my team say when I start asking all these questions?" is a typical comment.

Our response is, "What's the point of investing in training, benefitting from it, and then not having the courage and conviction to use what you've learned?" It's better for your team to notice a difference – and in this case it should be a positive one – than to be aware that you've had training and see no change in you whatsoever. A coaching culture is only created by every individual manager playing their part.

Just think. You've learned a new skill. You've practised it. You're competent. And even if you make a mistake and veer off-course from the model you've been taught your coachee is unlikely to know!

Believe in yourself and try the following.

Bring your team together to:

1. Establish a collective understanding of what coaching is.

- Differentiate coaching from instructing, mentoring or counselling, with which it's often confused.
- Provide a definition such as Graham Alexander's ([click here](#)) or, more memorably, "Coaching is simply a conversation with a purpose", as my Business Partner, Sharon Nicholl, likes to say.
- Invite the team to share their experiences of being coached – both positive and negative – inside and outside work.

2. Check out the team's readiness for coaching.

According to David Clutterbuck's *Coaching the Team at Work*, some of the critical questions to test readiness for team coaching are:

- Does the team see itself as a team?
- If not, does it see value in becoming a team?
- Are members prepared to commit to tackling issues through open dialogue?
- Are there existing conflicts that need to be addressed first?
- Is there a genuine desire for change?
- To what extent does the team understand the coaching process?

3. Conduct a live coaching demonstration.

- Seek a volunteer, possibly in advance.
- Ask them to think of a real issue on which to be coached (often people select generic but relevant topics such as becoming more organised and productive; dealing with a difficult situation; preparing for a forthcoming meeting etc.)
- Coach them in front of the team for 10-15 minutes using the GROW Model.
- Encourage an open discussion about the effectiveness of the coaching approach.
- Seek the volunteer's comments about how it felt and its usefulness.
- Ask for feedback on the skills and technique applied by you as the coach.

4. Discuss the applications of coaching for individuals and the team.

- When and how could coaching be used? Examples include one-to-ones and appraisals; informal responses to observed behaviours and actions; when asked for your advice, opinion or assistance; when setting up projects and reviewing them at their conclusion; at team planning days etc.
- Decide with the team their preferred options for coaching and how to get started.
- Agree ground rules such as confidentiality, how topics get on the coaching agenda etc.

5. Discuss issues of feedback.

- How will the manager give feedback to individuals/the team using a coaching approach?
- What opportunities will the team members have to feed back on their manager's coaching skills?

6. Agree a standing agenda item for future team meetings.

This should be along the lines of '**Coaching, Performance and Learning**' and the questions to be asked are:

- What have been the benefits of coaching on the team?
- What can we do better?

By holding such an initial meeting, where coaching is introduced openly and clearly to the team, you set the scene for a positive future and, at the same time, make a personal contribution towards creating a coaching culture in your organisation.

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