

## **Ready, Steady...Coach!**

Let's start with an assumption. You really do want to coach. In other words, I don't have to convince you of the benefits of coaching for yourself, your coachees, and your organisation. You're already motivated and raring to go.

So, how exactly do you get started?

### **1. It's ok to start small.**

Sometimes we worry about how people might react if we suddenly do things differently. Don't let this put you off. How about starting small and building up from there? For example:

- Start asking more open questions
- Practise listening much better to people
- Summarise what you're hearing
- Keep your opinions out of it
- Keep the conversation focused and constructive
- Base conversations on the GROW Model, i.e.:

**G**(oal) - What do you want or need to achieve?

**R**(eality) - What's the situation right now?

**O**(ptions) - What could you do to get there?

**W**(rap-up) - What have you decided to do? When exactly?

This is it stripped back to its simplest form and ideal for remembering it while you're speaking to someone. Of course, you can change the wording so that you feel comfortable with what you're saying. Just remember, though, not to change it to 4 closed questions!

### **2. Grab hold of 'Coachable Moments'.**

It's quite likely that instead of formal, planned coaching sessions, you'll identify lots of 'coachable moments' instead. These are opportunities that present themselves throughout the day where you can respond using a coaching style of conversation.

Examples of 'coachable moments' include:

#### **Being asked for your advice, opinion or assistance.**

Try a non-directive approach this time, especially if you've been asked the same thing previously and given an answer which seems to have had no effect. A technique might be to ask what exactly they're trying to do; how come they're stuck; what they've done

previously in such a situation; what ideas do they have to resolve the problem; and what they believe the best way forward is?

**Observing inappropriate behaviour** such as dreadful interaction with customers or an aggressive telephone manner.

You have 3 options here:

1. Say nothing
2. Tut and shake your head
3. Speak up and get them to consider the impact of their behaviour.

Whilst the first two are definitely the easiest, they're not exactly going to deliver great results now or in the future. Be brave and speak up. For example, ask them to put themselves in the customer's shoes; how might they be feeling as a result of the conversation; what went well; what could they have done better; what have they learned; how will they respond more effectively when a similar situation arises?

The main thing to note is that you are not shouting, screaming or yelling at them. You are having a civilised, focused conversation with the aim of making a decision about what needs to happen next time.

### **3. Integrate coaching into everyday tasks.**

With practice, it will become easy to integrate a coaching style into your typical managerial responsibilities such as 1:1s, appraisals, team meetings, planning sessions, dealing with colleagues/other departments/partners/customers.

What's your normal way of working?

1. Do you consult and engage?
2. Do you really listen and concentrate on what people are saying without being automatically judgemental?
3. Do you ask questions to find out more because you're curious?
4. Do you use your subject-matter knowledge to ask insightful questions and get people to think for themselves?
5. Are you open and trusting?
6. Do you see the good in people?
7. Do you believe that people are capable?
8. Do you encourage people to use their initiative?
9. Do you treat people fairly?
10. Do you encourage a culture of creativity and innovation?

These actions, behaviours and attitudes will serve you well as a coach. From the list above, what could you be doing more of?

#### **4. Be conscious of coaching opportunities all around you.**

Do you have conversations with people at work? Then you have plenty of opportunity to coach. These conversations can either be planned or unplanned, formal or informal. What they have in common is that as a result, decisions have been made to move an issue forward and this will impact positively on performance.

Typical topics that managers use coaching to address include:

- Developing leadership in others
- Developing a skill e.g. presenting, report-writing etc.
- Improving time management/personal organisation
- Solving a problem
- Resolving interpersonal conflict
- Work-life balance
- Career planning
- Embracing and delivering change
- 'Hot topics' i.e. issues that are important, urgent and need careful thought to work out how to tackle them

All of the above are ultimately about developing people in order to deliver even better results.

#### **5. Think big.**

Finally, think big and **s-t-r-e-t-c-h** yourself and your team!

- How can you develop your team to be **superb** at what they do?
- If you could **achieve** anything at all, what would you want that to be?
- What have you been **dying to change** and now have the confidence to do it?

**My challenge to you is:** What will **you do** in the next month **to shine** as a brilliant coach?

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