

# Coaching and Mentoring

By Olivier Serrat

Coaching and mentoring can inspire and empower employees, build commitment, increase productivity, grow talent, and promote success. They are now essential elements of modern managerial practice. However, many companies still have not established related schemes. By not doing so, they also fail to capitalize on the experience and knowledge seasoned personnel can pass on.

## Rationale

High-performance, contemporary organizations know that a company is only as good as its employees. They place strong emphasis on personal attributes in selecting and developing staff. However, this does not come without challenges, not least of which may be (significant) gaps in the experience, knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, behaviors, or leadership required to perform demanding jobs. Formal training courses may vaunt wholesale transfer of these; but employees will not likely stretch to their full potential without dedicated guidance that inspires, energizes, and facilitates. In the new millennium,<sup>1</sup> good coaching and mentoring schemes are deemed a highly effective way to help people, through talking, increase self-direction, self-esteem, efficacy, and accomplishments.



## Definition

Both coaching and mentoring are an approach to management and a set of skills to nurture staff and deliver results. They are, fundamentally, learning and development activities

*To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.*

—John Henry Newman

that share similar roots despite lively debate among academics and practitioners as to the meaning (and implications) of each word.<sup>2</sup> A good coach will also mentor

<sup>1</sup> The 1990s saw the rapid emergence of coaching as an identifiable industry.

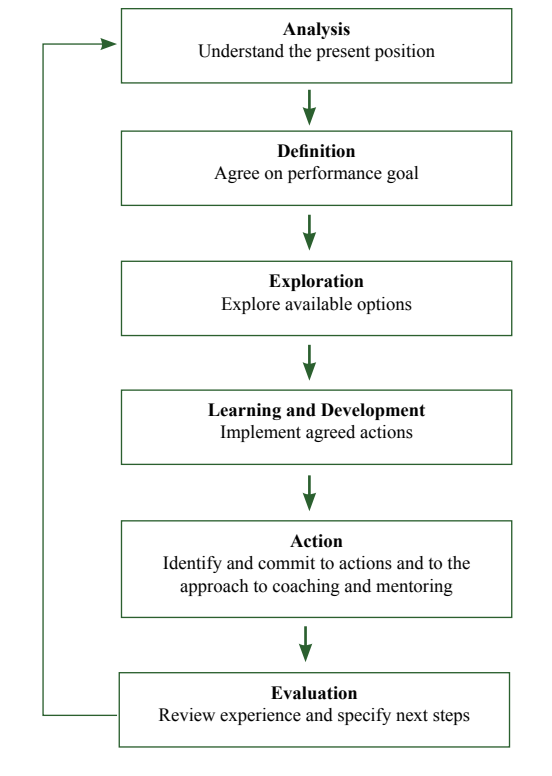
<sup>2</sup> Differences of opinion have been fueled by the wide range of contexts in which coaching and mentoring take place; by the perceptions of stakeholders as to the purpose of related conversations; by resulting variations in the application of coaching and mentoring activities; and by not counting commercial, practical, and ethical considerations. Somewhat elitist definitions have it that coaching means encouraging employees to do their jobs well, while mentoring is about helping top performers excel. (The people performance potential model that categorizes teams and organizations, not individuals, as icebergs, problem children, backbone, and stars is an accepted extension of this approach.) From there, the two camps specify that the attributes of each activity can be distinguished according to focus, role, relationship, source of influence, personal returns, and arena. The psychologically minded, on the other hand, have viewed coaching and mentoring as adjuncts to therapy. (Attempting to fix poor performance is termed counseling.) Possibly, the main distinction one might make in differentiating coaching from mentoring is that the former does not necessarily rely on the specific experience and knowledge of the coach being greater than that of the client, and may emphasize cross-disciplinary skills. Also, mentoring usually refers to one-on-one relationships, whereas coaching can target both individuals and teams.

and a good mentor will coach too, as appropriate to the situation and the relationship. Hence, these *Knowledge Solutions*, which relate to individuals, treat the two terms interchangeably: both are related processes for analysis, reflection, and action, intended to enable employees achieve their full potential with a focus on skills, performance, and “life” (personal) coaching and mentoring.<sup>3</sup> (A substantial side effect of investments to bring out potential is that organizations will enable seasoned personnel to delegate more and supervise less.)<sup>4</sup> Unlike conventional training, coaching and mentoring concentrate on the person, not the subject; they draw out rather than put in; they develop rather than impose; they reflect rather than direct; they are continuous—not one-time—events. In brief, they are a form of change facilitation.

### Applications

Coaching and mentoring can be used whenever performance or motivation levels must be increased. There are many applications, each to be looked at from as many points of view as possible. Recurring opportunities relate to developing careers, solving problems, overcoming conflicts, and remotivating staff. In all instances, feedback should be specific, factual, and objective. (Ideally, the final stage of a coaching and mentoring cycle should form a platform from which to initiate another, with a view to long-term learning and development.)

**Figure 1: Structured Coaching and Mentoring**



Source: Adapted from John Eaton and Roy Johnson. 2001. *Coaching Successfully*. Dorling Kindersley Limited.

*And therein we find the secret to Peter Drucker: He had a remarkable ability not just to give the right answers, but more important, to ask the right questions—questions that would shift our entire frame of reference. Throughout his work runs a theme that highlights a fundamental shift, away from achievement—jettisoning with the flick of his hand, as if he were waving away an irritating gnat, any consideration of the question of what you can “get” in this world—to the question of contribution. Drucker’s relentless discipline to say “no thank you” to invitations and inquiries stemmed from thinking always about how he could best contribute with his one lifetime.*

Source: Excerpted from Jim Collins. 2005. *Lessons From A Student Of Life*. Business Week. 28 November. Available: [www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05\\_48/b3961007.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_48/b3961007.htm)

<sup>3</sup> The moral is that it is essential to first determine exactly what the needs are to make sure that the mentor coach can supply the type and level of service required, whatever that service might be called. Clearly, one size does not fit all: to profile needs (without being distracted by details) it is important to look at demographic, motivating, and learning factors; the subject’s background; and his or her availability.

<sup>4</sup> Mentor coaches draw benefits too. Coaching and mentoring help develop leadership and communications skills, and learn new perspectives and ways of thinking. Significantly, good mentor coaches are never motivated entirely by money: personal development is a very important aspect of what is a two-way process.

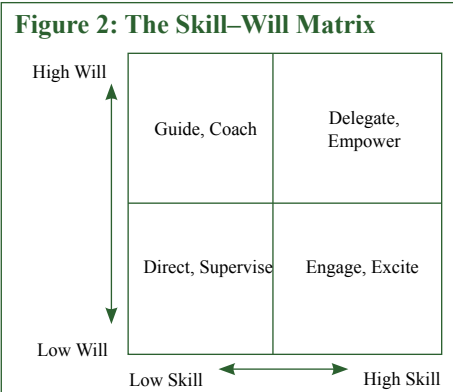
**Table: Deciding When and How to Coach and Mentor**

Reason to Coach and Mentor	Actions to Take
<b>Building Skills:</b> Set up opportunities for new skills to be learned and practiced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use coaching and mentoring to break up large-scale tasks into smaller ones, gradually introducing new skills.</li> <li>Before selecting a training program, coach and mentor your staff to identify performance targets they want to achieve.</li> </ul>
<b>Progressing Projects:</b> Oversee progress and monitor any problems on projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link coaching and mentoring sessions with progress reports over the life of the project.</li> <li>Work through problems that could hinder the successful completion of the project.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing Careers:</b> Prepare staff for promotion or show them a clear career path.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work on coaching and mentoring goals that could result in recognition for staff achievements.</li> <li>Focus on long-term projects that are challenging and bring out potential, rather than small-scale jobs.</li> </ul>
<b>Solving Problems:</b> Help staff to identify problems and possible routes to a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage staff to define the problem and to come up with their own route to a solution.</li> <li>Remain sympathetic to your staff's difficulties, while encouraging them to deal with problems robustly.</li> </ul>
<b>Brainstorming:</b> Direct the creative input of the team to keep projects on track.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accentuate the generation of creative options rather than getting bogged down in problems.</li> <li>In team coaching and mentoring, take a lead by offering creative ideas of your own, and then invite the team to assess them.</li> </ul>
<b>Overcoming Conflicts:</b> Diffuse disagreements among team members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coach and mentor staff to develop greater insights into others' perspectives and therefore avoid misunderstandings.</li> </ul>
<b>Remotivating Staff:</b> Restore enthusiasm and commitment within the team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish people's needs and aspirations and link these to performance targets.</li> <li>Be prepared to dig for the issues that really concern the employee and be ready to talk them through.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from John Eaton and Roy Johnson. 2001. *Coaching Successfully*. Dorling Kindersley Limited.

## Process

For any single coaching and mentoring goal there is a cycle of six basic stages, each of which hinges on effective questioning, active listening, clear feedback, and well-organized sessions. First, the mentor coach and the client get to know one another to establish clarity and rapport, engage, and agree what the goal is;<sup>5</sup> second, they discuss the current reality, to which the mentor coach will adapt the coaching and mentoring style;<sup>6</sup> third, they explore available options; fourth, they identify and commit to a course of action (at a pace the client is comfortable with) in line with shared expectations (that might involve training); fifth, the client implements the agreed actions with the support of and clear (meaning constructive and positive) feedback from the coach; sixth, the mentor coach and the client consider what has been learned and how they might build on that knowledge, possibly by initiating a new coaching and mentoring cycle. All the while,



Source: Adapted from Max Landsberg. 1996. *The Tao of Coaching: Boost Your Effectiveness at Work by Inspiring and Developing Those Around You*. HarperCollins.

<sup>5</sup> Goal setting forms the crux of coaching and mentoring, springing from a sound diagnosis of the capabilities and attitudes of the client. The smart goals agreed from there are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timed.

<sup>6</sup> Coaching and mentoring styles typically lie within a skill–will matrix. Skill depends on experience, training, understanding, and role perception. Will depends on desire to achieve, incentives, security, and confidence. Coaching and mentoring styles should vary in accordance with a client's endowment of each.

the mentor coach should, with empathy and sensitivity, encourage the client to come to his or her own conclusions. Mentor coaches must have a high degree of emotional intelligence, viz., self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills.<sup>7</sup> This is essential to achieving a good relationship that combines autonomy and shared responsibility toward accomplishment of the performance goal. Last but not least, everything that is said must remain confidential.

### Appraising

The purpose of appraisal is to identify accomplishments and make sure new performance goals are realistic. Appraisal will call for a joint review and a development plan. The joint review should cover (i) the last period's objectives, (ii) examples of achievements, (iii) the client's self-rating, (iv) the mentor coach's appreciation, (v) the next period's objectives, and (vi) the client's comments on these. The development plan

*I don't know any other way to lead but by example.*

—Don Shula

should specify (i) the long-term objectives, (ii) immediate objectives, (iii) the competencies required, (iv) training needs (if any), (v) the actions agreed, and (vi) the review date agreed.

### Evaluating

Evaluation determines merit or worth, assesses impact, identifies improvements, and provides accountability. When assessing coaching and mentoring programs, five critical levels of performance, for which data and information must be gathered and analyzed, apply:

- Level 1: reaction (did the clients like the interventions?)
- Level 2: learning and development (did the clients benefit as planned?)
- Level 3: organizational support (did the clients receive the institutional support needed?)
- Level 4: behavior (do the clients apply their learning and new competencies in the workplace)
- Level 5: results (what is the impact on the organization?)

*The miracle, or the power, that elevates the few is to be found in their industry, application, and perseverance under the prompting of a brave, determined spirit.*

—Mark Twain

### Afterword

All development is self-development. One cannot force employees to develop: they must want that themselves.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, what an organization can do is to help set an environment that makes it more likely its staff will want to learn, grow, and succeed.

*Yet when asked to spend time with an unknown and unproven young man seeking his way in the world, Drucker freely gave the better part of a day to mentor and give guidance. I had the honor of writing about that day in the foreword to "The Daily Drucker," wherein I recount how Drucker altered the trajectory of my life by framing our discussion around one simple question: "What do you want to contribute?"*

Source: Excerpted from Jim Collins. 2005. Lessons From A Student Of Life. *Business Week*. 28 November. Available: [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05\\_48/b3961007.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_48/b3961007.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Not everyone can be a mentor coach. Even if emotional intelligence skills can be learned, some are more naturally gifted with "people" skills than others. Before committing, would-be practitioners should ask themselves: Do I enjoy encouraging and motivating others? Do I want to contribute to the growth and success of others? Do I want to share my experience and knowledge with others? What specific expertise can I claim and offer? In what areas am I willing to help? Am I comfortable with posing challenging questions? Am I prepared to regularly invest time and energy in coaching and mentoring? What is my preferred duration for a partnership? What is my preferred frequency and method of contact? What type of client would I prefer to coach and mentor? Can I describe the professional and personal qualities of that client? Do I want to coach and mentor someone from the same profession or the same career path? How would coaching and mentoring add to my sense of contribution and community? How would coaching and mentoring contribute to my own goals? Are there any areas that I do not want to visit?

<sup>8</sup> The conscious competence learning model, for instance, takes a learner from stage 1 (unconscious incompetence) to stage 4 (unconscious competence), having passed through stage 2 (conscious incompetence) and stage 3 (conscious competence). Yet, some will resist progression even to stage 2 because they refuse to acknowledge or accept the relevance and benefit of a particular skill or ability.

**Further Reading**

ADB. 2009a. *Working in Teams*. Manila. Available: [www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/working-in-teams.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/working-in-teams.pdf)  
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John Eaton and Roy Johnson. 2001. *Coaching Successfully*. Dorling Kindersley Limited.

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