

# Coaching

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## Key learning points

- There are many definitions of coaching so we need to check to avoid misunderstandings.
- We can move along the push-pull continuum to make our coaching style suit the need.
- Coaching uses skills we probably already have, and techniques we already know, but we may well have to shift our focus to work within the coachee's map of the world.
- Organisational coaching can usefully borrow ideas from sports, music, life coaching and elsewhere.



both terms. In fact, it is so confusing that the European Coaching & Mentoring Centre (see back page) has decided to run the terms together and refer to coach/mentoring, so that people are at least prompted to check with each other what they actually mean.

## Some definitions of coaching

*The Times English Dictionary* (HarperCollins 2000) says a coach is a trainer or instructor; that the word comes from the Hungarian name of the town where coaches (as vehicles) were first made; and that it probably comes from the idea of the instructor carrying the pupil. There are many other definitions (as many as there are writers about coaching?), including the following:

- Coaching is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another (Downey 1999).
- Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance (Whitmore *et al.* 1996).

- Coaching is a pragmatic humanism. ... Coaching is also a method to enhance performance and a leadership style that gets results (Rosinski 2003).

## Why coaching?

There are several reasons why you might need to know about coaching:

- You teach coaching skills to managers who coach as part of their role.
- You teach coaching skills to staff who will be coaching their colleagues.
- You provide coaching as an addition to the training programmes you run.
- You get approached during courses by people with problems.
- Your role includes providing a coaching service.
- You need to coach managers to stop them putting people on courses unnecessarily.

## European Coaching & Mentoring Centre

The EMCC was set up in 2002 by five founding trustees – Sir John Whitmore, Professor David Clutterbuck, Professor David Megginson, Eric Parsloe and Julie Hay. It aims to be an umbrella body that will bring together practitioners, organisations and providers across Europe in order to establish and maintain standards

for coach/mentoring. It has already produced a code of ethics and run an annual conference, and it is producing an e-journal and conducting research into coach/mentoring competencies, including identifying the various formats that exist. For more information go to [www.emccouncil.org](http://www.emccouncil.org)

## Case study

### An inner game experience

A couple of years ago I went with a colleague to a workshop on coaching being run by Tim Gallwey at Queens. As I expected only to be in the audience, I went in tracksuit and trainers. Others had done the same and I assumed they too had opted for comfort. Part way through the session, Tim asked who were the volunteers who had agreed to be coached. Everyone looked at those in tracksuits, including me. I promptly muttered something about my total lack of ability to play tennis – and found myself being picked out by Tim as someone who would make a good coaching subject.

Soon after, I was on a tennis court, confessing that at school I could never hit the ball – I always had the proverbial hole in my racket. The way Tim coached was pretty miraculous because I went on to hit most of the balls back – without even realising I was doing it. What he did was in two stages: first, he had me doing something other than hitting the ball back; and, second, he had me focusing on something else so that I hit the ball without thinking. To begin with he got me to use the racket like a hockey stick – which meant I had no trouble hitting the balls back

along the ground. Then he began to throw the balls to me but told me not to try to hit them – instead I was to call out when the ball bounced – and when I could do that, he had me call out when I would have expected to hit the ball. By this time I was actually hitting back most balls (someone collected them and showed me afterwards).

So what did he do to bring about this transformation? His inner game principles (Gallwey 1975) can be summarised as:

### Potential minus Interference equals Performance.

My interference was believing I couldn't hit the ball, supplemented by another belief – that came into effect during the coaching session – that I couldn't see a ball in flight either. The inner game coaching style meant that I was so busy paying attention to details that these unhelpful beliefs got crowded out of my mind.

It seems we can coach anyone in just about anything if we believe that they have the potential – all we have to do is work out how to direct their attention to some aspect of the task so they forget to run their interference.

## References

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## Author

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## The skills of coaching

We will not go into detail about coaching skills here because they are all general skills that you will have developed for other reasons, albeit sometimes with a different focus. They include:

- contracting,
  - establishing and maintaining rapport,
  - listening,
  - questioning,
  - reflecting – paraphrasing and summarising,
  - empathising,
  - highlighting inconsistencies,
  - evaluating;
- plus being able to work with people, use techniques and models, for:
- assessing and evaluating,
  - problem solving,
  - option generation,
  - goal/objective setting,
  - action planning.

In addition to developing their skills and applications of techniques, the coach needs to be able to stand in the shoes of the coachee or learner, to work within the coachee's map of the world, and to set aside their own preconceptions and assumptions. Good coaches have coaches of their own who support them and challenge them to become more aware of how they interact during coaching sessions, and who encourage them in their continuing professional development as coaches.

### Watch out for gremlins

Richard Carson, in *Taming your Gremlin*, offers a metaphor for our internal sabotaging voices. Laura

Whitworth *et al.* (1998) and colleagues relate this to co-active coaching, a format that emphasises the process between coach and client, and reminds us that gremlins can afflict both parties. What gremlins do you have that might get in the way of your being an effective coach?

### How to choose a coaching approach

A key consideration is whether to pull or push or go somewhere in between (see Figure 1). This will depend on factors such as the innate potential of the learner, the consequences of error, and the learner's current state of competence. Is it something they could do with prompting, such as needing to be more confident? Is it serious if they get it wrong, as in damaging a customer relationship or breaking safety rules? Is it a natural progression of what they can do already or does it require completely new skills or knowledge?

### The GROW model

This is one of the most quoted models of coaching. It sits near the right-hand end of the continuum. GROW as an acronym seems to have emerged after various sports coaches were influenced by the work of Tim Gallwey (1975). Miles Downey (1999) adds TO before GROW and shows it as the initial stage of choosing the TOpic for the coaching, so that we have the following:

- 1 **Topic** – what shall we work on (today, this session, generally)?

- 2 **Goal** – what are the desired outcomes for this session, or at the end of several sessions, this week, this month?
- 3 **Reality** – what is the situation now, what CASK (circumstances, attitudes, skills, knowledge) is the learner in (Hay 2003)?
- 4 **Options** – how many possibilities can be identified (by the coachee), what actions might they take?
- 5 **Wrap up** – or What now, What, When, Who, Where, How or Will, as in do you have the will or motivation to do it?

The key to the GROW model is questioning. The coach starts by asking the coachee what they want to work on; then asks what the coachee's goals are (and they may help them to clarify these, make them more SMART and so on); next asks about the coachee's situation so that the coachee becomes more aware; then asks the coachee what options they might have (and may prompt them to recognise things they've overlooked); and finally asks what they will do now (and may confront any perceived lack of motivation or unrealistic plans).

### Instructional coaching – RADAR

There will still be times when a more instructional form of coaching is needed: for example, something requiring technical expertise that would take the learner a long time to discover through trial and error, or where there are safety implications if they get it wrong. For these, we need to work further to the left of the continuum.

RADAR – stages for instructional coaching		
Stage	What you do	Skills you need
<b>Rapport</b>	Putting the learner at ease, getting to know each other, becoming comfortable. Developing the relationship. Agreeing the 'contract', how to work together.	Establishing rapport, relationship building and contract setting.
<b>Analysis</b>	Agreeing the objectives of the coaching. Identifying the performance gap. Identifying strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and potential problems. Planning what to do.	Questioning, listening and reflecting skills, plus techniques for objective setting and planning whether and how to describe or demonstrate.
<b>Description/ Demonstration</b>	Telling or showing the learner what to do. Modelling the correct behaviour for the learner or guiding the learner as they do it themselves.	Effective ways to do the tasks, how to break tasks down into manageable chunks, plus teaching and presenting skills.
<b>Activity</b>	Letting the learner practise the required behaviours. Giving appropriate feedback and guidance.	Able to encourage and reassure the learner, and to give helpful advice in a focused way. The coach also needs to know when to keep quiet.
<b>Review</b>	Evaluating progress. Checking that the coaching has been effective. Planning how to handle any outstanding areas. Reviewing the way the coach and learner have worked together.	Techniques for evaluating, and skills at eliciting feedback from the learner on how effective the coaching has been.

### Life coaching

Life coaching has become something of a growth industry. There are numerous courses for people to learn to be life coaches: some reputable and some offering to change your life and equip you to do the same for others after a weekend of training – and a big fee. Although as a trainer you are unlikely to engage in full-life coaching, there are several elements to it that can be useful as part of other coaching formats. Mulligan (1999) refers to:

- values and goals – how do you prioritise (e.g. money, health, ambition, independence);
- positive mental attitude – improving self-esteem;
- creating a mental oasis – handling emotions and taking responsibility for problems.

You might well want to prompt coachees to consider any one of these. As examples, a coachee

might need to balance their ambition with a need to do the job they have now; someone being coached to do their first presentation might need more help with confidence building than with PowerPoint; a coachee getting stressed about learning new tasks might need help to relax.

### Sports, music and motivation

Much of the current interest in coaching has been stimulated by various sporting figures entering the business world – particularly Sir John Whitmore (motor racing), David Hemery (athletics), David Whitaker (hockey) and Miles Downey (tennis). We now have an additional source of ideas from Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic, who coaches musicians, ensembles and orchestras (although he tends to call it leadership). Although these fields undoubtedly have much to contribute, the

models they bring are based on the belief that the individual *wants* to perform. Unfortunately, we sometimes need to coach *reluctant* coachees – people who work because they must, have no expectation of job satisfaction, and little interest in self-development.

At times like this, the notion of motivational metaprogrammes can be invaluable. We operate across a spectrum from *moving towards* to *moving away* from. Those of us (estimated to be around 40%) who *move towards* are motivated by positive outcomes, towards goals, by the vision of the future. Those of us (another 40% estimate) who *move away* from are motivated to avoid negative outcomes and need to have (even fear) the undesirable consequences of lack of action. This can make a big difference to the way we coach someone.

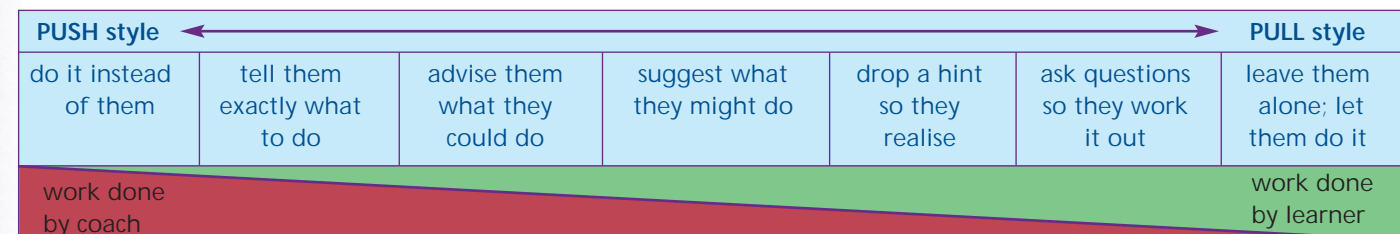


Fig. 1: Coaching styles continuum