

## Coaching – the new HR craze

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About 50 per cent of all information taught from a presentation is forgotten within an hour. Fast forward seven days, and that figure rises to 90 per cent. The idea of simply delivering information to an employee and expecting them retain and benefit from this information is outdated. The new craze that resolves this? Coaching.

Coaching allows for an individual to learn on the job in an atmosphere that is much more engaging than a presentation and will often give an employee the opportunity to learn for themselves. With the right guidance, coaching can become a much more efficient solution compared to the mundane approach of traditional training methods.

But how does coaching differ from other teaching methods? It is not uncommon to experience confusion over seemingly overlapping teaching methods such as coaching, training and mentoring. While it is true these three methods do indeed overlap, they share the common aim of improving the performance of the person or people involved.

### Coaching vs training vs mentoring

While training may incorporate elements of coaching, training is largely a formal process of imparting information. Coaching is about more than “telling” people what to do – it is about encouraging and assisting them to perform the skill or behaviour

that you want them to learn in a task-based activity.

Mentoring, on the other hand, is a relationship-based activity. A mentoring relationship aims to achieve specific goals in areas such as career development, networking, approaching specific projects and striking the right work-life balance, yet these goals will only form a small part of the whole picture.

In most cases, coaching is a formal relationship where the coachee has a specific goal to achieve. Whether short term, long term or a combination of both, coaching goals are always specific. The coach is there to guide the coachee through a formal process, often involving the extensive questions to help the other person to identify what they need to do so as to achieve their objective.

Of course, there will always be instances where a coach needs to issue instruction, but by and large – and in contrast to training – coaching is about leading the coachee to draw their own conclusions over what to do and how to do it.

### A replacement for training?

In essence, coaching is about helping someone to help themselves; it is about getting someone to do something because they want to do it and they believe that it is the right thing to do. Coaching will never replace training but will continue to grow in importance as a fundamental skill needed by managers today.

Managers have increasingly heavy workloads with larger teams, and to be effective themselves, they need coaching as a way that they can empower other people. Give a person a fish and you will feed them for a day, but coach a person to fish and they will be fed for a lifetime.

### **Realising the value**

Experts in training have long recognised the value of coaching, but some industries have been slow to take hold – especially highly technical sectors. The main reason for this is that it is not an easy soft skill to master, requiring a combination of excellent communication and people skills such as listening, questioning,

building rapport and providing feedback.

People in hard-line industries are not always comfortable or capable of using these skills, so it is easy to bypass coaching and focus instead on old-fashioned delegation and traditional classroom-based training. However, the tide is beginning to turn. At BLT, when we are asked to develop leadership training, the number one requirement is training managers how to coach.

In an age where businesses are on a perpetual quest for agility, every manager should be using coaching at least some times. By incorporating coaching into

development programmes, businesses can increase their agility by empowering coaches with the accountability for achieving the goal, creating a culture of ownership.

The coaching process is not only flexible but also can be adapted to the needs of an individual. But it works for the business too, being cost-effective and focussed on the goal in question – meaning that it actually delivers the desired results. Whether part of a formal process or a management style in its own right, coaching encourages innovation and new ways of working, which will, in turn, inspire agility across the business.