

The role of the Coach

Coaching is fundamentally about 3 things:

1. Raising Awareness

Self-awareness is a key pre-requisite for learning and development to take place and people vary greatly in terms of their levels of awareness. Coaching provides a useful means for people to develop a more informed and comprehensive sense of themselves. A very common comment people who are being coached make is “I’ve never thought about it like that before”, or “I’ve never made that connection before, but as we’re speaking I’m realising that....”

...So a key role for coaches is to ‘hold up the mirror’ to people, to help people to see themselves in new and different ways. This heightened awareness provides the basis for people to consider their options and make choices to change.

2. Getting People to Take Responsibility

Very often a perceived barrier to people achieving the outcomes and changes they would like is that they have not yet got themselves to a point where they see a clear opportunity to make things happen. They may have a sense of hopelessness about something they don’t know to tackle. They may be feeling that things are outside their control or perhaps that that it’s someone else’s responsibility to do something. Through coaching people have an opportunity to explore situations and options fully, with a particular focus on the choices they are making and some possible alternatives.

...So coaches have a valuable role to play in supporting and challenging people as they explore situations and start to develop some ideas for change. A good coach recognises that responsibility for action and change always rests with the individual. At the same time they are active in encouraging people to see their opportunities for change.

3. Enabling People to Make Changes

Making changes is what most coaching is about. In order for this to be effective there are a number of things that need to happen. Put simply these are:

- The individual needs to have developed a workable action plan that is doable and that is appropriate to the coaching goals that have been identified
- A clear, simple mechanism for getting feedback / measurement of progress needs to be in place
- The individual's commitment to action needs to be clearly established
- The action plan should include 1 or 2 easy next steps that will be taken within a short time frame (ideally 7 – 10 days).

Often coaching falls down because either an individual's action plan is too vague, too ambitious, uninspiring or not tied in to immediate timescales.

...So a key contribution of coaches is to enable people to work up an action plan that they are committed and able to follow through on. Again, responsibility rests with the individual, but the coach has a valuable role to play in 'steering' the action plan and establishing a feedback loop.

Taking all the above together, the following provides another definition of coaching is:

"Coaching is a goal-directed conversation that results in changes that help enhance performance and learning. Coaching moves people from awareness to responsibility into commitment, action and results."