**TCV Training - Course notes**

**Coaching at Work – creating awareness, responsibility and confidence**

**What is coaching?**

Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them. – John Whitmore

Coaching is the process which helps individuals come to their own conclusions about the best way to achieve improved performance at work. – Ann Baker & Louise Clare

Coaching is the art and skill of facilitating the learning, development and performance of another person. – Caroline Barnett

1 At one end of the spectrum coaching can be about direct skills transfer. You pass on your expertise in a one-to-one situation by explaining, demonstrating, asking questions and allowing for practice. This form of coaching is useful, for example, to

* teach new staff the skills they need for the job
* enable staff to learn new tasks
* help rectify mistakes and problems

2 At the other end of the spectrum coaching is about asking the right questions to encourage the individual to decide what they should do about a particular situation. This helps them to further their own objectives in the context of the organisation.

Whichever type of coaching activity you are involved in, a vital part of the process is to gain people’s commitment through action plans which are reviewed on a regular basis to improve motivation and maintain momentum.

Traditional sports instruction was based around technique with a right and a wrong way to do things.

Timothy Gallwey in *The Inner Game of Tennis* suggested that the biggest obstacles to progress are internal – self-doubt, fear of failure and so on.

If a coach can help a player remove or reduce the internal obstacles to their performance, an unexpected natural ability will flow forth without much need for technical input from the coach.

Coaching therefore includes an attitude of belief in people’s potential. Coaches see people’s potential not their performance.

To get the best out of people we have to believe the best is there.

Unless the manager believes that people possess more capability than they are currently expressing, s/he will not be able to help them express it.

Coaching is an intervention that has as its underlying and ever present goal the building of others’ self belief.

# Barriers to coaching

* “I haven’t the time to spend with people…”
* “They know more about their jobs than I do…”
* “I’m not good at solving people’s problems…”
* “I don’t want to lose control…”
* “I’m not a good communicator…”
* “Staff prefer to be told what to do…”
* “I can’t coach colleagues on the same or a higher grade to me…”
* “As far as I can see there’s nothing in it for me…”
* Time

Coaching is time invested, rather than time wasted. It may seem time-consuming to start with, but in the long-term you’ll be in a better position to delegate tasks to others or ask for their help if you need it. You may also find that because people are taking more responsibility for their work, they spend less time asking you and checking back because they are able to answer questions for themselves.

## Benefits of coaching

To the organisation

* No time away from the job required
* Enhanced teamwork
* More open communication
* Greater understanding of goals by all staff
* Can react quickly to change
* Better range of skills to select from

To a manager

* Less crisis management
* Regarded as a leader
* Less supervision required
* Time to spend on more important activities
* Better relations with colleagues, senior managers, and staff
* Enhanced interpersonal skills

To the individual

* Greater confidence
* More creativity
* Clear objectives
* Better understanding of work role
* High levels of motivation
* Builds problem-solving and decision-making skills
* Welcomes rather than fears change

‘*Hierarchy gives way to support, blame gives way to honest evaluation, external motivators are replaced by self-motivation, protective barriers fall as teams build, change is no longer feared but welcomed, satisfying the boss becomes pleasing the customer. Secrecy and censorship are replaced by openness and honesty, pressure of work becomes challenging work and short-term fire-fighting reactions give way to longer-term strategic thinking*.’ – *Coaching for performance*, John Whitmore

## Coaching opportunities

* Inexperienced learners requiring new skills
* Highly skilled people who want to improve performance
* Following a training course or workshop
* Person undertaking a programme of study or a qualification
* Joint performance review
* Small meetings
* Responding to requests
* By the kettle

**The nature of coaching**

We can approach learning about coaching from three perspectives – the attitudes that underpin effectiveness, the skills involved in helping another person to learn and the specific steps involved in bringing about change.

**The values of coaching**

John Whitmore, Timothy Gallwey and others have observed that coaching tends to be most effective when based on a number of attitudes and understandings. Three aspects stand out as being particularly important – understanding the importance of raising awareness, understanding the importance of encouraging responsibility and understanding the importance of building confidence and self-belief.

**Enhancing self-belief**

The primary purpose of coaching is to enhance an individual’s self-belief. The main barriers to progress are internal doubts and fears. Removing or diminishing these releases the potential for development. Building a track record of success builds confidence.

Expectations influence outcomes. This was demonstrated by a now classic experiment in an American elementary school in 1968. (Rosenthal and Jacobson.) In this school, like others around the country, the children were regularly assessed with various intelligence and achievement tests. In the year of the study Rosenthal and Jacobson obtained permission to add a new measure to the battery of tests, the Harvard test of Inflected Acquisition. Despite its rather grandiose name, it was actually a perfectly ordinary and well-standardised non-verbal intelligence test. The true nature and results of this test, however, were only ever known by Rosenthal and Jacobson. After the first administration of the test the researchers randomly selected around one-fifth of the children in each year and designated them as children who would be likely ‘to show a significant inflection or spurt in their learning within the next year or less than will the remaining 80 per cent of the children’. The names of these likely ‘bloomers’ were then passed on to the teachers (and only the teachers) with a brief explanation sheet outlining the researchers’ (bogus) expectations. One year later, Rosenthal and Jacobson retested all the children with that same Test of Inflected Acquisition. In the first two grades the ‘experimental’ children – those arbitrarily labeled as showing special promise – did actually significantly increase their scores on the intelligence test. For the remaining 4 grades the comparisons between the ‘experimental’ children and the controls showed negligible differences. What was so remarkable about the increases was that they could only be attributable to the teachers’ expectations, for it was only they in the schools who knew the identities of those allegedly ‘bright’ children; the children themselves had not been informed of their ‘superior’ ability. (The small numbers of children involved, the lack of consistent IQ gains in the older grades, and a variety of methodological difficulties with the study have meant that Rosenthal and Jacobson’s findings have not always been universally accepted. Nevertheless, subsequent research has confirmed that teachers’ expectations do have a consistent and measurable effect on student performance.

Therefore coaches must ‘know’ that an individual has the capacity to succeed and that it is likely that they will do so.

**Raising awareness**

Awareness leads to solutions. In a sporting context a coach can simply help an individual focus on a source of discomfort such as a muscle twinge, and the body will naturally adjust to a more effective action for that individual. In a business context, examining a situation closely from different perspectives can also give rise to an appropriate action that will move things forward.

**Encouraging responsibility**

A sense of responsibility or ownership is vital for accessing an individual’s full potential. Responsibility is diminished by being told what to do. It is enhanced by having choice and control. (A manager may stuggle with this if they are under pressure to meet specific targets and time is short.)

**Trust**

Trust is also crucial for any real learning to take place.

In a coaching session, trust and rapport are built by taking a genuine interest in the individual, by active listening including reflecting back accurate summaries of the individual’s communications, by a non-judgemental attitude and, where possible, by matching the individual’s verbal and body language as well as their tone and speed of speaking.

In the longer term, things that build trust include, reliability, predictability, honesty (at an appropriate level), loyalty (especially sticking by someone during hard times) and commitment (expectation for the future).

It’s worth considering where we learn our trust from? And, how we work with volunteers, suppliers and clients? Do they trust us? Trust and rapport will be created if the individual believes you want to help.

Each of us is a unique individual with our own particular make-up. Therefore there are no off-the-shelf answers or ‘correct‘ ways of doing things. For optimum performance, each of us has to find the way that suits us best.

**The skills of coaching**

* Setting objectives
* Asking questions
* Listening
* Observing
* Summarising and reflecting
* Keeping quiet
* Giving praise
* Providing constructive feedback
* Building trust
* Dealing with a negative response
* Sharing your own experience
* Reframing

**Questioning**

The art of coaching is in letting the individual take the lead and following them, while using questions to help them see more clearly what it is they are looking at. That is raising awareness.

An analogy would be the act of looking at a square of carpet. The act of focusing attention would reveal aspects in the pattern and the material that would ordinarily be ignored. Use a magnifying glass and another level of interest is sparked. Use a micoscope and a whole new world of shape and fibre and, possibly, living organisms is opened up.

Open questions such as Who, Where, What, When and How much tend to work best. Why tends to make people feel defensive. Try instead, What factors lead you to do such and such? How tends to lead into analysis rather than observation.

Closed questions can be used to establish some of the detail. Can you be more specific? Are you saying that…?

Sometimes, people can tend to wander. A polite, How is this relevant to…? should serve to clarify.

**Listening**

We are listening actively when we do the following:

* Hear everything that is being said, not what we want to hear
* Look for messages beyond the actual words
* Have strong powers of concentration and are not easily distracted
* Use visual communication to show we are interested and listening
* Are non-judgemental
* Can analyse information in order to respond in an appropriate way
* Don’t interrupt
* Don’t make assumptions about the person, based on the way they look or sound
* Are not influenced by personal feelings about the other person

It may be helpful to think of the three Ds of listening

* Detail
* Disposition
* Determination

Some common barriers to listening include:

* Thinking about the implications of what is being said
* Evaluating and making judgments about the speaker or the message - does this fit in with my values? Listening to my own personal beliefs about what is being said.
* Being and remaining preoccupied and not listening.
* Being so interested (and focused on your own desire to speak) in what you have to say that you listen mainly to find an opening to get the floor.
* Disagreeing with the content of what is being said
* Rehearsing - how am I going to reply?
* Anticipating what they will say next
* Hurrying on to the next thing
* Listening to someone/something else
* Withdrawing by simply going blank
* Talking over the speaker
* Interrupting before the person has finished speaking
* Not asking for clarification when you know that you do not understand

Listening requires concentration because we think a lot quicker than we speak. This means we have spare time to focus on other things than what we’re hearing.

**Reflecting**

Part of active listening is reflecting back to the individual a summary of what they have said. This has the effect of confirmimg for the person that they are in fact being heard, which in turn makes them feel valued and more relaxed.

**Reframing**

You may find it helpful sometimes to add a positive reframe to some of the statements you hear. For example, if someone says that they can’t get over their fear of public speaking, you could summarise that as, “…and you haven’t managed to overcome your fear of public speaking yet”.

**Constructive feedback**

# Guidelines for giving feedback

The problems that people experience in giving feedback invariably occur in situations where someone has ‘made a mistake’ or in discussions about general poor performance. Typically, the person giving the feedback may feel embarrassed or, perhaps, annoyed with the recipient. These feelings will tend to influence the way in which the feedback is given, and consequently the way in which the other person will receive and respond to the information. Even where these feelings do not prevail, the tactics used or the sensitivity of the recipient may lead to a defensive response. When someone is defending themselves they are unlikely to be objectively considering the information being offered.

The following guidelines should be considered:

1. **Offer the person the choice of making their comment first.**

**2. Without prejudging the issue, be clear about what you want to say in advance. Practice if necessary. Start with the positive.**

Most people need encouragement and to be told when they are doing something well. When offering feedback it can really help the receiver to hear first what you like about them or what they have done well.

**3. Be specific and descriptive.**

Avoid general comments which are not very useful when it comes to developing skills. Statements such as “you were brilliant!” or “it was awful” do not give enough detail to be useful sources of learning. Pinpoint what the person did which led you to use the label “brilliant” or “awful”. Describing specific behaviours and their effects makes it easier for a person to change their behaviour or seek further information if they wish.

**4. Select priority areas.**

Don’t save it all up, especially if there is considerable negative feedback to be

given.

**5. Offer alternatives.**

If you do offer negative feedback then don’t simply criticise, but suggest what the person could do differently. Turn the negative into a positive suggestion.

**6. Own the feedback.**

It can be easy to say to the other person, ‘You are….’ suggesting that you are

offering a universally agreed opinion about that person. In fact, all we are

entitled to give is our own experience of that person’s behaviour at a particular

time. It is also important that we take responsibility for the feedback we offer.

Beginning the feedback with ‘I’ or ‘In my opinion’, is a way of avoiding the

impression of being the giver of ‘universally agreed judgements’ about the other

person.

**7. Leave the recipient with a choice.**

Feedback which demands change or is imposed heavily on the other person

may invite resistance and it is not consistent with a belief in each of us being

personally responsible for choosing what we do. Feedback should not be seen

or used as a means of control – it does not involve telling someone how they

must be to suit us. Skilled feedback offers people information about themselves

in a way which leaves them a choice about whether to act on it or not. It can

help to examine the consequences of any decision to change or not to change,

but does not involve prescribing change.

**8. Think about your timing.**

**The coaching process**

One of the most popular models for coaching is the four step model known by the acronym GROW, which stands for Goals, Reality of the current situation, Options and Will to succeed.

**Goal setting**

Goals for the coaching session and goals for what the individual wants to achieve.

It can be helpful to distinguish between a dream you may have for the future, an end goal or final aim that you want to achieve and a performance goal that describes the level of performance that you believe will enable you to attain your end goal. An end goal of winning an Olympic medal or landing a particular job is unlikely to be entirely within your control. But the level of performance you attain is much more within your control.

Goals come in all shapes and sizes but most helpful ones share the characteristics described by the acronym SMART – specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and timed.

Goal setting is so important to performance that it has its own theory!

# Goal setting theory

Work motivation concerns direction (what people are trying to do), intensity (how hard they try) and persistence (how long they keep at it).

The most effective approach to motivation according to research carried out in a range of contexts is goal setting. It is based on the premise that intentions shape actions.

If work goals are specific and difficult, and if they are accompanied by feedback on how well one is doing, work performance is usually enhanced.

The following diagram shows the components of goal-setting theory

Participation in goal setting

Ability (self-perceived)

Financial incentives B

Goal commitment

Goal acceptance

Goal difficulty

Goal specificity A

Knowledge of results

F

Performance

D

Direction

Intensity

Persistence C

Strategies

Ability E

The diagram shows how the characteristics of a goal and attitudes towards it (A) are thought to be influenced by incentives, self-perceptions and the manner in which goals are set (B).

In turn, those goal characteristics and attitudes are thought to determine behavioural strategies (C) which lead to performance (D) within the constraints of ability (E).

Knowledge of results (F), also known as feedback, is thought to be essential to the further refinement of behavioural strategies.

Reviews of research arrive at a number of conclusions most of which fully or partially support goal-setting theory.

Most fundamental have been overwhelming confirmation of the following phenomena:

* Difficult goals lead to higher performance than easy goals, as long as they have been accepted by the person trying to achieve them.

(This follows from the fact that people direct their behaviour towards goal achievement so that difficult goals produce more effective behaviour than easy ones.)

* Specific goals lead to higher performance than general ‘do your best’ goals.

(Specific goals seem to create a precise intention, which, in turn, helps people to shape their behaviour with precision.)

* Knowledge of results is essential if the full performance benefits of setting difficult and specific goals are to be achieved.
* The beneficial effects of goal-setting depend partly on a person’s goal commitment. That is, his or her determination to try to achieve it and unwillingness to abandon or reduce it.

These findings constitute the core of goal-setting theory, which is the most consistently supported theory in work and organisational psychology.

Additional comments

* Financial incentives can indeed enhance performance
* Ability affects performance
* Research has been carried out in a range of contexts
* Goal setting is magnificently clear about how managers can enhance the performance of their staff
* Research also shows that goal setting is worth doing. In goal-setting field experiments, the median improvement in work performance produced by goal setting was 16 %.
* Participation is better than being told but no better than being sold.
* There is a difference between learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation.

When approaching a task from a learning goal perspective, an individual’s main objective is to increase his or her level of competence on a given task. Alternatively, when a task is approached from a performance goal orientation, individuals are primarily concerned with demonstrating their competency either to themselves or to others via their present level of task performance.

People who adopt a performance goal orientation will tend to be more fearful of failure, less willing to take on difficult goals, and perhaps less effective in using thought processes to achieve them, than those who adopt a learning goal orientation. They are also less likely to feel they have control over whether they achieve their goals, because by definition the goals of a performance goal oriented person depend partly on what other people are doing. In the long run, learning goal orientation is more likely to produce high performance and competence.

The sorts of questions that can be helpful when establishing goals include:

* What is the subject matter or the issue you’d like to work on?
* What would you like to have achieved at the end of this session?
* What would you want to achieve in the long-term? What’s your time frame?
* How should we describe your objective?
* Is it realistic?
* How would you recognise that you were performing better?
* Is it challenging?
* Can you measure it?
* On a scale of 1 to 10 where are you now? Where do you want to be?
* What is the time-scale you could achieve it in?
* Are shorter-term goals needed to reach the end goal?
* What would you like to achieve by tomorrow / the end of next week?

**Reality**

It can be argued that goals can’t be established until the current situation is known and understood. John Whitmore argues instead that a purpose is esssential to give value and direction to a discussion, even if goals can only be loosely defined before the situation is examined in detail. Goals based on a discussion of the current situation can tend to be less creative and more constrained by current ways of thinking.

The key focus for understanding the current reality is objectivity and detachment. This is easier if the questions prompt descriptive rather than evaluative responses.

Coaching is about getting people to THINK. It is often appropriate to expect the individual to think hard at this stage in order to uncover hidden levels of detail – again raising awareness.

“We have a measure of choice and control over what we are aware of, but what we are unaware of controls us.” – John Whitmore

“Problems must be addressed at the level beneath that at which they show themselves, if they are to be permanently eliminated.” – John Whitmore

Reasons to establish the reality of the current situation include:

* It reduces errors due to assumptions, exaggeration, memory lapses
* It clarifies the issue in terms of its size and scope and complexity, who is involved and their relationships, features of the problem and so on
* It helps clarify objectives because you know where you are starting from
* It helps to identify helpers and positive aspects
* It helps to identify the person’s own resources that they can use to achieve their goal

The sorts of questions that can be helpful when exploring the current situation include:

* What is happening now? What is the present situation in more detail?
* What and how great is your concern about it?
* Who does this issue affect other than you?
* Who knows about your desire to do something about it?
* How much control do you personally have over the outcome?
* Who else has some control over it and how much?
* What do you already know / do about this issue?
* What has stopped you doing more?
* What experience have you got that might help you?
* How do you handle…?
* Is there a particular issue?
* How often? Who? By whom? etc (NB avoid Why?)

**Options**

The principal objective here is to get as many options as possible. The quantity of alternative courses of action is more important at this stage then their quality or feasibility. This is because the process stimulates creative thinking and minimises the effect of negative implicit assumptions that most of us carry around – It can’t be done, It can’t be done like that, They would never agree to that, it’s bound to cost too much, we can’t afford the time etc.

The sorts of questions that can be helpful when establsihing options include:

* What ideas can you think of?
* What options are available?
* What else could you do?
* If you stepped back …?
* Is there only one way?
* What would you do if you had more time, a larger budget or if you were the boss?
* What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet / a new team?
* Would you like to add a suggestion from me?
* Can only you get that information / help / support?
* What do you think will be easy/difficult?
* What are the pros and cons of each option?
* Which do you think is the best option and why?
* Do you want to try several or focus on one?
* Which would give you the most satisfaction?

**Will**

Now it is time to translate ideas into commitment. To select the actions that will achieve the goals and create a plan to implement them.

The sorts of questions that can be helpful when assessing and encouraging a person’s determination to carry out their plans include:

* Which would you like to try?
* Which are you going to choose?
* Are you willing to try that?
* Will that help you achieve your goal?
* What are your criteria and measurements for success?
* What are the advantages of your chosen approach?
* What do you think might be the problems with this choice?
* What obstacles could you face?
* What personal resistance, if any, do you have to taking these steps?
* How will you overcome them these internal and external factors?
* What are the consequences of deciding on this option?
* What support will you need from me or others
* What authority will you need delegated to you?
* When would you want to start?
* What exactly will you do and when?
* What commitment do you have on a scale of 1 to 10 to taking these agreed actions?
* What stops this from being a 10?
* What could you do to raise your commitment closer to a 10?

**Summary**

Finally, it is important to keep a record of what has been agreed. Summarising the main points is a helpful way to end a session. Questions to elict a summary include:

* What have we agreed at this meeting?
* How does that help us meet the objectives for this project / session?
* What are the next steps in this project?
* Is there anything else you’d like to talk about now or are we finished?
* When shall we hold our next meeting?

**Motivation**

Occasionally, you may encounter someone whose problem seems to be more personal than performance related. In such a case it is worth considering the range of human emotional needs and whether one or more of them are not being met in that person’s life

We are motivated by our human needs. In addition to the basic physical needs for food and shelter we have several equally important emotional needs that include:

Security – safe territory and an environment that allows us to develop fully, freedom from bullying or harassment

To give and receive attention, which is a form of nutrition

A sense of autonomy and control

Being emotionally connected to others

Feeling part of the wider community

Friendship or intimacy – knowing that at least one other person accepts us for who we are, warts and all

Privacy – the chance to reflect and consolidate experience

A sense of status within social groupings

A sense of competence and achievement

Meaning and purpose, which come from having people who need us such as family or colleagues or people we help through some voluntary work, from challenge and being stretched on a life-long basis and/or a belief or search for something greater than ourselves, sometimes called a spiritual orientation.

When these needs are met in balance we can perform to our full potential. When one or more are missing we are prone to illness.

A workplace that allows us to meet these needs will be a more productive setting than one which makes it difficult.

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