

Coaching Essentials

**Practical, proven techniques for
world-class executive coaching**

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A CLIENT NEEDS TO BE MORE OF A 'PEOPLE PERSON'

Executives can often focus on 'hard' aspects of business, such as finance or processes, and neglect the softer aspects, such as the need to get the most from their people. People are invariably an organisation's most critical, expensive and decisive resource; products and processes may be copied and finance acquired but people's combinations of skills, behaviour and experience are unique. It's up to leaders to get the most from their people: helping the business achieve its full potential by helping its employees to achieve theirs. A useful way to make progress is for clients to understand the value of empathy, treating others as they would wish to be treated.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Get your clients to tell you about their teams – what are their strengths and weaknesses? What are the priorities for the future, and what are the implications for team-members? What effect do you – as leader – have on your team? In what ways do you need to be more of a 'people person' – why, why now, and how do you want to achieve this? What will success look like? What does being a people person mean to you?

USEFUL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- MBTI
- Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO-B)
- Developing business relationships
- Inspiring trust
- Meta-mirror
- Managing cross-cultural relationships and behaviour
- Using emotional intelligence
- Logical levels
- Defusing tensions (acknowledge, ask, answer)
- Managing different generations
- Eight principles of motivation
- Enhancing motivation
- Empowerment
- Developing influence (the Thomas-Kilmann conflict instrument)

DEALING WITH DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

The renowned management thinker Peter Drucker, writing in *The Economist* in November 2001, pointed out that: 'In a knowledge economy, there are no such things as conscripts – there are only volunteers. The trouble is we have trained our managers to manage conscripts.' This situation is highlighted by the challenge of managing people from generations other than your own. In fact, in recent years workforces have changed dramatically. For example, talented employees are emerging from a much wider range of countries than ever before.

Also, the range of skills needed is more varied and the nature of the workplace is more complex. It used to be that the old were in charge of the young, who did what they were told. That situation is now eroding and one of the keys to engaging employees at work is to understand the generational divide. Several techniques are useful. Suggest the following to your clients.

- **Segment your approach and accommodate each generation's perspective.** There are different groups in the workforce and members of each generation have their own motivators, attributes and preferences resulting from the formative events and conditions that they shared. Common experience doesn't always dictate common attitudes among a particular generation, but it can mean that people tend to carry similar influences throughout their careers.
- **Recognise the limitations of your own experience.** Your own experience as a manager is important but it has been shaped both by your own personal experiences and those of your generation. Another person of another generation may well have a completely different set of priorities, values, concerns and preferences. Thinking back to what you wanted may take you in the wrong direction. Also, remember that, in a world where homogeneity and standardisation dominate, it's the combination of different people, and the fusion of different ideas, that provides the essential fuel for progress and success.
- **Be flexible when you interview or promote people.** If you stick rigidly to a prescriptive job description or set of capabilities, then

you may end up missing a gem. Find out what people can do as well as what they can't, and be flexible.

- **Understand that many of today's employees don't respond to traditional motivators.** This points to the need for a different approach. For example, be prepared to discuss what people want and value – don't always assume that, based on your own experience, you already know what's required. Also, be prepared to use different techniques and styles when communicating. The manager who views engaging, motivating and rewarding people as an exciting challenge will be amongst the best of managers.
- **Empathise and look past the clutter.** This means learning from others but also understanding that engaging people requires a customised approach. This comes from an open dialogue based around two issues: first, what can I do for you? Second, here's what I need from you.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What do people want? What are their motives and 'drivers'? What are the formative experiences of the people in your team? Are you relating to people as individuals? Do you find it difficult to flex or shed your views of the way things should be done? Could – and should – you show greater flexibility? What are the strengths of the other generations and how can you get the greatest benefit from them?

USEFUL TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- Logical levels
- Using emotional intelligence
- Enhancing motivation
- Empowerment
- Managing different generations
- Leadership styles
- Developing business relationships
- Inspiring trust
- The Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI)

This section looks at some of the most challenging, daunting or problematic issues presented to coaches. Some of these are commonplace, others less so, and all can present themselves in a wide variety of ways.

We suggest issues for coaches and their clients to consider, and highlight possible ways that each might be addressed. This is done in a coaching, questioning style, to prompt thoughts for coaches and so they can adapt the questions to their own particular coaching style.

The specific techniques to which we refer are described in Part 4.

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Difficult challenges for coaches	Issues to consider	Possible solutions
<p>The client is defensive Define 'defensive' and take great care when using this term – it's a loaded word and issue. Usually, if you describe a behaviour to someone, you're likely to prompt that behaviour in them. So, if you say to individuals 'you seem defensive / angry / anxious', then their likely response will be defensive, angry or anxious!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it a valid response? Is it justified? • Are you, the coach, producing the defensiveness? • Why are they defensive? • What evidence is there of defensiveness? • Is it temporary, deserved or longer-term? • Are issues of confidence and sensitivity at work? • What are the consequences of their defensiveness? • How can you reduce their defensiveness and get them to be more open to advice and constructive? • Which option would work best: a) ignoring it and hoping things improve; b) gently confronting the issue; c) changing your approach and finding a way round their defensiveness? • Why does their defensiveness matter – what effect is it having? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallel process – when you give feedback, explain to clients what you're observing and the response it's producing in you, their coach. • Reframing or meta-mirror – would it help the clients to view the situation from a different perspective? • Logical levels – what's motivating the clients? What's the lens through which they perceive the world? What are their priorities and guiding influences?
<p>The client is behaving emotionally (e.g. feeling low, depressed or crying) Consider whether this is a valid response. Do you understand the clients' situation and emotions? (Coaches often want to rush to solve problems and sometimes this isn't feasible – for example, in the case of bereavement.) If clients mention depression, ask whether it's clinical or if they are receiving treatment for it. Many people seek medical treatment for this and other similar issues – is that the case here (if a client openly talks about being depressed)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the client upset? • Would a 'time-out' help? Is this situation positive or negative? • Is this an opportunity? Emotion is sometimes accompanied by determination, energy and a clear focus – can these be channelled to help the client? • What are the immediate priorities for the client, and what longer-term goals would be of benefit? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask clients what would help them the most in this session. • Be flexible and ask clients if this is the best time for the coaching session. • Empathy is always valuable and sympathy is sometimes appropriate. How can you best provide support? • Miracle question – what do the clients want, and what do they want to change or improve?

This section provides a range of practical tools and models to help coaches and benefit the clients they're coaching – the coachees. Some of these tools are universally relevant in a wide range of situations while others work best when addressing specific issues – decisions and problem-solving, leadership, relationships, prioritising, strategy and creativity.

The index at the beginning of this section lists all the tools and models referred to in the previous two sections, for ease of reference.

INDEX OF COACHING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

GROW

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The wheel of life
Thinking strategically
The balanced scorecard
Scenario thinking
Avoiding active inertia and moving from good to great
Developing innovation
Six thinking hats
Disney creativity strategy

QUESTIONING

UNIVERSAL

Non-directive coaching relies on the ability to question – it's an essential skill and the essence of coaching.

THE IDEA

When to use it: Always – this isn't so much a coaching technique, *it is coaching*.

Summary: The main objective of a coach is to help the coachees improve their position by learning, achieving a goal, making a decision, resolving an issue or simply improving their understanding – all by using effective questioning rather than by simply presenting a solution or the coach's viewpoint. This is because questioning is much more likely to produce a result for individuals once they've focused on the issues and considered their own solutions.

DESCRIPTION

Some of the most useful or typical questions to use during a coaching conversation include the following (note that these questions be used as part of the GROW process):

- What are you trying to achieve?
- How will you know when you've achieved it?
- Would you define it as an end goal or a performance goal?
- If it's an end goal, what performance goal could be related to it?
- Is the goal specific and measurable?
- To what extent can you control the result? What sort of things won't you have control over?
- Do you feel that achieving the goal will stretch or break you?
- When do you want to achieve the goal by?
- What are the milestones or key points on the way to achieving your goal?
- Who's involved and what effect could they have on the situation?

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- What have you done about this situation so far, and what have been the results?
- What are the major constraints in finding a way forward?
- Are these constraints major or minor? How could their effect be reduced?
- What other issues are occurring at work that might have a bearing on your goal?
- What options do you have?
- If you had unlimited resources, what options would you have?
- Could you link your goal to some other organisational issue?
- What would be the perfect solution?