

Coaching Defined

The mention of coaching in a business setting generally conjures up executive coaching. Executive coaches are brought in to help a company's management polish the skills they need to run the company, manage people, and cope with the stress of their jobs. While executives benefit from coaching, thereby running their companies more successfully, the tools coaching can offer work well for mid-management and lower executives as well. To benefit from coaching, we need to better define it, understand how it works, discuss its processes, and grasp the fundamentals. This article will seek to convey these important elements.

Coaching Defined

Coaching can be defined as a series of processes and procedures designed to assist an individual in improving his or her skills so that he or she can better perform his or her tasks. Coaching is a management style, and managers who coach their employees assist them to reach higher grades of performance through encouragement, a challenging environment, and the presentation of clear and obtainable goals.

How Coaching Works

The objective of coaching is to improve performance by raising the attention, care, attitude, skills and enthusiasm of employees. Coaching begins with an assessment of current status, and continues with performance assessments as the coaching progresses. In many cases the coach will seek to have a consensus on the assessment guidelines, although this is not necessary. Once an initial assessment is concluded, the coach works with the individual or team to determine the following:

- Goals – in almost every set of circumstances there are goals that can be set that are currently not being pursued even though they are quite within reach. A good coach will help people identify these goals and set up procedures for the goals to be met.
- New Initiatives – Like goals, there are new initiatives that can be pursued that will raise performance levels, create excitement, drive motivation, and instill a greater sense of purpose. A good coach will help his or her subjects explore possible new objectives and select the appropriate ones based on a set, commonly agreed upon criteria.
- Plan of Action – Encouraging learning and motivating subjects to boost performance can only be effective if a viable and practical plan of action is in place. A good coach will not only provide the subject with new goals and initiatives, but also work closely with him or her to develop the roadmap to successful obtainment of these objectives.

The Process

Some coaches view coaching as a series of processes that continue as each new set of goals is undertaken. Seeking to empower clients, Tudog generally prefers to set up the process so that managers are able to resume the role of coach as the need arises. The process Tudog embraces has 6 stages. They are:

1. Defining the Goals – in this stage the coach and the client jointly determine what the goals of the coaching experience are, how they are going to communicate, and a timetable.
2. Assessment – in order to understand where you want to go and be able to measure progress you must understand the status of the current situation.
3. Consideration – in this stage the individuals and coach explore what options and opportunities exist and consider which ones best suit the overall objectives of their company.
4. Planning – the setting up of a roadmap for implementation, including task assignments, measurement criteria, and timetable.
5. Implementation – designed as much as a learning experience as a means of moving the status quo forward, this stage is the actual execution of the tasks decided upon in Step 3.
6. Review – this final stage reviews performance, determines what was learned, sets up new standards of practice that were born of the exercise, makes adjustments in process and execution for subsequent sessions, and establishes new procedures.

The Fundamentals

The fundamentals of a good coaching experience are as follows:

- A good coach doesn't need to control the process. He or she needs to allow for distinctive processes, so long as they fall within the broad definition of the coaching experience. Leadership in this instance is setting parameters and allowing subjects to operate freely within those guidelines.
- A good coach promotes learning, whether it is from others, from our own mistakes, or from self-discovery through exploration and activities.
- A good coach helps nudge people in the right direction, allowing the choice of which direction to take to be that of the subject. All new goals have inherent value and purpose. As long as the subject is pursuing growth, the coaching is meeting its objectives.
- A good coach makes the process exciting, engaging, challenging, and productive. People become more active when they can feel their progress.

Coaching isn't for everyone, but as a management tool it is highly effective in getting employees to get involved in the company, help define their roles and get used to always striving to reach higher objectives. The process of coaching allows them to engage the company in a manner that gives them a sense of value, while your offering of coaching, gives them a sense of your appreciation.