

The Fundamentals of Coaching

The very idea of coaching is often misunderstood. Rather than it coming from a point of arrogance or greater knowledge than someone else, coaching is really all about pushing someone to excellence by making them be the best they can. The comparative capabilities of the coach are completely irrelevant. The coach only needs to know how to effectively and constructively extract the excellence from the other person.

In most cases people live in relation to the expectations of those closest to them. We either live up to their expectations or we fall short of them. But in most cases we are compared to them. These expectations are usually realistic and reasonable and in par with objectives we can, if we try, reach. Where we stumble is when the expectations are too burdensome and we cannot possibly satisfy the other party – so we give up even trying. Or sometimes, the expectations are so low that they fail to properly motivate us, so we don't try because we fail to see the challenge.

Coaching is really about helping people set the right, properly balanced expectations so that they can effectively work toward meeting the goals they set for themselves, as well as those that have been set by others and that they accept.

Tudog's coaching practice utilizes 7 fundamentals of coaching that we believe best serve to bring out the excellence in our clients. These 7 fundamental are:

1. A Clear Definition of Excellence

Excellence is not a static measurement that remains the same across different goals and different people. In order to push someone to be excellent you need to have a good definition of what constitutes excellence to that person – and what constitutes excellence within the arena the person needs to operate within. By knowing what defines excellence, you are in a much better position to help the person gain measures of it.

2. A Clear Definition of Leadership

In many cases people seek out coaching because they already are in positions of leadership or seek out a position of leadership. The only way to assist them in improving their performances or enhancing their prospects is to have a clear definition of what leadership means within the confines of the social and business structures they operate within. By knowing this, you are able to develop the steps needed to meet the goals.

3. The Ability to Have Tough Conversations

The least effective kind of coach is the person who is more interested in avoiding conflict than making progress. If the coach plays up to the ego of the client then the chances for real meaningful change is limited. The coach's job is to bring forth the tough and uncomfortable conversations, regardless of how uncomfortable and awkward they may be. As long as these conversations are constructive and have a clear purpose, they are necessary. The Tudog tough conversations seek to determine where weaknesses are, create a path to improvement, and then hold the client to his/her commitment to improve. If the client slacks off a bit, you have to be there to call him/her on it, even if doing so will instigate an uncomfortable moment.

4. The Right Relationship

All too often coaches think that the best way to get the client to open up and discuss weaknesses and be receptive to suggestions is by becoming friendly and establishing a relationship that is among equals. This damages the coaching process because sometimes the client needs to hear things that a friend cannot or does not wish to say. The right relationship for a coach is one that is development focused. The purpose of the sessions together is to identify areas for development, create a plan for development, and then to monitor and track the development. That is the entire purpose of the relationship and any other view can diminish the efficacy of the coaching.

5. The Right Coach

Not everyone can be a coach and not every good coach can be good with every client. The match needs to work because there are many times when the relationship will be under stress and any weaknesses in the relationship can be cause for diminishing results. The good coach has to earn the respect of the client by being genuine in his/her comments and recommendations. The coach needs to have sufficient self-esteem to be able to present ideas and opinions with confidence, but not an exaggerated sense of sense that inhibits discussion or prohibits ever being told he/she is wrong. Also, the coach needs to be coaching for the right reasons – that is to help people succeed in reaching their objectives. Without this desire to serve the coach may lose credibility in the eyes of some clients who will question the motivations behind certain suggestions.

6. A Good Eye for Potential

A coach's job is to help people perform to their highest potential, even if coming to understand what that potential is requires a process of discovery. The potential can be directly related to the existing goals, or could be beyond them, requiring a re-evaluation of goals and the tough discussion on needing to work harder to meet one's potential. Conversely, sometimes you may come across a client that has set his/her sights too high, and the tough conversation is about reconsidering the ambitious nature of the goals.

7. Accountability

There is little point in developing an improvement plan for someone who will not follow the steps outlined. It is not enough to want to improve, you need to make sure the client will actually implement the program. In order to do this you need to have the authority and power to hold your client accountable for his/her actions as they affect the program. You should let the client set up the accountability elements of the program before the action plan is launched. This way, as you proceed, if you need to hold him/her accountable, you will be doing so in ways he/she selected.

A coaching relationship is almost like a partnership in that both sides need to respect one another and understand how and why they need each other. The partners need to have not only a mutual appreciation for one another's skills, but also the comfort to confront one another when necessary, and the authority to hold each other accountable. By doing this, the coach is able to push the client to excellence, while allowing the client to help make him/her a better coach.