

Coaching for career enhancement

by Alison Griffiths

Take a moment and think about a particular task that you find difficult and tend to avoid doing. It could be Giving Presentations, Report Writing, Writing SOPs, Changing your Job or Role – something that's personal to you.

Does it seem that no amount of training or demonstration or discussion has helped you - you still avoid doing it?

Now - think about how the avoidance is affecting you and others:

- What are the consequences of avoiding it?
- How would you feel if you could find a way in which to overcome the avoidance?
- What would be the results?

You have just experienced an example of Coaching and if this has triggered something in you whether it be amusement, intrigue or even annoyance, I hope it will encourage you to read on. This article aims at giving you a greater insight into what Coaching is, how it has evolved and is developing and most importantly how it could benefit you as an individual as part of your learning and development and in the important role of leadership.

Coaching? Training? Mentoring? – What do I need?

There are many forms of Coaching and the word 'Coaching' can mean different things to different people. Something that seems to cause the greatest amount of confusion is how Coaching differs to Mentoring and Training. In my mind they are all fundamental aspects of learning and development and each brings its own unique value that complements the others - giving individuals and teams a complete package. Just as for your health you might visit a Chiropractor for skeletal problems, a Chiropodist for foot problems and an Ophthalmologist for your eyes, so too might you be trained, coached or mentored depending upon your need.

To put this into perspective, let's imagine you have taken up a new position in a new organisation or you have someone new joining your team. One of the first things on your mind either as the employee or employer is what do I (or what does the new recruit) need to know in order to do the job? A 'Needs Analysis' as part of an Induction Programme will obviously highlight different areas of development in terms of technical skills eg. Software, Policy, ICH, SOPs etc and softer skills eg. Negotiating, Presenting, Time Management etc. but what is the best solution - Training, Coaching or Mentoring? I would argue that a combination of all three is essential. To explain:

- **Mentoring** in the context of this scenario is a form of 'buddying' ie. the new recruit has "an experienced organisation member who can share, guide, provide feedback"¹. Some one who you can learn from through osmosis - by being shown and by doing. This can be a cost effective, rewarding and fruitful way in which to develop people because it helps to build team relationships and collaboration when managed appropriately (eg. the person mentoring is agreeable and able to allocate time).

¹ Mullins, L. The Nature of Learning. Management and Organisational Behaviour. 1999:5(10):367.

- **Training** is the best solution if the person needs information delivered to them. Whether for Technical or Softer skills, the individual is gaining the knowledge required to do the job, or learning the technique behind the task.
- **Coaching** aims at developing skills further because it brings "out the 'best' in a person, improving a person's skills" and bringing into the learning process the person's attitude and behaviour. It enables the individual to recognise how their responses to tasks and situations can actually impact on their ability, success rate and performance. Coaching helps them to discover how they can improve this and it motivates and encourages them along the way. Coaching differs to training in that it is questions based. **A good Coach does not have all the answers. The skill of the Coach is to ask the right questions.** Using this method the individual creates for themselves new levels of confidence and empowerment. It is therefore particularly effective when training alone has not been successful and there is obviously something blocking the individual from putting into practice what they have learnt.

Taking this one step further, when combining Coaching with Mentoring and/or Training you have a very powerful learning tool.

- **Mentoring and Coaching.** To combine the skills of a Coach with the Mentor's knowledge and experience of the job and company can only enhance the ability of the Mentor to help the new recruit. I am sure you can remember a time when you have been allocated someone to work with as you begin a new role. Were they able to give you the time you needed? How well did they impart knowledge and information? Did they explore your level of knowledge and experience and did they have the patience to let you try it out for yourself? This is in no way meant to undermine the value of any team Mentors out there. What it does is demonstrate the kinds of issues many of you are aware of as a result of other work pressures. As a skilled Coach, the Mentor could establish ways in which to overcome those obstacles – even if the issues are perceived to be out of their control.
- **Training and Coaching.** Recent figures published in the Institute of Personnel Management Association in Public Personnel Management stated that by **combining Training and Coaching, productivity was typically increased by 88% compared to 22.4% when using Training alone.** In many ways the statistics speak for themselves and increasingly organisations are combining Coaching into their interactive training courses. As is often the case – the Sales Teams are benefiting first – let us hope that this article will help it penetrate into R&D!

As you can see – as independent tools of learning and development each has its place. Combined – the impact is magnified three-fold.

The Evolution of Coaching

Coaching has existed for centuries. For as many years as people have been communicating with each other, it has been used as a tool in which to support, encourage and motivate.

It has evolved gradually over time into different forms and today is becoming increasingly prominent in such areas as 'Life', 'Executive' and 'Business' Coaching. This began in the early to mid 1900s when philosophers such as Norman Vincent Peale began to research the magic formula of successful people. What he discovered was the power of positive thinking and his book of this title, has today sold over thirty million copies. Dale Carnegie was trained by Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie Seminars, which you may have heard of, targeted Sales teams in the US to recognise the power of a 'Can do' attitude and the growth from this in

terms of books, tapes and software is significant. The concept continued to gain momentum and new Gurus such as Anthony Robbins and Zig Ziglar began to promote 'Self Motivation' and 'Self Development' in what could be described as a loud, forceful, passionate even may be 'gimmicky' and some might say unrealistic way. As a result, if taken out of context or interpreted incorrectly it could give rise to some concern.

However, in parallel other research was being conducted by the Psychologists Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis and although there is some question over who founded it first in the 1950s, the practice of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) came into being. Since then, they have been eager to take their problem-solving and psychoeducational methods into the society to reach a wider audience (ie. those not requiring therapy) and Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) was founded – providing a more scientific explanation of how by adapting our self-restricting, self-defeating beliefs and attitudes we can achieve things and overcome obstacles in ways that we might not otherwise believe possible. In contrast to what some may describe as an overly positive thinking style, CBC focuses on adapting negative thinking into realistic thinking with a distinct positive leaning and a strong 'Can do' attitude.

Today Coaching is well established in the USA and in Australia. It is in its infancy in the UK and gradually gaining momentum. There are many different styles and types of Coaching and who you choose to Coach you and/or your team is a very personal choice. As with any outsourced service you have to have rapport with, and confidence in that person. Qualifications will differ and many Coaches that have been practising for years are not specifically qualified in Coaching. They may have a general Management, HR, Psychotherapy or Counselling background or they might be qualified in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and/or Coaching or Mentoring. In my mind what is key is that you can work with them and that they have the 'life' and 'business' experience to be able to put questions into context, empathise and bring the maturity required to such a role. If approached by a 21 year old with a Coaching Degree – I would be wary and in Career Coaching, you may well feel more comfortable with someone who understands the Pharmaceutical Industry.

With the profession and industry finding its feet in the UK, Coaching is at the stage Regulatory Affairs was some 10 to 15 years ago in terms of establishing good coaching practice, ethical standards and regulations. Associations such as Association for Coaching and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council are working with Coaches to put these standards in place and we can keep you informed.

So How is Coaching being used in Industry?

Many of us would link the term 'Coaching' with Sport and would be surprised to hear if any team or top athlete did not have a Coach. So why therefore should business not be the same? This is exactly what some of the Sports Coaches and Business Leaders thought and so the relationships began to emerge. In addition, HR and Training Managers were finding themselves in a similar position to Thomas J Leonard – who in the early 1980s as a Financial Adviser in Seattle was finding that his clients were asking for more than financial advice. They were seeking help with career management and life ambitions and as a result he set up the first 'Coaching' Practice outside the sporting world in 1982². Likewise HR and Training Managers found themselves in full-time Coaching roles.

² Harris, G: Life Coaching, The Origins, Connecting your Inner Wisdom. 2002; 1:3.

Within the pharmaceutical industry it is beginning to develop with some of the blue chip, medium sized Companies and Agencies recognising the value. It seemed to start in many instances with the services of a 'Coach' being offered as part of a Senior Executive package to help top management integrate into the organisation. Thereafter the Coach acted as a sounding board, facilitator and motivator as the person developed in the role making high-profile, strategic decisions. These relationships could last for years and as it is beginning to be recognised as a valuable induction and organisational development tool, it has started to filter down through organisations in a more time-framed, structured way. For example: helping to settle in new recruits, individuals and teams improve performance and leaders develop more effective skills.

A company outside our industry that has successfully completed a Coaching programme is Safeway. Becky Ivers, the HR Director describes it as being "a waterfall effect" and further goes on to say that "it can be painful sometimes, but it helps people to understand how to grow and find themselves" "Coaching builds confidence, gives courage and helps individual creativity"³ At the lower level, some readers may have heard of 'Springboard' which is specifically aimed at Women to help them recognise their specific value and contribution (I believe now there is also one developed for men!). At all levels, the underlying reason for Coaching is to manage 'change' and create a less stressful environment for ourselves and those around us. The Coach in industry is there to help individuals, teams and organisations in doing this.

Why is it important to you and your Career?

All too often we focus on the technical aspects of our role in Regulatory Affairs. ***How much time are we spending on developing our own personal skills and attributes that move around with us and in essence make us more marketable?*** From my time in recruiting I can say that fundamental qualifications and experience were important to Recruiting Managers. However, what 90% of them wanted me to concentrate most on in searching for the 'ideal candidate', was how the person would adapt, fit into the team and interact with others. In the words of one Recruiting Manager "it's the 3 A's that are important - Availability, Affability, Ability and in that order". In other words if people are open to learn and have the right attitude to work through the pains and pleasures of doing so and are prepared to build relationships and integrate into the team and Company - ability will follow. If however, the individual is not prepared to make themselves available and affable - how easy is this to fix and what impact will it have? It is therefore important for you as an individual to be able to demonstrate your personal qualities to support the ever important technical skills.

Another situation when Career Coaching can help is when you reach a point on your career journey where you don't know which route to take next. Who do you ask? Where do you go? The majority of us will have a network of friends, colleagues, industry acquaintances and hopefully a life mentor, who we can turn to and who can give us some of their time - and of course there is the internet. However, this is not always enough. A Careers Coach can help you work through your analysis of where you are, what you have to offer, what you might like to do and how best to go about it - supporting you as you unravel the confusion that is usually getting in the way of making decisions and moving your career forward. If you are really proactive, the Coach could simply help you in strategically planning and managing your career.

Coaching is a new concept to many I am sure, and hopefully this has gone some way in helping you understand the concept of Coaching and how it should be an integral part of your learning and development and career planning. Also, why HR

³ Kent, S: Safeway's Fresh Approach, Training Magazine, October 2002 p 24

and Operations are increasingly turning to Coaching as part of their learning and development, performance management and retention strategies – especially within Regulatory Affairs where people are not so easy to replace.

About the author:

Alison Griffiths, **Director, Executive Services, Unicus Ltd** www.unicus.co.uk, is a Founder Member of the Association for Coaching.

If you have found this article helpful and would like further information on any aspect of coaching, please contact www.associationforcoaching.com

The Association for Coaching is an independent professional body promoting best practice, raising awareness and standards across the UK and Ireland Coaching Industry, while providing value added benefits to its members – whether they are Professional Coaches or Organisations involved in Coaching.
www.associationforcoaching.com