

Coaching is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another.

It is worth looking at some of the individual words in this definition. I will start with the word **performance**. Coaching in business is ultimately concerned with performance and anything a coach might say or do should be driven by the intention to improve performance. Improved performance may relate to the execution of a specific task or project, the achievement of business goals or more generically greater effectiveness or efficiency.

Learning is another potential outcome from coaching and is at least as important as performance because, taking a longer term view, it is what the future performance of the organisation is dependant upon. The distinction I would make with **development** is that while you have to learn in order to develop, learning as used here refers to a broad domain, how to approach a task, getting to grips with new technology, while development is about personal growth and greater self-awareness.

Then I come to **facilitating**. Here it means more than 'to make easy', although that is desirable too. Facilitating implies that the person being coached has the capacity to think something through for himself, to have an insight or creative idea. It acknowledges that people can learn without being taught. This in turn means that the coach has to give up on the fact that he has the right answer. The role of the coach is to enable the player to explore, to gain a better understanding, to become more aware and from that place to make a better decision than they would have made anyway.

Which leaves **art**. I do not mean to suggest that there is no science to coaching, for there is and it forms much of the content of this book. Coaching is an art in the sense that when practised with excellence, there is no attention on the technique: the coach is fully engaged with the player and the process of coaching becomes a dance between two people, conversationally moving in complete harmony and partnership. At this point the intelligence, intuition and imagination of the coach become a valuable contribution - rather than being interference for the player. The science to coaching comes out of experience and observations shared with like-minded people over a number of years and supported by other, related, disciplines such as psychology or philosophy. Much of this book is devoted to a description of that science, but you should know that the science of coaching is not coaching. If you get stuck in doing it by the book you are truly stuck, for your attention is with the book or the right way of doing it and not with the player. Someone once said of acting "there are no rules but you've got to know them", and coaching is a bit like that.

Effective coaching in the workplace delivers Achievement, Fulfillment and Joy from which both the individual and the organization benefit.

By Achievement I mean the delivery of extraordinary results, organizational and individual goals achieved, strategies, projects and plans executed. It suggests effectiveness, creativity and innovation. Effective coaching delivers achievement, which is sustainable. The impact of much coaching diminishes after the departure of the coach. Because of the emphasis on learning and because the confidence of the player is enhanced (“I worked it out for myself!”) the increase in performance is typically sustained for a longer period and will impact areas that were not directly the subject of the coaching.

In Fulfillment I include learning and development. To achieve the business result is one thing, to achieve it in a way in which the player learns and develops as part of the process has a greater value - to the player, the line-manager or coach and the organization, for it is the capacity to learn that ensures an organization’s survival. I also include here the notion that work can be meaningful; that individuals through coaching begin to identify goals that are intrinsically rewarding. With fulfillment comes an increase in motivation. That the coach respects the player, his ideas and opinions, that the player is doing his work in his own way, that he is pursuing his own goals and is responsible - this all makes for a player who is inspired and committed. In this way more of the energy, intelligence and imagination of each individual is brought to the service of the organization.

And Joy. When people are achieving their goals, when those goals have some meaning and when learning and developing is part of the process then enjoyment ensues. These three components, achievement, fulfillment and joy are interlinked and the absence of any one will impact and erode the others. Learning without achievement quickly exhausts one’s energy. Achievement without learning soon becomes boring. The absence of joy erodes the human spirit.

There is one other factor that I cannot fit neatly into the three outputs of effective coaching, but is implicitly behind them all, and this is responsibility. Without responsibility and a sense of ownership organizations quickly become ineffective. Coaching directly and immediately impacts responsibility. If the line-manager or coach solves the problem or decides on the course of action for the player then he has taken ownership and responsibility. Should the player hit an obstacle he will come back to the line-manager or coach for more guidance. Coaching in which the player defines his own goals, solves a problem for himself or develops his own plan, has the result that responsibility stays with the player.

These ends, Achievement, Fulfilment and Joy cannot be delivered through an approach to coaching in which the line-manager or coach instructs others as a function of their expertise, knowledge or, worse, status. This approach, as I will explain in greater depth in the next chapter is known as 'Directive'. A wholly Directive approach removes the need for the player to think or be creative, removes the opportunity to take responsibility and takes any satisfaction or joy out of what limited achievement there might be. Effective coaching, as described above, requires a predominantly 'Non-Directive' approach, an approach that evokes excellence, in which learning is intrinsic and satisfaction derives from the achievement of meaningful goals. This is what effective coaching can be.