The relationship between the coach the client and the purchaser of coaching

By Geraldine Kelly

When considering how to manage this situation it is important to consider the different objectives of those concerned.

The Coach wants to work with someone who is committed to changing patterns of behaviour, or instigating effective techniques to enable them to perform to a greater degree, or to stop doing the things that are sabotaging their success. The Client wants to do any or all of the above, whilst maintaining a degree of respect, trust and confidentiality. The person who is paying for the coaching is looking for a return on investment. They may chose to measure that return on investment in a different way to either the Coach or the Client. They want tangible evidence that their money is well spent, with the most effective coach.

Managing this situation requires patience, understanding and negotiation skills. The Coach must understand that if the purchaser is not happy, then no money will be spent. The Coach must also understand that if the Client is not happy, then no sessions will occur. Equally the Coach must be satisfied that he/she can manage the situation and get the best for both the Client and the purchaser. The purchaser may want to know how many sessions for how long, and what is discussed and what measurable outcomes they can expect. This is likely to breach the confidentiality between the Client and the Coach.

The Coach should meet with the Client first to establish a relationship, to agree terms and to determine that they can help the Client. The Client should let the purchaser know that the Coach is to be engaged. The Coach should meet with the purchaser to agree initial session numbers and times and costs. A discussion should ensue about what are appropriate levels of information to be discussed regarding tangible measures. It could lie with the Client to liase with the purchaser at the end of each session or month to discuss the value of the sessions. This would at least eliminate the Coach from breaching their confidentiality with the Client.

There is also the issue of what happens if as a result of the coaching, the Client decides to leave the organisation. This responsibility lies with the Client, not with the Coach. An agreement between the Coach and the purchaser should have taken place before the second session to agree responsibility levels and confidentiality boundaries to remove the Coach from liability. Just as the Coach is not liable for the Client's departure, so are they not responsible for the removal of ineffective members of staff, this is the responsibility of the Manager/Director and HR. A Coach is there as an additional resource to the organisation, not as a replacement for ineffective staff or the lack of staffing procedures.

A Coach should have a relationship with the Client first and the organisation second. If the Coach is successful they may maintain a relationship with the organisation after the Client has moved on. Equally they may retain the relationship with the Client wherever they work.

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

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