

Focus on You! The value of coaching in organisations

By Alison Griffiths

January – the time for new experiences and a search for change. But how many of us have the courage to go for it? How comfortable are we with what we've got. In the words of Zig Zigler (US Sales and Marketing guru) 'If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting what you have always got'. Is that how it is going to be for another 12 months both for you and your company?

OK, so I will explain where we are going with this. For many years I have been promoting the value of personal development within the pharmaceutical/healthcare industry to support the ever important technical skills we all tend to focus on. For the past year I have been concentrating that attention on the value of Coaching as a personal development tool that we can all use to help us manage our lives and the key aspects within it more effectively.

This article is aimed at raising awareness of what Coaching is and specifically how it can improve your professional lives in terms of your career, your confidence, your relationships and your success. It also provides evidence and information to support the rationale for having a Coach if it is something that you feel would benefit your personal development. For the Line Managers, it aims at giving you some hard and soft facts on return on investment and the value of Coaching.

There are many personal and professional development tools available. ICR is itself a great promoter of many through its provision of Conferences, CPD Programme, Workshops and Training Courses. Some tools I am sure we have all found to be more effective than others. This depends on our opinion of the tool or provider, what we are using it for and our motivation behind using it. Each brings its own unique value – specifically when used at the right time for the right reasons. That may sound a fairly obvious statement. However, I have lost count of the number of times people have commented that they have found themselves on a training course that was a complete waste of time! Maybe you too have experienced something similar? The first step therefore, in defining the right learning and development solution is to be clear about what you need.

Why choose Coaching?

First of all, it would help to understand what Coaching is. You will find different definitions of Coaching. Personally I believe it to be 'the art of facilitating the learning, development and performance of another' (Downey, 1999:15¹), ie. helping people establish where they are, want to be and how to get there. In comparison to training, it is not about imparting information. Instead it uses socratic (specific, brief and relevant) questioning to help raise awareness of our own capabilities, knowledge and rationale. This in itself can be challenging. Don't let that put you off! By default, it means that we retain what we have learnt more easily because we have established and experienced it ourselves in a safe environment with the support of an independent, objective 'other' person. As a result, we are more willing to take responsibility and action based on our findings.

¹ Neenan, M and Dryden, W: Life Coaching A Cognitive Behavioural Approach; 2002: ix

You may consider using a Coach to have support through the learning process and to act as an independent 'sounding board' for a number of different reasons and I have listed a few in the table below:

REASONS FOR CHOOSING COACHING	
Situation	Coaching Support
Unsure of what to do next in your career or life in general	Defining aspirations and SMART Goals for short, medium and long term future
Difficult Decision Making	Logical methodologies to help you work through options and break down the inhibiting beliefs that can prevent progress
Finding Solutions	Rationalising and prioritising options to help you come to a conclusion
Procrastination	Helping you identify causes and consequences, what you want to achieve and how to achieve it
Stress	Providing tools to raise awareness of what is in and out of your control and how to manage it productively and proactively
Low self-esteem, lack of confidence	Having some one who believes in you and will challenge your self defeating personal belief systems to demonstrate your capabilities, skills, achievements and value.
Passive or Aggressive Communication	Coaching is underpinned by appropriate language and assertiveness techniques which become an integral part of learning to communicate effectively
Performance	To enhance or improve by establishing objectives and working with you to tap into what are as yet, hidden abilities

In summary, Coaching enhances effectiveness what ever the situation, because it is aimed at helping individuals and teams excel in their performance, problem solving and decision making tasks. By challenging them beyond their 'comfort zone' perceived ability boundaries are broadened.

What is the Value of Coaching?

If we take all these situations into consideration, we can see how Coaching can be a valuable tool not only to the individual but also to the business and organisation. The information below may be useful for you to support any request for a Coach during personal development discussions.

Advantages to Business: Coaching individuals for retention purposes in the form of Career Coaching can save a business 1.5 times the annual salary of the individual, taking into account replacement, training, productivity and lost knowledge. Results from a study being conducted on the Return on Investment (ROI) of Coaching in Britain by the Association for Coaching are

due to be released early next year. Already published from the US in the Kotter and Heskett Harvard Business School Study shows companies using performance enhancement coaching having improved Revenue Growth of 520%, Employment Growth of 246% and Net-Income Growth of 755% compared to Companies without it. The Manchester Study: Maximizing the Impact of Executive Coaching shows an ROI of 5.7 times the investment².

Advantages to Organisation: Coaching creates an environment of 'mutual responsibility' and can move organisations away from a 'them and us' culture. It promotes proactivity in enhancing performance and developing careers because it identifies what individuals want to achieve which can be planned in line with business strategies. Morale and confidence are raised, interactions and communication are more positive and solutions focused. The result is increased output and productivity and good PR for the organisation in terms of incentives and attracting and retaining staff.

Advantages to the Individual: Effective Coaching will provide you with aims, direction, the ability to plan and review and self help tools that you can implement in all aspects of your life. Embracing the concept of Coaching over a period of time, will give you the opportunity to develop more productive ways of thinking and behaving, managing and performing. It will help you plan your career and live your life with reduced fear of the unknown and unexpected. It will increase your ability to take control, assertively question and challenge – thereby allowing informed judgement and the courage to take calculated risks. Referring back to the Manchester Study above, Executive Coaching improved relationships by 74%, teamwork by 67% and job satisfaction by 61%

Stay ahead of the Competition

We have looked at the different ways Coaching can benefit. Let's now consider Career Coaching in more depth. Career Coaching is something that many individuals are interested in and many organisations shy away from because they automatically believe it means they will lose their staff. In fact, just the opposite could be said – it can help organisations and you retain employment whilst staying ahead of the competition. How?

Many organisations already hire the services of a Coach for their most senior executives to help them settle into new roles and to provide them with another 'ear' (as it can get quite isolated at the 'top'). It is taking time for the concept and value to filter down. However, some significantly successful companies have introduced Coaching in the automotive, banking, insurance and pharmaceutical sectors. Some have specifically focused on 'Career Coaching'.

One such example is Lloyds TSB. It introduced a Centre for Career Management – an international career center for giving information, advice, guidance and coaching to help its people manage their careers. HR ran an advice line and the Coaching element came in when people required more than simple advice on learning and development issues. It was not an 'outplacement' it was a place to plan for the future. Lloyds TSB found that perceptions on managing career opportunities changed significantly because people began to regard the process as a proactive

² www.extraordinaryliving.com/services/leadershipcoaching/impactofcoaching.html

rather than reactive process (ie. to be used only when faced with a crisis). It is now used by all levels of staff and employee opinion surveys demonstrate a positive impact on attitudes, levels of satisfaction and staff turnover³.

To help manage expectations, it has to be said that one of four outcomes is likely as a result of Career Coaching. You are either going to:

- stay where you are (possibly with some change)
- seek a new role within your organisation
- seek a move externally
- seek a complete life change

and this may go some way to understanding the reluctance of organisations to incorporate career coaching in learning and development. In challenging that concern, whether the change is immediate or in the future, how can any of these options really be considered as negative? Consider the impact on an organization that has an individual who is distracted, demotivated, unproductive because of a stressful situation or simply in the wrong job?

By proactively supporting individuals to be aware of current situations, to plan where they want to go and help them develop towards it, provides the individual with direction (thus raising motivation and morale). In return the company has created a culture of trust where plans are more likely to be shared – thus providing the necessary information for effectively planning growth, stability and change.

For example, Roche embraced this concept and as a result retained a valued Senior Manager in another part of the business. The alternative could well have been to lose her skills and knowledge completely.

None of this of course, takes the emphasis away from us as individuals in terms of managing our development and the future. To have our organisation supporting us can help financially and emotionally – however, only we can make it happen by taking action.

About the author:

Alison Griffiths, Director Executive Services, Unicus Ltd (www.unicus.co.uk) is a Member of the Association for Coaching, an independent and non profit coaching body aimed at promoting excellence & ethics in coaching throughout the UK & Ireland. Further information can be obtained on the website at www.associationforcoaching.com

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³ Caplan J: Career Development Coaching, Coaching for the Future; 2002; 5:69