

## Introduction

The following describes personal coaching, i.e. what it is, how it works, and its potential benefits. It explains what you can expect from your coach, and what your coach will expect from you. Please use it to prepare for your coaching assignment.

## What is personal coaching?

Coaching is a form of learning, where a person - a coach - supports someone else - a coachee - to create learning and self-development in a way that benefits them.

Coaching is normally a conversation, or series of conversations, one person has with another. The coach intends to produce a conversation that will benefit the other person, the coachee, in a way that relates to the coachee's learning and progress. Coaching conversations normally happen away from the workplace, e.g. in a meeting room, or external venue.

Personal coaching normally consists of two people talking in a room about things the coachee wants to change. This is sometimes called 'off-line' coaching. It might also be one person observing another person doing something, e.g. chairing a meeting, then discussing that afterward. This can be called on-line coaching.

## Why do people have coaching?

People enlist the services of a coach because they want to improve their situations and achieve goals. They want to learn new ways of thinking and approaching situations, in order to get better results. Common goals might be being more organised and effective at work, gaining confidence in certain situations, or simply relating to other people more effectively.

A skilled coach uses a combination of observation, questioning, listening and feedback to create a conversation rich in insight and learning. For the coachee, they will experience a focus and attention that helps them develop a greater self-awareness and appreciation of their own circumstances. In addition, they'll also create new ways to resolve issues, produce better results and generally achieve their goals more easily.

Common benefits people experience from coaching include:

- Improved sense of direction & focus
- Increased knowledge of self/self-awareness
- Improved ability to relate to and influence others
- Increased motivation
- Improved personal effectiveness, e.g. focussed effort
- Increased resourcefulness/resilience, e.g. ability to handle change

## What you can expect from your coach

The role of coach provides a kind of support distinct from any other. Your coach will focus solely on your situations with the kind of attention and commitment that you rarely experience anywhere.

Your coach will listen to you, with a genuine curiosity to understand who you are, what you think and generally how you experience the world. Your coach will reflect back to you, with the kind of objective assessment that creates real clarity. During conversations, your coach will encourage you to rise to challenges, overcome obstacles and get into action.

# Coaching Overview

A coaching relationship is like no other, simply because of its combination of objective detachment and commitment to the goals of the individual.

Because the relationship is based on trust and openness, the contents of your discussions will be confidential. Where a third party has requested the coaching for you, we will agree with you the best way to keep them involved or updated.

## What your coach will expect from you

In return, your coach will encourage you to stay committed to the coaching process. That means showing up for sessions, taking your own notes where appropriate, and keeping any agreements you make during sessions.

Your coach also needs you to be open to the potential of coaching. That means contributing to conversations honestly and openly. For example, if something isn't working, your coach needs to know. If you have concerns or problems, voice them. If you know why a problem is occurring, say so. The strength and power of coaching relates strongly to the level of openness and trust between the coach and the coachee.

## What coaching is not

Coaching is none of the following:

### Structured Training, e.g. classroom learning

Structured Training relates to a fixed agenda of learning, and a prepared approach to making that learning happen. For example, if you were being trained in a classroom to use a computer, the trainer would often use a structured approach to making sure you learnt a certain amount of information, within a certain time frame.

Coaching follows a more flexible format, according to the coachee's objectives. Both the coachee and the coach influence the direction and content of sessions. Coaching also places real responsibility for learning on the individual and encourages learning to continue after the session.

### Therapy, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy

Whilst coaching is not therapy, and should not be viewed as therapy, it does provide a viable alternative to people who may have previously considered some form of counselling to resolve a situation. For example, coaching promotes a greater self-awareness, and fuller appreciation of our own situations and circumstances. Sometimes, change can be promoted by a simple shift in perspectives. Barriers of self-belief such as "I can't" or "I don't" can be challenged in order to encourage fresh approaches and ideas.

### A way of someone else solving your problems for you

Coaching is based on the principle that an individual is ultimately responsible for their lives and the results they're getting. If we acknowledge that we are responsible for something, it follows that we have power and influence over it. For example, if you're not getting the results at work that you want, a coach might encourage you to:

- a) Understand that situation more clearly
- b) Develop new ideas or approaches for those situations
- c) Take constructive action that get you the results you want

## Coaching Overview

What a coach will not do is instruct you to go and do something specific, or go and do it for you. If they did, the coach would be taking responsibility – and so power – away from you.

### How might coaching benefit you?

The following questions will help you begin to form goals for a coaching relationship. They are not intended to identify specifics, but rather encourage thoughts or ideas. Please take a few minutes to sit quietly with the questions, perhaps writing down your answers.

1. What current goals (if any) do you have relating to the following areas:
  - i) Your work, e.g.
    - Personal performance/effectiveness
    - Career development, progression
    - Ability to lead/manage others
    - Motivation, fulfilment
  - ii) Your relationships with others, e.g.
    - Your colleagues
    - Your manager
    - Your stakeholders, clients, etc.
    -
  - iii) Your learning/development, e.g.
    - Handling conflict
    - Influencing others
    - Confidence, resilience, etc.
2. Thinking about your current circumstances
  - What would you like to do less of?
  - What would you like to do more of?
3. What would you most like to change if you could?
4. What's going really well for you right now and you'd like to build on that? e.g. do more of it, or make it even better
5. In what ways do you currently obtain learning?
  - By experience, i.e. doing things
  - Formal study, e.g. taking qualifications
  - Through observation of others
  - Reading, listening to audiotapes, etc.
  - Structured training, i.e. courses
  - Mentoring or coaching relationships, e.g. discussion, feedback

## **Coaching Overview**

### **Summary**

Hopefully you'll now have gained a better understanding of the opportunity of coaching. Perhaps you've also begun to think about your own situations and goals, and are realising how coaching might support you.

Please bring any relevant responses to the above questions to your coaching session. Your coach will then be able to help you clarify your thoughts and ideas further.