


Fastlane

 David Heath of McCanns Human Resource Consultants adds that an interesting thing happens when managers crack coaching. “They don’t just see other people’s motivation rise – their own motivation increases, too. After all, it’s incredibly satisfying to help people develop – and to have more time to yourself.”

What makes a good coach?

If you’re not a good listener, forget coaching, says Rebekah Fensome, a business coach within the marketing sector. “Giving full attention to what the other person is saying is the cornerstone of good coaching. That requires a lot of patience, as well as the ability to cast aside your own assumptions so that you can take on board the other person’s agenda. You’ll need to leave your judgmental head at the door.”

You’ll need to be energising, encouraging and empathetic, as well as able to build a rapport with others and to give unconditional regard to a person’s development, she adds. “With your face, cues, body language and

words, you’ll need to show that you have 100 per cent confidence in them. If they sense fear in you, they will never believe in themselves. That’s crucial because coaching is ultimately a confidence building exercise.”

You’ll need to encourage the coachee to leave their comfort zone and stretch themselves and, once you get to know their objectives, you’ll need to work on championing these through your coaching. Remember that the best coaches are people who can do some very creative lateral thinking – it’s about opening up options so that people’s horizons are broadened.

Coaching is certainly not for control freaks. The whole ethos behind coaching is that people must learn through their own mistakes, so be prepared for a few hiccoughs in the short term. But rest assured that it will pay off in the end.

Common mistakes

“A big mistake is trying to give the coachee answers rather than supporting them to find their own solutions,” says Jonathan Perks, head of leadership development at Penna.

“A coach may feel they need to be an expert in the subject they are discussing when in fact this is not necessary. Once an individual knows the structure of a coaching conversation, they can help the coachee to talk through any issue and provide options where necessary.”

Carla Cotterell, European key accounts director at Advertising.com, adds: “Coaches often spend too much time providing examples from their own career. While personal anecdotes can help build rapport, it is important that the coach remains focused on the needs of the member of staff they are working with.”

But cut yourself some slack. Just as coaching means allowing your team to learn by their mistakes, allow yourself to get it wrong sometimes too. “Fear not if you don’t feel like the world’s best coach within a couple of weeks,” says Stuart Duff. “While many people take to it instinctively, I’ve had others tell me it takes them a good couple of years before they get out of ‘telling’ mode when coaching.” **tm**

Kate Hilpern writes on coaching and management for *Coaching at Work*

Are you ready to coach your team?

When showing members of your team how to approach a new area of work, you:

- a) Tell them how you would do it;
- b) Talk them through some potential challenges and options to overcome them;
- c) Ask them open-ended questions about how they might play to their strengths and overcome their weaknesses.

If a member of your team comes to you with a work-related problem, you:

- a) Offer a solution;
- b) Invite them to come up with a solution and then guide them through achieving it;
- c) Ask them what they think the best end result would be and help them work out the steps they would take to achieve it, bearing in mind their individual personality and working style.

A member of your team makes a mistake. You:

- a) Tell them you never made any such mistakes and to buck their ideas up;
- b) Give them some options on how to rectify the situation;
- c) Invite them to work out what caused the error and what they have learned from it; reassuring them that it was probably a good learning curve.

Your team has been achieving good results with very little management input. You:

- a) Decide to let them get on with it. If it ain’t broke, why fix it?;
- b) Reassure them that you’re happy with what they’re doing and that they can come to you if they have any queries;
- c) Think about ways you can help them to stay at the top or do even better such

as learning how each individual in the team operates or by ensuring they don’t become victims of their own success and burning out too quickly.

If you answer:

Mostly (a) Coaching is nowhere to be seen in your management toolbox. If you want to embrace coaching, go on a comprehensive course, but even then recognise if it’s not for you.

Mostly (b) You’re halfway there, with some coaching techniques beginning to rear their heads.

Mostly (c) You’re obviously a natural. Coaching already helps you to unleash people’s potential.