



Similarities and Differences in Coaching & Mentoring

Corporate growth in the 21st century requires management to reach far beyond traditional skills such as training, supervision and management. Personnel development in the 21st century has less to do with these “oversight” skills than the need to develop human capital. Workers flooding the workforce today are seeking self actualization and personal growth. With the globalization of the economy, speed of technological change and the end of pensions, loyalty to a particular employer is on the wane. The way to attract, retain and develop human capital in the new millennium is through providing a higher level of growth and opportunity for your people. Employees need to understand the big picture and realize what’s in it for them if they are to support the big picture.

Coaching and mentoring are the 2 highest levels of professional development available in today’s workplace. Let us review some simple definitions to help us understand both and place them in the proper framework.

men-toring - *adverb* to counsel or teach; to sponsor or support; to influence or guide.

coaching - *adverb* an empowering learning engagement leading to self realization and self actualization by the coachee.

It is easy to become confused about the differences between coaching and mentoring. Often times the two terms are used interchangeably when in fact there are some very specific distinctions. The primary distinction between the two is “who established the course of action”. In mentoring, the course of action is usually provided by the mentor, whereas in a true coaching engagement, it is the coachee who creates the action plan. It has been my experience that most managers revert to mentoring, thinking they are coaching and as a result the lasting quality of the lesson is marginalized. The reason is simple. If a person sets a personal goal, and successfully accomplishes it after painstakingly working toward its achievement, personal and professional growth is always a powerful byproduct. The result is that similar situations will seem familiar, the coachee’s confidence will rise and they can approach that new problem with greater confidence. In a mentoring engagement, however, the mentee does not go through the pain of evaluating options, choosing a course of action or experiencing the personal satisfaction of conquering the challenge. Thus, they are deprived of a key component of coaching: personal and professional growth.



The similarities have more to do with the required skill sets that mentoring and coaching share. Both the mentor and coach use strong interpersonal and communication skills as well as intentional coaching skills. The objectives of the mentor and coach can be similar--to increase personal work-related effectiveness within the work/organizational culture. Both are organizational resources that can greatly enhance one's professional and personal learning and development and achievement of goals. The major distinction between a mentor and coach is the depth and type of feedback and direction provided.

The primary difference between a coaching and mentoring engagement is "who came up with the solution?" In mentoring, the mentor generally provides an expeditious solution and recommends a course of action. In a coaching engagement, it is the employee who generates the solution. The coach merely helps them uncover their goals and align a strategy. The coach then provides encouragement and accountability to help the coachee attain their goals. The primary objective in any coaching engagement is to expand the coachee's comfort zone. The coach is a catalyst in affecting lasting personal growth, balance and contentment. Implied in this process is that it is the coachee, not the coach, who arrives at alternatives, seeks a solution and charts the corrective course. The coach's responsibility is to offer perspective through powerful questions then motivate and hold the coachee accountable to attaining their objectives

In fact often times mentoring is a smaller component of a coaching engagement. An example is: Enabling the person you are coaching to effectively utilize his or her personal traits and skills in the context of organizational realities. The coach as a mentor: The coach acts as a mentor when they apply their experiences to clarify a specific question pertaining to the coachee's organizational role or clarify the relationship of that coachee to their professional role. For example; does the coachee:

- Have a clear understanding of his or her role in the organization?
- Have clearly defined tasks/responsibilities?
- Have a well-defined career path?
- Understand his or her career interests?
- Have a good understanding of the culture and norms of the organization he or she is in?
- Have clearly defined tasks/responsibilities?

It is not unusual to change hats from coach to mentor, often, sometimes within a single session. As this happens both the coach and coachee must be cognizant of this shift and acknowledge the difference.



A mentor will provide specific recommendations pertaining to career and professional growth, generally based on the depth of experience or skill set they possess. During a mentoring engagement, objectives, strategies and tactics are discussed. The mentor then draws on their experience and expertise to craft a recommended course of action(s). Input is fairly direct and takes the role of a guide or facilitator. The mentor will provide a recommended course of action to the mentee. Mentoring is an expeditious tool to drive results which may or may not be mentee generated.

Some common roles of the mentor:

- Connecting your partner to other members of the organization.
- Sharing your experiences and providing knowledge on the formal and informal processes of the organization.
- Providing career guidance
- Help the person you are coaching see the bridge between:
 - What they value and desire and...
 - The task or role for which they are responsible
- Encourage belief in their ability to be successful.
- Align their level of confidence with their abilities.

At the root of the debate about coaching is the question as to whether people are able to change, and if so, to what degree. There is one key trait that is essential if someone is to be a good candidate for coaching:

humility: – *noun* the quality or condition of being humble; modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance, rank, etc.; a lack of false pride

Having coached hundreds of people through all professions, it has been my experience that if one lacks humility then they lack the incentive required to change. They simply feel that they know more than their coach and will discount everything that is discussed. Certainly they may feign acceptance, but in the end they merely appease the coach, and maintain their current practices in the belief that they know better. For coaching to be effective the coachee must accept the need to change AND take 100% responsibility for that change. Before you begin any coaching engagement, insure that these 2 criteria are present. Providing these 2 preconditions; humility and accountability are met, you should have a better than average chance at effecting change.

Change is generally gradual, and not without setbacks. The key is to stay the course and concentrate on ONE primary area of improvement at a time, anything more causes a distraction. Once the single goal is accomplished, celebrate then reprioritize and begin working on the next area of development.



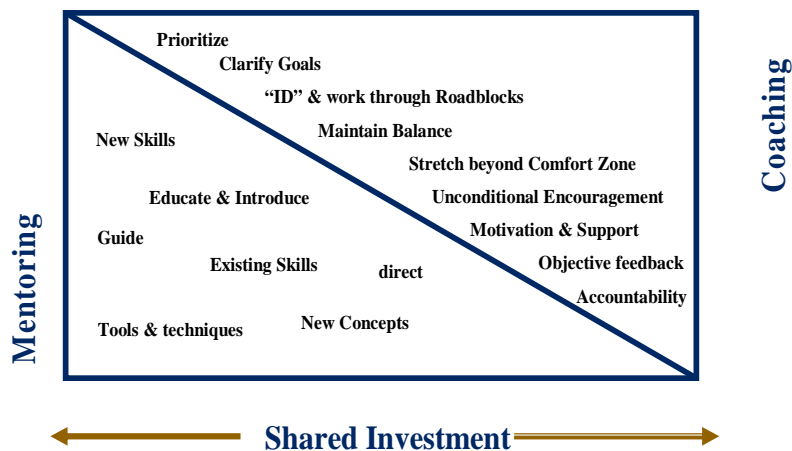
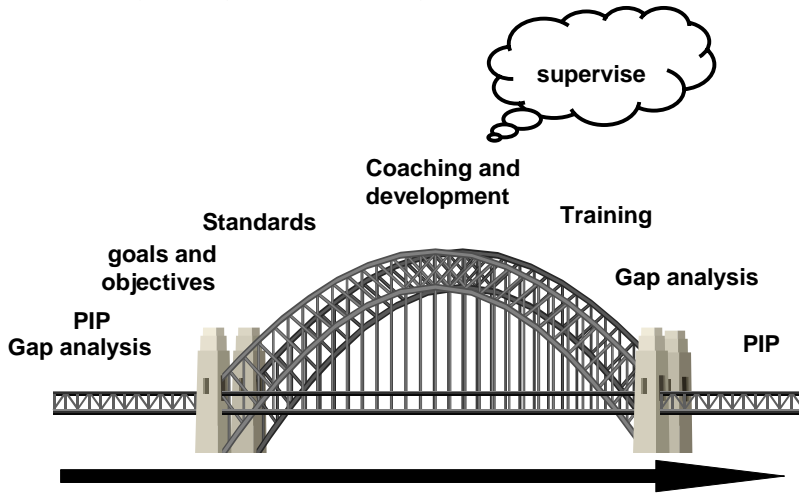
Here are typical stages of change that people encounter. As a coach you can observe the progress!

1. *Awareness.* "I seem to have a need to change."
2. *Acceptance.* "I definitely need to change."
3. *Commitment.* "I not only own the problem, I own responsibility to fix it."
4. *Program for development.* "I fully embrace this program, with specific activities."
5. *Reinforcement.* "I need internal and/or external reinforcement – feedback –for maximum growth."
6. *Monitoring progress.* "I embrace measurement of my progress."
7. *Conclusion.* "I've fixed this problem; while recognizing that for some issues a lifelong effort is necessary, I have achieved the specific goal of eliminating a potential career derailer."

Implied in all seven steps above: the coachee is leading the change...
the coach is merely a catalyst.

A typical coaching program in corporate America might look like this:

Ongoing coaching and support



There are some areas which you clearly need to avoid if you want to have a successful coaching outcome. In no particular order, I have identified the most common coaching mistakes I have witnessed.



Top 5 coaching mistakes

1. Failure to establish a trusting and protected environment
2. Talking too much
3. Not providing a closed loop feedback solution
4. Mentoring or supervising during coaching time
5. Coaching time is not given priority

Comparison of Mentoring and coaching

	Mentor	Coach
Goals	Support success and advancement Support and advise on career development Serve as a personal advocate Advise the person on best ways to maneuver the political waters of an organization and open doors Provide advice about strategies for best way to accomplish work goals	Support success and advancement Create greater self-awareness around strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for learning and development Help people identify personal goals that support work goals Maintain focus on desired areas/objectives Help people accomplish personal development faster than if left on their own
Methods	One-on-one face-to-face meetings, lunch or dinners Casual setting Knowledge sharing Tells, advises, suggests, instructs	One-on-one phone or face-to-face meetings More formal structure with informal conversational tone Measurable goals established Personal talent/personality/soft-skill assessments Periodic meetings with boss Use of provocative questions to expand the person's universe
Involvement of others	May be directed to others to accomplish work	Typically includes boss of person being coached to articulate work-related goals and key accountabilities
Scope	Organizational and career maneuvering within context of current job and future potential	Personal and professional development within context of current job and future potential



Some parting thoughts to place coaching in perspective...

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly.

One day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther.

Then the man decided to help the butterfly, so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon.

The butterfly then emerged easily.

But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings.

It never was able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were required to force fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If we are allowed to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us.

We would not be as strong as what we could have been.

And we could never fly.



About Don Hahn

Donald J. Hahn, President of Hahn Training has enjoyed a successful 25 year sales and sales management career. As a sales performer working for fortune 500 companies, Don consistently ranked in the top 5% of all sales performers nationwide. As an accomplished sales executive and leader he has delivered marketing, training, recruiting and CRM solutions to sales teams of up to 800. Don is the author and owner of a reliable interviewing tool entitled H.I.R.E which improves sales candidate selection. A Certified Franklin Covey Coach, Past President of the Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives, member of the American Society for Training & Development and the International Coaching Federation, Don guarantees results to his clients throughout the Greater Niagara Region. Numerous fortune 1000 companies have benefited from his unique sales insights and trainings over the years.

