

Our vision on Coaching

What leaders have to learn?

New or old?

Is it a new way of learning? Or is it an old long practiced way of learning?

All “official” learning paths start with learning in groups that I where children learn their basic skills. After ten years of practice in reading, writing, speaking, calculating and more, they reach a rather high level in mastering these basic skills.

Two new challenges emerge:

- 1. To be a master one has to add his/her own personality in the technical skill. It is not by teaching you learn. You find your own unique way to perform best by coaching.
- 2. The pre-master level is performing the skill as a habit. These habits must also block irregularities in practice and fluctuations in focus. That is what habits are for. For new learning one has to de-block himself/herself out of the old habits and create new solutions.

This new learning implies new attitude and new practices of the apprentice. Not being the follower who perfects existing habits. One has to master ones own development. What attitudes and practices a manager must have?

We all experienced coaching

It is lucky we all have experience with coaching. Several people in our lives may have had this contribution. They can be old, young, of scholarship, or craftsman. They did something different from what others did. They did not give advice when you talked with them about life, your dreams, what you do--successes and failures. When they asked questions that were not “exam-questions”, but open questions that made you think about what you “really want” and “how you want to do”.



These people have a coaching skill. Luckily this skill is generally available in society. Many cultural movements leading to happiness cultivate this skill. Some learned this skill at home, in a group. In society the need for this skill is growing. We have many advisors who tell us what is the best to do.

Many teachers teach students the best way to handle. Managers can give instructions on how things have to be performed. Coaching?

What is needed?

The most needed skills now for leaders are:

- to help people to become effective in new situations where repetition of past behaviour is not enough for a good performance;
- to help people to connect their internal sources with outside demands.

Managers need this coaching skill in their daily repertoire of leadership skills.

Only when it is integrated in a continuous learning system, culture, coaching can be effective

“I do not want to promote coaching as such. I cannot prove it is successful when there is no organisational support”. We oftentimes hear statements like that from training managers and OD professionals. Training and leadership development professionals do not want to train for the sake of training, which is like a drop on a hot spot and all learning fade away in a second.

What conditions are needed to mark it as a standard practice in a company?

- Full support from the top management
- Continuous learning
- Organization wide participation
- Coaching performance being in the management performance appraisal system
- Measurable targets on yearly basis
- Daily practice of coaching (on the regular agenda of management) and submission of ongoing management report
- Direct linkage to the business performance and the bottom line

Where to start? Managers? Individual?

What is the most effective way to do?

Coaching as an integrated tool in daily leadership practices

Coaching is a normal tool for every manager integrated in his daily work. It is all implied in the “Situational Leadership Model”. (Hersey and Blanchard , Management of Organisational Behaviour, 2012) . Coaching is also included in the Action management model of Adair. (Action Oriented Leadership). The challenge for a manager is “How to stimulate employees in every day activities to a higher level of mature performance”. This included the two challenges: new levels of performance (new habits) and new connections between internal drives and external responsibilities.

So in this line of thinking coaching is in the normal every day practice of leaders. It is included in all management training.

From the learner perspective: integrate new accents into the existing system. Do not train managers coaching, mentoring, leadership, teamwork, leading projects--integrate these concepts in one working system.

Coaching is not a special tool for a specific situation: It is the daily practice of a manager

Managers integrate coaching in their normal work. They learn to integrate it into their leadership behaviour. Coaching is very closely rooted in their every day job. Coaching can be differentiated according to management levels: line managers, middle management, and senior management. Coaching also means giving feedbacks in daily work. In the following, we give two typical examples:

Task related coaching

A new employee comes to work at a department where they have to book reservations, makes lists of courses. The manager says: “you have general knowledge of ‘word’ and some database programs. Here all is very special. You will use all special made formats and the data base is all pre-programmed. How do you want or learn? Here is a manual with step by step instructions, or you can learn by trial and error. Start with a phone call of someone who wants to make reservations for a course. Okay, you want to try yourself. How long will you try? You want me to stand next to you so you get immediate feedback and answers on questions? Or do you want to try for yourself for sometime? Ten minutes? I am back in ten minutes”.

Hints: 1. Giving control over the situation to the learning person is very important for self-confidence, and for job satisfaction. 2 Also important is a signal of trust from the leader: He is a mature person who can steer the learning himself.

An issue of personal development

A Director manages a department of 250 people. He guides 10 managers, each working with a group of 25 people. 70% of the work changes slowly over time: once in the two years, 20% of the work changes regularly, 10% of the work is experimental and totally new. The Director faces the question: “Do we have enough well trained people coming year”? He estimates of what is necessary. He knows past year’s evaluations. Does that fit? He has a lot of uncertainties.

He calls for a meeting with all managers (like he does every year) and presents the question. The managers go into depth on the thoughts of the Director and the reasons for his expectations. They evaluate and compare with what is going on today. All employees have development targets. Any progress? And they ask themselves more questions: what are the ambitions of several people? What the competences? Can they all come to a new level of performance? Which employees need special attention? At the end, all leave with homework for the next meeting in two weeks.

Hints: The Director has the skill to present questions in the context of the success of the whole department. Connect managers to this task he cannot perform himself on his own. He must know how to share problems and guide the search process by the managers to an answer. The managers must have the skill to make career conversations with their people, evaluate the progress, and be able to talk with the employees when they see an employee is making no progress.

So coaching skills become part of behaviour every manager needs to practice in his daily work. When an organisation aims to strengthen the coaching skills, it offers its managers training programs that fit directly in the daily practice of the managers. It will be connected and integrated in the leadership concepts they know and connected to skills they already know.

Organizing coaching training

To be effectively integrated in an organisation, training has to be organized for two groups of managers: the training for the managers of the managers, and that for line managers.

To have new practices integrated in the behaviour of a manager on the workplace, the manager of the manager has a crucial contribution. This contribution must be part of a program for the implementation of leadership behaviour.

How can a manager of the (learning) manager reinforce the new practices of the manager?

- give him space to apply his new skill: give time to have coaching conversation
- be very clear in the expectations and feedback on the practices
- be stimulating
- not be afraid that the manager will make mistakes., he will.

Regarding training for line managers, we suggest:

1. His sensitivity to use his own and oftentimes vague feelings as a source of information about the relationship between his values and what is going on in the behaviour of others.
2. His ability to begin each cooperation according 'the natural order': commit on goals; specify each contribution; agree on the work-rules; break down all blockades. In ongoing practice. they learn to ask questions on the commitment to the same goals when a practical issue occurs.

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3Cs : *Connect, cooperate, commit*
