

### 3

## Coaching Competencies

Using and combining the processes of coaching and strategic and tactical action planning addresses individual behaviors, motivation, and related personal improvement. Business coaching focuses on identifying and clarifying goals and emphasizes action, accountability, and follow-through.

Coaching is unique in the manner in which the client interacts with the professional: The client is the driver in this professional relationship because he or she makes the final decision and initiates the appropriate action. He or she is also responsible for abiding by a system of accountability. The coach fulfills the role of a facilitator to fully empower the client. Each client exists within various systems, both personal and professional. These influence how a coaching effort is conducted, as do other factors, such as the organizational culture and structure, available resources, and an organization's business objectives.

Coaching comprises protocols, principles, standards, guidelines, and procedures that contribute to the highest, most resource-effective performance of the discipline and is based on a broad range of experience, knowledge, and practical application.

However, an overreliance on process and protocol can get in the way of the coaching experience and results. If coaches seem more interested in following a specific method or are reluctant to skip steps, clients might lose interest or patience. Problems also can occur when coaches are unavailable for ad hoc coaching. It is important for coaches not to over-schedule their time, thus reducing the opportunities they have to coach. Good chemistry is also a plus; poor chemistry often leads to clients losing interest.

Coaches who focus on what their clients want to achieve can provide coaching that makes a difference. Great coaches are bold and courageous in one moment and reflective and playful in the next. They adapt their dialogs to be most helpful in moving the client forward.

### Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the need for skilled coaches.
- List the core competencies that effective coaches possess.
- Explain how establishing strategically aligned objectives and measuring results facilitate learning in a coaching relationship.
- List and define the basic steps in the coaching process.
- Explain cognitive dissonance disparity.
- State the value of mentoring.
- List the techniques used to create effective communication in a coaching relationship.
- Describe training and certification programs geared toward coaches.

## Setting the Foundation

According to Finnerty (1996), "The changes that have brought about a need for expert coaching skills are connected to the shift from the paradigms of the industrial era to the paradigms of the information age. In the industrial era, businesses hired people for their hands. Today, organizations hire people for their minds. Organizations must have the capacity to quickly respond to the demands created by global competition and rapid changes in technology. Coaching is the management skill that enables organizations to engage the minds of employees."

Finnerty also points out, "Technology creates a demand for coaches. Coaches are needed in an environment where the rapid pace of technological change creates an environment in which employees are constantly learning. Managers can help employees successfully master new tools, programs, or work processes by providing performance observation and feedback. However, many jobs today require greater competence because of the more complex technology involved. Employees need training and coaching to develop the skills to meet these high demands."

Finnerty further notes that managers today are confronted with a workforce that is more responsive to being coached than being controlled. Although employees may lack technological competence, they are better educated as a group. Employees now are expected to participate in problem solving and decision making and use their heads to provide service and improve quality. Employees are less security oriented than those who lived through the depression and world wars. Frankel and Otzao (1992) propose that "today's workers feel that in exchange for coming to work, they should be stimulated, challenged, and recognized for their efforts."

## Developing Coaching Competencies

A coach needs myriad skills for a productive coaching relationship. Table 3-1 outlines the critical skills that coaches need and activities that they carry out. The largest category of essential skills is communication, because this is the primary way coaches influence clients to reach the desired goals.

### Facilitating Learning

When first instituting coaching as a development strategy, coaches set the parameters for how to integrate and substantiate it and, most important, determine what the client expects to gain from it.

Aligning the coaching initiative with business goals is essential for cultural change; the coach works from the top down and, to get the attention of senior management, demonstrates a direct influence on business measures.

**Table 3-1. Most Important Skills Needed to Be a Coach**

Skill	Activity
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Be direct</li> <li>• Provide feedback</li> <li>• Be empathetic</li> <li>• Ask the right questions</li> <li>• Be quiet</li> <li>• Relate experiences</li> <li>• Provide encouragement</li> <li>• Generate alternatives</li> <li>• Connect information</li> <li>• Engender trust</li> </ul>
Client motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve motivation for change or action</li> <li>• Facilitate change or transition</li> <li>• Believe in the client's ability</li> <li>• Improve coachability</li> </ul>
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be curious</li> <li>• Be nonjudgmental</li> <li>• Have humility</li> <li>• Put aside personal agenda</li> <li>• Be self-aware</li> <li>• Be fully present</li> </ul>
Technical skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop theories of motivation</li> <li>• Implement coaching practices and tools</li> <li>• Increase knowledge of the business</li> <li>• Develop strategies and plans</li> <li>• Create contracts</li> </ul>

These are some questions to consider:

- What kinds of outcomes is the client or organization looking for?
- What will the coaching experience look or be like for the client or organization?
- What are the expectations of the coach?

At this point, the coach can determine what to achieve. Coaching can help

- attain a sustained competitive advantage through better performance in specific target areas or competencies
- diminish the expense of firing, hiring, and training new people
- turn around underperforming or derailed executives
- increase knowledge transfer of high performers and exceptional managers
- accelerate leadership capability
- develop a more effective management or leadership succession program
- develop higher-performing projects or cross-organizational teams.

### Measuring Results

For the results of coaching to be measurable, the coaching intervention must support specific objectives—this is especially critical when measuring results against business performance. To create measurable objectives, the coach determines the expected outcomes of coaching based on the coaching program's goals and objectives.

Evaluation expert Donald Kirkpatrick's second and third levels of evaluation measure a learner's mastery of content and ability to transfer learning on the job. His fourth level of evaluation measures the results of a training intervention on business measures. Typically, objective level 4 evaluation measures include increased output, cost savings, time savings, and quality improvement, while subjective measures include increased employee satisfaction, employee confidence, customer satisfaction, customer retention, implementation of new ideas, and decreased employee turnover.

By linking the skills and behaviors (level 2 and 3 measures) that the coaching intervention is designed to address and improve to a level 4 measure, the learner and the coach have a focal point and a clear roadmap for on-the-job application.

### Understanding the Coaching Process

According to the ICF, "Coaching typically begins with a personal interview (either face-to-face or by teleconference call) to assess the individual's current opportunities and challenges, define the scope of the relationship, identify priorities for action, and establish specific desired outcomes. Subsequent coaching sessions may be conducted in person or over the telephone, with each session lasting a previously established length of time. Between

Mentoring can take several forms, from an informal relationship in which a mentor helps a protégé learn a specific task to a long-term relationship in which a mentor provides advice and support to a protégé over a period of several years.

There are some common misconceptions about mentoring and mentoring programs. Mentoring is not

- an opportunity for an experienced employee or manager to tell a protégé what to do
- a one-way relationship in which all benefits accrue to the protégé
- a working relationship without difficulties or challenges
- a working relationship in which the more experienced person always has the skill sets
- a substitute for other types of learning through classrooms, e-learning, and personal networks.

Through mentoring programs, protégés develop vision and expertise and mentors become invigorated, knowing that they are leaving a legacy to their organization, profession, and community.

A key benefit to mentoring programs is that they offer something other career development programs do not—individual attention. Traditionally, organizations have been interested in grooming employees to take over jobs of increasing responsibility. On another level, they might be concerned with retaining the bright, young graduates who could easily take their skills and enthusiasm elsewhere if they are not quickly involved in the excitement and goals and with the people of the organization.

Organizations often look toward a formalized mentoring program as a means of instituting a management continuity system at a variety of levels. Some use the program to groom middle management for senior-level jobs. Mentoring programs are an effective means of increasing the political savvy, exposure, and visibility middle managers need if they are going to succeed in top-level management positions.

### Structured Mentoring Versus Traditional Mentoring

Table 3-2 outlines the key differences between structured mentoring and traditional mentoring. These key differences are important considerations for helping organizations decide whether structured mentoring or traditional mentoring programs will meet their needs. To establish which kind of program it needs, an organization should consider the following situations for which structured mentoring programs tend to be more effective and efficient than traditional mentoring programs:

- A person has just joined the company and needs to learn specific skills as well as the social context of the work. (Structured mentoring is particularly important for a new college graduate.)
- A person has changed jobs in the company and needs support during the transition, such as in expanding a personal network in the new position.

- A person is being groomed for a promotion.
- The task is more than the sum of its parts, such as in consulting or management, where both knowledge and soft skills are critical to job success.

**Table 3-2. Distinctions Between Structured and Traditional Mentoring**

Structured Mentoring	Traditional Mentoring
Time limited, focused on the protégé's acquisition of a particular skill set, usually within a particular context	Long or short term, depending on needs of the protégé and willingness and availability of the mentor
Focused on specific behavioral objectives	Focused on career development and overall career performance from a long-term perspective or over a period of time
Clearly articulated expectations for both mentors and protégés	Used by corporations to assist employees in learning and adhering to certain corporate requirements
Planned activities created for the purpose of providing the protégé with an opportunity to learn specific skills in a specific context	Unplanned activities that come up on the job and are not created specifically for the purpose of learning
A means for structured feedback from the mentor	Lack of structured means for feedback; feedback is provided, but the quality and quantity depends on the mentor
Active engagement of the protégé in reflection and self-assessment	General absence of reflection and journaling; self-assessment may or may not be present, but mentor mostly provides feedback
Inclusion of an evaluation component to document business results	Metrics and an evaluation component may or may not be present

✓ **Chapter 3 Knowledge Check**

1. Which questioning technique seeks to develop critical thinking and creativity skills?
  - a. Open-ended
  - b. Closed-ended
  - c. Socratic
  - d. Didactic
2. Which of the following is most appropriate for gaining experience in a specific job role and having formal, standardized documentation ensuring competence and the ability to complete the function appropriately?
  - a. Coaching
  - b. Executive coaching
  - c. Mentoring
  - d. Structured mentoring
3. During the analysis stage of the coaching process, which best describes the coach's focus?
  - a. Identifying the problem and lack of achievement of a particular agreed-on standard
  - b. Creating the performance metric standards
  - c. Documenting observations and establishing performance metric standards
  - d. Identifying the negative and positive consequences and current reward systems
4. Which type of feedback focuses on the future and is designed to help the client raise performance or prepare for the next level of effort?
  - a. Evaluative
  - b. Developmental
  - c. Formative
  - d. Summative
5. The responsibility for building and keeping the lines of communication open in a coaching relationship rests with the client.
  - a. True
  - b. False

6. The primary purpose of having an employee self-assess his or her performance is to build
  - a. Trust
  - b. Confidentiality
  - c. Factual observation
  - d. Commitment
7. According to the ICF, coaching always begins with a face-to-face personal interview to assess an individual's current opportunities, challenges, and to define the scope of the relationship and priorities.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. Factors that inhibit or enhance the creation of a good environment include the coach's own body language and nonverbal cues.
  - a. True
  - b. False

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