

# Coaching Enhances Individual and Business Performance



*'You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.'* –

Martin Luther King Jr

## The Context

Coaching is a growing industry within the U.K. It is one of the most flexible, cost-effective ways of providing development for an individual, team or organisation.

Coaching is an interactive process that helps individuals and organisations to develop more rapidly and produce more satisfying results. Coaches work with clients in all areas including business, career, finances, health and relationships. As a result of coaching, clients set better goals, take more action, make better decisions, and more fully use their natural strengths.

## What is Coaching?

Timothy Gallwey, author of the Inner Game of Tennis, describes coaching as:

*'Unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them'.*

Performance Consultants David Whitaker, OBE, Dr. David Hemery, MBE and Sir John Whitmore describe coaching as:

*'Coaching is about helping someone to get the best performance out of themselves – the potential for which was already there. Coaching is about releasing that potential'.*

David Hemery found *'my research into 63 of the world's top performers underlines the fact that in the realm of excellence the mind is key' and Sir John Whitmore states 'once the race starts there is only one backside in the driving seat. That's what I mean by responsibility'.*

Therefore coaching is about releasing potential and generating responsibility. By coaching an individual it inevitably heightens and raises their awareness and thus enables them to take even more responsibility for whatever issue or issues they are being coached upon.

## How a coach can help is by enabling the person being coached:

- ✚ find their own motivation
- ✚ define their own goals
- ✚ discover from within their own experience and abilities how improved performance is possible for them
- ✚ produce that performance

The client, in discussion with their coach identifies what 'improved performance' might mean. It could be 'how can I manage my satellite-based team' for a Sales manager, or it could be 'where do I want to be in 5 years time?' for another manager.

In summary, coaching:

- ✚ helps people set better goals and then to reach those goals
- ✚ asks clients to do more than they would have done on their own
- ✚ focuses clients better to more quickly produce results
- ✚ provides the tools, support and structure to accomplish more

## Who does the coaching?

Coaching is a two-way process in which a coach, through discussion and guided activity, helps an individual to build his or her competence and confidence at work. In many organisations the role of the coach is adopted by the individual's manager. In some circumstances this role may also be undertaken by a peer, an HR specialist or an external consultant.

Professional coaches are trained to listen and observe, to customise their approach to the individual client's needs and to elicit solutions and strategies from the client. They believe that the client is naturally creative and resourceful, and that the coach's job is to provide support to enhance the skills, resources, and creativity that the client already has. While the coach provides feedback and an objective perspective, the client is responsible for taking the steps to produce the results he or she desires.

Coaching can be used to help any individual overcome a gap in his or her performance and, unlike most training interventions, it takes place on the job.

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## Who hires a coach?

- + People hire a coach when they:
- + are starting a new business
- + are making a career transition
- + re-evaluate their life choices
- + simply feel ready for a personal or professional breakthrough
- + want more
- + want to grow
- + want it easier

## What happens when you hire a coach?

- + you take yourself more seriously
- + you take more effective and focused actions immediately
- + you stop putting up with what is dragging you down
- + you create momentum so it's easier to get results
- + you set better goals that you might have without the coach
- + you can work on personal goals and/or business/professional goals with a trained professional coach

## How is coaching different from mentoring, counselling, consulting, therapy, sports coaching, a best friend?

<b>Mentoring</b>	Deals with organisational career or personal transitions and works on the past, present and future by discussing the client's thoughts, feelings and actions. Mentors are unconnected to the client's day-to-day life.
<b>Counselling</b>	Deals with emotional problems and tends to be problem-centred by working on the client's perception of the problem both past and present. Counsellors are professional third parties.
<b>Consulting</b>	Coaching is a form of consulting although it tends to address organisational issues predominately. The coach works on the system, structure and processes within the organisation looking at ways for potential benefit in organisational improvements.
<b>Therapy</b>	Coaching is not therapy. Coaches don't work on 'issues' to get into the past or deal much with understanding human behaviour. This is left up to the client to know and figure out while the coach helps them move forward and set personal and professional goals that will give them the life they really want.
<b>Sports</b>	Coaching includes several principles from sports coaching, like teamwork, going for the goal, being your best. But unlike sports coaching, most professional coaching is not competition or win/lose based. Coaches strengthen the client's skills rather than helping them beat the other team. It's win/win.
<b>Best friend</b>	A best friend is wonderful to have. But is your best friend a professional who you will trust to advise you on the most important aspects of your life and/or business.
<b>Coaching</b>	A personal coach does just what an athletic coach or music teacher does, only in a more complete and bigger way. A coach challenges you and takes the time to find out what winning in life means to you. A coach is your partner in living the life you know you can accomplish, personally and professionally. A coach is someone to hold you accountable for your life, to make sure you really do live up to your potential.

No matter where you are in life, there is always a desire for more. More success, more money, closer relationships, a deeper feeling of meaning in life, etc. It is the nature of people to want to attain more, become more, be more and we all struggle with how to get what we're looking for. This is where coaching can help.

Most people believe that 'hard work and doing it on your own' are the keys to finding the life, success, money or happiness that they seek. They believe that a price must be paid to attain what they want, and often that price is poor health, not having enough time to enjoy life, strained family relationships or lessened productivity. The saddest part is that, even though this effort may result in more of something, it is often not the something you had in mind, and you are back where you started, or worse, further from your real intentions.

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Athletes and performers know about this trap. They know they need someone else, a trained someone else to help them set goals, discover real needs, and work effectively toward ultimate goals of excellence. So, they are willing to hire a coach or a teacher. No serious athlete or musician would expect to progress very far without one.

## Why does coaching work?

### Coaching works for several reasons:

- ✚ there is a synergy between the coach and client which creates momentum
- ✚ the coach and client are able to build an atmosphere of trust and openness with each other
- ✚ a coach raises awareness in the client of his or her performance gaps
- ✚ the client takes responsibility for his or her own personal development
- ✚ better goals are set – ones that naturally pull the client toward the goal rather than goals that require the client to push themselves to the goal
- ✚ action plans are set for reaching the client's goals. The coach works with the client guiding, motivating, challenging and supporting them to achieve their goal in less time than if they had to figure it all out by themselves
- ✚ helps the client identify what, if anything is blocking their goal achievement and how to eliminate those blocks
- ✚ the client develops new skills, and these skills translate into more success
- ✚ the coach provides accurate and timely motivational and formative feedback to the client on his or her performance improvement
- ✚ the client finds out whether they are doing what they most enjoy and identifies what they are tolerating or putting up with
- ✚ the coach provides the ongoing support essential when undertaking any new endeavour

### Overall coaching works because, performed well, it is:

- ✚ non-judgemental
- ✚ confidential
- ✚ supportive
- ✚ guiding
- ✚ challenging
- ✚ encouraging
- ✚ active listening and hearing
- ✚ effective questioning
- ✚ raising awareness
- ✚ generating responsibility
- ✚ leading towards improved performance
- ✚ totally equal

Professional coaches like Ann Skidmore structure their coaching in a way which will meet the needs of the client and doesn't compromise either person.

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## Starting points for coaching

The starting point can be defined by the pressures, opportunities and changes facing the organisation right now. For example, coaching can be used to great effect by organisations experiencing any one of the internally, or externally driven environmental conditions featured below:

- + internal and external pressures for change
- + achieving organisational change and learning
- + managing transitions effectively
- + dealing with organisational cultures
- + re-building self-esteem and performance
- + cost cutting
- + mergers and acquisitions
- + need for flexibility
- + change of core business
- + culture change
- + expansion
- + multi-skilling
- + strategic alliances

**Any of the above organisational or individual needs can then achieve a number of aims:**

- + promote shared values
- + integrate newcomers
- + develop competence
- + develop the top team
- + re-energise plateaued staff
- + align staff with organisational goals
- + change attitude and behaviour
- + improve change management skills

## Review

Having considered what coaching is, who does the coaching, who hires a coach, what happens when you hire a coach, how it is different from mentoring, counselling, consulting, therapy, sports coaching, a best friend and how it works, it is clear that coaching provides cost-effective benefits in enhancing individual and business performance.

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