From Coach to Awakener

by
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In general, *coaching* is the process of helping people and teams to perform at the peak of their abilities. It involves drawing out people's strengths, helping them to bypass personal barriers and limits in order to achieve their personal best, and facilitating them to function more effectively as members of a team. Thus, effective coaching requires an emphasis on both task and relationship.

Coaching emphasises generative change, concentrating on defining and achieving specific goals. Coaching methodologies are outcome-oriented rather than problem-oriented. They tend to be highly solution focused, promoting the development of new strategies for thinking and acting, as opposed to trying to resolve problems and past conflicts. Problem solving, or remedial change, is more associated with counseling and therapy.

Origins of Coaching

The term "coach" comes from the Middle English word *coche*, which meant "a wagon or carriage." In fact, the word still carries this meaning today—such as when a person travels "coach" on a railway or airline. A "coach" is literally a vehicle which carries a person or group of people from some starting location to a desired location.

The notion of coaching in the educational sense derived from the concept that the tutor "conveys" or "transports" the student through his or her examinations. An educational coach is defined as "a private tutor," "one who instructs or trains a performer or a team of performers," or "one who instructs players in the fundamentals of a competitive sport and directs team strategy." The process of being a coach is defined as "to train intensively (as by instruction and demonstration)."

Thus, historically, coaching is typically focused toward achieving improvement with respect to a specific behavioural performance. An effective coach of this type (such as a "voice coach," an "acting coach," a "pitching coach") observes a person's behaviour and gives him or her tips and guidance about how to improve in specific contexts and situations. This involves promoting the development of that person's behavioural competence through careful observation and feedback.

In recent years, starting in the 1980s, the notion of coaching has taken on a more generalised and expanded meaning. Coaching in organisations involves a variety of ways of helping people perform more effectively, including project, situational and transitional coaching. *Project coaching* involves the strategic management of a team in order to reach the most effective result. *Situational coaching* focuses on the specific enhancement or improvement of performance within a context. *Transitional coaching* involves helping people move from one job or role to another.

Many companies and organisations are opting for coaching of these types, in place of or in addition to training. Because coaching is more focused, contextualised and individually targeted, it is frequently more cost effective than traditional training methods in producing real change.

Another rapidly developing area of coaching is that of life coaching. *Life coaching* involves helping people to reach personal goals, which may be largely independent from professional or organisational objectives. Similar to transitional coaching, life coaching involves helping people deal effectively with a variety of performance issues which may face them as they move from one life phase to another.

Large "C" and Small "c" Coaching

Clearly, personal coaching, executive coaching and life coaching provide support on a number of different levels: behaviours, capabilities, beliefs, values and even identity. These new and more general forms of coaching—executive coaching and life coaching—can be referred to as capital "C" Coaching.

Small "c" coaching is more focused at a behavioural level, referring to the process of helping another person to achieve or improve a particular behavioural performance. Small "c" coaching methods derive primarily from a sports training model, promoting conscious awareness of resources and abilities, and the development of conscious competence.

Large "C" Coaching involves helping people effectively achieve outcomes on a range of levels. It emphasises generative change, concentrating on strengthening identity and values, and bringing dreams and goals into reality. This encompasses the skills of small "c" coaching, but also includes much more.

Levels of Learning and Change in Individuals and Organisations

One of the most useful NLP models for capital "C" coaches is that of NeuroLogical Levels. Both coaching and modeling frequently need to address multiple levels of learning and change in order to be successful. According to the *NeuroLogical Levels* model (Dilts, 1989, 1990, 1993, 2000), the life of people in any system, and indeed, the life of the system itself, can be described and understood on a number of different levels: environment, behaviour, capabilities, values and beliefs, identity and spiritual.

At the most basic level, coaching and modeling must address the *environment* in which a system and its members act and interact—i.e., *when* and *where* the operations and relationships within a system or organisation take place. Environmental factors determine the context and constraints under which people operate. An organisation's environment, for instance, is made up of such things as the geographical locations of its operations, the buildings and facilities which define the "work place," office and factory design, etc. In addition to the influence these environmental factors may have on people within the organisation, one can also examine the influence and impact that people within an organisation have upon their environment, and what products or creations they bring to the environment.

At another level, we can examine the specific *behaviours* and actions of a group or individual—i.e., *what* the person or organisation does within the environment. What are the particular patterns of work, interaction or communication? On an organisational level, behaviours may be defined in terms of general procedures. On the individual level, behaviours take the form of specific work routines, working habits or job related activities.

Another level of process involves the strategies, skills and *capabilities* by which the organisation or individual selects and directs actions within their environment—i.e., *how* they generate and guide their behaviours within a particular context. For an individual, capabilities include cognitive strategies and skills such as learning, memory, decision making and creativity, which facilitate the performance of a particular behaviour or task. On an organisational level, capabilities relate to the infrastructures available to support communication, innovation, planning and decision making between members of the organisation.

These other levels of process are shaped by *values and beliefs,* which provide the motivation and guidelines behind the strategies and capabilities used to accomplish behavioural outcomes in the environment—i.e., *why* people do things the way they do them in a particular time and place. Our values and beliefs provide the reinforcement (*motivation* and *permission*) that supports or inhibits particular capabilities and behaviours. Values and beliefs determine how events are given meaning, and are at the core of judgment and culture.

Values and beliefs support the individual's or organisation's sense of *identity*—i.e., the *who* behind the why, how, what, where and when. Identity level processes involve people's sense of role and mission with respect to their vision and the larger systems of which they are members.

Typically, a mission is defined in terms of the service performed by people in a particular role with respect to others within a larger system. A particular identity or role is expressed in terms of several key values and beliefs, which determine the priorities to be followed by individuals within the role. These, in turn, are supported by a larger range of skills and capabilities, which are required to manifest particular values and beliefs. Effective capabilities produce an even wider set of specific behaviours and actions, which express and adapt values with respect to many particular environmental contexts and conditions.

There is another level, that can best be referred to as a *spiritual* level. This level has to do with people's perceptions of the larger systems to which they belong and within which they participate. These perceptions relate to a person's sense of *for whom* or *for what* their actions are directed, providing a sense of meaning and purpose for their actions, capabilities, beliefs and role identity.

Levels of Processes Within Individuals and Organisations

In summary, coaching and modeling must address several levels of factors:

> • **Environmental factors** determine the external opportunities or constraints which individuals and organisations must recognise and react to. They involve considering *where* and *when* success occurs.

> • **Behavioural factors** are the specific action steps taken in order to reach success. They involve *what*, specifically, must be done or accomplished in order to succeed.

> • **Capabilities** relate to the mental maps, plans or strategies that lead to success. They direct *how* actions are selected and monitored.

> • **Beliefs and values** provide the reinforcement that supports or inhibits particular capabilities and actions. They relate to *why* a particular path is taken and the deeper motivations which drive people to act or persevere.

> • **Identity factors** relate to people's sense of their role or mission. These factors are a function of *who* a person or group perceives themselves to be.

> • **"Spiritual" factors** relate to people's view of the larger system of which they are a part. These factors involve *for whom* or *for what* a particular action step or path has been taken (the purpose).

Levels of Support for Learning and Change—A Roadmap for Large "C" Coaching

The task of the capital "C" Coach is to provide the necessary support and "guardianship" which help clients to successfully develop, grow and evolve at all these levels of learning and change.

Guiding and Caretaking

Guiding and caretaking have to do with providing support with respect to the *environment* in which change takes place. Guiding is the process of directing a person or group along the path leading from some present state to a desired state. It presupposes that the "guide" has been there before, and knows the best way (or at least a way) to reach the desired state. Being a caretaker, or "custodian," involves providing a safe and supportive environment. It has to do with attending to the external context and making sure that what is needed is available, and that there are no unnecessary distractions or interferences from the outside.

Coaching

Traditional coaching (i.e., small "c" coaching) is focused at a behavioural level, involving the process of helping another person to achieve or improve a particular *behavioural* performance. Coaching methods at this level derive primarily from a sports training model, promoting conscious awareness of resources and abilities, and the development of conscious competence. They involve drawing out and strengthening people's abilities through careful observation and feedback, and facilitating them to act in coordination with other team members. An effective coach of this type observes people's behaviour and gives them tips and guidance about how to improve in specific contexts and situations.

Teaching

Teaching relates to helping a person develop *cognitive skills and capabilities*. The goal of teaching is generally to assist people to increase competencies and "thinking skills" relevant to an area of learning. Teaching focuses on the acquisition of general cognitive abilities, rather than on particular performances in specific situations. A teacher helps a person to develop new strategies for thinking and acting. The emphasis of teaching is more on new learning than on refining one's previous performance.

Mentoring

Mentoring involves guiding someone to discover his or her own unconscious competencies and overcome internal resistances and interferences, through believing in the person and validating his or her positive intentions. Mentors help to shape or influence a person's *beliefs and values* in a positive way by "resonating" with, releasing, or unveiling that person's inner wisdom, frequently through the mentor's own example. This type of mentoring often becomes internalised as part of a person, so that the external presence of the mentor is no longer necessary. People are able to carry "inner mentors" as counselors and guides for their lives in many situations.

Sponsoring

"Sponsorship" is the process of recognising and acknowledging ("seeing and blessing") the essence or *identity* of another person. Sponsorship involves seeking and safeguarding potential within others, focusing on the development of identity and core values. Effective sponsorship results from the commitment to the promotion of something that is already within a person or group, but which is not being manifested to its fullest capacity. This is accomplished through constantly sending messages such as: *You exist. I see you. You are valuable. You are important/special/unique. You are welcome. You belong here. You have something to contribute.* A good "sponsor" creates a context in which others can act, grow and excel. Sponsors provide the conditions, contacts and resources that allow the group

or individual being sponsored to focus on, develop and use their own abilities and skills.

Awakening

Awakening goes beyond coaching, teaching, mentoring and sponsorship to include the level of *vision, mission and spirit*. An awakener supports another person by providing contexts and experiences which bring out the best of that person's understanding of love, self, and spirit. An awakener "awakens" others through his or her own integrity and congruence. An awakener puts other people in touch with their own missions and visions by being in full contact with his or her own vision and mission.

This complementary group of competencies—caretaking, guiding, coaching, teaching, mentoring, sponsoring and awakening—define the skill set of large "C" coaching. These are essential skills, regardless of whether one is coaching a little league baseball team, a coworker trying to improve his or her ability to communicate, a project group in a company, a person making a life transition, or the Chief Executive Officer of a multinational organisation. Each of the different levels of support requires a different quality of relationship on the part of the coach and a different tool set. The tools of mentoring, for instance, are distinct from those of teaching, guiding or awakening.

Many situations will require a combination or sequence of tools, skills and types of support. The purpose of my new book ***From Coach to Awakener*** (Meta Publications, 2003) is to define the types of contexts and situations which call upon the capital "C" coach to focus on a particular role—i.e., caretaker, guide, coach, teacher, mentor, sponsor, awakener—and to provide a specific tool set for each role. In other words to provide the tool set an effective coach needs to manage the entire scope of large "C" coaching activities—from caretaking to awakening.