Coaching and mentoring essay

The chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in the UK (CIPD 2009) reports that 79% of survey respondents are using coaching within their organisation and that 77% say coaching has been increasing in recent years. It is therefore no surprise that the large UK-based customer facing organisation, where I am hypothetically working as a human resources manager, has made a commitment to deliver coaching and mentoring to improve performance over the next two years.

The aim of this report is to highlight how coaching and mentoring differs from training, and to also explain how the use of coaching can effectively improve manager performance within the organisation. Such a result can be achieved by identifying the potential barriers to success encountered when using coaching and providing solutions for them. The report will conclude by recommending ways to overcome the potential barriers and suggest ways to ensure cost effective delivery of coaching and mentoring over the two year period and beyond.

How coaching differs from training and how it can improve manager performance Coaching can be seen as the use of silence, questions, and challenges to assist a coachee towards a defined work-based target. These are often present issues or ones that relate to the future (McLeod 2006). Therefore, coaching is an intervention aimed at helping the coachee to focus on and achieve their clearly defined goals. The coach uses open ended questions to provoke thought, raise awareness, and to inspire motivation and commitment (Ives 2008).

From the range of coaching approaches diagram (Downey 2009) below, it shows that coaching can be generalised as being directive (push or hands on) or non-directive (pull or hands off). [pic] Whitmore (2003) suggests that hands-off approach should be applied whenever possible. Parsloe and Wray (2000) state that, the more rapidly a coach can move from hands-on to hands-off style, the faster improvement in performance will be achieved. A strict non-directive approach would insist that coaching is almost entirely about questioning and is not about directing.

In this respect, the role of the coach is to conduct the process not to direct the outcome. Training, on the other hand can be seen as a hierarchical delivery of information (Smith & Cox 2007), and from figure 1 the aims of training below, Rogers (2004) suggests that training operates at 3 different levels. At level 1 it is about the teaching of skills which are defined and assessed. Level 2 is where processing is required of the information in context.

Finally, Level 3 is where concepts and theories are presented and management must use and apply these to their situation. Coaching starts from a person-centred approach (Rogers 1986) and is always working from the coachee's agenda to arrive at solutions and answers which are very individual and subjective. In contrast, trainers generally work to established and pre-determined ideas where the routes are well defined for most situations and there is perceived to be a ' right' answer.

Essentially, training is characterised by having relatively pre-determined answers often with an objective frame of reference whereas coaching will

create emergent solutions which will have a primarily subjective value (Smith & Cox 2007). Another difference can be explained with the aid of figure 2 learning strategies map (Smith & Cox 2007). [pic] Each quadrant in figure 2 provides a framework for understanding the activities and strategies used when developing others.

Activities in quadrants A, B and C all fall within the training arena and by contrast quadrant D is the main focus for coaching. Therefore, training will generally work towards pre-determined, objective areas of knowledge; whilst coaching is person-centred, helping define subjective answers to open questions where the answers could not have been predicted by the coach.

The positive effect coaching has on manager performance can be seen from the CIPD (2009) survey where it identifies how coaching is currently being used, with the top three being: Improve individual performance 78% • Dealing with underperformance 30% • Improving productivity 28% From these findings it is clear that coaching can deliver tangible benefits both to individuals and organisations. In addition, coaching and mentoring are key mechanisms for transferring learning from training courses back to the workplace and can have a positive impact on an organisations bottom line (Parsloe & Leedham 2009). Potential barriers and how to overcome them The main barriers to the successful use of coaching can be caused by individual self-doubt.

Hindmarch (2008) defines self-doubt as the negative feeling associated with evaluating one's abilities and perceiving them as inadequate to carry out a piece of work effectively. Therefore, this barrier is a work related

phenomenon which may affect performance at work in an adverse way. Leonardeli and Arkin (2002) found that when doubts about one's abilities are not addressed, then damage to self-esteem can follow. This can develop into a negative evaluation of one's self at a more profound level, and therefore potentially be more damaging. It seems that positive beliefs about oneself may augment performance.

Taylor and brown (1985) indicate that excessively positive self-evaluation are characteristics of normal individuals that helps lead to productivity and creative work. In addition, Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as a person's belief in their capacity to achieve a desired outcome. Therefore, the higher the sense of self-efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience a person will put into their work. Another strategy to overcome the potential barrier of self-doubt involves educating the subordinate to learn new things at work.

Downey (2003) emphasises the importance of leaning as when a client is fully focused, fear and doubt are forgotten and the natural ability to learn comes to the fore. Coaching can also be used to overcome self-doubt as it helps to develop an empathic and supportive relationship, using questioning, helping the subordinate identify their own resources and challenging their beliefs (Hindmarch 2008). Bachkirova (2004) also observes that encouragement, support and positive feedback are the most useful ways to overcome self-doubt.

Therefore, the relationship between coach and coachee will always be seen as critical to the success of coaching and in maintaining the view of coaching

as a safe environment where a client can share their feelings in confidence. As a minimum, the coach must display a genuine interest in the coachee, apply effective communication skills such as listening and verbal skills, and needs to provide an encouraging and supportive space within which the coachee's strengths and weakness and hopes as well as aspirations can be explored (Skiffington & Zeus 2003).

Conclusion – Recommendations to ensure cost effective delivery To ensure cost effective delivery of coaching and mentoring an organisation is recommended to change to a collaborative team culture which in turn creates a liberating culture that can help overcome barriers that limit organisational learning (Torbert 1991). Organisational learning is increasingly perceived as a source of competitive advantage (Appelbaum & Goransson 1997) and can therefore be used as a strategic resource to deliver coaching to a large UK based customer facing organisation.

Another recommendation to ensure cost effective delivery of coaching is to train internal coaches. Internal staff is more familiar with the corporate culture and are more likely to be accepted by other employees within the same organisation compared to an outsider. Such training could incorporate the blended learning approach of three days of intensive training, followed by assignments, practical coaching and reading between classes as it has been proven to be highly effective (Rock & Donde 2008).

An example of the cost effective benefits that internal coaching can bring derives from the approach that AIG used; each leader (internal coach) coaching one to two internal clients (an hour per week) can impact on

average 38 people per coach (Rock & Donde 2008). A further recommendation is to hire internal coaching experts to deliver the coaching programmes. This is becoming more widespread with coaches gathering external information and quality resources, and honing their own skills to become internal experts (Rock & Donde 2008).

As mentioned earlier in the potential barriers section of this essay, when a client is fully focused, fear and doubt are forgotten and the natural ability comes to the fore. With this in mind and the case study of Air products and Chemicals, an international corporation whose principal business is selling gases and chemicals for industrial uses (Dai, Duserick & Rummel 2009), a further recommendation is to provide consistent learning opportunities to employees no matter where they reside.

This can prove to be cost effective for an organisation because the case study reports 94% of learning participants apply their learning on the job within six weeks. This lead the company to focus on better performance through use of better learning that resulted in overall company growth. Another recommendation comes from the case study of CheckFree a service provider to banks and investment advisors (Dai, Duserick & Rummel 2009), where they have a learning culture consisting of learning objectives that are strategically aligned with business goals.

This can ensure a cost effective delivery of coaching because CheckFree reported that with such culture in place for six months, average services handle time decreased by 40% and customer satisfaction increased by 19%. Ultimately, cost effective coaching is achieved only if the coaching

programme is followed. Parsloe and Leedham (2009) suggest ten ' simplicity

tips' to ensure ease of carrying out coaching and mentoring.