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The Coach Equation

Solutions for the performance puzzle

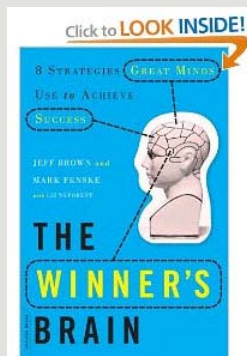
July 2011

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This article has 851 words and should take 3.4 minutes or less to read.

A small price for knowledge!

Featured Book:



The Winner's Brain: 8 Great Strategies Great Minds Use to Achieve Success
by Authors
Jeff Brown and Mark Fenske

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October 19-20
San Francisco, CA

November 2-3

What I Have Learned About Coaching

Exactly what is coaching? Chairs do it, professional coaches do it, peers do it, managers do it. But what is it?

I began coaching "professionally" in 1999 and still receive questions about coaching. "What is coaching?" How do you do it? What kind of people need coaching?" "Does it really work?" Coaching is relatively a young profession and demand is growing. There are many coaches like me who find themselves needing to answer the same questions I had when I began coaching. I needed to have a simple way to describe coaching as well as explain how it works. Over time, I simplified my response to:

"Coaching is a collaborative process based on a desire for change and a higher level of satisfaction at work or in life and involves curiosity, courage, and commitment."

I often need to further define what I do by assuring the listener that coaching isn't therapy, counseling, or delegating. It may, however, include teaching, sharing stories, or providing resources or referrals. It's a process of working together for problem solving and improving performance in a series of ongoing coaching conversations. It's support and whole lot more.

What does it involve? First there has to be a sense of wanting something "more" or "different". Toss in a willingness to seek support for pursuing a higher level of satisfaction with work or with family and friends. Then throw in powerful questions to narrow the conversation to a goal that is attainable. Yes, we use the SMART acronym as a guidepost. Why not? It works.

Here are some elements that I find help both parties in a coaching relationship.

Collaboration: It can be challenging for managers and reports to set aside their power differential, but once they decide to work together, coaching becomes easier. A performance coaching session can be highly valued when both parties understand the parameters - focus on the performance and the behavior needed to improve. Managers who use a collaborative approach are often viewed as partners in developing the whole person.

Focused: Once the conversation begins, it is important to focus on agreed objectives. If the coaching sessions take on an agenda driven exclusively by the coach, the trust and rapport will be weakened, or even destroyed. Additionally, the coach must facilitate the process so that conversations stay on target. It is easy to drift into interesting but not pertinent information as sessions progress. The gift of coaching is to be able to help others find their own solutions to their problems.

Columbus, OH

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DiSC Train the Trainer:

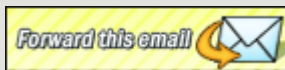
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September 23
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explore, and experiment.

Disclosure: The relationship between any two people is enhanced when there is an exchange of opinions, beliefs, and feelings in an atmosphere of trust and support. Both parties are rewarded when the skills and resources of the coach and the person being coached can focus on the work at hand. Disclosure provides an opening for an exchange of information, opinions and new ideas about oneself as well as about new or different processes. There is mutual satisfaction when the work and the conversation is focused on growth and development.

Curiosity: I often urge my workshop participants to approach coaching as a scientist. They have skills, experience, ideas, opinions, and processes. And yet, the one thing that can make them a great coach is curiosity. Have an open mind. Listen, ask questions, respond, and connect as scientist might when confronted with something new. Be a beginner. Even when you know what to do, hold those thoughts in favor of learning more. You may be surprised at how the person being coaching can produce novel or unique ideas and solutions.

Courage: The Star Trek series encouraged us to believe that the inhabitants of the Enterprise were excited "to boldly go where no man has gone before". What courage! Were they excited? I'm sure there was some excitement mixed with fear and curiosity. Wherever coaching takes place, so does change. And wherever there is change there is discomfort, anxiety, and fear. A good coach has the courage to instigate change and the compassion to support a change-frightened person.

Commitment: There are moments of circumstantial coaching that can quickly solve a problem or set someone in a new direction. However, people who commit to a series of coaching conversations find more satisfaction in the relationship. A single conversation can be insightful, motivating, or educational. But coaching for performance and change takes as long as it takes to learn, and that means repetition, patient instruction, and regular review.

So when I speak to someone who is interested in learning more about coaching, either as a participant in one of our coach training sessions or in having a personal coach, I refer to some of the fundamentals that all coaches need to keep in mind. As a coach, we challenge people to reach beyond their comfort zone, and in turn we are challenged to perform at our best: to be attentive and respect the pace, intelligence, and intuition of others. Coaching produces great results not because it's easy, but because of the commitment of the two people who want to be their best.

Sherry Greenleaf, RCC

Seeds of Success:

"The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

-- Mahatma Gandhi

"We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human

responsibility." -- Albert Einstein

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." -- T. S. Eliot

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