

Reflections on “Coaching”

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Coaching is an oft used word in today’s times as part of Formal Performance Assessment Systems.

Whether it is in the context of the sports world or the workplace, it is increasingly gaining greater significance. Any cricketer would owe his initial grounding to his COACH. He would be a tutor, a Resource provider, a Sounding board, a Challenger & a source of encouragement & confidence-building at some point in time or other. He may provide -

- Clarification, re-direction & re-alignment ;
- Open Dialogue/joint problem-solving ;
- Assistance with identifying resources & addressing barriers.

If this is true of Sachin Tendulkar’s coach, it could be examined of a coach in a workplace context too. Coaching is an integral part of People Processes in quite a few organizations.

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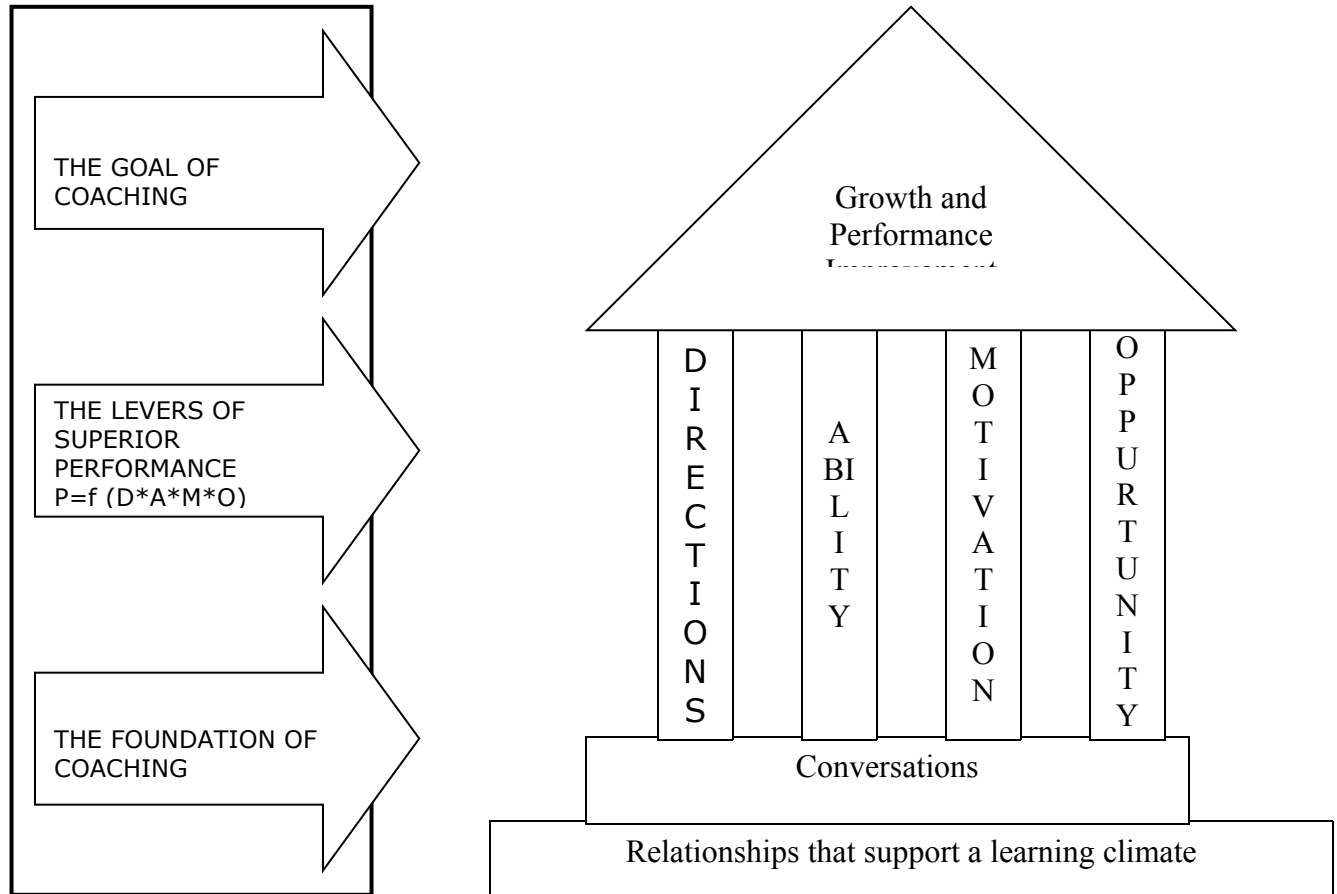
Coaching is central to every phase of any Performance Assessment System.

It is seen that the only source of sustainable business success in an *Information Economy* is the ability to learn. Companies that learn to harness the creativity & learning potential of their people will thrive. Those that don’t will disappear. Since effective coaching is clearly the most effective way to promote learning & hence superior performance, it is an integral part of how we do work for example at Monsanto.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN ?

Coaching is a relationship & conversation-based process whereby we help each other make informed choices about how to grow & improve performance.

We believe, people seek coaching not because they have to, but because it helps them to become self – sufficient & to achieve their goals.



Individuals provide Coaching not because they have time on hands, but because it gets results. Because Coaching delivers value for everyone involved (coach, Learner, the team & the organization), the process is self-generating. And because it builds the ability of people to think for themselves, Coaching empowers people to be self-sustaining.

Coaching represents any dialogue that helps someone else:

- discover new insight
- create new options
- acquire new skills
- apply new knowledge

Most of us are already engaged in such conversations. Consequently, most of us are already doing some coaching.

For instance, in Monsanto, under the DPR (Development, Performance & Rewards) process, when each individual formulates his/her Goal Document at the beginning of the year, they identify Coaches (usually 6 -8 in all) who would help them in achieving or get closer to the goals they list. This happens only when the Coach & Coachee agree on the goal & are clear about the time commitment involved in the process. The Coach also puts it down on his/her Goal Document. Thus the commitment from both sides gets locked in.

It is not essential to have the boss as the Coach for all the Goals. People from other functions who have the expertise & are willing to invest the time to help another are counted upon. In the Business goals, the boss is of great help, whereas in Personal Development goals, HR is key.

The Coach would provide regular feedback & also plays an important part in year end assessment.

CONTRASTING THE EXPERT & INQUIRY APPROACHES:

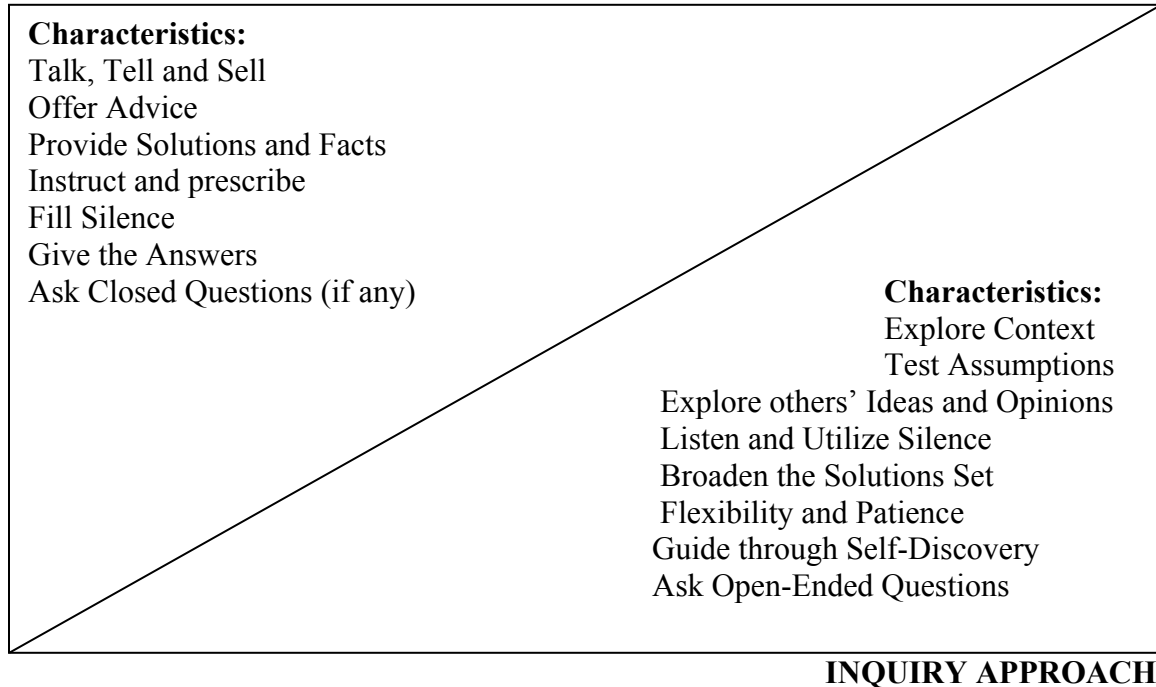
While there clearly are many different ways to coach, most approaches can be described as either “Expert” or “Inquiry”, or a combination of both. We have experienced Coaches in our system, adopt one or both of these.

In fact, about 3 years ago, a group of 20 People Managers were put through a 3 day Coaching Skills Program to be able to help their people better. The program had live role – plays to make the learning more real & these were video– taped & reviewed to understand the different styles of coaching.

The **expert approach** could be characterized as helping someone arrive at a predetermined solution.

The **inquiry approach** could be described as helping someone make an informed choice.

EXPERT APPROACH



INQUIRY APPROACH

Usually, the Coaching discussions are planned & thus the Coach is well prepared. However, often times it also happens over lunch or a cup of coffee, hence the choice of approach is very spontaneous. The discussion does not turn out to be BY

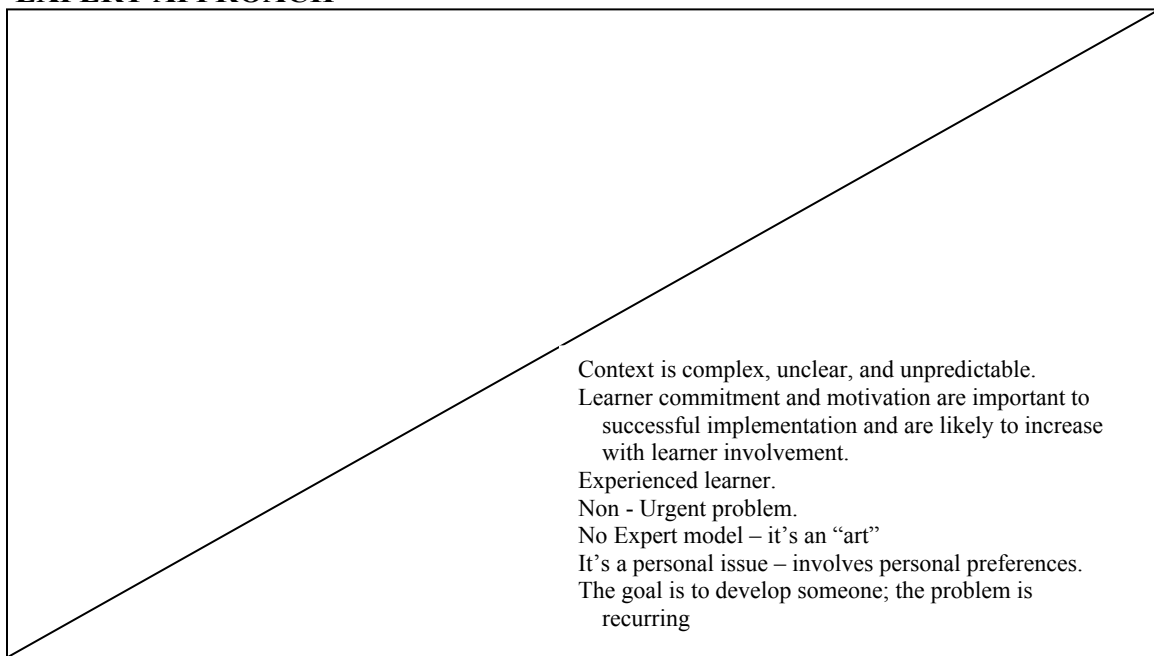
Expert Approach	vs	Inquiry Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you consider this option? 	↔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What options have you considered?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you tried doing it this way? 	↔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me what you have already tried?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on my experience here is what I think you should do. 	↔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What criteria are you using to make your choice?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let me show you how to do it. 	↔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's discuss the criteria you may want to consider in making your choice

THE BOOK & that's okay as long as it was a meaningful one which has helped the coachee.

WHICH IS THE "BEST APPROACH"?

THE ONE THAT FITS THE NEEDS OF THE SITUATION.

EXPERT APPROACH



However, here are some criteria that a coach could consider in deciding which approach to use.

Based on the coaching discussions, an employee makes appropriate adjustments that include –

- changes in behavior
- Adjusting goals & plans
- revised resource needs
- new learning opportunities

Under the Monsanto DPR (Development, Performance & Reward System), any Monsanto employee can be a coach. Coaching is not the exclusive domain of a Supervisor/People Manager.

The individual is accountable for:

- Seeking the required feedback & coaching.
- Keeping track of accomplishments & contributions.

Everyone is accountable for:

- Providing coaching support to co – workers.
- Initiating quality conversations with co- workers.

“Coaching is not something we need to do in addition to getting results. It is one of the things we need to do in order to get results.”

EOM