



Coaching in the Modern Workplace – part 1

Mark Rendell, independent trainer and project manager, believes that bringing a coaching ethos into your organisation represents more than just a shift in management practice but also a revolution in traditional ways of running the business.

High quality coaching represents good value for money as interventions can lead to rapid and consensual change, higher performance levels, tangible, measurable success for the coachee / team in the short term; increased problem solving capacity and ‘can-do’ attitudes in the medium term and, ultimately, a healthier, more cohesive, resilient and effective working environment.

For the modern workplace, a *genuine* coaching ethos will demand a shift in:

- a. Traditional management methods** in terms of trust, openness, overcoming reflexive ‘top-down’ approaches – requiring a “we are all in this together” philosophy,
- b. Organisational structure and lines of communication** - encouraging stronger peer-to-peer and inter-departmental relationships, greater effectiveness and cohesion between management and staff, including ‘bottom-up’ approaches, and
- c. Performance measurement** - encouraging clearer, self-derived goal setting and success measurement and enhanced problem-solving skills.

The rewards of a genuine coaching ethos in an organisation can lead to significant benefits:

- i. higher quality products and processes,
- ii. increased responsibility, higher performance (including discretionary effort),
- iii. higher retention levels of staff,
- iv. mutual respect,
- v. a team focused on the same vision throughout the organisation (augmenting, for example, Kotter’s 8 stages of change process model¹),
- vi. mutual respect and support (particularly when faced with difficult or controversial decisions), and
- vii. a journey through the upcoming change process that aims to bolster the team’s cohesion and confidence by unlocking and maximising everyone’s potential.

Coaching should not be seen as a cheap and cheerful ‘quick-fix’ to help management push through the difficult and unpleasant aspects of change in as short a time as possible. Nor should it be seen as something that you can ‘do’ to the workforce.

Internal / peer coaching v. external coaches

A manager can be a coach within the team but there may be limitations on the effectiveness of this relationship, particularly if the manager / coach is indoctrinated in traditional “*I am the expert*” attitudes and lacks patience or value in the *process* of finding solutions (by, for example, undermining the confidence of the coachee and proposing solutions). I would advise that you assess the rootedness of this attitude and address it before proceeding with manager / staff coaching methods.

¹ Kotter, Prof. J.P., 1996. *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press