



Top Ten Myths about Coaching

I was sitting on an airplane last month discussing the benefits of coaching when the person he was talking with voiced her skepticism about what I was saying. She was a graduate student who felt that coaching wasn't the best answer for improving job performance and productivity. It seems she has a friend who is in need of a way to accomplish tasks on the job and she felt that there was no way for him to be motivated to reach his goals. Jim and the woman discussed her misgivings and he found them to be the same ones we encounter when people are hearing about the truths of coaching for the first time.

With so many organizations shifting to coaching in today's marketplace, misconceptions often arise as to just what coaching is, what it does for an corporation and how it affects leadership. The most common reason for avoiding coaching is misunderstanding. With that in mind we are presenting the Top Ten Myths we have heard about coaching in recent months.

1. Coaching is therapy or counseling. Therapy focuses on an individual's past. Coaching focuses on bridging the gap between present reality and the possibilities that can be achieved in the future. Counseling is reactive. Coaching is proactive in that it is goal focused and improves personal and organizational performance. Coaching is not an excuse for employees to dump their personal problems, complaints or personal emotions. Rather it is a partnership created by engaging in a dialogue where one identifies ones' goals, strengths and discovers and creates strategies that unlock their untapped potential and commitment. Coaching is a way of treating people as individuals and giving them a memorable experience to achieve breakthrough performance on the job and in life.
2. Coaching is just a new word for an old thing. Coaching is not a fad or a re-dress. It is a process strategy for an effective conversation. Nobody today has time to think. Coaching helps you slow down and gives you a place to think in a sage place with someone. Organizations who want to invest in their people through building trust, increasing performance and retention and help them set goals and strategies are using coaching as the best method to accomplish these and more. Coaching allows teams to build on their existing strengths and skills. Coaching focuses on the individual's desire to succeed and helps draw them into a trusting

relationship which results in improved communication. It is the best method for overcoming personal barriers to productivity and devising strategies on a one-on-one basis as coaches and employees build on relationships together to achieve breakthrough performance.

3. Coaching is for job performance reviews only. This is a narrow view of what the universe of coaching can give to your organization. Coaching is misused when it is focused on only one or two areas of work. The purpose of coaching in an organization is to improve performance and productivity through meaningful one-on-one conversations that target barriers to strategizing and performance and focus each staff member on how they can best do their jobs. Coaching can be used to reinforce training by targeting the areas that trainees want to apply the skills they have learned in their training experiences. Coaching helps managers to work with their teams to set goals and strategize on the best way each staff member can accomplish their tasks. When done properly coaching can replace job performance reviews as supervisors build trust and overcome reluctance in their staff members.
4. Coaching is only for upper level management only. Coaching is for every employee. People want to be their best. Everyone can benefit from coaching; from the board room to the mail room. What better way to train new employees than through coaching by their managers? What better way to increase sales than sales managers coaching their sales team members? Customer service is improved when employees are coached and satisfied with their jobs. Coaching creates openness in the workplace for everyone and encourages employees to voice concerns. What organization or corporation wouldn't benefit from open communication that improves the bottom line? Performance improves at all levels and productivity increases. Employees who are satisfied will help reach the organization's goals.
5. Coaching undermines authority. Senior executives who fear coaching as a way to have their authority undermined don't truly understand what coaching is or does. Barriers typically occur as organizations move from traditional, directive management style to a coaching approach. Senior level leaders fear losing authority as they make the shift to the coaching process. Coaching reinforces the lines of authority as senior level leaders coach down the chain of authority. The lines of authority are strengthened as each supervisor receives coaching from his/her immediate executives and then coaches their team members to breakthrough performance. Top level management sets the direction by participating in the coaching process and their position as authority figures is reinforced through modeling the coaching process. In fact, if the senior leadership is not coaching, then it is difficult for the rest of the organization to become enthusiastic about it. The leader always sets the speed of the team.
6. Coaching is a touchy-feely experience. Coaching is about reaching concrete goals. Coaching deals with both feelings and facts. It targets mistaken beliefs about

- one's goals. It helps top level managers shift their emphasis to getting the job done rather than managing the organization to death. Imagine a CEO who can set personal goals and challenge his/her senior staff to do the same. Imagine top level Vice Presidents and managers who can coach their divisions to out perform their previous performance because now everyone is continually being coached to their greatest potential. Aggressive goals can be reached as workers come to terms with the barriers and limiting beliefs that have prevented them from being more productive on the job.
7. Coaching might pit personal goals against organizational goals. Coaching focuses on how the individual can best accomplish the team's goals. It energizes the workforce and gives them the knowledge of how to give their best. Managers become facilitators of individual development. People love to win. Coaching taps into people's desire to be part of a winning team. It focuses on goals and seeks to improve personal and organizational performance. In fact coaching allows you to ask top performing employees to list their long-term career goals and accomplish them in a way that supports the organization's goals.
 8. Coaching is for poor performers who are failing in their work. I worked with an organization this past year who took this point of view. They used (or rather, mis-used) coaching to do job performance reviews on their poorest performers. As a result they were overlooking the benefits that coaching provided for the entire organization. Coaching is for people who want to do better and meet new challenges. The coaching conversation focuses on identifying and unlocking ones true potential. Coaching helps employees set goals and strategies. To limit it to the poorest performers is to deny benefits to everyone from the top down. Coaching has potential benefits for the employee, the manager and the team.
 9. Coaching is a new management fad. Coaching has been implemented in leading organizations in around the world because of its proven track record of increasing Return On Investment and enhancing professional performance. There is a generation of individuals in the workforce today who don't respect the cookie-cutter, "one size fits all" management style of the Twentieth Century. They respond to individualized methods of incentives. Corporate coaching has become the next step in leadership, sales and customer service. It is a modern approach to management that is more in step with the needs of today's volatile marketplace. As I stated in a previous article, (*Put Me In Coach!*), coaching may not be just the newest and best way to manage; it may be the only way.
 10. Coaching means more work for less money. When employees are performing at their best, they work smarter not harder. The rewards of coaching far outstrip the time invested in it. Coaching is a results-oriented approach that gets everyone on board to create fast and dramatic organizational transformation. Ultimately that means less work for more money. Coaching simplifies processes within an organization. Coaching will NOT lead to an increased workload for the same pay but will streamline your efforts and provide more time for renewed creativity.

When an organization adopts a coaching culture through training in The Coaching Clinic® they find that everyone from the board room to the break room is performing at new levels of productivity and the bottom line increases. What organization doesn't reward increased profits with increased compensation? Coaching just may be the breakthrough your team has been searching for to get off the plateau and reach to new heights and new income records.

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