

Fact sheet – Getting the most from Coaching

Introduction

Coaching is a great tool that enables a trained person to help you realise your maximum potential. It is important that you are in the right frame of mind and well-prepared to gain the most from it.

Note: Coaching here is described in the ‘non-US’ sense and can be likened to a sports coach. The sports coach does not take the penalty at the critical moment; their role is to ensure the players are on the pitch in the right organisation and in the right mind-set to deliver.

Preparing

Time of day – the first thing is what time of day is best for you? You want to be when your brain is at its best, which for some is in the morning and for others that is later in the day. It is even possible to coach into the evening as long as it works for the coachee.

Time aside to do it justice – Always set aside time in your schedule to do justice to the coaching session. Experience suggests it takes a little longer than we expect, so worth leaving a bit of overrun time, as there is nothing worse than having to stop the session at a critical point.

Location – where to do the session is important, you want a quiet space away from the work place, a place where you won’t be disturbed by work, ideally is quiet. Public spaces are perfectly okay, but always worth considering prying eyes and people overhearing comments. Most important is a place that is comfortable, although we wouldn’t recommend coaching at home.

Open mind – keep an open mind, allow your thoughts space to move about and explore options. It is why you are there!

Drive the agenda – make sure you drive the agenda, it is your session not that of your coach. If it is your first session your coach might help by giving some guidelines and a framework agenda, but as the sessions progress it is good for you to take over the agenda and set your own personal direction. Your coach will work to your beat-rate.



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During the session

Phones and other distractions – the key purpose of the coaching session is your development, and it is worth making space for that – you are worth it. Work can wait, although it is highly likely your phone will go off; as such, it is worth turning onto silent or you will be getting interruptions and your mind will be distracted.

Note taking – is a very personal thing, generally you will find your coach won't make notes, they tend to do this after you have gone. It is worth having a piece of paper (or modern equivalent) in front of you on the table so that you can capture the actions towards the end.

Otherwise, you should not really take notes, it is far better to let the conversation work for you.



Build the relationship – your coach will naturally do this, they are trained to do so, but it is also worth you taking the lead and building the relationship; even the occasional personal comments about weekends, holidays etc are good to build a stable and trusting working relationship. If the relationship is not building, and it does happen from time to time, then be brave enough to open the dialogue to say this.... your coach should have done this already, but if not, you lead it. Better to change your coach than waste the sessions.

It's a conversation – let the conversation flow, keep roughly on track, but don't be so tight on agenda as to stifle a good conversation.

Actions – Don't leave the session without taking actions, make sure you have a clarity of understanding regarding the actions, how they will be delivered and reported back to the coach. Celebrate with your coach when you have met the action target, the little victories matter.

Set next session – it is always worth getting your diaries out before you part and placing the next date in the diary and securing the location. Time races by otherwise and before you know it, it is several months between sessions. Ideally you should be looking for 3-4 weeks between sessions, although that is flexible depending on specifics.

And, above all – enjoy it.

