

How Coaching Can Help Achieve Your Goals



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Five Ways to Take You from Where You are Today to Where You Want to Go Tomorrow

By Daniel Houston

THE
1750 GROUP
INC.

Introduction

1. Coaching Is...

Most professional coaches desire to make a difference in the lives of other people. “There is nothing more satisfying to a coach than witnessing their coachees move forward” (Passmore, *Excellence in Coaching: The Industry Guide*, 2006).

A fast-growing profession, leadership coaching has more trained professionals joining its ranks each year. Its roots emerged from sports fields such as tennis, golf, and skiing in the early to late 1960s. When coaching transferred to the business world in the 1970s and 1980s, it developed a high degree of diversification and sophistication that lasted well into the 1990s. Today, coaching as a profession is accepted as a respected and widely used resource for personal and leadership development that can take you from where you are today to where you want to go tomorrow.

What exactly is coaching? According to the International Coaching Federation (ICF), coaching is:

“A professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that supports the achievement of extraordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team.” (ICF, 2005 FAQs about coaching, www.coach-federation.org)

Another definition proposed by the Association of Coaching states:

“Coaching is a collaborative, solution-focused, results-oriented and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning, and the personal growth of the coachee.”

<https://www.associationforcoaching.com/page/CoachingDefined>

In essence, coaching as a profession helps people get unstuck from where they are now to where they want to go. It facilitates a personal environment that fosters self-directed learning for personal growth and improved performance.

Many people seek out coaching for several reasons, including:

- ☐ Feeling fear, frustration or lack of confidence about work
- ☐ Searching for more fulfillment
- ☐ The need to understand their own or their colleagues' motivation and goals
- ☐ Wanting to be more innovative and influential with the process of resolving or managing conflicts
- ☐ Wanting to better manage time
- ☐ The need to shape the performance of self and others
- ☐ In a bind with regard to relationships
- ☐ Needing to set priorities and get more life-balance
- ☐ Addressing behaviors that limit the ability to build relationships and establish influence
- ☐ Aligning unit and department goals with organizational goals
- ☐ Setting and accomplishing evasive goals
- ☐ Other

Take a few minutes to check the box or boxes that best fit one or more of your goals. Second, take a few minutes to describe below why the goal(s) is important to you now.

Third, email me and let me know what that goal is: dan@danhoustonassociates.com

or

Call me at (704) 750-9670 for a complimentary coaching session.

2. How Might Leadership Coaching Help?

Effective leadership coaching includes methods, strategies, and action plans to move people toward meeting their performance standards. In doing so, a coach will address the more personal aspects related to how people do their work, e.g., how well the coachee gets along with supervisors, coworkers, customers, and vendors. For Bob Wall, who states in *Coaching for Emotional Intelligence* (p. 62), this means coaching within the sphere of how behaviors are “linked to character, personality, and how people work with others in doing their jobs.”

Another important feature of coaching is that it helps leaders, managers, and line staff explore more creative ideas and menus toward achieving goals, improving performance, and responding to change. The coaching profession recognizes that most of its work is done with organizations, leaders, and employees responding to change. Therefore, the benefits of coaching in many ways are helping leaders and employees to be responsive and responsible for change. As John Whitmore in *Coaching for Performance* says:

“Increased competition in the market, technological innovation, instant global communication, economic uncertainty, and social instability will demand leaders become more flexible, not less. A strong benefit of coaching is to help leaders respond to change by employing change-management strategies, increasing flexibility, and fostering resiliency to changing environments.”

Therefore, coaching and a coaching-friendly environment will help to address leadership issues, and encourage creative suggestions from managers and employees “without the fear of ridicule or premature dismissal” (*Coaching for Performance, Fourth Edition*, 2009). It has been The 1750 Group’s experience that one creative idea within a coaching session often sparks others within the larger organizational environment.

Is Coaching Effective?

A majority of leaders report that in their organization’s executive coaching is effective. According to the Ninth Annual Executive Coaching Survey from Sherpa Consulting Group, 58 percent describe results from coaching as “excellent” and more than 40 percent describe results as “good.” Among HR and training professionals, only seven percent have seen results they would describe as only “fair,” with a mere one percent reporting “poor” results. So, coaching is an effective way grow and improve performance.

Coaching is worth it because... as the coachee begins to work with a coach, he or she can expect the coach to assist in clarifying the situation (where you are); help to identify internal resources; and assist with desired outcomes while exploring interpersonal and internal skills needed to reach these desired outcomes (where you want to go.)

This approach to coaching is effective because:

- A coach provides an outstanding and well-developed ear—an interactive sounding board. Coachees can expect a coach to listen carefully and help them understand what they need to think, say, and do in order to make desired changes.
- The goal of most coaches, and certainly The 1750 Group coaches, is to maximize the ability to respond to the coachee's situation resourcefully; in essence, to increase the choices the coachee has in order to reach his or her goal(s).
- A coach engages the coachee in exploring and learning more effective means to reach his or her goals(s).



Photo: Aleksandr Davydov@123RF.com

3. Can it Really Improve My Behavior and the Behavior of Those Who Work for Me or With Me? How Can Coaching Benefit Me?

The five benefits of coaching include, but are not limited to:

1. Improved performance and productivity
2. Efficient staff development methods
3. Improved learning
4. Improved relationships
5. Improved self-awareness

1. Improved Performance and Productivity

Improved performance and productivity is rated as the first issue a coach addresses when working within an organization. If setting and achieving performance goals is not done, leadership, business, or performance coaching does not work. A coach will use coaching techniques—different from counseling or mentoring—to bring out the best in his or her coachee. This is achieved by setting realistic and achievable goals, eliminating internal and external barriers to goal obtainment, and developing action strategies.

2. Efficient Staff Development Methods

A coach believes that the most important assets to any organization are its people. To a coach, developing this most critical asset takes more than sending them to training once or twice a year. Coaching provides an intensive tailor-made approach to staff development. Coaches have the ability to either provide one-on-one coaching to staff development or teach managers to use coaching methods to improve staff performance. Whether coaching is used as a management tool or contracted with an outside leadership coach, research shows that staff development occurs more efficiently, more systematically, and more purposefully with coaching.

3. Improved Learning

Coaching can be learning on the fast track. With coaching as a management tool, there is no loss of time from professional activities. Learning always occurs within the context of job duties. This usually means shortened periods of time away from the office as opposed to training, seminars, or conferences. Also, coaching tends to be more enjoyable, more specific, and the retention rate is often higher than other forms of learning. Leadership practices, management techniques, and self-awareness activities have higher outcomes with stand-alone coaching or when used in conjunction with training.

4. Improved Relationships

Coaching facilitates improvement in a variety of personal and interpersonal knowledge, habits, and skills. The ability to relate well to others has a large impact on a person's success at work. Coaching helps individuals to improve their empathy toward others, and increases caring about the experiences, feelings, and needs of people around them. Coaching frequently assists the coachee to explore the limitations of self-centered thinking and learn the importance of focusing on others. Improved interpersonal skills also helps to contribute to a diversity-friendly climate by increased empathy and appreciation for diverse cultures, races, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc. My personal experience as a leadership coach has led me to believe that people with low levels of empathy make terrible leaders. The good news is that people can learn to be more empathetic.

Coaching also helps build strong relationships with direct reports, peers, supervisors, customers, and vendors by helping the individual strengthen communication skills, such as improving the ability to facilitate dialogue, manage conflict, and demonstrate empathy.

5. Improve Self-Awareness

Contrary to what many managers believe, the “soft-skills” of self-awareness and self-control are foundational for any leader or manager attempting to achieve his or her vision and goals and to motivate employees. A high level of self-awareness propels leaders to enhanced levels of performance.

Helping leaders, managers, and line staff develop greater self-awareness is another fundamental goal of coaching. Coaching helps individuals to see and “own” their strengths and to reveal blind spots in their perception of self and others. Coaching also assists leaders and managers to uncover blind spots that are behaviors and personal characteristics that serve to limit their effectiveness. Our experience indicates that many people fail to see these defects in themselves, even though they are obvious to others who work with or for them. Therefore, working with a supportive and seasoned coach not only helps an individual uncover blind spots, but to achieve a greater ability to work with others.



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Conclusion

The coach's primary job is to provide an interactive two-way mirror to assist the coachee in discovering his or her approach to their current situation. In other words, the coach helps to uncover what presently works for the coachee, while also assisting to establish what the coachee wants or needs to improve or change. In so doing, the coach stimulates and assists the coachee in developing greater self-awareness and increasing self-management and relationship-building skills.

The coach, acting as a mirror, reflects back the coachee's thoughts, words, and ideas. This primary coaching tool facilitates and enables the coachee to see themselves, their environment, and the people around them from a personal, yet objective point of view. To that end, the coach assists the individual in targeting desired goals more clearly. Together they determine how to move forward by removing barriers and exploring action steps that propel the individual toward his or her goals. One can expect that coaching will deliver results in large measure because of the supportive relationship between the coach and the coachee.



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Dan Houston is a certified John Maxwell leadership coach. You can contact him below, or for a complimentary session go to:

<https://www.johncmaxwellgroup.com/danielhouston/>



<https://www.danhoustonassociates.com>
melanie@danhoustonassociates.com
(704) 750-9670