

## How coaching can help you meet even greater challenges

Lesley Pugh

Coaching and mentoring can play a strong role in our stewardship of the human resources within our organisation and therefore offer an attractive return on investment.

Coaching has certainly had a profound effect on my 25 years of working life in terms of the increasingly demanding roles that I have felt motivated and capable to undertake. Increased self awareness helped me to see how much learning, adventure, flexible work patterns and relationships were key to my sense of well being. Setting up a Learning and Development Consultancy became an obvious next step on the career front and with coaching around the practicalities of networking and financing I quickly hit my financial targets. Five years later, when searching with a new coach for a stronger sense of contribution, the space and time to reflect helped me connect up with the Centre for Charity Effectiveness.

What exactly is coaching and mentoring? Generally it takes place 1-1 (though certainly group coaching/facilitation is becoming increasingly common) and frequently the aim is to develop performance, capability, motivation and sense of personal responsibility/purpose. There are many definitions of coaching and mentoring some emphasising the differences between the activities and some the similarities. We use the terminology interchangeably at the Centre. What is important is that when being matched with a coach and mentor there is clarity around what the coachee aims to achieve and what would be the most helpful process for achieving the said goals. For example is the coachee searching for someone who has undertaken the job before, do they believe the key to their aims is a change in their own behaviour, etc? At the end of the day what is essential for success is that the coach and coachee feel comfortable with each other and issues of style and approach are explored at the first meeting.

There are a range of factors which have driven the significant increase in organisations paying for coaching and mentoring. The following points capture some of the evidence currently available on the impact of coaching.

See [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk) (the HR Institute) for further information:

A study of coaching and mentoring from Middlesex University found that:

- A number of organisations have identified clear performance differences in those who are coached and those who are not in terms of meeting targets and quickly addressing issues that arise'
- 'Within just 5 months, the sales team had met their targets for the first time and within a year were continually surpassing them'
- 'Improvements from coaching include a 19% increase in quality and sickness absences down from 7 to 2.4%'

- ‘Coaching has turned around our reputation as a hire and fire company to one people seek to join (we used to be hiring every week and we haven’t had to recruit for 4 months)’
- ‘41% of leaders who had been coached were promoted compared with 15% of the non coached group’

In the same study coaching and mentoring was seen to impact 10 main areas:

- improved management skills and capability
- career progression
- changes the culture or helps to embed a coaching culture
- greater employee engagement and commitment e.g. retention
- improvements to business indicators or results
- savings in HR time/costs
- achievement of external awards and recognition
- unexpected spin-offs
- accelerated talent development
- behaviour change in the coaches (in ‘manager as coach’ programmes)

Coaching is now typically a part of leadership development programmes (both formal and informal)

Shareholder returns of companies investing in (and measuring returns of) leadership development have 15.18% higher returns than the S&P 500.

When leaders undertake coaching they present a very wide range of issues both in terms of challenges they face and also because they want to move from good to great!:

- the role of CE is isolating, I need to be positive but on the inside I feel very worried about the severe lack of funding
- the management team’s relationship with the trustees is not working
- the management team needs to step up a mark if we are going to deliver our strategy
- the organisation is facing a huge amount of change and staff will have to leave, so how can I minimise the effect on morale?
- the survival of the organisation is in question, we are suffering from founders syndrome
- I feel stressed and am considering other roles and jobs
- I recently attended a leadership development workshop and need support if I am really going to implement the learning and realise the benefits
- the job is going really well and I feel on top of it... What is the next step for me?
- the recession will mean a major re-structure – I need space to think it through
- I want to achieve at my absolute best and need to understand what this looks like
- I want more challenge!

There is no typical coaching and mentoring process, each process develops to meet the needs of the individual. I recently worked with the Chief Executive of a charity who self referred. He had a particular interest in managing change more effectively and the development of his new management team. Our initial meeting was to see if we clicked, share our experience and start to scope out specific coaching objectives. In fact he did not originally identify goals; however by the

second session we turned around the range of 'problems' into a clear set of objectives. We contracted for 4-6 sessions with a review. Each time we met there tended to be a balance between working on longer term more strategic goals e.g. how to support the managers and staff to increase their ability to manage change and the short term issues e.g. I am concerned about a meeting with a major funder tomorrow'. There were a range of reported benefits from the coaching:

- tackled a senior manager who talked down the organisation's leadership
- developed the skills of the management team on managing their staff e.g. reaction to change
- tackled conflict in one function
- undertook an organisational engagement process, post restructuring
- successfully transitioned to a new Chair

As a coach my observations of the coachee were: increased confidence in decision making, clearer planning about own career path, clearer goals for the development of his own management team and increased understanding of how to effectively manage change. In terms of my own approach, keen listening skills, strong open questioning and summarising helped an originally muddled and complex and emotional picture become much clearer in terms of setting achievable objectives. In this leader's case, once these objectives were identified and emotions processed the move towards goals flowed quite naturally.

There are many ways that coaching and mentoring can occur in organisations. Coaching the Chief Executive is just one of them – this of course has the added benefit of transferring the skills into the organisation as the leader becomes coach through their own experience. Quite often coaching and mentoring programmes can mushroom as one leader reports the benefits to another. If this happens the issue of a coaching culture can be raised, that is to say, 'what are the benefits of using ask rather than tell skills to engage the whole organisation more effectively'? In these cases the Centre for Charity Effectiveness runs coaching and mentoring training for the whole or majority of the management group. Often two day workshops, with a follow up process, can provide managers with a safe environment to practice with colleagues and build mutual support on issues they may have with staff. How can I get x to take more responsibility? I need to give feedback and find a way forward with y whose manner with customers has not reached our standards. What are my options with a and b who are star performers but there is no clear next step for them?

Bringing ourselves up to the present day, how can coaching and mentoring help in the current climate? Certainly this is a time for organisations to review strategy, manage change, ensure the best performance from all managers and staff

When we must do all that we can, and be seen to do so, to safeguard and maximise the effectiveness of all our resources, getting the most out of our human talent is something we can do something about. Coaching and mentoring can bring very rapid short term effectiveness gains when individuals are operating under highly stressful and demanding conditions as well as laying down the foundations for forward-looking leadership development to take advantage of growth opportunities when they re-emerge.

### ***About Lesley***

Lesley Pugh is a Leadership Development Consultant and Team Facilitator, committed to organisational success through facilitating the growth of people. She has management and consultancy experience in European and North American commercial organisations, UK public sector and charities. She has an MSc in Change Agent Skills and is co-head of Cass CCE's coaching and mentoring practice.