

Business Purpose: To clarify how coaching fits the role of manager.

Line manager as coach, mentor, trainer and manager



Managers see themselves as just too busy to coach. For coaching to have any chance of sticking, it must fit to the reality of the managers' working life. And that means that, unless the process is straight forward, flexible and 'next-day useable'...and unless they can do that all in 10 minutes or less, managers don't have the capacity for coaching. Knowing that they can (and should) coach in bursts of 10 minutes or less is very freeing for managers. They can imagine how coaching can be part of their regular working life, rather than have it become yet another burdensome add-on to their already long list of responsibilities.

Michael Bungay Stanier ~ Box of Crayons

In a coaching culture, the emphasis is placed on the organisation's purpose and the fitness of coaching techniques to support that purpose at a particular time. Managers are tasked with making the vision of the organisation a reality, keeping systems operating effectively and improving the systems.

A manager is first and foremost a manager not a coach. However, there are aspects of a manager's job that are best accomplished using coaching techniques and, in some cases, are only accomplished by using coaching techniques. Coaching techniques therefore need to be a part of a manager's range of skills, along with mentoring and training skills, to develop people.

A successful manager involved in developing people will change 'colour' chameleon fashion between mentor, coach and trainer as the situation demands.

- When discussing someone's role, or the task aspects of their job, it's appropriate to give management direction as needed.
- Task and skills development call for instruction and demonstration to increase 'know how'.
- The mentor's benefit of hindsight, the voice of experience, comparisons of situations and lives can expand horizons and perspectives.
- When it's constructive to surface from people their ideas, challenges and solutions, to facilitate their thinking, to enable them to take responsibility, to empower them to use initiative, then a coaching approach comes into its own.

It's not necessary as a manager to perceive these roles as separate and requiring devoted time. The nature of the manager's job lends itself to developing coaching skills and techniques as part of their repertoire, their toolkit, to use as and when the situation demands.