



COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE

Coaching is all about unlocking personal potential through the empowerment of individuals that result in improved personal performance. The key factor about coaching at the elite level is that it is the coachee who is the expert and not the coach. Empowerment is the key factor in this process and this leads to sustained levels of motivation. In the recent Olympic Games, the GB Cycling Team became the most decorated British team ever to compete at the Games. One of the main reasons for this was the culture they adopted in their preparation for the Games which ensured they had a team of motivated athletes all working towards something they believed in. Within their programme, it was the athlete who was the 'king' and not the coach. It was each athlete's job to draw up their own personal plans for performance improvement and also to recruit the support staff they want involved in that process. The athlete's trained when they wanted to train. It was the support staff's job to ask the right questions at the right time to elicit information from the athlete. As it was the athletes who were coming up with the solution, they became more motivated to engage in the performance enhancement process.

COACHING IS ABOUT USING A SOLUTIONS FOCUS

Coaching using solution focused questions allows performers to feel more confident, more engaged in their work, and enables them to take ownership over their performance. Not only that, coaching taps into a part of the brain which is more robust to the effects of high performance pressure. Therefore, when it is the performer who is making decisions for themselves rather than being imposed, they are able to learn in the environment and become better performers on a day to day basis. Our most robust skill under pressure is that of 'walking'. Why? Very simply it is because we have learned to do this through guided discovery. We have been allowed to fail and we have come up with the solutions. Using this analogy it is your role as the coach to create the guided discovery at the elite level so that performer consistently learns through experience so they are empowered to take action.

At a very basic level, the easiest coaching process to understand is the TGROW model. Whilst performance improvements may not occur immediately, long term, performers are able to explore their environment and find the solutions from the questions provided by the coach.

The GROW model consists of five phases. The **T** stands for **Topic**. What would you like to talk about today? The **G** stands for **Goal**. Specifically, what is the desired outcome that you want to get out of this mini session today? The **R** is the **Reality** of the situation. What is currently happening? What have you tried? How are you feeling? The **O** is where the athlete draws up **Options** for moving forward. They will identify the strengths and weaknesses for each of those **Options**. Finally, the **W** is the **Wrap** up of the coaching session. This is where the performer will come to a conclusion about the way forward. The process is extremely fluid



and it is not a necessary pre-requisite to go through each stage in a set order. Through practice, it is the skill of the coach to ask the right questions at the right time. Sometimes a coaching session may last two minutes. Likewise, a more complicated issue may take several hours. Below are some of the key questions to consider within each phase:

Topic Questions

1. What is it you would like to discuss today?
2. What will be of real value to you?

Goal Questions

1. What is it you would like to discuss today?
2. Can we do that in the time we have available?
3. What would you like from this session?
4. If I could grant you a wish for this session what would it be?
5. If there was one thing that you would really like to improve upon, what would it be?
6. What would you like to be different when you leave this session?
7. What would you like to happen that is not currently happening for?
8. If you could make a difference today, what difference would you like to make?
9. What would you like to happen in this coaching session for you to walk away feeling happy, content and fulfilled?
10. Is what you want a realistic goal for today?

Reality Questions

1. What is the current situation?
2. How does x make you think or feel?
3. How does x impact upon others around you?
4. What is it about x that is having such an impact?
5. How often does x happen?
6. In what situations does x occur?
7. What is it about x that impacts upon you?
8. What are other people's perceptions about x?
9. When does x happen?
10. What have you tried so far?
11. What is it about your interventions which have been positive and negative?

Options Questions

1. What could you do to change the situation?
2. What alternatives are there to that approach?



3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of that approach?
4. What possibilities do you see for action? Don't worry if they are not possible at this point in time.
5. Who might be able to help?
6. What the benefits and pitfalls of these options?
7. Which options are of greatest interest to you?
8. Rate on a scale of 1-10 the practicality of these options?
9. *Would you like an option from me?*

Wrap Up Questions

1. What are the next steps?
2. When are you going to take action?
3. What support do you need to help you on your way?
4. What actors are getting in the way of you taking action?
5. How can you overcome these factors?
6. How will you ensure you stay on track with your proposed action?
7. How motivated are you to take action (1-10 scale)?
8. What are the consequences of taking no action?

Try using this process with your performers. You will find that longer term, this approach is the way forward. It is built upon a sound base of research which looks at our most efficient learning strategies. The more you use the model the more you will be able to adapt it and use it in creative ways to enhance your skills as a coach. Remember, the performer is the king.

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