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Managers as Coaches: How to Deliver Feedback

Ron Hess

If you polled managers about what they dislike most in their jobs, providing feedback to employees likely would top the list.

But, managers need to overcome their fear, because insufficient feedback often proves to be the root cause of poor employee *and* poor business performance.

Research shows that employees crave quality feedback. They desire to know where they stand, and they use the feedback as a step toward self-improvement. But, a gap exists between need and fulfillment. In fact, ineffective feedback often is commonplace.

Where coaching comes in

Help meet the need for quality feedback by guiding your

The Future of Coaching

Terrie Lupberger

To talk about the future of coaching, we must first discuss what coaching is *now*.

Coaching—the process whereby a coach helps someone alters his or her behavior in order to take advantage of talents and produce desired results—is an evolving field. A coach helps a person or groups to reflect, challenge assumptions, create new possibilities, and take new actions.

Different from traditional training, teaching, or consulting, the expert in

managers to coach employees. As you evaluate training needs, look for clues about feedback problems in employee survey results, exit interviews, or through informal input.

Feedback helps recipients understand their strengths and weaknesses, and motivates them to improve. Feedback is about praise *and* constructive assessment; it's not about browbeating. When you train on feedback, bring the mindset of the coach; leave the image of the taskmaster at home.

Managers should remember:

- **Feedback is part of your job.** The collective efforts of employees determine an

(Continued on pg. 2)

the coaching relationship is the client. There is little or no advice giving or transference of skill. Instead, the fundamental pre-supposition in the coaching relationship is that nothing is broken, but through this relationship, the client learns what he or she needs to learn.

In my own coaching experience, and from the available field research, it's clear that many organizational

(Continued on pg. 3)

Delivering Feedback *(continued from pg. 1)*

organization's performance. Without proper feedback, performance suffers.

- **Don't fear giving feedback.** Just as visits to the dentist aren't so bad if you take care of your teeth, feedback usually isn't so bad if you have taken the time to prepare, learn the basics, and provide feedback regularly throughout the year.
- **Build a performance plan.** This will become the baseline for feedback. Achieve a two-way understanding of the performance levels and behaviors you expect *before* the performance cycle begins. Set job standards, goals, and deadlines.
- **Think before you say.** Envision all the headaches that occur when employees fail to meet performance standards. Prioritize time for performance planning. Avoid the impulse mode; choose words carefully.
- **Keep feedback objective.** Focus on the problem, not the individual. Use facts, observations, and results. Don't beat around the bush. Spell out the problem and its impact. Clearly let the employee know the results you expect. Speak to the consequences if he or she does not improve. But, don't stop there. Build employee ownership and initiative for problem resolution. Reach an agreement on actions. Confirm the agreement by restating it.
- **Provide feedback frequently.** Prompt feedback enables employees to quickly address

problems within their control, or duplicate the success.

- **Offer balanced feedback.** Feedback comes in two sizes: positive and negative. Offering praise and encouragement for good performance helps maintain motivation and signals employees to continue in this direction. And, it helps take the edge off conversations more delicate in nature.
- **Respect the individual.** Speak with the individual privately, avoid accusatory tones, and use positive, non-verbal body language such as attentive listening. Don't threaten the individual. Above all else, stay cool and professional. Don't be drawn into emotional conflict.
- **Allow time for course correction.** If employees hit a bump in the road, don't wait until the final performance review to tell them. Give employees time to address the deficiencies, and encourage them as they strive to correct their course. Schedule follow-up meetings to discuss their progress.

Giving feedback is challenging, but it's an essential skill. The ability to provide effective feedback is one of the most important tools in a manager's toolbox. It's key to making the most of an organization's most important resource—its people.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

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“The ability to provide effective feedback is one of the most important tools in a manager's toolbox. It's key to making the most of an organization's most important resource—its people”

The Future of Coaching (*continued from pg. 1*)

leaders now realize the value—and return-on-investment (ROI)—that coaching can bring to their organizations. The leaders I work with realize that as a person takes on more managerial and leadership functions, his or her roles and responsibilities become more complex.

The need to engage in innovative thinking increases, and the cost of missed opportunities rises dramatically. Yet typically, as the demands on this person's time increase, he or she spends less and less time learning.

Coaching interventions support new learning. Coaching, when done well, is an evocative *and* a provocative process that can help others create positive change in their professional and personal lives. The operative words in the last sentence: "done well." This provides the biggest challenge to the future of coaching.

What is the future of coaching?

One of the biggest challenges is that *anyone* can call himself or herself a coach, even if they don't have credentials, training, or skills. If too many coaching practitioners are incompetent, the profession is in danger of becoming yet another fad.

Nonetheless, I'm hopeful this won't happen. Why?

The International Coach Federation's (ICF) Credential Program. The ICF has developed ethics, standards, and core coaching competencies. It is against these competencies that coaches are tested and credentialed. Ideally, all coaches would obtain credentials. Having a standard for excellence as

a coach offers the buying public more assurance in whom they hire. It also potentially keeps government agencies from trying to regulate the profession, and it raises the educational bar among those who practice coaching.

Ongoing professional research. The more legitimate research done on the ROI and benefits of coaching, the more likely the professional world will view coaching as an essential leadership and management tool.

Dedicated professionals. Most coaches that I know care deeply about contributing to organizations and individuals in a way that not only improves results, but heightens personal well-being and satisfaction among the organizations' members.

Even with the benefits mentioned above, we have much more to do to make the public aware of what coaching is and what to look for in a coach. And, with the newness of this profession—as with any profession—come the growing pains associated with creating a strong, unified, well-organized, and articulated identity.

I believe that we as individuals, and as a civilization, face challenges because our traditional way of thinking and acting has separated everything into its parts. Coaching is one way to bring the parts back together.

So, I do believe that what coaching is in its essence, and what it produces for others, has a strong future.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

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Are We Asking the Right Questions?

Karlin Sloan

Corporate leadership means answering difficult questions. Am I showing by example how to lead well? What do I need to change about my behavior?

The best executive coaching focuses on the power of questions and provides the time to answer them.

As coaching has proliferated, it has become even more important to define what good coaching is—and what it is not.

What Coaching Is Not

Coaching is not traditional consulting—when a firm hires a consultant for his or her expertise. The consultant is a teacher, not a coach, and instructs leaders in ways to approach their business.

What Coaching Is

Unlike didactic consulting, the inquiry approach works off the premise that growth must come from within.

Consider the following engagements:

Sue, VP of operations for a large technology company, said: “I would ask my coach what she thought. Her answer was usually, ‘What do *you* think?’ I began to notice how much I second-guessed myself and started to check that behavior and be more confident in my opinions.”

Here’s another example. A coach was working with a harsh-lipped CEO on how she could become a more effective communicator. The coach told her specific language to change. The CEO was insulted and fired the coach.

If the coach had used the inquiry model, he might have asked, “What

effect is your approach having on performance?” The outcome might have turned out differently.

When Coaching Works

Coaching may not be the right answer for your leadership-development needs. How do you know? Here is a short list of issues that one-on-one coaching doesn’t address:

- Psychological problems
- Systemic breakdowns, such as failure of the organization to address competitor strategies.

Here are the kinds of issues great coaching can affect:

- Developing self-awareness
- Cultivating performance, confidence, and flexibility
- Developing problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Encouraging responsibility
- Integrating new material and assimilating feedback.

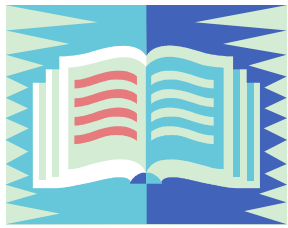
Is it Worth it?

According to *Business Wire*, a 2001 study of companies that implemented coaching showed an average return on investment of 5.7 times the investment. The benefits included improved productivity, retention, and profitability.

It is not magic though. While coaching by inquiry can have an important effect on individual leaders, it does not create leadership out of a void. By asking the right questions, the coach helps individuals achieve a new focus. Then cultures begin to change and become more conducive to innovation.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

Karlin Sloan is an entrepreneur and Certified Executive Coach. You can reach her by email at ksloan@karlinsloan.com.



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Case Study: Coaching at National Leadership Institute

Rainette S. Bannon

Executive Coaching is a hot-ticket perk for many organizations. But questions about coaching abound. Is it worth the time and money? What will this coach accomplish?

In directing our executive coaching programs and leadership training at the National Leadership Institute (NLI) at University of Maryland University College, I have become convinced that executive coaching is a critical follow-up component to leadership training.

Coaching makes the connection between the learning and the workplace, providing structure, reinforcement, strategies, and guidelines for continuing development. Certain elements—the art and science of coaching—create successful coaching outcomes.

The science. We rarely provide coaching without anchoring it to a 360-degree assessment—which provides essential information on which to build.

The art. All of our coaches must relate to different personalities—coupled with business acumen; an understanding of organizational practices; listening skills; courage; credibility; and, if necessary, the ability to confront individuals on tough issues.

Coach and coachee forge a relationship with the potential to achieve significant change. If trust and openness don't exist, the relationship will not produce results.

Here are two examples that illustrate a terrific blend of art and science.

Bob, an executive coach, worked with John, a *Fortune* 100 senior executive. John achieved his high-status position through his technical ability and a

command-and-control style. Now, the next promotion calls for an executive with skill and tact in handling people—not John's current image.

Like many successful executives, John resists negative feedback. He must develop reflective thinking, and recognize that his current position is the pinnacle—unless he changes some behaviors. Not an easy task for a coach.

What succeeded? Art and science.

Bob recognized that John needed respect for what he had achieved, a path that allowed him to use his strong personality and drive, and a vehicle to measure success.

The duo agreed that John would work on specific behaviors, and measure his success by re-administering, after six months, specific segments of his 360. In all categories that John and his coach had agreed to work on, they noticed positive change!

In another case, Suzanne needed a guiding hand to help her become skilled in voicing her needs, talents, and limitations.

Her coach modeled the behavior she wanted by taking a strong stance. Suzanne began to develop new capabilities through exposure to a role model—her coach!

Just as leadership and coaching are complementary, so are weaving art and science into coaching.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

Rainette S. Bannon is an associate director with NLI. You can reach her by email at rbannon@umuc.edu



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Book Excerpt: [*Coaching Training*](#) by Chris Chen

Chapter: Designing Interactive Training for Coaches

Principles of Design in Experiential Learning

The foundation for delivering effective coaching training is a well-conceived design. An appropriate design considers both the abilities of the facilitator and the needs of the participants. This requires carefully thinking through the learning readiness and training needs of potential participants and creating a sequence of events to maximize the possibility that they will learn what they need to learn in the time allotted. This means *designed learning*, or a structured plan for helping coaches develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, strategies, and tactics in which they need to be competent in order to be successful. The proper design will increase the comfort of the facilitator and allow the facilitator to deliver an enjoyable and effective program with a minimum of stress.

Much has been documented about how adults learn best. As table 3-1 (click [here](#) to see the table online) shows, Jones, Bearley, and Watsabaugh (1996) in *The New Fieldbook for Trainers: Tips, Tools, and Techniques* have pointed out several “truths” about adult learning.

Given these principles of adult learning, it is imperative to design sessions that are highly interactive and engaging. It is impossible to force anyone to learn anything, so the goal of effective training design is to provide every opportunity and encouragement to the potential learner. Involvement of the learner is the key. As an old Chinese proverb says: “Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand.” The designs in this book use several methods to

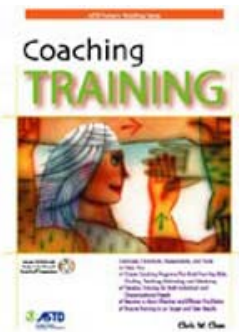
convey information and engage participants. By incorporating a variety of training mediums—such as well-designed overhead presentations, discussion sessions, small-group work, structured exercises, and self-assessments—these designs maximize active participant involvement and offer something for every learning style.

In addition to engaging the interest of the learner, interactive training allows you to tap into another source of learning content: the participants themselves. Everyone knows something about coaching. Each of us acts as a coach to someone in some venue in our lives (for example, coaching a children’s soccer team, teaching a friend to fish, helping someone fix a water heater). In a group-learning situation, a good learning environment will allow and encourage every participant to share with others in the group so the entire group’s cumulative knowledge about coaching can be used.

A Note on Training Language

This set of principles and their implications for designing experiential learning for coaches should make it clear that training is not “teaching.” Trainers should not use terminology associated with education. This includes such words as the following (the training language is shown in parentheses):

- course (training session)
- instructor (facilitator)
- evaluation (assessment)
- classroom (training room or venue)



Book Excerpt (continued from pg.6)

The organizational learning experience differs greatly from most academic experiences. It is inherently more practical and targeted. Many people have negative memories of their formal schooling, so trainers should be careful not to bring these to mind in designing sessions.

Using the Sample Designs in This Book

If you study the sample design in chapters 6 through 9 and the content modules in chapter 10, you will discover a number of effective practices in designing interactive training for coaches. Here are the major generalizations you may draw from this study.

- **Break up the time into segments.** This applies both to brief training sessions and longer ones. First, determine the “chunks” of time you have, such as half a day or a morning.
- **Design each segment so it has a beginning, middle, and end.** Break each segment into the smaller divisions that are required for your training activities and debriefings. Structure the length of each segment according to the time required for the activity; need for participant breaks; and the need of the trainer to refresh himself or herself, gather thoughts, or get organized.
- **Anticipate what training activities might take more or less time than you expect.** You may need to stay with a group discussion longer if it is particularly productive. If a structured experience goes quickly, you need to be prepared to adjust the timing of your remaining learning activities

accordingly or insert another in “real time.”

- **Make a seamless transition from one set of activities to the following one.** In a training session with multiple modules, it is important to make sure the participants see how each module relates and leads into the next. Your training should not feel segmented. Make transition statements that bridge the time segments: “Now that we’ve considered what it takes to be an effective coach in this organization, let’s build on that by considering....” The bridges and relationships may be obvious to the designer of the training, but it helps to point them out with meaningful segues to participants.
- **Don’t short-change the debriefings.** Here is where the learning becomes crystallized and commitments are made for more effective behavior after the training. Allow plenty of time to talk through the results of each learning activity.
- **Spell out a step-by-step plan for each session.** The samples in this book give you models to consider in this regard. Sometimes your design includes activities that you and your trainees carry out after the formal session.

Click [here](#) to read the full chapter.

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Coaching C.L.U.E.S. by Marian J. Thier

Reviewed by Stephanie Sussan

Coaching has landed on top of the latest list of executive perks—and that bodes well for those in the Organizational Development field.

But in order to remain on the top of that list, coaches need to effect change—not just with the executives they serve, but also with the organization as a whole.

Through a series of well-told, real-life stories, which are framed by the five C.L.U.E.S—characteristics, language, underlying motives, energy, and stories—Marian Thier engages her readers and tells them how to do just that.

Thier carefully plots the scene and cast of characters with such vivid color and detail that you will not only understand the situation, but you'll likely recognize each situation as one you've dealt with before.

Each scenario has a tool to solve the problem at hand. Thier tells you exactly how she implemented the tool, and roadblocks encountered along the way, and the final outcome.

These tools—or tricks of the trade—often seem so simple; it's hard to believe they work. Despite the apparent simplicity, it's clear that these solutions took careful thought and experience.

To further illustrate that point, in the back of the book Thier provides a step-by-step approach to outline each tool she used during the scenarios found in Part I of the book.

And the best part about this book? You don't have to read it cover to cover in order to absorb the pearls of wisdom Thier has to offer—though I admittedly became mesmerized by each story, and spent much of Christmas Eve day reading the entire book!

You easily can chose a scenario that is applicable to your needs, read how she handled it, and then flip to the back for a detailed explanation of how to use the tool.

Whether new to the coaching field or a seasoned veteran, you should take advantage of these practical and creative solutions—you are sure to learn how to quickly effect change!

Stephanie Sussan is the former editor of Infoline—ASTD's premier monthly how-to journal, and the current editor of OD/Leadership Network News and ROI Network News. You can reach her by email at stephanie_sussan@hotmail.com.

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Coaching Resources

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