PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | COACHING

Does Coaching Really Work? Where's The Proof?

I have stone cold hard data about the effectiveness of coaching.

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Some of you may have heard about coaching, some of you are pros at it and some may be doing what you think is coaching. You could also be wondering if coaching really works. Wherever you lie in this spectrum, I have stone cold hard data about the effectiveness of coaching.

I too have been in your shoes and have traversed that entire spectrum. For many years, when I was in the corporate world, I had subordinates. It was standard practice in the corporate world to set annual objectives with KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) at the beginning of the year for each employee. Best practices also meant that superiors had to conduct KPI reviews twice a year with each subordinate. As a boss, I incorporated coaching during these reviews. Or rather I thought it was coaching.

After undertaking training to be a DSWA Certified Coach, I realized that I was doing coaching totally wrong. Most companies, even Fortune 500 and Global 500 organizations, had it wrong and still do, when it comes to coaching. Bosses are encouraged by the Human Resource Departments to coach their staff to boost productivity but very few actually train the bosses to be effective coaches.

When coaching is done correctly, this is what Marshall Goldsmith et al discovered in research conducted within a sales organization of 3,000 sales representatives. These reps were divided into four groups and different levels of intervention were employed and this was their observation:

Group 1 - no training; sales declined by 4%

Group 2 - 8 hours of training only; sales increased by 1%

Group 3 - 8 hours of training + some coaching; sales increased between 9 and 19%

Group 4 - 8 hours training + 8 sessions of thirty-minute telecoaching; sales increased by 20%.

Let me emphasize the results of Group 4. Combining training and coaching produces 20 times the result of just training people!

So what exactly does effective coaching look like?

Coaching is not the same as mentoring, although many companies and people use these terms synonymously. Coaching is also not training.

At the Direct Selling World Alliance (DSWA) we define training as imparting skills to improve productivity and coaching as changing behavior to boost productivity.

Now you can see why Goldsmith's Group 4 had sales that took off like a rocket.

Coaching is not telling someone what to do and providing them with the answers. Very often we mistake business coaching like that of a sports coach, who we always see as shouting instructions.

Providing people with solutions doesn't transform them. Instead you become a crutch.

You're the go-to guy with the answers.

Here are some elements to incorporate into your coaching to make it super effective:

coaching should be an **invitation** and not an expectation. This means the coachee has to give you **permission** to coach them. In the corporate world, coaching is mandatory and so it is an expectation. Many staff don't look forward to it as it's a "telling session" by the boss.

create a **safe environment** for the coachee to open up. This relates to the first point above. It's not a very safe environment when the session is mandated.

acknowledge their contribution to the organization, no matter how small
use **picture phrases** and words, for example roadblock or red light (instead of obstacle)

start **questions with the W-words** - What, Where, Who, When, Which and How. At DSWA, we avoid the Why question due to a judgmental connotation.

get coachee to **create goals with timelines**

get them to **commit** to these goals and ask them how you will know when it is implemented. This should be done at the end of the coaching session.

make sure that your **airtime** during these coaching sessions are about 20-30%. This means the coachee has to do the bulk of the talking, not you

One critical element I haven't included above is how to give feedback. I'm certain that you've heard and read about how to give "constructive criticism". It's really strange how business schools and psychologists concocted this philosophy as the right way to make people think about their actions.

When Dale Carnegie published his book, *"How to Win Friends and Influence People"* in 1936, he had already stated that criticism always leaves the receiver with negative emotions. He or she will resent you for doing so. It's an irony that modern researchers went on a wild goose chase to discover the right way to give feedback when it was already documented 80 years ago.

At the DSWA we train Leaders on the 5 Coaching Skills and among them is how to give ***"compassionate feedback"***. Compassionate Feedback makes the receiver happy and eager to take corrective measures.

The take home message from this article is that the Network Marketing industry should train independent distributors and coach them. Training alone is insufficient.

You will lose, if your competitor were to go the whole nine yards (including coaching) and you only stick with mundane training.

Every Direct Selling Field and Corporate Leader can be trained as coaches to take their game to the next level. You can never pick up great coaching skills from books or articles and I'm speaking from experience over 30 years. Invest in learning coaching skills from the experts in the field. Visit DSWA Coach Excellence School for training dates.

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