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Learning and development, conferences

The power of coaching

More and more managers at the European Commission are attracted by the idea of having a personal coach. In this approach they follow both Olympic champions who were the first to discover the benefits of coaching and a worldwide trend in the learning & development of managers. The method has proved to have a significant impact on individual and organisational performance, improving both leadership and management capacities. This article reviews the most important features of a formal one-to-one coaching relationship.

How does coaching work?

Coaching takes place in the form of structured conversations. It is a process in which the client, called a coachee, gets support from the coach in achieving his goal. The coach accompanies the coachee in finding the most effective and workable solution. In this process the client is "the expert". He decides where to go and how to get there. The coach acts as a facilitator for this transition having at his disposal various coaching models derived from psychological schools of thought.

A good coach should be able to present and explain clearly his preferred methodology to the client at the first meeting in order to get agreement on the way they are going to work together. In all cases coaches will ensure the confidential character of the sessions and use powerful questioning, active listening, and authentic communication - which are at the heart of the successful coaching relationship. Thanks to these they will create a non-judgemental space built on trust where the client has the opportunity to reflect upon issues that are really important to him.

The dynamics of coaching

At the beginning of the process the coach helps the coachee to clarify his goal so that it is measurable, specific, time-bound and within the coachee's control as well as being aligned to his personal values and preferences. Against this background both set up a coaching contract in terms of expected results, working methods, responsibilities, logistics and last but not least evaluation of the sessions. In the process, the coach using relevant tools will unblock the client's own resources, maximalise his creativity, help him overcome his limitations or fear, so that he can truly reach full potential. Managers have described this as obtaining a new awareness, gaining new perspectives, and inspiration, and feeling a new impetus. As coaching itself is a result-oriented intervention, it will always cover the stage of designing actions and monitoring procedure which help clients introduce the desired changes into their lives.

Are you ready for a coaching experience?

For coaching to be successful the client needs to have a true desire to change and be ready to take responsibility for his own learning. It means being committed to discovering his own unique answers and accepting that the coach is not an adviser or consultant and cannot provide ready-made solutions. The added value of a coach would be to help the coachee to get a deeper insight which comes from this very specific one-to-one relationship built on openness and respect. The benefit of this approach for the client is that he acquires full ownership of the solution and a strong motivation to undertake the action that has been designed.

How to start?

In 2011, the European School of Administration signed a four-year contract with the BICK consortium for delivering coaching. It is open to all Commission services both for individual and group coaching activities. If you are interested in taking advantage of this possibility, please contact your training unit so that they can make the necessary arrangements for you.

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