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Introduction: What is coaching?

If you look around at how coaching is currently being described there seems to be a clear polarization into two camps:

- 1 Transference:** Those who believe that coaching is a process of transference – whereby one person with prior knowledge or experience can impart this wisdom to others with a goal to optimize performance.
- 2 Discovery:** Those who see that the coach's role is to help others release untapped capability – to help the person be who they are and what they want to be. Here the focus is more on releasing potential.

Although people and companies will adopt variations of these forms and use as appropriate, we need to be clear as to the difference between the two camps because of the confusion it can create for the client, coach and corporate leaders. The word coach has become a catchall for a range of roles and positions, some of which might be viewed as more directive in nature while others are more emphatic and supportive in style.

This use of the word 'coach' is common in large companies, for example in call centres where coaching is the term used when a supervisor notices that someone needs to resolve a problem. Other examples might be seen on the Sunday morning football pitch where the coach works with young children to teach them how to take a free kick, or in a fast food restaurant where the supervisor's role is to turn newbies into efficient customer service representatives.

At risk of opening a debate that can never be closed (normally because of semantic interpretation and contextual experiences) I would offer the diagram in Figure 1.1 as a simple representation of the coaching continuum. By no means is this being offered as a definitive model, but it is important that people understand the basis on which the ideas are being presented.

2 The Seven Cs of Coaching

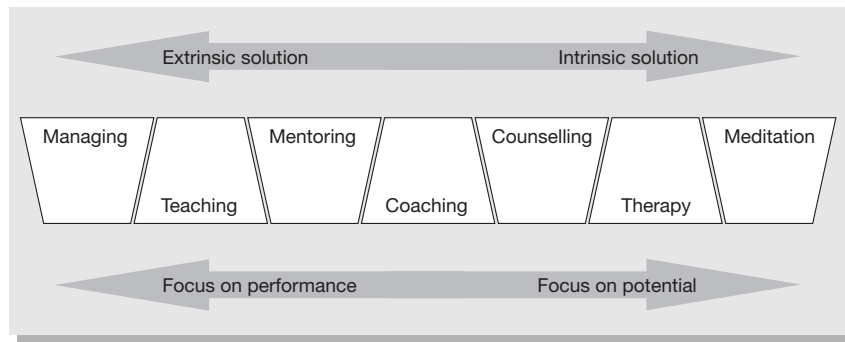


Figure 1.1 Coaching continuum

At the left-hand side we have ‘managing’ where someone is commanding people to ensure that a specific output is achieved. They will often do this by giving direction and ideas on how the output needs to be delivered. At the other end of the spectrum we have ‘meditation’ where the idea is to spend time on a contemplative discourse. The person focuses on intrinsic aspects and pays less attention to external forces or solutions. In this sense the value comes from within and is not externally directed or informed.

“I see managing as a process that people adopt as necessary whereas management might be taken as a role.”

Please note this is managing – not management. I see managing as a process that people adopt as necessary whereas management might be taken as a role. So the coach might spend most of their time in the central position, but in other cases they might need to move up either end of the spectrum as dictated by the situation. Conversely, a ‘manager’ might spend the majority of their time in the far left position managing their people, but in some instances may move along the spectrum as dictated by circumstances.

The ‘managing’ end of the spectrum is often more concerned with performance management where the goal is to ensure that the resources or people deliver the expected output. This is akin to buying a car where the top speed is stated as 100mph and ensuring that it can deliver this on demand. In a coaching context this might be the manager who looks after a team of engineers. There is an expected daily rate of jobs that each is targeted to deliver and the manager’s role is to ensure that this figure is achieved. Where

one of the engineers is below standard the manager might seek to 'coach' them to help bring their output up to scratch.

However, the other end of the spectrum might be more focused on discovering potential. Not just ensuring that the resource will deliver the agreed performance, but rather what this person is capable of – what could it unleash if we were prepared to invest time discovering what latent and tacit talent the person has? – much in the same way that a sports mechanic doesn't seek to get the stated performance from an engine; instead they will invest time, energy and all the talent and years of experience to unearth all the latent power that can be teased from the stock design.

The use of the word coaching in this book is based upon the middle perspective of the coaching continuum. In accepting a coaching engagement the coach will have a material interest in ensuring that the client will deliver the agreed outcome, if not for altruistic reasons, then at least because their personal brand takes a dip every time they coach someone who does not deliver the agreed outcome. At the other end, only the client can deliver change that will add value and be sustainable. Any lasting solution will generally be one that the client discovers, owns and is able to maintain after the coaching engagement has completed.

In bringing these two drivers together, we end up with the following:

- **Coach: 'Help someone'** – this help might be directive or non-directive based upon the needs of the client, coach and the context where the coaching is taking place.
- **Client: 'to help themselves'** – this places the ownership squarely on the shoulders of the client and so it is not for the coach to provide or own the solution.

This is why the collaborative nature of the 7Cs framework is so important as it is where these two drivers come together at midpoint on the coaching continuum, as seen in Figure 1.2.

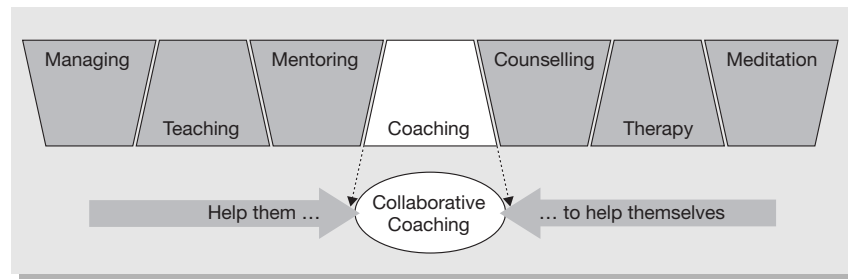
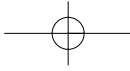


Figure 1.2 Collaborative Coaching fit



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The 7Cs framework and associated tools are designed to be used anywhere on this continuum, but the emphasis in the book is related to the coaching point on the continuum where the primary goal is for the coach to help the client to help themselves.

John's journey

In describing the framework, I have also included a running case study of someone who is being coached. The case study draws upon the ideas and models outlined in each chapter and offers an indication of how they might be applied by a coach. My one concern with taking this approach is that it might seem to be offering the 'right' way of using the framework and models. This is certainly not the case. The ideas offered in the book are consciously and deliberately relaxed and adaptable so that people can choose to interpret and deploy them in line with their natural style. Hence, the way that I have described them in the case study will clearly reflect my personal view of the situation and how I might go about it – I am sure that your approach would and should be very different.

The hero of our story is John and he is about to be coached by Julie. The case study picks up from their first meeting and follows them on their journey through to the logical conclusion. It is written to try to highlight both John's and Julie's perspectives and indicate in particular what Julie does to help John and why she makes these particular choices.

Julie is someone who is relatively new to coaching, but she has a real passion for the subject and a real sense of purpose about why it is important for her. She worked for a large company for the early part of her career but then decided to make a life change and travelled round the world for a year to help discover her purpose in life. At the end of this journey she noticed the increasing demand for personal coaching and also recognized the value that such coaching had had for her when thinking about making a life change. So she undertook a study programme, began a coaching practice and now has in the region of ten regular clients.

John is 43, divorced and is a weekend dad with two children. He has worked for the same firm for 19 years but is now faced with the threat of redundancy. He doesn't know for definite, but the rumours are spreading that a downsizing programme will be introduced in the next year. Although he is really scared of leaving, he sees this as the chance to make a break and do some of the things he has been thinking about for the last four years.

At the end of the next chapter we see the point where John meets Julie and they explore the ideas of working together in a coaching partnership.