

How to Coach and Extend Backstopping Support

Past experience shows that coaching helps LAs improve, develop, learn new skills, achieve aims and manage organizational change and challenges.

Coaching

The process of coaching is different to training. Coaching draws out rather than puts in. It develops rather than imposes. It reflects rather than directs. Coaching is reactive, flexible and enabling, not prescriptive or instructional. Coaching is non-judgmental. Coaching helps people and organizations to develop and grow in a variety of areas resulting in self-fulfilment and self-discovery. Coaching is about getting the very best out of organizations and enabling them to make decisions that will improve their performances. Coaching is unlike training, consultancy, advising, or providing a professional service in which work is completed on behalf of a client.

In coaching, listening is more important than talking. By listening, people can be helped to overcome their fears, be offered complete objectivity and given undivided attention and unparalleled support. This leads to the intuitive questioning that allows the client to explore his/her own situation.

Coaching is a two-way process. While listening is crucial, so is being able to interpret and reflect back in ways that remove barriers, pre-conceptions, bias and negativity. Communicating well enables trust and meaningful understanding on both sides. Good coaching uses communication, not to give the client the answers, but to help the client find the answers for themselves.

A coach's ability to build rapport with people is vital. Normally such ability stems from a desire to help people, which all coaches tend to possess. Rapport-building is made far easier in coaching compared to other services because the coach's only focus is the client.

Coaches motivate and inspire people and this ability lies within us all. It is borne of a desire to help and support. People who feel ready to help others are normally able to motivate and inspire. When someone receives attention and personal investment from a coach towards their well-being and development, this in itself is motivational and inspirational.

Coaching patterns vary according to a person's need, circumstances and timing. There is no single set formula for a coaching relationship. Remembering that everyone is different and has different needs is an essential part of being a coach.

Coaching is client-led, which means that emotions have to be tapped into from the very beginning of the process. So, having the flexibility to react to people's differences, along with the curiosity and interest to understand fundamental issues in people's lives, are crucial in coaching.

Coaching in LAs

Coaching within LAs basically focuses on promoting a democratic dialogue. It emphasizes expression of democratic values and as a generative mechanism, a means of creating efficient discourse, strategic measures and solutions, transparency and consensus. It also focuses on learning processes, which strengthen participation and communication and thus lead to broadly based skills enhancement.

The ideal results of coaching:

- Development of attitudes and skills.
- Creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence.
- Listening to the counterparts (active listening).
- Clarifying problems, needs and challenges.
- Communicating and exploring options.
- Prioritizing between options and reach conclusions.
- Implement conclusions.
- Offer feedback.
- Evaluating personal and organizational performances.

Coaching will also develop fertile approaches for participatory development processes and unite different parties, groups and levels of administration and/or community to work towards common goals.

Coaching can take place in the following areas:

- Improvement of efficiency and effectiveness in management systems.
- Citizen Participation and incorporation of their priorities into planning.
- Effective service delivery for citizens.