

Experiential Performance Coaching - Can you help us?

Person being coached: “What should I do?”

Coach: “What do you think you could do?”

Michael Maynard examines Experiential Performance Coaching.



This is a snapshot of the classic coaching relationship. The coach resisting the temptation to give advice or guidance. Instead they throw the responsibility back on the person being coached. And it demonstrates an important shift when encouraging leaders to move away from conventional command and control management. They need to learn the value of using questions and the vital aspect that listening can play in a coaching session.

This is a struggle for many managers who habitually provide direction and often

coaching somebody, is how long can they hold out before they leap in and tell the person exactly what to do? So it is essential that they expand their coaching tool-kit in order to empower

the other person and develop their self-motivation. in a dictatorial style. The joke on coaching courses, when you watch managers take their first steps into the practice of

However, there is a danger with this style of coaching. The coach can become passive and the session dull, undynamic and uncreative. This contrasts vividly with a different sort of Executive Performance Coaching that we use at Maynard Leigh. Over the last twenty years we have developed a distinctive methodology for improving performance

in others. We thought it was worth sharing our thinking with you as there's a danger people have a limited view of what a coaching session can look like. In this day and age where thousands of people can receive a diploma in Life Coaching simply by attending a weekend course and partaking in various online activities, it is important to look at the other end of the scale where Experiential Coaching takes place.

Executives who invest large amounts of money in the one-to-one learning experience expect far more from their coach than a fireside chat and time for reflection – important though those aspects are. They want a dynamic and creative experience that will challenge and stretch them to practise new behaviours and take a profound leap in their capability.

The Maynard Leigh performance coaching experience resembles the relationship between a theatre or film director and an actor. “The director’s job in rehearsal is to unlock the actor’s potential in order to



deliver outstanding performance. They do this in many ways using insightful feedback, suggesting exercises, encouraging experimentation and working in a creative partnership. This is why actors will always expect to get up on their feet and try things out in the rehearsal stage of a production.

People who come to us for coaching in presentation skills would expect this to be the case. They would think it self-evident that a coaching session to prepare for a conference speech, for instance, would not simply be a question-based conversation, exploring barriers to high performance. No. They would expect to get on

their feet and try things out – to rehearse. This is how people change their behaviour and discover new ways of doing things and expand their range and capability.

Yet, it’s not only in presentation and communication skills that this methodology works. People come to us for a whole variety of issues, for instance: preparing for promotion, improving work/life balance, inspiring a new team, managing difficult relationships, strategic planning for a new role, developing emotional intelligence. Whilst some of the session will crucially involve an in-depth conversation exploring the dimensions of the issue, its ramifications and the person’s thinking about it,

it will also take the client into the realm of experience. It will explore their emotional states and expression. It will, more than likely, provide opportunities for them to experiment with alternative behaviours and rehearse anticipated situations. Whatever else, it will certainly be an experience – one that comes out of the dynamic creative partnership between the coach and the client.