

There's a place for coaching – but are you ready to be coached?

Not everyone is by the way – in fact most aren't. If that surprises you, what follows may be a challenge.

A common response from the more informed in the market would be something like:

“At least for executive/ business (rather than sports) coaching there is a sense that it is maturing as a field, but elements of the Wild West remain”



There are regular reviews and research performed about the effectiveness of training and personal development, and on occasion that steps into the effectiveness of coaching.

A recent study on coaching was made by the *Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)*. Without putting any spin or bias I suggest if you're interested you read [it here](#).

But what is coaching?

There are several coaching institutes and academies, some international providing their own coaching accreditation, but what does that mean and is there any value to it? Are they great coaches and who says they are?

Some, like the **ILM** say coaching needs to be (more) regulated – why and again what would that look like or mean? Perhaps more credentials, letters like **BA or BSc or maybe PhD** would have value – when the reality is the industry is rife with instances such as a 2 day practitioner course on a psychometric product and suddenly making you an expert!

Would any (more) regulation for coaching make it any better? Too many questions... so let's look elsewhere.

Terms linked/confused with coaching

With the other terms linked with coaching and seemingly for many they are almost interchangeable like *mentoring, learning, teaching, guiding, counselling* etc it all seems a bit muddled. We know what we think the real differences are, but how does an uninformed buyer know? Do buyers need a course on that perhaps...? We don't think that's a route forward, but in many respects it is like wading through quicksand.

Plus we have since the nineties and noughties entrants with yet more labels -**Business Coaches** - who in all reality are no more than good advisers using the flavour of the month term “coach” to differentiate their proposition. No wonder the term Business Coach has a sour taste for many.

A back to basics approach is needed, maybe.

So what is the purpose of Coaching?

Looking at purpose should be the place to start - surely.

Featured in the ILM study and recognised for his success is Sir John Whitmore's performance approach. It's published in his book "Coaching for Performance: a practical guide to growing your own skills" – and he gives us a big clue in the title.



Our Mind Fit definition of coaching comes from his:

“to raise a persons’ level of awareness and to generate responsibility in that person to take action ”

Or as you might say “open your eyes to reality and just do it”. And as John's book gave the clue “a practical guide to growing your own skills” it's about the coachee growing their skills and becoming independent and nothing about the coach. The coach is there for the moment, and that's a short moment in time, not forever as some coaching dependence has become - a crutch.

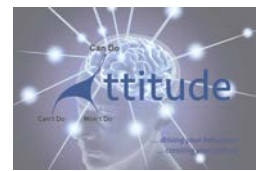
As your skills are grown you become your own coach. Raising you awareness and getting feedback to be better – not hard is it? If you need more skills, then get a different coach as you should've exhausted the previous relationship, or maybe you now need a mentor - that is if you know the difference.

Does Coaching Work?

The simple response to that is **yes, but only if the platform is right**. Yes you do need to build or be on the right platform. So what do we mean by platform?



Well the following is what Sir John Whitmore's colleagues found out after he raised that very question. Why I know that will become obvious later. In the late 1990's Sir John was concerned that coaching was not having the impact it should. Because they had access to a wide database, they



were able to interview a large number of people who had undergone coaching and start asking the relevant questions so they could get an evidenced based answer.

What they found - coaching fell short of expectations

In the team was Graham Williams, the architect of what today is known as Mind Fitness , and he found that the majority of participants:

1. thought coaching was far better than training
2. it made sense
3. they had learnt how to deliver what was required and had a plan

and whilst that looked promising, it transpired that most felt they were too busy to do anything different and they did not have time to implement their agreed actions. They weren't on the right platform. Does that have a familiar ring to it? Most people that go on time management course, still seem to have a time management problem!

So the reality was that it was not much different than the research around the conversion rate for training and the same problems persist. Perhaps that shouldn't be too surprising!

So although the coaching had been successful to a point it was failing to translate into:

- behavioural change – *just like training*
- tangible and measurable results – *just like training*
- return-on-investment for the organisation – *just like training*

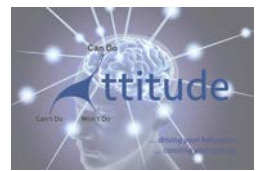
But where coaching worked, they found these people simply had a different mindset to those where it had failed. Not a startling discovery, but this was far more evidenced based than assuming it was the case.

How to make coaching work

They found the start point is simply not coaching. The mindset of a person is the start point and that means it is a person's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that need to be addressed and considered first. Other research, including McKinsey's on leadership, has found it is necessary to change the negative mindset into a positive mindset first, and then (accelerated) change can happen – the platform, foundation or the starter for change is having a can do mindset. But just saying you are a 'can do' is clearly not enough.

Mindset - Mind Fitness

As Graham Williams was on Sir John's team, it's easy to connect the dots and see the roots and pedigree of the Mind Fit process. A process that is all about changing the negative activities into positive actions by applying, amongst other things, positive psychology. The approach is not to provide more knowledge or input, but to take the person on a journey with the Mind Fit Map® through new insights, experiences and activities. It enables a person to increase their self-awareness



allowing them to self-assess how their own attitudes and behaviours impact on them and others. As a result, it becomes sustainable, and people are being the best they can be.

Once a person has chosen to change and address their [Behavioural Waste™](#), their negative beliefs and attitudes, for positive behaviours, the coach can now step in knowing that the person is in the right frame of mind to action what the dialogue explores in a business context or elsewhere.

Other evidence?

Prof Martin Seligman, Guru of Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA stated in a paper in 2007 that

“coaching is a practice in search of a backbone, two backbones actually: a scientific, evidence based backbone and a theoretical backbone.”

He goes on to say that positive psychology may provide the backbones.

What he has done is to identify research from other areas that may fit what for the majority of coaches is something they believe works anyway: regardless of academic proof.

Most people now know the power of beliefs and that they can overshadow and dominate a person’s reality – with disastrous results if the belief is false!

In previous articles I’ve referred to perhaps the ‘widest gap in business’ being the gap between what knowledge training purports to deliver and what it actually delivers. The gap is so wide that even **Donald Kirkpatrick** of training evaluation fame described it as a

“devastating disconnect between learning and behaviour”

whilst the **CIPD** called the transfer no better than *‘random chance’*.

Perhaps coaching is just another of those gaps?

Whatever the evidence and there is a lot out there, the choice is still yours.

So to answer the question – **Are you ready to be coached?** If you’ve any [Behavioural Waste™](#), we’d say address that first and then take a coach.

But it’s your choice.

