

Coaching: the catalyst for better business performance

A view from Frank Dick CBE

Frank Dick is well known as the Director of Coaching for UK Athletics during the 'golden years' of the late 1980's and early 1990's. He is now an internationally renowned Coaching Consultant, author and motivational public speaker. Frank has strong and well founded views on the role that 'coaching' plays in the endless corporate search for 'better business performance'. We are delighted to present Frank's views as a stimulus for further discussion. Read on ...

“Coaches – in business as in sport - improve the performance of those they coach.

We do not have total control of results in our competitive arenas – be it business or sport, but we do have total control over our performance. The probability of enhancing the results we want is clearly greater if we each improve our performance. Whatever the starting point in terms of ability or achievement, we can perform better given personal commitment, quality coaching and a supportive environment.

Whatever our field of endeavour, it is our capacity to learn faster which affords us advantage in addressing 'challenges and competition' - which constantly change, and which are persistently tougher. Coaching prepares you for this and supports you in this, while the 'challenges and competition' themselves are stimulus to producing far better performance.

Our profile of motivation and competence is constantly shifting - as we learn and grow, from beginner to top performer. This in turn affects the various aspects of personal development, and so the coach needs to adjust his or her style of coaching - to address our changing needs. Therefore coaches must be equally comfortable and competent in all our areas of coaching style and be prepared to be 'coachable' in improving his or her own performance in coach style.

As each of us learns and develops, what we know to be valuable in improving our performance will also be valuable to those who follow. We must, then, improve our skills in passing on the value this represents. We must all develop our own coaching skills. We are performers and coaches. We are 'player-coaches'.

How coaches operate with their charges, falls into three broad systems.

1. The 'escort' system finds the coach taking someone from first steps all the way through to the highest level. Bruce Longden, for example, took Sally Gunnell from beginner to Olympic Champion.
2. The 'transfer' system is where the performer is passed from coach to coach as the performer develops. Each coach is a specialist at a given level of performer development. We have all experienced this system through our school years.
3. Finally, there is the 'partnership' system where coach and performer work in partnership with a team of people each of whom represents a development or learning resource to which the player needs access. The coach in this system synthesises the resource input in preparing and pursuing the player's development and performance plan in practice.

To deliver in all of this, the coach must develop a reservoir of coaching skills and methods. This represents a meeting of the art and science of coaching. They must also, of course, be knowledgeable in the subject matter of what is being passed onto the performer and in the means of adapting the performer to operate at higher and higher levels of performance under pressure.

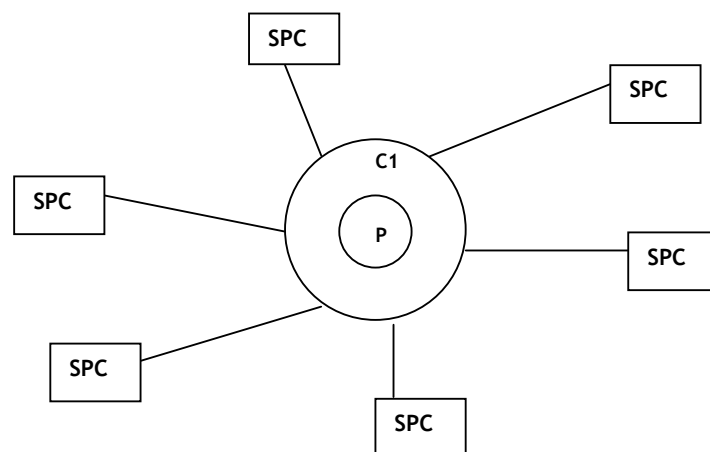
Traditionally coaches deal with improving a performer's technical ability, fitness and competitive attitude. For today's coach, that means developing the technical skills relevant to a player's role in the team, their 'professional' skills; the relationship skills in making interdependence a core strength in personal and team development and performance; the behavioural skills which grow from owning attitude to shaping culture.

It also means ensuring a balance when designing and coaching a performer's development across all aspects of their lifestyle including the performer's regeneration and wellbeing.

There are four different operational coaching roles and all are founded on the principle that in our arenas, whether in 'one on one' or team situations, we are interdependent; we are player coaches; coachable and coaching - to make a difference.

There are **personal coaches** who lead the process of performer development or have specialist input to that process. There are **team coaches** who recruit, develop and support players to deliver as an effective team. There are **coaches' coaches** who build and manage coach development frameworks. There are **chief coaches** who design and lead a coaching culture to support pursuit of excellence.

Although different in function, there is a symbiosis in their fit within an organisation. Each pursues in practice a simple delivery model.



C1 Lead Coach (may be personal coach; team coach; coachable coach; chief coach)

P Performer(s) – Focus of coach

SPC Support people etc. (recruited by C1 to meet changing performer needs)

The difference in function is reflected in difference in range of competencies. Just as performers pursue personal development plans, so also with coaches – from objectives/ goals/ target through monitoring, review, learning more effectively and faster - to improve in coaching performance.

A growing number of organisations, in order to build and support all aspects of the coaching culture, have established coaching colleges or Academies. Some interact with other coaching colleges or Academies.

In the recently documented process of putting the concept of a coaching culture in place, Abbey National concluded that *'labour turnover decreased by 8% in Telesales; 2% across the company as a whole. Sales performance increased over 9 times the actual 'cost per person' of the programme - giving an average return of £812 per person'*.

The now legendary BT *'...for a better life...'* campaign measured perceived attitude and behaviour change through coaching at an improvement of 13% over 18 months in the CARE scores.

Without doubt, coaching makes a winning difference, but it requires strong leadership commitment; collective ownership throughout the organisation; and persistent endeavour to make it happen. In achieving the situation where an organisation can truly consider itself a 'coaching culture, the value is not restricted to affording a new style dimension to leadership and management. It also puts in place a powerfully creative and adaptable vehicle for all future change, development and persistent pursuit of better performance.

(Frank Dick is available for speaking engagements and for consultancy. Please email contact@nation.uk.com for more information)