

COACHING CHURCH LEADERS

An Introduction to Coaching



by
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Coaching Church Leaders: An Introduction to Coaching

Who this booklet is for?

You will find this booklet useful if you are in a leadership position in a church and you want to know more about coaching because you are interested in being coached and would like to know more about the subject.

This booklet has been arranged in the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. What is coaching?
3. How does coaching differ from other forms of support?
4. What does coaching cover?
5. What are the benefits of coaching?
6. How long does coaching take?
7. What is a coaching contract?
8. What is the coach's role during the coaching sessions?
9. Some coaching models and processes
10. What are the key attributes and skills of a coach?
11. How do I select an external coach?
12. Where can I get further information?

1. Introduction

An increasing number of ministers, in all Christian denominations, are benefitting from work-based coaching. Its popularity is due to one or more of the following:

- (a) Recognising that many able leaders, in all walks of life, who wish to increase their effectiveness in these fast changing times get themselves a coach.
- (b) The desire of many ministers to improve their personal, team working and leadership skills.
- (c) An opportunity to talk things over with someone who does not have an axe to grind and to use this independent person as a sounding board for bouncing ideas.

- (d) The declining number of paid ministers; the advantages of building a team and the increasing reliance on volunteer help.

At present anyone can call themselves a coach or a mentor or a work consultant. The names are often used interchangeably - part of the reason for this is that an effective mentor or work consultant uses a coach approach and coaching skills.

This booklet will give you an idea of what coaching is and what to look for if you want to select an external coach.

As you read this booklet please consider situations where you could adopt more of a coach approach when working with colleagues. Why? Because I think you will get more out of people by using a coaching style (supportive/asking questions) than the more traditional (directive/telling them what to do) approach.

2. What is coaching?

Let's start off with two of many definitions of coaching and look at some of the key words used.

"Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them"
Timothy Gallwey, Author 'The Inner Game of Work'

You will notice that:

- (a) The emphasis is on the other person (the client or the 'coachee'); and on their performance and potential. If you feel uncomfortable with the word 'performance' change it to 'effectiveness'.
- (b) Coachees often significantly undervalue their own potential and may also be blissfully unaware of their top two-to-four unique talents and strengths.
- (c) The focus is on learning, not teaching. This requires the coach to be fluent in a wide range of learning and thinking preferences.

"Coaching is an ongoing partnership that will help you produce fulfilling results in your vocation and personal life. Through the process of coaching you will deepen your performance and enhance the quality of your life."

Richard Fox, Partner The Learning Corporation LLP

I have used the word 'partnership' as there are two people involved each with different roles. The coachee is primarily responsible for the content of the conversations and for taking any action. The coach is responsible for creating the optimum environment for thinking and learning and for using relevant processes.

As coaching conversations are about specific work related issues, the reference in the above quotation to 'quality of life' may seem a bit strange. However, when a coachee enjoys an improvement in their work situation this tends to have a positive knock-on effect on the rest of the coachee's life. An example that springs readily to my mind is resolving a difficult relationship with a deacon or church warden.

3. How does coaching differ from other forms of support?

This section outlines the main difference between coaching and counselling and therapy. Let me try and illustrate this with an actual example. About 12 years ago a business associate contacted me. She said she had a friend who wanted to set up her own business and was looking for a coach and asked if I could meet her. I had an introductory session with this person and fairly early on in the meeting she said she was in the process of going through a difficult divorce, at which point she became very upset. We both agreed that her priority was to get over the trauma of her divorce. I suggested she worked with a qualified counsellor or therapist, then when she was ready to move on we could, if she wished, meet again to be coached on her new business venture.

Coaching functions on the basis that the coachee's current situation is OK and that the coachee is resourceful and able to engage with a reflective process and move forward.

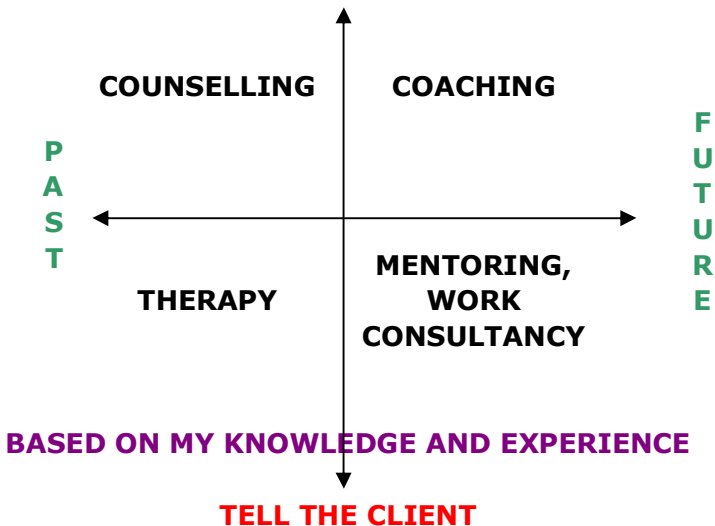
Even if the coach is a trained counsellor or therapist, topics like dealing with trauma, addictions to chemical substances, being abused as a child are outside the scope of coaching. If these surface during a coaching session then the coach should signpost the coachee to a qualified therapist or counsellor. In practice this rarely happens mainly because the potential client knows the type of person they should be talking to.

The distinctions between coaching, mentoring and work consultancy are less pronounced and the terms across the UK are often used interchangeably.

Generally speaking, a mentor is chosen because they have more experience in the area in which the mentee wishes to develop. For example, a newly appointed Dean of a cathedral might want to pick the brains of an experienced Dean in another cathedral and this could become a mentoring relationship. The new Dean might also engage a coach to work on specific areas e.g. lack of self confidence; networking skills.

ASK THE CLIENT QUESTIONS

BUILDING ON CLIENT'S KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE



So with mentoring prior experience of the issue under discussion is more important than with coaching. The mentor does not have to be older than the mentee. For example, when I have problems with my laptop or with my BlackBerry or iPod I turn to a 27 year old for support – no 8 year olds being readily available!

The accompanying chart is an attempt to illustrate where the use of counselling, therapy, coaching, mentoring and work consultancy is the most appropriate form of support.

The most productive relationships come where the coach builds on the client's knowledge and experience. 'If you give a man a fish you feed him for a day. If you help him learn how to fish he will feed himself for life'.

4. What does coaching cover?

To give you an idea of the range of topics covered in coaching conversations, here are some of the topics raised by my coachees in the last six months. How to:

- Use time more effectively.
- Delegate.
- Create a team.
- Prepare a vision and plan.
- Agree key values.
- Unearth my talents and strengths.
- Handle a difficult situation.
- Improve my presentation skills.
- Become more self confident or resilient.
- Prepare for a new position/parish.
- Chair meetings more effectively.
- Get the best out of people/volunteers.
- Set up working groups within existing church structures.
- Find a personal assistant.
- Improve work-life balance.
- Understand my own identity.

5. What are the benefits of coaching?

The benefits to the coachee:

- Chance to learn and grow in specific area(s) and in a safe, confidential environment.
- Gain different perspectives on an issue/opportunity.
- Opportunity to think aloud.
- Support in thinking through problems/opportunities.
- Chance to identify and unlock potential.
- Increase level of personal responsibility/ownership.
- Readiness to take on more responsibility.
- Greater clarity regarding a task or role.
- Increase self-awareness.
- 'Just in time' support on a topic coachee wants to develop.
- Increased certainty/reduced doubt.
- Be stretched and readily agree to goals that are higher than coachee would have set her/himself.
- The 'real' problem has been unearthed.
- Knowledge transfer from the coach.

Benefits to the coach:

- Satisfaction of seeing someone else develop as a team player and leader.
- Learn from the coachee's different perspectives.
- Develop own skills as a leader (see above and also section 6).
- Can lead to a recognised coaching qualification.
- The following benefits apply when the person is using a coaching style with his/her own team or congregation:
 - Alignment of roles and goals.
 - Increased delegation.
 - Increased retention of people.
 - Opportunity to get feedback as a leader.

Benefits to the team/parish

- Increased effectiveness of people.
- More open culture.
- Easier to recruit people as things seem better organised.
- More people able to deal with queries.

A further benefit of coaching is that it can be done 'any time, any place, anywhere'. Coaching might occur in a 4 minute conversation in a coffee break, or whilst walking outside for 20 minutes, or during a longer pre-planned meeting, or in a phone conversation.

6. How long does coaching take?

Coaching is usually 1 to 1 and face to face. It is also possible to coach individuals successfully over the phone. For example, in September and October 2010 I coached executives who are based in Chile, China, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, India, Holland (3 people) and Italy. With 3 of these 8 people we used Skype and webcams so were able to see each other as well as have cost-free phone calls.

The timing and frequency of coaching sessions varies considerably depending on the needs of the coachee. Those who have a single performance issue might attend 1-4 one hour sessions over a period of 2-3 months. Others might like to meet 2-4 times a year. The majority of my coaching clients have three or four areas that they want to work on and opt for up to 6 sessions each of 1 to 1.5 hours, meeting every 4-6 weeks. There is a clear understanding on both sides that we will stop or change the programme if the coachee has achieved what they came for, or if the personal chemistry is not right. So, for example, one very able person came to me to be coached on changing her career. She did an enormous amount of research between our sessions and after session 3 we both had a clear plan of her next steps and we ended the coaching programme.

7. What is a coaching contract?

When I am engaged by a church to coach one or more of their people I like to meet the potential coachee together with his/her sponsor so that the three of us can reach a shared understanding of (a) what we mean by 'coaching'; (b) the areas the coachee wants to work on; (c) the confidential nature of the conversations between the coachee and me; and (d) the format of any review meeting between the sponsor and the coachee at the end of the programme.

The sponsor might be a senior minister who has a form of oversight of the coachee or the sponsor might be the regional director for ministerial training.

During the first 1 to 1 coaching session we carry out some 'contracting'. We agree how we want to work together and we reaffirm the confidential nature of our discussions. We then clarify where we want to meet and the 2-4 areas that the coachee wants to work on. It is helpful if these topics are as discrete/separate from each other as possible. We then set clear goals and well-formed outcomes for each topic. During sessions 2-5 inclusive we make progress on each of the goals. One of the maxims coaches use is "The problem presented is not the problem". So it is not unusual to rethink a goal.

During the final session the coachee is asked to summarise the learnings gained from the programme and their plan to sustain and enhance the new behaviours.

8. What is the coach's role during the coaching sessions?

Before each coaching conversation takes place the coach needs to create an optimum environment for thinking and learning. One coaching school refers to 'Clearing the Space'. This involves me tidying up the room, clearing away distracting papers, diverting incoming phone calls etc. Equally important I clear my head so that I can become totally present with the coachee.

When the coachee arrives time should be set aside to (re)build rapport, put the coachee at ease, check that s/he is OK to start the coaching conversation and is unlikely to be interrupted.

So my role as a coach is to create the right environment for the coachee, to ask questions and ensure we have conversations of value. By providing coachees time and space to think through issues I'm also giving them a greater opportunity to learn and grow and to find solutions that will work for them. A rookie (novice) coach needs to avoid trying to fix the coachee's problems. It is helpful to remember that 'The coachee has access to all the resources needed

to deal with this particular issue'. Strange as it may sound, most of these resources are already present within the coachee, just waiting to be teased out.

9. Some coaching models and processes

G	Big G stands for 'What is your GOAL for the chosen topic?'
g	Little g stands for 'What would you like to achieve (your goal) by the end of this particular coaching session?'
R	Big R stands for 'What's your current position on this?' i.e. the current REALITY .
r	Little r stands for 'Is your goal realistic ?'
O	Big O stands for the coachee's OPTIONS in moving from R to G. What are the different ways you might achieve your goal?'
o	Little o is for 'What obstacles might get in the way?'
W	Big W represents WHAT are your first steps/actions?'
w	Little w checks the coachee's level of motivation to actually take the actions. Put bluntly ' Will you do it?'
E	Big E stands for 'What other things will improve in your life (positive EFFECTS) when you achieve your goal?'
e	Little e stands for 'What evidence will you have that you have achieved your goal?'
R	Big R ' REFLECTING on our conversation(s) what have you learned about yourself?'
r	Little r stands for 'How will you reward yourself/celebrate success?'

Coaches are trained in how to use one or more models/processes. A model/process is useful in that it provides a structure and can help ensure that the coaching conversation has real value. It also helps ensure that no essential steps are omitted. For example, I have a natural preference to spend time on helping the coachee create compelling goals and generate choices. I'm less inclined to

focus on detailed actions and timetables because, being a well organised activist, this comes as second nature to me. So a model or process helps both the coach and coachee manage their preferred styles and ensures that all key aspects are covered.

Coaches need to guard against the model becoming a straitjacket and/or trying to complete the whole process during a single coaching conversation.

The most famous coaching model, which was developed by Sir John Whitmore, is the GROW model. I have added two further steps to create GROWER.

The GROWER model, like other coaching models, comprises a series of questions under each of the letters G R O W E and R. There are countless questions the coach could ask under each letter. For brevity's sake some key questions are shown.

10. What are the key attributes and skills of a coach?

Here are some key attributes and skills of a coach and which any leader might also wish to enhance:

- (a) The ability to build rapport, trust and credibility.
In coaching it is credibility as a coach, not as a subject matter expert, that is important.
- (b) The ability to be totally present and connected with the coachee throughout the whole session.
- (c) Listening skills.
On our coach training courses we use the term 'listening beyond the words'. By this we mean:
 - i. Noticing the varying pitch and tone in the coachee's voice, the energy (or lack of it) behind certain statements.
 - ii. Reading body language including eye movements, facial colouring, breathing, symmetrical or asymmetrical hand movements.

- iii. Language preferences, e.g. Is the coachee using visual imagery to think through the topic? If so, I match the coachee's language preference to get onto the same wavelength as the coachee. Does the coachee have a preference for thinking conceptually or are they more inclined to think in logical, step by steps? Again, initially I will match this and then complement the coachee's strong preferences by covering points they might otherwise overlook.
- iv. It helps to know what level ('Logical Level of Experience'- Robert Dilts) the coachee is operating from. For example, is the coachee saying that they cannot do something because:
 - It conflicts with their sense of who they are (Identity) or
 - They do not believe it is possible (Beliefs), or
 - They haven't the skills to do it (Capabilities) or
 - There is no budget (Environmental)?
- v. 'Hold the space'. Be comfortable with silence. You have asked the coachee a question. It may be about a topic they have struggled with for years or a question they have never asked themselves. Give the coachee the time and space to process the question. Keep out of the way. After all, the word 'listen' is an anagram of 'silent'.
- vi. Being able to keep the coachee on track, to summarise and reflect back, to help the coachee focus on the nub of the issue e.g. to ask 'In one word, what is the issue?'

(d) Being able to ask a range of appropriate questions. Some of the traps a novice coach is likely to fall into are:

- i. Asking too many closed questions. A closed question is one that results in an either/or answer such as 'Will you start tomorrow?' So when going through each step in the G R O W E R sequence it is useful to start by using open questions in order to generate a discussion and to use closed questions when summarising or concluding each step.
- ii. Thinking of the next question whilst the coachee is talking instead of being totally present with the coachee. The

coach should relax. The coachee's comments provide the next question.

- iii. Asking leading questions which steer the coachee towards the coach's line of thinking. Instead practice using 'clean language' (David Grove) learning to work with any metaphor the coachee might use¹.
- iv. Asking a multiple question, i.e. 2-3 questions wrapped into one long sentence. Practice asking a single question in a sentence of less than 10 words.
- v. Overusing a question beginning with the word 'why' e.g. 'Why did you do that?' The coachee could feel that the coach is being judgemental. Rudyard Kipling had five other marching men so vary the questions by starting with what, how, when, who, where.....?.

(e) Manage your own body language as well as your words. Your raised eyebrow speaks volumes!

(f) Manage your own personal preferences. The coach should be aware of their personal preferences regarding learning styles¹ (Honey and Mumford); multiple learning intelligences² (Howard Gardner), or at least representational systems³ (Robert Dilts and others); basic drivers/motivations⁴ (David McLelland); communication styles⁵ (DiSC); team role preferences⁶ (Meredith Belbin); managing change (Richard Fox and others).

On our training courses for coaches and mentors we introduce a very useful diagnostic which was designed specifically for coaches. It is called a 'Personal Coaching Styles Inventory' and is sold by Corporate Coach U. It highlights the user's strong and weak coaching style preferences over four categories: Director, Mediator, Presenter, and Strategist/Analyst.

¹ www.peterhoney.com

² www.howardgardner.com

³ www.robertdilts.com - encyclopedia – representational systems

⁴ www.wikipedia.org – David McClelland – achievement, power and affiliation

⁵ www.thediscpersonalitytest.com

⁶ www.belbin.com

- (g) Have a light touch. If one is not careful, some coaching discussions can become a bit too serious and heavy and you hear a lot of 'I should', 'I must' type statements. Life is complicated for some folk. Attempt to keep a light touch on the tiller. More likely than not the coachee will see the funny side of the situation and you both end up laughing. 'A smile is a curved line that puts things straight'.
- (h) Tease out the learning. Coaches sometimes talk about two simultaneous journeys, the 'outer journey' and the 'inner journey'. An example of the outer journey is a coachee who becomes more effective at delegating. However, the coach will also be keen to tease out what else the coachee has learned during this outer journey. For example, the coachee may say something along the following lines:
- "I realise that in taking on more and more routine administration I was spending much less time on what called me into ministry in the first place. No wonder my morale was so low. I have been a softie. I did not delegate because I did not want to upset anyone. I let people take advantage of me. I realise that a servant leader is not a doormat. That's the 'ah ha' I have had".
- (i) Avoid dependency. The purpose of a coaching relationship is to help the coachee work through some specific goals and to tease out the learnings of their inner journey. It is also about supporting the coachee in building up greater personal responsibility and effectiveness.

During a coaching programme a strong friendship can emerge. However, the final session is an occasion for the coachee to summarise what they have got out of the programme and, if relevant, the support system they will use in future.

Coaches should avoid persuading the coachee to book up for a further 6-10 sessions, then holding them to attend the whole programme. When the work is done, end the programme. Church ministers have only come back to me for a second programme as a result of a significant change in their role.

11. How do you select a coach?

Probably the most effective way to find a coach is by personal recommendation, from either a minister who has had a good experience of coaching or by speaking to your church's director of ministerial education and training.

An alternative and less reliable route is to look at lists of coaches on websites such as:

International Coach Federation UK, www.coachfederation.org.uk
Association for Coaching, www.associationforcoaching.com

It is important to meet, or at least phone, the potential coach(es) to find out more about them e.g. years as a coach, coach qualifications, experience of working with the churches, their style of coaching. Then ask about the length, frequency and format of typical coaching sessions, the characteristics of an excellent coaching relationship, their fee and the names and phone numbers of people who could provide references.

After this conversation ask yourself 'How confident am I that we can build rapport with this person? Will this coach be sufficiently challenging? Will they be able to understand my issues/opportunities?'

12. Where can I get further information?

For an introductory book on coaching I suggest '*Coaching for Performance*' by John Whitmore, published by Nicholas Brealey.

For information about coaching generally have a look at: www.coachfederation.com and for useful articles and models, one of our own websites: www.coachingknowhow.com.

To read the core competencies of coaching please refer to <http://www.coachfederation.com/icfcredentials>

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About the author

Richard Fox is a partner in The Learning Corporation LLP, a credentialed coach with the International Coach Federation, a member of the Association for Coaching, a Master NLP practitioner, and an associate of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Richard is an experienced coach, facilitator and mentor with specialist skills in leadership, team working, developing people in line with vision; and in supporting individuals and teams as they create 'Purposeful Lives' and 'Purposeful Organisations'.

His work with the churches over the last 10 years has included leadership and management development, personal leadership, parish consultancy, one-to-one and team coaching. In the last 12 months he has worked with the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Church of Scotland and several dioceses in the Church of England.

Apart from the enjoyment gained in his work, Richard has a passion for trekking, choral singing, travel, sport, reading and socialising. He is a member of St. Saviour's Church, Guildford. He serves on MODEM's Leadership Committee. He is currently writing a book '*How to Befriend Time, Reclaim Your Life and Live More Purposefully.*'

Please visit www.churchleadership.org.uk
www.purposefullives.com www.coachingknowhow.com and
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About MODEM

MODEM is a national ecumenical Christian network, which encourages developments in the areas of leadership, management and ministry. It is an organisation in association with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). Membership is open to individuals and organisations. Members receive journals covering the latest news, views and reviews, as well as developments in the spirituality at work movement.

MODEM's fourth book, *How to Become a Creative Church Leader* was published in 2008. MODEM's next book, *101 Ideas to Transform the Local Church*, is due for publication in early 2012. MODEM also supports Grove Books' Leadership Series. For further information, visit www.modem-uk.org.