

Coaching-style leadership

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Abstract

In this paper, I would like to present the colourful uses of coaching, highlighting the practical aspects of its working mechanisms and utilization. I mainly focus on the Coaching-style leadership, which has many advantages within an organization on day to day basis. I would like to emphasize that coaching easily can be the most effective tool for learning, and utilization of many things at work, like leading others. In my article I paralelly discuss theories and possibilities of application, highlighting the relevance and uniqueness of Coaching-style leadership. I would like to increase efficiency of my paper through examples as well.

Keywords: Coaching, Leadership, Coaching-style leadership, Methodology, Competences, Behaviours

JEL CODE: I12, M12, M53, O15

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of coaching - even if it is rather slow in Hungary - is getting more and more intense in our country. There is no doubt about the positive interpretation of the trend, in spite of the fact, that there are countries which have much more experiences and traditions in this field, like the United States of America, or Western European countries. Justification, practical applicability, and usefulness of coaching is indisputable, and it becomes more clear, and noticeable when compared to other methods:

1. táblázat: Utilization efficiency of different methodologies

	Immediate knowledge change	Transfer to work
Presentation	10 - 20 %	5 -10 %
Demonstration	35 %	5 -10 %
Practice	70 %	5 -10 %
Practice with feedback	80 %	5 -10 %
Coaching after training	90 %	90 %

Forrás: <http://www.gips.org/assets/files/Learning/ProfessionalDevelopment/PDInformation/Joyce%20&%20Showers.pdf>

Development of coaching can be manifested in many ways, like implementation of coaching also can be very diverse. From leadership point of view, the alpha of the symbiosis we are talking (writing) about can be the Coaching-style leadership. Being a leader as a coach is not a new interpretation. Though previous research works related to this topic has been called an "instructor", "trainer" or "developer", a leader who used coaching methods as well within the management repertoire. Since Evered and Selman for the first time (since 1989) considered coaching as a managerial "core" competency, many managers "discovered" coaching. The HR practice that emerged under this effect began to leak to line leaders, and workers have become increasingly committed to their own development. Talent development has increasingly required from managers a day-to-day coaching-style leadership to become a developer of their subordinates this way. At that time, lack of resources could not provide effective support for managers in their coaching activity.

In the past, coaching was simply referred to the healing power of inferior power. However, its perception has been well-placed, so the former "lack of orientation" approach has been replaced by a development orientation, where coaching as a driving method is now considered a day-to-day direct driving practice where the subordinate can recognize its capabilities and possibilities for higher performance. Actually, it is a learning process that is designed, to strengthen commitment, guidance, and help as a "learner". A partnership between the coach and his client, where the emphasis is on promoting the learning process mentioned above. While the coach comes from "outside", the coaching service is provided to an organization's employee, the coaching-style leader helps behavioural change of subordinate(s), which actually means learning the development.

The most common goals of coaching-style leadership include increasing the workplace's performance through learning, which is, however, a much more complicated, multi-dimensional development. For example, by deeper employee self-knowledge through intensive feedback can manifest other kind of social benefits of the coachee (client, in this case the worker itself), and can improve general behavior of the employee.

In summary, the term "coaching-style leader" describes those managers who use coaching tools on a daily basis regarding their employees.

Some people believe that the number of coaching-style leaders is small, as many of leaders do not possess the appropriate coach qualification and skills, moreover there is lack of time, lack of commitment, no remuneration system that is designed for this kind of system, or not considered as an important leadership role.

At the same time, qualified, competent leaders who consider themselves coaching-style leaders can become effective job coaches.

Effective coaching-style leaders have a number of common features, such as helping attitudes, less management needs, empathy, openness to personal learning, or feedback (Hunt & Weintraub, 2002). Coaching-style leadership can be fueled by these attributes. Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) identified three fundamentally necessary categories: commitment to their own leadership roles, commitment to learning and learning processes, and commitment to "learners".

First of all, these leaders are strongly convinced that their coaches are supposed to support their development and that they are expected to do so. There is a difference between coaching - which is usually about people - and the "classical" driving method that tells workers what they need to do (Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002). Leaders generally have instructions, guidance, and evaluation, while coaching-style leadership is about delegation, assistance, development, support, and obstructions. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that, in the majority of cases, both approaches are needed. In some cases, the leader should be able to switch between the above styles, because there can be situations where coaching-style leadership is inappropriate in practice (eg. lack of time, decision-making competence, etc.).

By virtue of their abilities, exemplary leaders become effective coaches through their own competences, process attitudes, and belief in their acquired knowledge. They have no doubt about their efficiency, they can build trust, build relationships, and work with their employees to strive for harmony, as they really take the support of their colleagues seriously. Learning and the learning process are important, necessary, never ending, and are considered to be all-important. Learning is most effective when it has feedback, and comes back-to-work, coupled with the engagement of learners (coachees) towards their own development. The chance of success is increased if a person with a coaching view sees the coachee's ability and commitment to a mutual learning-based process, feels the desire of the learner to acquire newer and newer information that adds to the need of answer for "Why?" questions.

Since coaching became an informal learning strategy used by leaders, involvement in coaching-type dialogs was also important. Mumford showed in 1993 that effective leadership activities should support learning, the new task (and empowerment for that), the challenge, the problem solving within the group, and have to make difference between various performance dimensions and unsuccessful work.

Basic conditions for coaching-style leadership include high levels of active listening, observation and analytical skills, adequate interview and interviewing skills. In doing so, a typical behavior is the delivery and reception of performance feedback, the communication of clear goals in the right form, and the provision of a supportive environment for coaching (Mobley, 1999).

The competences required for coaching-style leadership and the ability to transfer them into practice, the definition of boundary conditions has been put at the center of research. Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) identified thirteen coach competencies that have an incentive for subordinates, including:

Behaviours supporting delegation:

- adequate questioning to encourage the subordinates to think,
- appearance as a resource - breakdown of barriers,
- the "ownership" of employees,
- restraint - not giving answers.

Behaviours supporting motivation:

- giving feedback (towards employees);
- receiving feedbacks from employees,
- together developed solutions - "talk over",
- creating and supporting a learning environment,
- defining and communicating expectations,
- promoting change of perspectives,
- widening the employees' horizons, highlighting different viewpoints,
- use analogies, scenarios, and examples,
- supporting others to promote learning.

Behavior-Taxonomy of Beattie (2002):

- thinking - reflective or prospective thinking,
- information - knowledge sharing,
- delegation - delegation, trust,
- evaluation - feedback and consideration, definition of development needs,
- counseling - instructions, guidelines, suggestions, coaching (advice from the author)
- professionalism - role model, standardization, planning and preparation,

- attention - support, commitment, availability, reassurance, involvement, and empathy
- developing others,
- motivating workers to increase their flexibility.

Subsequent comparative studies (Hamlin, Ellinger & Beattie, 2006) have shown that there is a strong congruence between the above coaching-style leadership competencies, while Noer, Leupold and Valle (2007) have suggested to accept coaching-style leadership as a dynamic interaction, that means triumvirate of evaluation, challenge, and support.

The effectiveness of coaching-style leadership can be significantly influenced by environmental factors. Beattie's (2006) parallel research at two organizations revealed that the political, economic, social environment and technological trends have an impact on the style of leadership and learning needs. Taking organizational effects, the past, the mission, and the triangle of strategy-structure culture have decisive importance. "Learning organizations" can play major role in ensuring their leaders to lead their team in coaching-style. The human resource strategy is also a critical point, namely to what extent it supports the leaders' ambitions in this regard.

Organizations have different personnel development concepts and infrastructural capabilities that determine their leaders' way of thinking, regarding role-, commitment-, and remuneration- consciousness. Nevertheless, we must mention the paradox that arises from the coexistence of leaders' coach and evaluation role.

This duality may put the employees in a way that is opposed to openness, which is why they do not fully reveal their thoughts, problems, and mistakes. Referring to Ellinger's (1997) research, the leader should be able to flexibly switch between the executive coaching skills and the slightly harder styles of managerial roles, the implementation of which requires an exceptionally high degree of emotional maturity.

The lack of motivation for coaching, coaching makes it more difficult, but rather makes it impossible for a leader to act as a coaching-style leader. The coaching relationship between the manager and his subordinate must be based on mutual trust and openness. If that is not the case, this is the first and most important thing to do. The leader must first trust himself, be able to act as a coach, create a coaching atmosphere, and be so committed to motivating his subordinate to learning.

Also from the subordinate side, we can outline the behavioral features that help increase the efficiency of the aforementioned collaboration.

These are as follows:

- looking at your own actions from an objective (less subjective) point of view,
- curiosity about consequences of their own and others' actions,
- accepting that others may be more informed in certain areas,
- ability to boldly share your various comments with your leader,
- willingness and ability to receive feedback as well,
- motivation for development and learning - for the whole coaching process.

The latter one characterizes a central question: "Does the leader have to apply coaching as a temporary intervention, or does he continually make it part of the daily routine management?"

The question is, in my opinion, very good, and the answer generates some degree of differentiation with regard to the applicable methodology. I think both of them have their own place and role. The former one is more like a "classical" coaching approach, while the latter one is a much more complicated approach and practice requiring a more complex approach to other techniques, and other coach or leadership roles, behavior repertoires, and a list of leadership competencies, to report.

Leaders are in an exceptional position to communicate on a daily basis with their employees, so they can have almost permanent influence on their work-related learning processes. Consequently, coaching-style leadership can become an informal activity that is fueled by leadership-subordinate dialogue. In practice, this often exacerbates conversations about performance or development opportunities. By outlining the path of development, regardless of the originator, almost at the same time, the leader must define the ways in which he/she should be able to achieve the goal. In most cases, for example, this may mean that a leader, as a result of a dialogue, commits himself to a questioning technique that helps him to deepen his subordinate in thinking about himself.

But even if the leader gives feedback to a colleague or a role-play, he or she may become involved. In practice, a coaching-led leader can choose from a number of behavioral patterns found in empirical research, one or more of them, or even "overwhelming" leadership repertoires.

Coaching-style leadership has tried to involve different people in parallel. According to Grant (2006), it is familiar with Erikson's therapy, where therapists use medical diagnostic methods, try to stimulate their clients' attention to simple problems by asking simple questions. Based on this, coaching-style leadership at the workplace should be characterized by the following points:

- problems often come from a scarce behavior repertoire,
- we have to focus on finding solutions,
- the awareness that the client's life is known deeply by himself than by his coach,
- the coach can learn himself,
- the coach can help his client to identify his resources,
- action-oriented, concrete goal-setting,
- a relatively rapid, future-oriented behavioral change,
- a coach who enhance customer engagement,
- a coach who motivate his client towards new thinking directions.

It should be emphasized that the principles of self-directed learning help approach-centered problem solving.

Let's take an example of self-directed learning help approach-centered problem solving. Let's look at this one example.

Alice, is one of the subordinate of Alexander. Alexander is the senior IT manager. Alice was given a task from the CEO, to make a presentation that shows a strategy for developing a new computer system. Alice asked Sandor to help her and review her presentation as she thought her boss had a great experience in this field. They sat and reviewed the material. Sándor soon realized that Alice's presentation was far from reality, so in the next two weeks, the material was being discussed three times. In connection with the costs, Alexander intensively began to ask Alice, pointing to comments, from the point of view of the expected reactions of future audiences, as Alice had so far described. Alexander asked most of the costs for Alice because he knew that his colleague had the biggest mistakes in this area. This was the most brilliant and hardest part for both of them. Finally, Alice returned to the next meeting with budget alternatives, this time from several perspectives, much more realistically considering her plans. Alexander has proved (for himself too!) That he can motivate Alice, be able to ask questions that stimulate her thinking and give her a "margin" to mobilize the potential of his colleague.

In summary, Sándor applied appropriate questioning techniques to Alice's ability to come up with the right solution, as she was given the task of delivering the presentation.

On the other hand, coaching is about behavioral change, but it is not a mechanical, stimulus-responsive point of view, but rather a personality-centered approach. Classical behavior-based technology often involves modeling, feedback, formatting, successive small steps, self-management, reward, reinforcement, and practicing new behaviors. The behavior-based approach of coaching begins with clarifying what is actually what the client expects and then helps him deliver it to the desired state (Peterson, 2006).

The following example highlights the practical applicability of a behavioral approach to coaching-style leadership.

Peter is a production manager at a marine engine manufacturing company. Thomas, who is technically highly trained, but his social behavior leaves something to be desired, often makes immature, rough comments. Peter has repeatedly warned Thomas about such deficiencies, who, however, waited for Peter to stand by him. Peter told him not to count on this until he developed these abilities. Peter decided to fill out a questionnaire with Thomas's internal and external clients so that Thomas could better understand what skills he should develop. Peter invited Thomas to have a lunch together, and then tried to clarify the results of a survey at a three-hour meeting. Thomas did not accept the personal traits of the survey results. This was the beginning of a one-year process, outlining the probable consequences of unchanging, then the questions came, and a significant, positive change occurred in Thomas's behavior. Thomas realized that in vain the high level of technical knowledge, his job can not be successfully filled with heavily incomplete social competencies. He accepted the development plan for himself, and committed to walke along the "road."

In this case, feedback from third parties helped Thomas change its behavior by recognizing that if he was willing to change his behavior, he would be able to interact with his clients more professionally.

After the two approaches discussed above, we can not miss one of the most popular psychological trends of today, the cognitive approach.

The basis of this is cognitive therapy, which emphasizes that the person's psychological state depends to a great extent on his cognitions and thoughts. (Auerbach, 2006)

Consequently, cognitive therapists often help their clients explore the mistakes of their thinking by exchanging them with more accurate, more useful cognitions. They motivate for a more realistic worldview. Cognitive coaching helps you in reviewing the mindset and behaviors of your customers, in mapping the deep-seated patterns that determine behavior. By breaking down the cognitive and emotional barriers, the coachee's self-knowledge becomes more realistic, more accurate. His way of thinking develops, while his internal stability and self-acceptance increases, so the repertoire of his behaviors is expanded.

Let's take an example for that too.

Emil is a mid-level leader at R & D. His new subordinate, Anna is out of the team's culture with her behavior. At her previous job she worked hard and her bosses evaluated her efforts. There are significant organizational differences between the two jobs.

Emil had already seen the time to talk about it all at the beginning, so he openly told Anna what he thought. They sat down and honestly told each other what they think and feel. Emil said that as leader he can observe Anna's behavior. He also informed his colleague that as a leader, his duties include eliminating external and internal obstacles that hinder his staff. They met many times and talked about events, so Anna was able to tell him about her thoughts and emotions. They discussed different approaches of current problems. This coaching-style leadership allowed Anna to deepen her self-awareness, reveal the relationship between her mental models and her behavior. She could test new behaviors and behavioural mechanisms - in the new cultural environment - that she was constantly supported by his coaching-style leader.

Coaching-style leadership can be approached from several point of views (streams), as we could see in the previous sections. This will increase the chances of effective leadership-style coaching by leaders who are trained in coaching-style leadership to become effective coaches for their subordinates. They can commit themselves to one or the other - sympathetic point of view, closer to their personality, but of course the above-mentioned streams can also be combined.

Despite the fact that coaching-style leadership can bring many positive individual and organizational results, it has its own application frameworks for which a more detailed exploration is still to be expected.

At the same time, almost every leader has the opportunity to become an effective coach. Most managers, however, have no coaching, psychological or therapeutic background, so it is suggested to them that at least one of these areas, in theory, where practical application sometimes is difficult, but exciting and joyful.

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