

PROBLEM SOLVING COACHING

What is a coach?

- **Coach(verb):** to give instruction or advice; instruct
- **Coach(noun):** a person who trains an athlete or team
- **Teach(verb):** to impart knowledge or skill; give instruction
- **Instruct(verb):** to furnish with knowledge, especially by a systematic method; teach; train; educate
- **Mentor(noun):** a wise and trusted counselor or teacher; an influential senior sponsor or supporter

Coaching

“Coaches help others to learn, compete, and succeed. Effective coaching is good teaching.”

–BeLikeCoach

<http://belikecoach.com/>

A Special Challenge for Leader

- Leaders traditionally are expected to know, tell, not ask questions.
- The typical relationship:
 - Supervisor knows the answer (or is expected to know)
 - Subordinate understands the command
- Moving from the knower to an equivalent partner to help requires the following:
 - An attitude of respect for the role and capability of the coachee.
 - Recognizing that you, the leader, need the thinking of the coachee.
 - A level of empathy, understanding, and care for the coachee.
 - A curiosity of how the coachee is thinking about the situation.

Knowers versus Learners

- We have all been trained to be knowers.
- We go to the knower mode of communications automatically.
- Coaches are in the knower mode limit:
 - The thinking of the coachee
 - A more complete understanding of the problem
 - The development of the coachee
- We need to practice asking questions to learn and grow learning.

Inquiry with a helpful purpose

- **Humble Inquiry** is based on what the coach hears and not on what he or she is thinking.
- If the coach is thinking it is most likely about.
 - What he or she believes the real problem is
 - Their idea for how to solve the problem
 - What questions he or she can ask to lead the problem owner to cause or solution the coach has in mind.
- This kind of coaching seldom helps the problem owner because it takes over the problem solving responsibility.

Characteristics of Humble Inquiry Mindset

- Characteristics:
 - Maximize curiosity in the other person
 - Minimize biases and assumptions
 - Acknowledges problem owner knows more about the problem situation
 - Sincere in your interest
 - Be openly curious and learn
 - Strives for equability in the relationship regardless of positions
 - Focused on the coachee
 - Not focused on his/her own thinking
- Intent is to learn and **not** to demonstrate own knowledge or expertise

Examples of Questions and Request

- Questions and Request
 - “So... what is happening?”
 - “What is the target condition?”
 - “What is the actual condition?”
 - “What obstacles are you encountering?”
 - “Which one are you addressing now?”
 - “What concerns you most?”
 - “What are your next steps?”
 - “What would happen if...?” (Be careful not to insert your thinking question)
 - “What do you know about what’s causing this?”
 - “What are your ideas to address the cause and eliminate the problem?”
 - “Tell me how you know you are going to do that?”
 - “How will you know your solution is working?”
 - “Please, go-on...”
 - “Give me an example...”
- Tips:
 - Try to stick with “What” first over “Why” or “How”
 - Move to “How” questions once the coachee has a countermeasure/solution
 - Avoid “Have”
 - Affirm what you hear.

Inquiry with a Humble Purpose

How:

- 1) Listening to what the problem owner is describing and thinking.
- 2) Develop curiosity about the basis for what the problem owner knows and thinks.
- 3) Ask questions about how the Problem Owner knows what they know and why they think that they think.

Why:

- 1) Focus on the other person's thinking and seeks to understand it.
- 2) In turn it prompts the other person to pause and consider what they really know and how they arrived at what they believe is the situation or solution.
- 3) Prompting recognition and reflection that increases awareness is the helpful purpose of Humble Inquiry.

Thoughts on Listening

“The greatest compliment anyone ever paid me was to actually listen to what I was saying.”

– Henry David Thoreau



Preparation for the Exercise

- Pick a work-related problem that is not huge or complex.
- Be prepared to describe:
 - the situation
 - the problem itself
 - its importance
 - its history if needed
 - what you know about what's going on
 - your ideas of why it's happening
 - and what you have in mind to do about it

Debrief

Coach:

- Describe what they heard the problem owner say about the problem, the problem situation, and their concerns, thinking and ideas about the situation.

Problem Owner, start the debrief by sharing:

- How well the coach heard their description, thoughts and feelings about the situation and describe any important points that the coach missed .
- Your reflection on how your perspective and thinking about the problem situation have change or not changed as a result of the coaching discussion
- Any questions you now recognize you need to answer to have a better grasp of the problem situation

Observer, use the observation sheet to share:

- What you noticed about coach's listening, focus on the problem owner's thinking, the intent of his/her questions, his/her connection with the problem owner
- Your sense of the equitability in the relationship between the coach and problem owner

Problem Owner, Coach, Observer Discuss:

- Your sense of the nature of the relationship and helpfulness of the coaching during the discussion

Challenges of Exercise



Learn By Doing



Practice! Practice! Practice!

Thank You!