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Leading Together Series Coaching Part 1 Pre-read: Coaching Over the Years

Please read the following document and:

- 1. Highlight key concepts/key ideas*
- 2. Record any wonderings or questions for clarity you might have after reading the information.*

We will be referring to it in our session - therefore it may be helpful to download or print it for your convenience.

Coaching is not a new idea. For years articles, researchers and scholars have pointed towards coaching as a key skill needed in leadership, teamwork and culture. Much of the research supporting a coaching model was built, in part, on the research and practice of Carl Rogers in the 1940s through to the early 80s:

Carl Rogers (1980)

"It is that the individual has within himself or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behaviour – and that these resources can be tapped only if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided."

This theory led the educational world to look to coaching as a key ingredient for successful knowledge translation and behaviour change when learning new coaching skills:

Joyce & Showers (2002. Also 1980-present - multiple studies)

"Training consists of four main components: developing knowledge, through exploring theory to understand the concepts behind a skill or strategy; the demonstration or modelling of skill; the practice of skill and peer coaching...Peer coaching not only contributes to the transfer of training; it also facilitates the development of new school norms of collegiality and experimentation."

The business world paid attention to this, and looked at coaching as a way to usher in a different management approach:

Roger D. Evered & James C. Selman (1989)

Coaching and the Art of Management

"The current management culture, with its focus on controlling behaviour, needs to be replaced by a management culture in which skillful coaching creates the climate, environment, and context that empowers employees and teams to generate results."

But there were many challenges to using coaching effectively:

Michael Lombardo & Robert Eichinger (2001) and James Hunt & Joseph Weintraub (2002)

Employees rank their managers as "dead last" in their effectiveness with coaching, and with the time they take to use coaching with employees. This is due to it seeming like it will take "too much time" or be a "waste of effort."

Despite the fact that coaching is known to be a way to enhance relationships between leaders and employees, between employees and between groups:

James Hunt & Joseph Weintraub (2002)

"Managers who coach their employees are known as good managers to work for, developers of talent, and achievers of business results. They also become better leaders in the process."

Building the internal capability of teams to use coaching, and coach each other contributes to culture in unique ways:

David Rock & Ruth Donde (2006)

"Early indicators are showing significant increases in retention, engagement, productivity and performance across organizations that have developed internal coaching...Systems theory says that the power of a network is proportional to the quality and quantity of connections between the nodes...(and so) There is a lot of research that shows that people's performance at work is very connected to the quality of the relationship with the boss but also the quality of relationships with co-workers...By utilizing internal coaches you are potentially increasing people's overall performance through deepening the connections across this system"

Much of the challenge, however, comes from the pre-conceived ideas people have about coaching, and some of the models that have been used in the past. In the mid 2000s neurocognition and leadership were considered in tandem to best understand how to support people making change. Research points to some specifics in coaching that is “brain compatible” and creates the psychologically safe environment where people thrive and grow:

David Rock & Ruth Donde (2006)

“The approach used is self-directed and solutions focused. This means assisting individuals to come up with their own answers and focusing on solutions not on problems. It is not telling people what to do and it is not counselling. This is a highly effective and impactful coaching approach to do internally” (Results Coaching Systems)

David Rock & Jeffery Schwartz (2006)

“Change is pain...Humanism is overrated...Focus is power...Expectation shapes reality...(and) Attention density shapes identity...Is the answer to all the challenges of change just to focus people on solutions instead of problems, let them come to their own answers, and keep them focused on their insights? Apparently, that’s what the brain wants. And some of the most successful management change practices have this type of principle ingrained in them.”

Case Western University (2010)

Coaching with compassion was differentiated from other forms of coaching. Coaching with compassion is coaching where the goals, ways to achieve the goals, and how to assess the impact of the goals lies entirely within the coachee. It is a strengths-based approach to coaching where any assessment of performance is determined by the coaching. Other forms of coaching were identified as being “more critical.” Coaching with compassion resulted in “activation in areas of the brain where visioning occurs. That response is most important for new learning and for supporting changed behaviour. When the coach focused on deficits or trying to fix an issue, the opposite effect occurred.”

Which then leads to how do you coach in a way that supports this kind of change?

Arthur Costa, Robert Garmston & Diane Zimmerman (2014)

“Cognitive capital refers to the collective mental resources available in an organization.”

The most desirable and effective model of coaching is the one that surfaces and builds on and with the strengths, experience, perspectives and passion of everyone in the organization. A model that sends the message that “this is a safe place for everyone to make a contribution.”

Coaching in this way is how we create a “needs facilitating” environment that supports the autonomy, relatedness and competence of everyone in an organization. This we know to be the very essence of our psychological needs.

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