



THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING, MENTORING AND RELATED FIELDS

ABSTRACT:

Coaching draws its influences from and stands on the shoulders of a wide range of disciplines, including, counselling, management consultancy, personal development, and psychology. However, there are a number of core differences which distinguish coaching from its related fields. Key points:

- **Origins and history of coaching**
- **Types of practitioners**
- **Definitions**
- **Comparisons**

Overview

Learning coaching skills and having a coach are both becoming a regular part of a leader's working life today. One of the current challenges most frequently heard from coaches and leaders alike is when to coach, when to offer advice and when to be directive, either at work or in the coaching relationship. An effective manager today must be able to move smoothly along the continuum between coaching, mentoring and directive management:

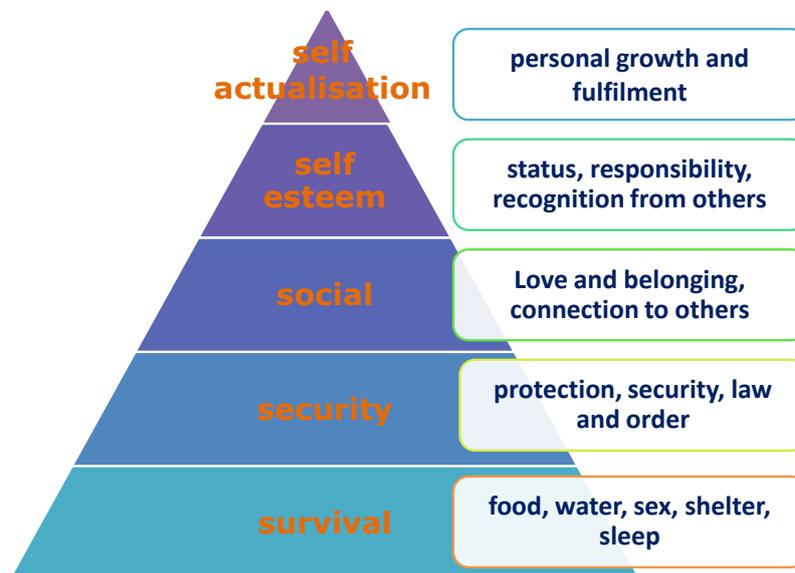


History

Coaching has its roots mainly in psychology and sports coaching. However, early psychology, up to and during the time of Freud and Jung, was largely remedial and remained so even when it later developed through behavioural and cognitive therapies. Therapy was about identifying what was wrong with the subject and attempting to fix it.

In the sixties, humanistic psychology was developed, the key figures being Abraham Maslow, renowned for his 'Hierarchy of Needs', and Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy. The breakthrough made by these psychologists was that they started to look at what was right with people rather than what was wrong – focussing on their best potential rather than their problems. The Hierarchy of Needs places 'self actualisation' at the top of the human evolutionary journey.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Maslow focussed on the top of the triangle: how to reach the pinnacle of achievement and satisfaction. He believed that the process of reaching upwards would solve problems lower down on the way.

It was not until the 1970s that a tennis coach applied the principle to coaching. Timothy Gallwey was a Harvard graduate in the nineteen seventies who, while on sabbatical, became captain of the Harvard tennis team. Gallwey noticed that when he left the court, his students tended to improve faster than when he was there to instruct them. Already a disciple of spirituality and psychology, Gallwey explored this paradox and developed a series of techniques to encourage the benefits. One of his key findings was to apply 'directionality' – naming one's goal before starting out. Gallwey wrote a series of books called 'The Inner Game', applying this and his other theories to performance in life and work as well as sport.

During the 1980s, Gallwey's work was embraced by English baronet, Sir John Whitmore, who brought the techniques to Europe and founded schools of skiing and tennis to develop them. At one point, Whitmore's team was asked to provide a day of 'self directed' tennis coaching by a large organisation which wanted its managers to incorporate the Inner Game approach into their leadership styles. This was termed 'Performance Coaching' to differentiate it from conventional sports coaching, and

Whitmore wrote a book about it called 'Coaching for Performance', which has since been translated into nineteen languages and has become a kind of bible for coaches and organisations.

And this, it seems, is how the term 'coaching', to which the fields of psychology, business and self development have all contributed so much, originated.

Executive, business, career, personal and other types of coaching are all based on the principles described above. Coaching is a process, like accountancy, and the process remains much the same regardless of which type of coaching is taking place.

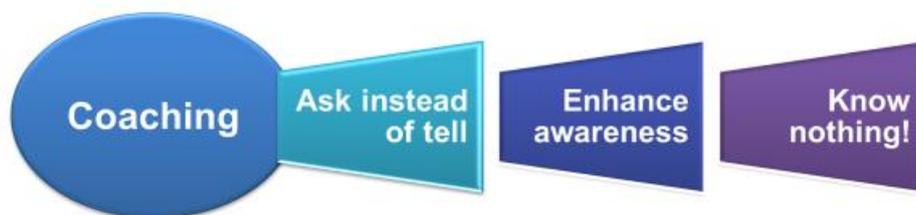
Other practices have grown from similar roots alongside coaching, such as positive psychology, Neuro Linguistic Programming, management training and personal development.

The Differences

Let us now take a look at the different practitioners and what they do:

Coaching

Coaches work on improving the performance and wellbeing of an individual or group through setting goals, exploring values and beliefs, and creating plans of action. This is achieved not by advising or telling, but largely by questioning to facilitate awareness and self-directed learning. The coach does not require any knowledge, skills or experience of the coachee's field of work. In fact, ignorance here can be an advantage, and may encourage the coach to ask more neutral and less leading questions:



There are a growing number of categories in coaching, such as life, executive, team, group and career coaching, but the process is largely the same. Just as the more successful an athlete is, the more likely he or she is to work with a sports coach, performance coaching is not necessarily about fixing problems but about helping successful individuals and teams to become more so.

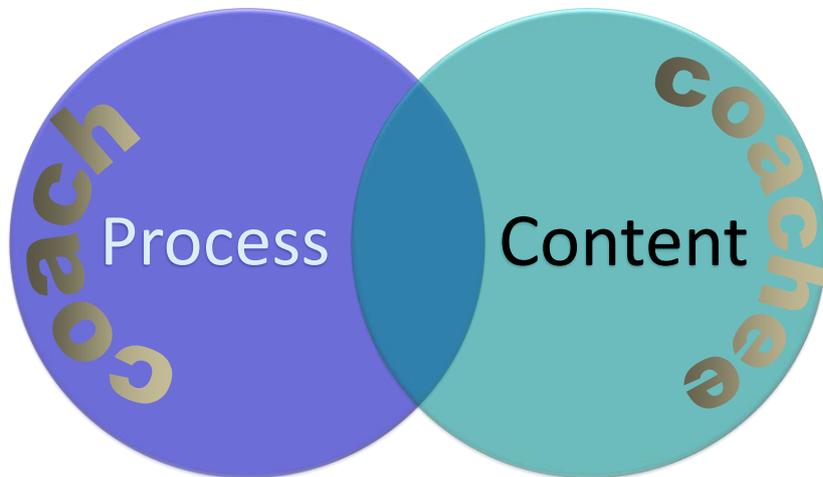
The profession is currently self regulated, but most coaches will have undergone some form of training and accreditation. Several coaching bodies have been set up by coaches around the world, including The Association for Coaching, the ICF and the EMCC. In addition some accreditation bodies like the ILM (Institute of Leadership & Management) provide coaching qualifications.

Coaching is positive, non-judgemental, solution focused and challenging:

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF COACHING



Although the control of the process lies with the coach, the content always lies with the client, making the coaching experience an empowering, productive and enjoyable one. The crossover area in the diagram below represents the times when coaches make suggestions or share their own insights. They usually ask permission before doing this, making a clear boundary between the client's agenda and their own:



Coaching can be practised either one to one or with groups of any size and is used with teams to achieve a unified and supportive force. The roots of communicating in a coaching style are ancient and inherent in all people; some are natural coaches who were raised in a coaching atmosphere. For others, it is possible to learn the skills and change their style of communication, hence the growing popularity of coaching in corporate and public organisations. Good leadership is virtually synonymous with good coaching skills.

Occasionally, emotional baggage may surface during coaching and the coach may refer the coachee to a counsellor or therapist. However, sometimes the process of coaching is found to dissolve deep seated blocks and traumas which have been holding the coachee

back, simply by its solution focussed approach, without the necessity of deeper exploration. Coaching has also produced results in physical healing, sometimes combined with related fields such as Neuro Linguistic Programming and David Grove's Clean Language, Transactional Analysis or other disciplines.

Mentoring

A great deal of confusion is caused by different uses of the term 'Mentor'. In some organizations the word is used to describe coaching as defined in this article. I would define Mentors as people who impart their own experience, learning and advice to those who have less experience in the particular field. In modern business, the practice of delivering mentoring in a coaching style is on the increase.



Therapy: Psychiatry, Psychology and Psychotherapy

A psychiatrist is a qualified medical doctor with further training in psychiatry but not necessarily in psychology. A psychiatrist is the only practitioner covered in this article who can prescribe drugs to treat a mental condition.

A psychologist will have general training, usually a degree, in psychology, plus further training in a specialist field.

A psychotherapist works with deep-seated emotional difficulties and will have received rigorous training and ongoing supervision.

In recent times, basic coaching skills are usually included in any kind of therapeutic training.

Counselling

Counsellors often provide the simple service of 'someone to talk to', particularly in situations of grief, shock or anxiety. There are various levels of training, starting with a short course leading to a certificate. Sessions can be on a one off basis, or occurring regularly over months or years.

Consultancy

A consultant brings knowledge, skills, experience and advice to an organisation.

Conclusion

A simple way of expressing the difference between coaching and mentoring is:

"A coach has some great questions for your answers; a mentor has some great answers for your questions"

An analogy with driving a car helps to define the differences between all the above fields:

- A therapist will explore what is stopping you driving your car
- A counsellor will listen to your anxieties about the car
- A mentor will share tips from the experience of driving cars
- A consultant will advise you on how to drive the car
- A coach will encourage and support you in driving the car

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