

# First Line Management CMI Level 3

## Session 7

### Managing People

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## Inducting New Team Members

Do you remember your induction into your organisation?

What did you think of it?

### Why is there a need to integrate new team members?

- To settle new members into the team quickly
- To ensure acceptance by/good relations with other team members
- To give confidence to new team members
- To avoid misunderstandings and conflict
- To enable new team members to become productive as soon as possible.
- To introduce a new team member into the organisation so that they feel an integral part of it and are ready to be involved.

### The ways in which a team leader may integrate a new team member into the team.

- Carry out a planned induction.
- Nominate a mentor/tutor
- Encourage openness by new member to ask where necessary.
- Monitor regularly.
- Formal follow-up

### The possible adverse effects of not carrying out an effective integration.

- De-motivate the team and the individual
- Conflict within the team
- Poor performance from team and individual
- Decrease in productivity
- New members leave quickly
- Accidents

### A typical induction would include

- Introduction to other members
- Introduction to work place/station
- Introduction to role in team
- Layout of work place
- Organisational requirements
- Health and Safety requirements
- Opportunity for questions
- Organisational charts – lines of reporting

## What is Coaching?

There are many definitions of coaching, some looking at it from an academic point of view, many from a sporting point of view. One definition from the Oxford English Dictionary says, 'to give hints to, to prime with facts'. Another says, 'to train or prepare (a student for an examination, a crew for a race)'. Yet another source defines it as 'setting a pace or standard for an athlete to follow'.

None of these definitions comes quite close enough to describing what coaching is in a training sense. There are some similarities, but there are some vital elements missing.

The principal feature of coaching in a training sense is that it is learner-centred.

The coach doesn't tell or teach the learner the things he/she wants him to learn. Instead the coach actively provides the learner with experiences that will lead him/her to find out those things for him/herself. This does not mean that the coach stands by doing nothing. He/she usually adopts a 'back seat' role being available to give guidance and help when the learner really needs it, and regularly helping the learner to review each experience so that he/she understands what he/she has learned from it.

Another element of coaching is that it is usually task- or work-based. The coach uses the workplace as the classroom. It is by exposing the learner to new and real work experiences, by encouraging him/her to solve new work problems, that the coach helps the learner to learn and to develop new competencies and to improve existing ones.

A third important aspect of coaching is that, in most cases, the learning is for a job-related purpose. That purpose is to make the learner more effective in his/her present job, or to prepare him/her for a future job.

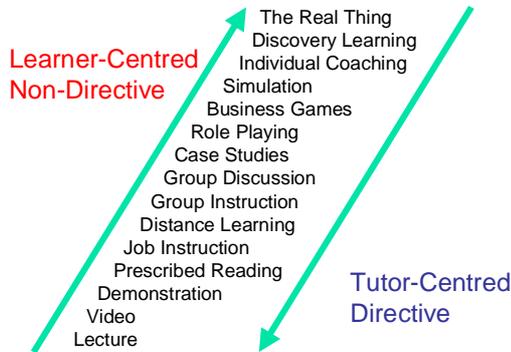
The remaining element of coaching is that, for the most part, it is planned. There are, of course, unexpected opportunities that arise for coaching which are not planned, but once taken, these too can benefit from an element of planning. Coaching, in the training sense, can therefore be summarised as:

Systematically increasing the capability and work performance of someone by exposing him or her to work-based tasks or experiences which will provide relevant learning opportunities, and giving guidance and feedback to help him or her to learn from them.

A beneficial spin-off from coaching is that it tends also to develop the learner's learning ability, so that he or she goes on actively learning from future experiences, independent of the coach.

# Imparting Learning

## A Spectrum of Training Methods

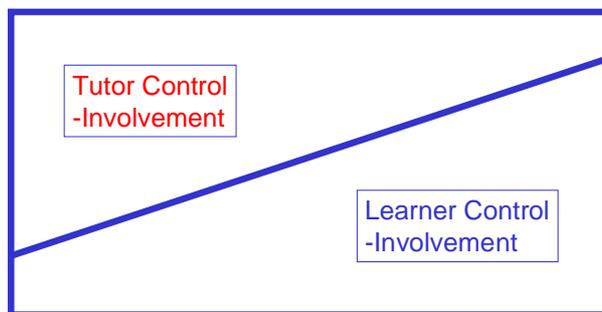


The number and types of methods for imparting learning are quite large, ranging from the lecture to the 'Real Thing' (on-job learning). One way of examining the characteristics and uses of each method is to arrange them in a spectrum according to the involvement of the tutor on the one hand, and that of the learners on the other:

At one end of this spectrum, the methods have an increasing tendency to be directive or tutor centred. At the other end they tend towards being non-directive or learner centred.

We could examine these methods further and analyse the relative involvements of the tutor and the learners by placing them on the following continuum:

## Coaching



## Tutor Centred Methods

Methods that are directive or tutor centred, by their very nature, allow only a limited amount of participation by the learner. There has to be, therefore, a greater degree of motivation for such methods to be effective (eg in the university lecture situation, the motivating factor is the degree or qualification at the end). Because learner participation is limited, it is difficult to assess learner progress during the session, and the opportunities to make mid-session adjustments to the delivery are also limited.

Generally, the main advantages of tutor-centred methods are that they allow for a larger amount of material to be covered in a shorter amount of time, and delivered to a larger number of learners.

Tutor-centred methods are most appropriate where facts and knowledge-based material have to be delivered to large groups of highly motivated learners. They are less appropriate where the material is skill-based.

## **Learner-Centred Methods**

Methods that are non-directive or learner centred do allow a greater degree of learner participation. Because involvement is high, motivation is easier. It is also possible to get constant feedback on learner progress during the session, and mid-session adjustments are more possible to allow for fast or slow learners.

Learner-centred methods generally require more time to cover a given amount of material and they also require a lower trainee-to-tutor ratio than tutor-centred methods.

Learner-centred methods are most appropriate where the acquisition of skills and understanding, or the changing of attitudes, is required.

## **Coaching Styles**

Although coaching is generally classed as a non-directive training method, there are, within the process, varying degrees of directiveness or non-directiveness. Below are four coaching styles, each varying in its directiveness. The style that a coach adopts will depend on the level of competence in the subject currently held by the learner, and the degree of difficulty with which the learner perceives the problem. In the ideal learning situation it should be Style D, since the learner is doing more to learn from. However, if the learner is having difficulties, the coach may have to commence with a more directive style.

# Coaching

	← Directive A	B	C	Non-Directive → D
Identifying the Problem	By Coach	By Learner	By Coach	By Learner
Finding the Best Solution	By Coach	By Coach	By Learner	By Learner

## Style A

Directive coaching. The coach identifies the basis of the problem and explains it to the learner. The coach then works through the available options with the learner and tells him/her the best solution.

## Style B

The learner identifies what he/she sees to be the basis of a problem and comes to the coach for help. The coach works through the available options with the learner and tells him/her the best solution.

## Style C

The coach identifies a problem and explains it to the learner. The coach then encourages the learner to explore the available options and to decide the best solution.

## Style D

Non-directive coaching. The learner identifies the basis of the problem, works through the available options and decides the best solution. The coach guides the learner, helping him/her to clarify ideas, to question his/her biases and assumptions, to work through his/her confusions, to generate fresh approaches and ideas, and to choose his/her own solution. The coach acts as a learning resource.

## The Learning Process

Whereby Knowledge and Skill is acquired that didn't previously exist. We will discuss knowledge and skill, drawing out examples to confirm the differences.

### Coaching

Where learning takes place .....

Knowledge and Skill are acquired  Increased Competence

We will discuss attitude and understanding, again drawing out examples to ensure understanding of these elements.

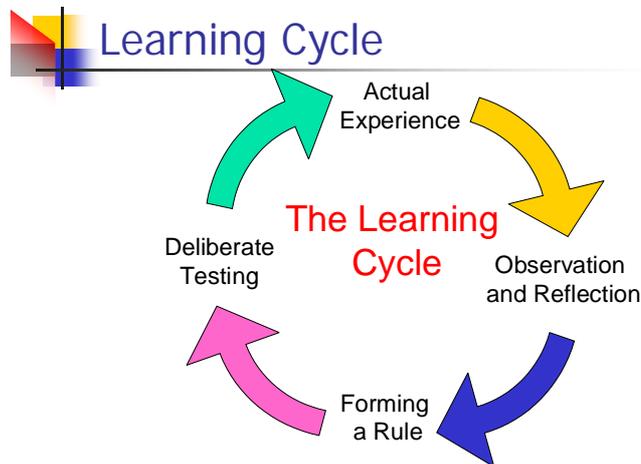
### Coaching

- Knowledge
- Skill
  - physical
  - mental
  - social
- Attitude
- Understanding

Learning is a voluntary process. People can't really be made to learn; they need to be motivated to learn. Certain things motivate. Others de-motivate. From you and your fellow delegates' experiences, list examples of motivating factors and de-motivating factors.

## The Learning Cycle,

Here we look at the learning cycle originally attributed to Kolb but more often used in



the works of Dr. Peter Honey.

## The Learning Process

### What is Learning?

A simple way to define learning might be to say that when learning takes place, knowledge and skill is acquired that wasn't previously possessed. The effect of learning is that the learner is able to do or understand something that he or she previously was not able to. Learning is therefore a process of changing capability.

Knowledge and skill are significant aspects for trainers to consider in training, because the learning process concerned with one usually differs considerably from that of the other.

Knowledge has to do with facts, or knowing what to do. Skill has to do with doing things (performance), and may be divided into three broad areas:

- Manual skills which have to do with physical dexterity;
- Mental skills which have to do with being able to manipulate facts, theories, etc, which leads to understanding; and
- Social skills which have to do with interacting with people (a very important skill requirement for trainers).

A third important element for trainers to be concerned with is attitude. This might be defined as a person's feeling for, or approach to, something. We also think of

attitudes as drivers of performance or learning. Therefore attitude is a very important consideration in training. Different jobs or tasks often require different attitudes or approaches. Think of the attitude that might be required for the job of a nurse compared with that of an accounts clerk. Attitude also strongly influences the way we learn, and to what extent we apply what we have learned. If we consider confidence as a form of attitude, the significance of this becomes clearer. It is possible to develop, change or modify attitudes by training.

## Learning Approaches

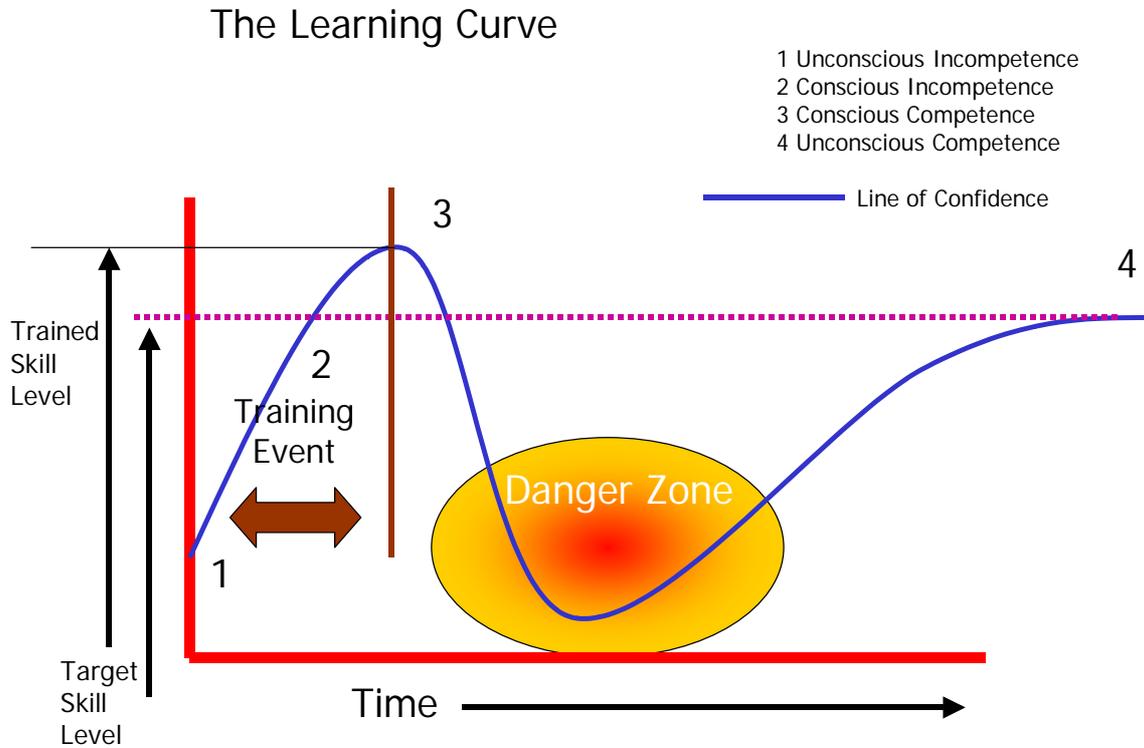
Three broad approaches to learning can be identified, *Rote*, *Reasoning* and *Experiential*.

*Rote* learning, or 'parrot fashion', where the learner repeats facts over and over until he or she can remember them, would appear at first thought to have limited value in training. Its main drawback is that little understanding comes from learning this way. However, the principle of repetition (repeating ideas and concepts in a variety of ways during a learning session) can have value in reinforcing some learning situations.

*Reasoning*, where the learner is encouraged to use what he or she already knows to work out things for him or herself, is a method that has long been favoured by trainers. The process is quite closely related to experiential learning. The basis of both these methods is explained by the Learning Cycle (see separate handout).

*Experiential* learning, 'learning the hard way' or 'being dropped in at the deep end' used to be discounted by trainers, but its value has been recognised now that we understand the process more. Its main drawback is that it can be very expensive, even dangerous, if major errors are made. But it is a very indelible form of learning. However, we can design learning methods that reduce the danger and cost and still retain the advantages of this approach. Role play exercises and flight simulators are some examples.

# The Learning Curve



The rate at which learners progress is seldom steady or linear in nature. More often it comprises a series of rises of varying rates with frequent plateaux and plummets.

## Skill Level

Skill level is where the learner is aiming to get to; often this aim is higher than needed to allow for some loss or lack of retention of information. Basically if we teach somebody three different ways of doing something then hopefully they will remember at least one of them.

## Time Lag

The reasons for this are various, and not all are fully understood. The learner's main problems arise at the plummet points, when his or her greatest need is reassurance. The trainer must therefore be quick to spot when a plateau is occurring, and be ready to give this assurance that the plateau and following plummet are all part of the mystical process of learning and will soon pass.

## The Assimilation Curve

The rate that a learner can absorb material is also not steady. It normally reaches a peak quite quickly and declines as time and mental fatigue progress.

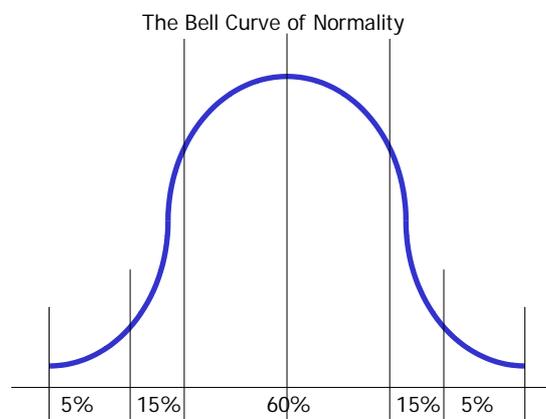
### Assimilation rate

Training events need to be designed with great care. The length of the training event is often governed by the subject matter and the intensity that it is delivered and by what form that delivery takes

All trainers must take account of this curve, perhaps by ensuring that knowledge input takes place when the assimilation rate is high and off-setting the effects of the fall off by introducing more active forms of learning. The upturn at the end of a session can be used effectively to give a summary or recap.

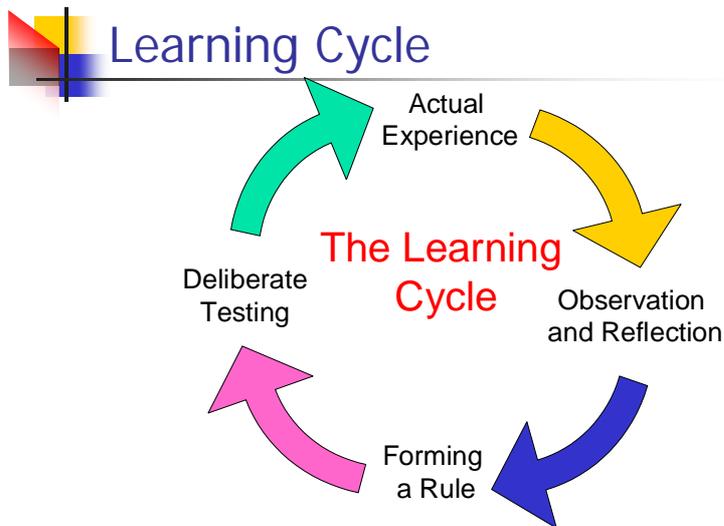
## Differences in Learner Ability

In most groups of learners there is a natural distribution curve of learning ability. That is to say, the majority of them will have a similar capacity to learn, with the numbers decreasing as the upper and lower extremes are approached.



Trainers must recognise this phenomenon, making allowances for the slower learners, and ensuring that faster learners are not held back. In reality it is the 15% either side of the normal that the trainer or coach needs to concentrate on. The individuals in the 5% category are often in need of specialist care, for example the very talented need a special coach and at the other end of the scale the learning challenged also need special care, which is well outside of the ability of the average manager/coach!

## The Learning Cycle



Consider how a young child may come to learn to respect heat by touching the side of a hot stove. Breaking the process down into stages, it may look like this:

- 1 The child touches the stove and feels the pain - an actual experience.
- 2 The child associates this pain with the stove and thinks about the connection - observation and reflection.
- 3 The child establishes a general rule that stoves hurt if you touch them - forming a rule.
- 4 After a while the child may cautiously put his hand near the stove to check out the rule he has made - deliberate testing.

## The Learning Cycle

Arranged like this, these actions form what is known as The Learning Cycle. It is seen as a cycle because the process does not stand still. As we learn more, we are continually trying things out, relating them to previous experiences and modifying our rules. In the above example we could see the child perhaps touching a central heating radiator, reflecting on this experience and incorporating the radiator in the same general rule as the stove.

This is very much a natural process and is carried through to adult learning, where the "forming a rule" step is more likely to be concerned with adding to, or modifying existing rules or concepts, ie adding to one's understanding of the world where most adults usually work out more complex rules for the simple concepts learnt as a child – most adults 'know' when something is too hot to touch.

Researchers point to two things about the Learning Cycle:

- 1 That learning is more effective when the learner is able to complete the whole cycle.
- 2 That individuals have different learning styles, in that some will learn better from experiences that emphasise one part of the cycle, while others will learn better from experiences that emphasise another part.

### Coaching vs Classroom Approach

In the classroom approach we are given the general rule and we are allowed to test it in safe situations by doing certain classroom exercises. It may be some considerable time before we can apply the rule in a real work-place situation i.e. have a real experience that we can reflect on and observe how we apply it.

Coaching tends more often to start with the work-place experience and has the learner completing the cycle by thinking about what he has done, or is doing (reflecting, observing), fitting this and previous experience into patterns or concepts (general rules) and checking these ideas out in practice (deliberate testing).

## Learning Styles

As already mentioned, different people learn in different ways. This concept has been a major study of Dr Peter Honey and Professor Alan Mumford. In their *Manual of Learning Styles*, 1992, they identify four main Learning Styles, which they name:

### Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists

They describe these styles broadly as follows:

**Activists:** Those who learn best from activities where they can fully involve themselves in new experiences without having to be too concerned about details.

**Reflectors:** Those who learn best from activities where they can sit back from the action to observe and think about it.

**Theorists:** Those who learn best from activities where they can see clearly the patterns, concepts or theories into which things fit.

**Pragmatists:** Those who learn best from activities where they can try out things for themselves so that they can see, in a practical way, how theories work out in practice.

### Learning Styles General Descriptions

**ACTIVISTS** thrive on the challenge of new experiences and like to be fully involved. They revel in coping with crises, but once the excitement has died down they like to move on because they get bored with implementation and longer-term consolidation. They enjoy working with others, but tend to hog the limelight. If you are an activist you are likely to be skimming this handout and looking for the next activity.

Activists learn best when:

- there is a wide range of new experiences, problems and opportunities to tackle;
- they are thrown in at the deep end with a task they think is difficult;
- they are given free rein to generate ideas;
- they have the opportunity to lead and organise others.

Activists learn less well when:

- they have to listen to lectures or long explanations of how things should be done;
- they have to work on their own a lot, eg reading or writing lots of notes;
- they are required to take a back seat and not get involved; they have to follow instructions to the letter with little scope for variation.

*REFLECTORS* like to collect all the facts and look at situations from all angles. They are cautious and dislike reaching a definitive conclusion until they have thought it through thoroughly. Reflectors prefer to take a back seat, observing and listening to other people before they make their own move. If you are a reflector you may be reserving judgement on how useful learning styles are until you have finished reading this handout.

Reflectors learn best when:

- they can do things in their own time without tight deadlines;
- they are allowed to think before acting or commenting, ie they have time to prepare;
- they have the opportunity to review what has happened and to think about what they have learned;
- they have time to do much painstaking research.

Reflectors learn less well when:

- they are worried by time pressure or rushed from one activity to another;
- they are forced into the limelight, e.g. to act as leader, or to give a presentation;
- they do not have time to prepare, i.e. they are required to act or comment without warning;
- they are 'thrown in at the deep end'.

*THEORISTS* approach situations and problems logically, working step-by-step to integrate their observations into complex theories. They tend to be perfectionists and like to fit all the facts neatly into their own rational scheme of things. They favour theories, models and systems, and tend to reject anything that does not fit their rationale. They like to be certain of things and feel uncomfortable with intuitive judgements. If you are a theorist you will probably be seeking to relate the facts in this handout to theories and models you are already familiar with.

Theorists learn best when:

- there is a clear structure and purpose, and they know exactly what is required of them;
- they have time to think logically about how ideas, events and situations are related;
- they are intellectually stretched, i.e. they are put into complex situations where they have to use their skills and knowledge;
- they can see that things fit into a logical pattern.

Theorists learn less well when:

- they are pushed into doing things without knowing the context or purpose;
- they feel intellectually out of tune with the other students, e.g. when they are with activists;
- the activity is unstructured, or they are briefed in a disorganised way;
- they are not given a chance to use their reasoning skills.

*PRAGMATISTS* are the type of people who return from courses full of ideas and want to try them out immediately. They like to get straight to the point and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. Pragmatists are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They are more comfortable with things that they know are going to work. If you are a pragmatist you are probably already thinking about ways to apply what you have so far learned about learning styles.

Pragmatists learn best when:

- they are learning things with obvious practical advantages, e.g. how to save time, how to do things better;
- they have the opportunity quickly to put into practice what they have learned;
- they are given a chance to try things out for themselves, with feedback from a credible expert.

Pragmatists learn less well when:

- they cannot see benefit in what they are learning, i.e. no practical application;
- there is no apparent pay-off, e.g. a better way of doing things; they are not given guidelines or the chance to practise things; there are obstacles to using the things they are learning.

Adapted from *The Manual of Learning Styles* (1992) by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford published by Peter Honey Publications Limited.

## Coaching and Learning Styles

If you are a coach, and your learning style differs from your learner, the coaching relationship could be affected. For example:

*If you were an Activist and you were looking for an immediate response, how would you react to a learner who wouldn't commit him/herself to an action or decision until he/she had had time to think about all the ramifications of what you had said?*

*If you were a Reflector how would you feel about a learner who continually jumped to conclusions, who seldom thought things through before acting or commenting?*

It is therefore important to realise that your own approach to learning situations may be different from that of the learners you are coaching. It follows that if you know your own learning style you are in a better position to coach well. More so if you know your learner's as well.

Here are some examples of how your own learning style may affect your coaching approach:

ACTIVIST coaches are likely to help by:

- taking a chance by exposing the learner to new learning situations, giving him/her unfamiliar tasks to do that he will learn from;
- responding spontaneously to coaching opportunities as they arise; and giving learners a positive and encouraging lead.
- They are less likely to help in:
- providing planned learning experiences;
- briefing learners before a learning event and reviewing it with them afterwards; and
- standing back to allow the learner to do and learn things.

REFLECTOR coaches are likely to help by:

- not taking too dominant a role in the coaching relationship;
- providing feedback in learning situations, helping the learner review what has happened; emphasising the importance of considering all the issues before acting.
- They are *less* likely to help in:
- responding to unexpected coaching opportunities;
- providing slightly risky learning situations, e.g. unplanned delegation;
- responding quickly to unexpected requests for help.

THEORIST coaches are likely to help by:

- helping the learner to understand the underlying causes of problems, and the systems, concepts or theories involved;

- aiming for clarity of structure and purpose in coaching assignments;
- encouraging a logical, step-by-step approach.
- They are *less* likely to help in:
  - helping learners understand emotions and feelings;
  - helping learners accept the obvious and simpler approaches;
  - making use of information and situations which conflict with their own ideas or theories;
  - developing those who are intellectually different from themselves, e.g. those less able than themselves or those with conflicting views or beliefs.

PRAGMATIST coaches are likely to help by:

- using learning opportunities that are relevant and that have a clear and immediate pay off;
- being responsive to new ideas and techniques, particularly those with practical applications;
- showing belief in the possibility of improvement; using existing job routines as a basis for learning.
- They are *less* likely to help in:
  - being responsive to ideas or techniques not immediately relevant to the current situation;
  - encouraging learning that is relevant to the longer term; showing interest in concepts or theories;
  - encouraging new ideas and fresh approaches that they may regard as too far removed from practical reality.

## Coaching Priorities

Managers are usually very busy and that it may appear that there isn't time to coach. However, coaching involves activities that a good manager will be doing anyway.

Delegating work; Reviewing progress; Discussing difficulties; Helping people resolve problems.

**It may not be possible to coach everyone in your team all of the time. It therefore becomes a matter of prioritising.**

- Consider each member of your team, analysing his or her development needs, and consider which ones would benefit most from coaching and why.
- From this analysis, draw up a priority list for coaching your team members.
- For this exercise you will work with a partner whose role will be to help you think through this task.
- When you have made your priority list, assist your partner to work through his or her list.
- When both of you have completed your lists, consider the factors that governed your priorities and make a list of these factors.

It would be ideal if you were able constantly to be coaching everyone in your team. This is seldom possible. If the team is large, there just isn't the time available for you to do this. So you must decide which members of your team you can and should concentrate on.

Fortunately much of the process involves activities that a good manager will be doing anyway:

- delegating work
- reviewing progress
- discussing difficulties
- helping staff resolve problems.

So the amount of extra work need not be all that great if you are already doing your job well.

Determining criteria for coaching priorities involves arriving at a balance between the needs of the following:

- The objectives of your team, both short term and long term
- The objectives of your organisation, both short term and long term
- The development needs of the individuals in your team, both short term and long term.

The following is a suggested priority list to be considered in conjunction with this balanced approach when deciding actual priorities:

*Key people.* Those people whose present or near future roles are essential to the success of your team. If these people are not developed, the whole team may suffer.

*The person who could be your successor.* If someone has been identified as your successor, then it makes sense to see that he or she has the best possible start in the new role. It is also better to hand your job over 'as a going concern'. This person may already be deputising for you, which, in itself, is a good coaching opportunity.

*Newcomers.* It is important in meeting both the needs of your section or department and those of the individual, that those joining your team receive early attention in order to establish them in their new jobs and to have them functioning as soon as possible.

*Those who need to improve most.* Anyone who is performing well below standard affects the achievements of your whole team as well as the chances of his/her own advancement. These people must also have a high coaching priority.

*Those who are ready for promotion.* Both the individual and the organisation benefit if those who are ready for promotion receive good training and development before the move. Coaching these people is often easier because they have a high level of motivation.

*High achievers.* High fliers, people with high potential need to be stretched whilst their motivation is high. Some managers begrudge giving them much attention, since they will soon be promoted out of their team, but this is shortsighted thinking. The organisation will ultimately benefit from their development, and if they do not get development when they need it, they are the most likely to leave the organisation.

*Those temporarily attached to your department.* These people may well be attached to you for experience and development anyway, so their motivation and expectations will be high.

*Those who most need stimulating.* They may be experienced people who, for some reason, have become 'stale' and are no longer contributing as well as they might.

## Opportunities For Coaching

### Coaching Opportunities

- Think of your own work situation, the team that you are part of and the team that you manage.
- Reflect upon some of the experiences that you and your team have been through in the past, and the work that lies ahead of you.
- From these thoughts, identify situations that you consider would have been, and/or will be, good opportunities to coach people in your team or organisation.

### Opportunities For Coaching

Whenever a particular job or task arises in your team you, as manager, have two options when it comes to choosing the person to give this work to. You can give it to an experienced person whom you know will do it well and with least difficulty. Or you can give it to a less experienced person who may have some difficulty with it, but who will learn a lot from doing it.

Taking the first option, you take fewer risks and you may solve your own short term objectives satisfactorily. But you may not be doing very much for the overall development of your team or organisation's capabilities.

If you take the second option you must accept an element of risk and maybe certain short-term difficulty for yourself. But you will be contributing substantially to the development of the individual concerned and to the development of your team's and organisations longer-term effectiveness. You have also recognised a coaching opportunity.

Coaching opportunities arise from many sources. As an aware coach, you will recognise and use these opportunities as they arise. You will often foresee such opportunities before they come about, and plan them more fully.

Here are some opportunities. You may be aware of others:

- Planned delegation where you pass some of your own work to one of your team for any reason.
- Relief coverage of all or part of your work, or someone else's work during holidays or illness.

- Promotion or job change. Any situation, which involves a change in role responsibilities or duties. This would include job rotation.
- Secondment to your department, or to another manager's, whether it be to gain further experience or merely to help out.
- Projects, working parties or pilot studies where members of your team are given the responsibility to research or develop something.
- Introducing new systems, procedures or equipment where individuals in your team can be given a significant role at all stages.
- Following performance appraisal reviews.

Development needs arising from appraisal reviews can often be met by work-based learning assignments, i.e. coaching assignments. Likewise, elements of forward job plans, where they involve breaking new ground, can be fruitful coaching opportunities.

Following mistakes, failures or setbacks. However regrettable they may be, mistakes, failures or setbacks, if handled correctly, can be powerful learning experiences. It is very important to get the person concerned back on his/her feet and to restore confidence. It is also important for him/her to arrive at his/her own understanding of how the failure occurred and how it might be avoided in similar circumstances in the future. If you refer back to the Learning Cycle, you can see that all the elements exist for effective learning. Well-applied coaching skills will ensure that it happens.

Following successes or major achievements. Just as it is important to learn from our failures (unsuccessful experiences), it is also important to learn from our successes. When a team member succeeds or achieves something, he/she needs to know why he/she has succeeded and how he/she can apply this new learning to future work. This individual may be able to carry the success forward, to develop other work areas. He/she may also be able to pass on the new learning to others (including you). As a good coach, you will be able to harness this individual's motivation and maximise this learning opportunity.

As well as recognising when and where coaching opportunities can be found, it is also important to understand what distinguishes a good coaching opportunity from a mediocre one. Here are some guidelines on what constitutes a good coaching opportunity:

- A real work assignment that has some importance.
- A task that is linked to a specific need for improvement or development.
- A task that is seen as a challenge to the learner and not something trivial.
- An assignment that can be accomplished in weeks or months rather than years.
- A problem that is seen by the learner as being within his/her capabilities.
- Something that is not seen merely as something that the boss doesn't want to do.

Nearly every interaction between you and any member of your team can provide a opportunity for coaching. Many opportunities are already built into existing systems

and procedures (e.g. performance appraisal, delegation, etc). Whenever a team member comes to you for help or advice, that too is an opportunity. It is therefore important to recognise these opportunities and to use them in the best way to develop the individual's capability and that of the team.

## Coaching Skills and Behaviours

### Coaching Skills and Behaviours

- Listening
- Attending
- Clarifying
- Reflecting
- Good question technique
- Recognising feelings
- Suspending judgement
- Drawing out
- Supporting
- Use of silence
- Summarising
- Giving feedback

## Coaching Skills and Behaviours

Most of the essential skills and behaviours for coaching are concerned with being aware of what is going on and helping the learner become aware of what is going on: in other words, communication.

The main ones are listed below. Sometimes skills and behaviours merge into each other: the boundaries between them are difficult to see. This fact is less important than being able to identify them so that you can develop them and use them effectively.

### Listening

Listening is one of the most important skills needed for coaching. Basically listening is concerned with:

- ❖ receiving information
- ❖ attaching the correct meaning to it
- ❖ acknowledging it.

It includes listening with our eyes as well as with our ears. Many feelings are expressed in other than verbal form, in what we call non-verbal behaviour or body language. Very often we need to 'hear' the sum of all the verbal and non-verbal information in order to interpret what is being said.

As well as listening for what is being said, it is important to listen for how it is being said. It is also important to note what is not said.

## **Attending**

Attending is closely associated with listening. It is concerned with *showing* that you are listening and demonstrating that you care about what the other person is saying. It is important because the better you attend, the more the other person will be prepared to tell you.

Helpful attending behaviours include sitting facing the other person, maintaining helpful eye contact, keeping a relaxed posture, not interrupting, using encouraging responses like nodding, saying: "mmm," "I understand," "I see what you mean," etc. Non-helpful non-attending behaviours include doing something else while you are listening, looking away from the other person, interrupting, fidgeting, doodling, sitting at an awkward angle, etc.

## **Clarifying**

Clarifying is also associated with listening. It means being absolutely sure that you understand what the other person is saying. It includes asking questions, repeating statements, and asking the other person to give more details or to repeat something in a different way.

Obviously the manner in which you clarify things is very important. Questioning must be done in a sympathetic way, and not sound like an interrogation session. Done carefully it has a useful spin-off: it helps to show that you care about what the other person is saying.

## **Reflecting**

Reflecting is linked with clarifying. It consists of repeating back to the other person, in your own words, what you think he/she has been saying or feeling. It is a means of showing that you have understood what he/she has said and how he/she feels. It takes considerable skill to reflect well. It is important that you really capture the meaning of what has been said and how the person is feeling, and that you do not merely repeat it back in the same words. It is also important how you say it.

## **Good Question Technique**

This means not only using 'open' questions, but also posing questions in such a way that the other person feels able to answer them fully and freely.

It also means asking appropriate questions at the appropriate times. Questions that provoke constructive thought are useful. Trap questions are not.

## **Recognising Feelings**

Recognising feelings is also linked with listening. It is important that the coach is aware of how the learner feels about the task, related problems, his/her own abilities, other people, or even the coach. The coach needs to understand what influence these feelings have.

It is also very important for the coach to be aware of, and to recognise his/her own feelings and how these might be influencing the situation. Feelings are sometimes expressed by what is said or not said, and by actions that are done or not done. They may have to be brought to the surface by careful discussion.

## **Suspending Judgement**

It is very easy, when listening to thoughts and ideas being expressed, to place our own immediate personal value judgements on them. This immediately affects the way we are going to listen (or not listen) to what has been said and what is about to be said, and influences what we will hear.

If we express our value judgements, whether verbally or non-verbally, then we will also influence the other person in what he/she will say or feel. Although it is difficult, it is therefore very important for the coach to keep an open mind, and to show the other person this, and to suspend any judgements for as long as possible until all the relevant issues are explored and revealed.

## **Drawing Out**

There may be occasions when the learner is not very forthcoming, or just 'dries up'. In such cases the coach will need to draw him/her out. Careful use of open questions is required, questions designed to help the learner focus on relevant issues, to examine his/her thoughts and feelings on them and to express them. Questions such as, "Why?" "How do you know that?" "What makes you think that?" are often helpful.

## **Supporting**

Sometimes a learner may go through a period of low confidence in him/herself: A coach needs to be able to recognise this and to help the learner out of it by using supporting behaviours: giving encouragement, helping the learner recognise the areas in which he/she has succeeded, declaring confidence in him/her. It is preferable to avoid statements like: "You're doing well." The learner may not be able to see that he/she is doing well.

## **Use of Silence**

People often feel uncomfortable with silence. When a gap occurs in conversation, they have an urge to fill it, to say something, no matter what. This can hinder a coaching situation. Just as we need paragraphs and gaps on a printed page, so too do we need punctuation in our conversation to allow time and space for reflection, to examine ideas, to get used to concepts, and to develop our thoughts.

A good coach manages silence, using it to ensure that adequate time is given to explore issues, and that the learner does not feel rushed into things. It also gives the coach time to assess the situation, to reflect, and to think through the next step.

## Summarising

There are times, during as well as at the end of the discussion, when the essential elements and issues need to be brought together in context and restated or summarised.

A good coach summarises regularly during discussion with the learner to help him/her clarify issues, to focus on those that are important, and to guide him/her in the appropriate direction.

An even better approach is to encourage the learner to summarise. This gives the coach a clearer idea of the learner's understanding, and it gives the learner a greater feeling of 'ownership' of problems, solutions and ideas.

## Giving Feedback

Giving feedback is an essential part of coaching and one of the most difficult skills for a coach to master. The learner needs to know how he/she is doing, so that he/she can make adjustments to improve performance. Not only does this feedback need to be helpful and useful: it also needs to be accepted by the learner.

The learner is more likely to accept feedback if he/she can see it as valid and fair.

Feedback should therefore be:

- understandable
- relevant
- timely
- actionable
- objective
- given in small, acceptable amounts.

## Summary

An effective coach:

- needs to be able to recognise what is going on in the learner's situation;
- needs to ensure good two-way communication between him/herself and the learner;
- needs to instil confidence in the learner, and gain his/her confidence
- The skills and behaviours described above aim to realise all of these needs.