



Example of Ineffective Versus Effective Coaching

The purpose of coaching is to guide and support another to:

1. Clarify a current, important priority that the person wants to work on;
2. Identify relevant and realistic actions to address that priority;
3. Take the actions in the person's work or life; and
4. Learn by reflecting on the coaching and the actions.

One of the clearest ways to distinguish the power of coaching is by comparing an effective coaching session with an ineffective session. In the following, let's assume that Tom's current priority, or coaching goal, is to improve his time management.

Sample of an Ineffective Coaching Session

Tom: I have a time management problem. I just don't get enough done in a day.

Bob: Yeah, me, too. That's hard for all of us.

Tom: My boss wants me to get more done, too. I've asked him for help, but he said everything on my todo list is important and that I need to get it all done. He makes me feel even worse.

Bob: Wow, your boss sounds like he's not helpful at all. What are you going to do? If you find something's that's useful, tell me because I'm stuck, too.

Tom: I suppose I'll take a time management course. That'll probably just give me more to do, though. We'll see.

Bob: How many employees work for you?

Tom: I've got 12.

Bob: That's a lot of people. Well, keep your hopes up. Maybe a time management course would be useful – and you should find a new boss!

Sample of an Effective Coaching Session

Notice the coach's use of questions in the following, and that the questions often include the word "you" in them. Also, notice how a coach might not have to know much about Tom's world at all in order to be helpful to Tom.

Tom: I have a time management problem. I just don't get enough done in a day.

Coach: Tell me more. How did you conclude you have that problem?

Tom: I never get everything done on my todo list. The more I get done, the more I end up adding to the list.

Coach: How would you conclude if you've solved your time management problem? What would success look like?

Tom: Well, I'd get everything done on my list. I suppose that's not realistic, though, because there's always something to do.

Coach: How do you like to solve problems like this? Think of a problem that you've solved in the past. For example, do you like to talk to someone, make a list of pro's and con's, etc.?

Tom: Well, I do like to talk to a few people and to make a list of pro's and con's.

Coach: Would that approach be helpful with this situation?

Tom: Yeah, I suppose it would.

Coach: Who are some people you could talk to for help?

Tom: Well, I really think my boss owes me some advice – after all, that's his job. Also, I have two co-workers who seem to feel good about how they manage time.

Coach: Do you like to get specific advice when you talk to someone?

Tom: Yeah, I'll ask them for specific advice.

Coach: So how about you talking to your boss and two co-workers, and then you and I can talk in a week so you can tell me specifically what you're going to do and by when?

Coach: Would it also be useful to get clear on what successful time management looks like to you?

Tom: Yeah, that would be very helpful.

Coach: OK, let's talk next week on Wednesday at 3:00 to hear your specific actions and what success would look like. Is that realistic for you?

Tom: Sure. I can do that. Thanks!