

Coaching– is it worth a can of beans and can its impact be measured?

There have been a number of articles published, not only in this august e-zine, but elsewhere on the subject of evaluating coaching. In my opinion, all good, thought provoking pieces. But is the provocation of thought what we're really looking for, or is it something more tangible?

As a coach, being provocative, challenging, confronting, questioning and all of the other qualities is something we all strive to achieve. After all, helping the client to find the answers to their questions is a major part of the service. Providing the objectivity and impartiality that helps our coachee to focus more on the issue or challenge and stimulating their creativity so that they discover their solutions is our stock in trade, using many differing models and approaches depending on the personality, issue and, often, environment of the session or challenge.

As many of the articles about evaluating coaching attest to, quite a large proportion of the need for coaching seems to focus on 'soft' issues, relationships, personal effectiveness or behavioural change. It is these areas of change that seem to be crucially important to our clients, these situations that cause so much stress and take on such important aspects. But how can we possibly measure, quantify or evaluate the difference that coaching will bring to these components of our lives that only make their presence felt when they fail to work or when they require so much effort to 'fix'.

Feeling less stressed, or having a smile on your face when you're at work, or getting on with a colleague better or feeling more in control or even having a good sense of purpose are all great! And coaching can really help achieve these. But so what? How is the employer benefiting from these desirable outcomes that are costing them anything from £100 an hour over however long the programme is in place for? What do they get for their money and how can the coach help the client to quantify the outcomes?

I've read some very good pieces that describe the initial stakeholder and client meetings at the start of a programme during which objectives are agreed for the coaching. These are an excellent start and a must for any programme. I've also seen good views on mid point and final reviews to check progress and effectiveness. I have also seen many stakeholders in just as much confusion and ignorance as the coachees as to what they really want as outcomes and how they are going to measure it all.

Often there is some trigger that kicks off the requirement for coaching. It could be a need to change an attitude or behaviour, the need for more knowledge or skills. Some challenge has arisen that one of the above could help solve. Just what is

that trigger? Is it something from within the coachee or external to them – a 360 feedback questionnaire or review, something outside of the client?

If the challenge is met and a solution is found, what will the client gain in terms of reward and what could they lose in terms of stress or pain?

Helping the client to ‘walk through’ those ‘what would happen if?’ situations then puts flesh on the ‘do nothing’ and ‘resolve the problem’ options. And there is the delta that should be able to be measured.

For those who may wish to offer even more help in evaluating the impact of change with their client, I’ve found using Decision Trees a real help. They will enable your client to assign different options, probabilities and values to courses of action and put you firmly in the seat of consulting coach. (Try this web site for more information. www.mindtools.com/dectree.html)

In the philosophy of coaching, helping the client to ‘discover’ the measurable value of the coaching will produce not only the will to achieve those future benefits but also a fan for life.

If anyone would like a copy of the flow chart that I have developed to use in evaluating their coaching, please contact me.

Let’s get measuring!

About the author

Roy Scott is a Senior Training Associate for Exceptional Training. He regularly publishes interesting and relevant articles from the world of training. As well as being a qualified and licensed NLP coach. Roy uses his vast experience of coaching senior managers to enhance the delivery of all his training solutions.

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