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Introduction

'There's a coach for everything and everyone'. How true is this comment? Certainly there has been a meteoric rise in the use of coaching as a development tool to improve people's performance. A recent CIPD study (2006) found that 79% of the respondents to their survey are using coaching in their organisations. There are also various descriptors applied to the individuals who provide coaching services. Examples are executive, business, life, performance and corporate.

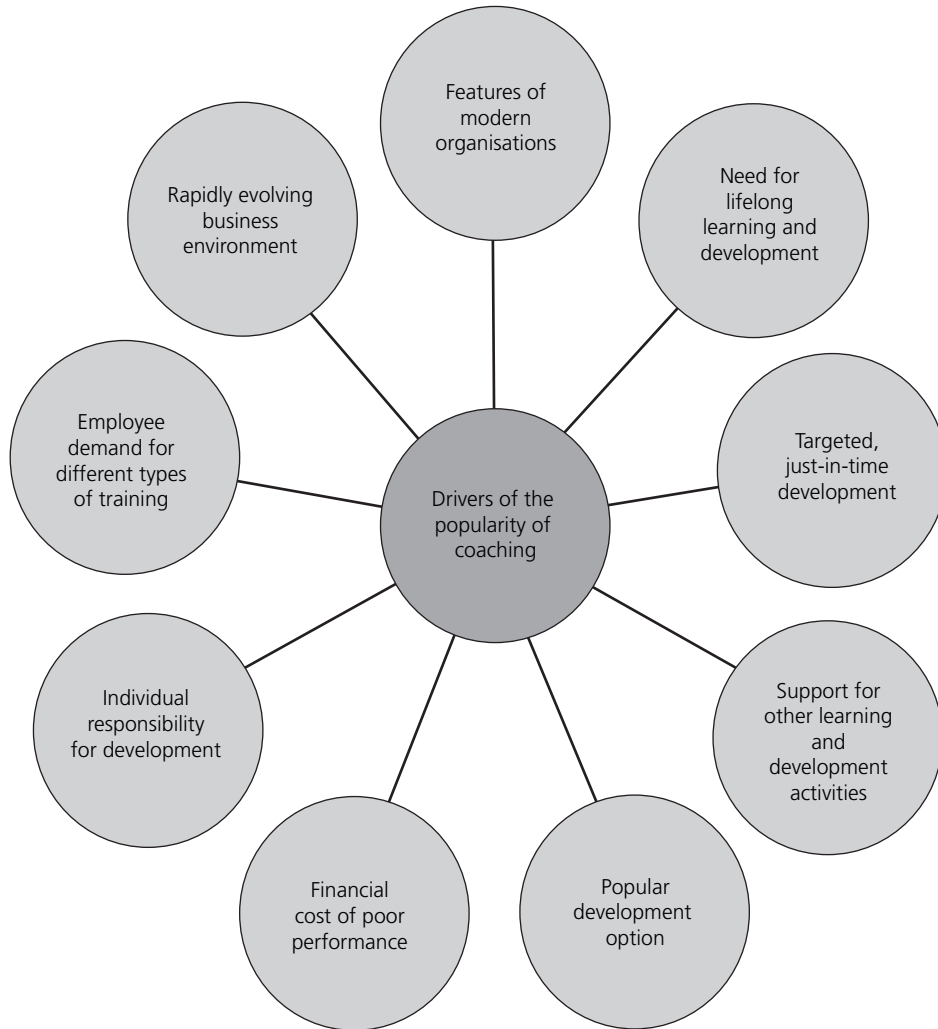
Coaching may have been viewed as 'remedial' and getting 'someone in to fix an underperforming employee' in the past. Generally, however, it's seen as a positive experience, and increasingly, it seems, everyone wants one. We can't ignore the fact that coaching is rising in popularity with a specific focus on improving performance.

So, what has been the reason for this rapid growth and interest? Jarvis et al. (2006) identify for us that coaching offers organisations a win-win solution to the development of their workforce. It has the scope to help individuals reach their potential while also improving the productivity and competitiveness of the business as a whole. The rapid pace of change is also seen as an indicator for the growing use of coaching as people are expected to continually adjust and adapt their skill sets and as flatter organisational structures require individuals to make large step-changes in performance when promoted or when making other job moves.

Examples of the drivers for the increasing popularity of coaching include:

For a short time, due to the market being flooded with people offering their services, coaching experienced a level of scepticism as buyers of

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coaching were confused about what constituted 'quality' services. Coaching organisations such as the International Coach Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) have contributed to support the professionalisation of an unregulated industry by producing quality standards for individual and coach-mentoring training programmes. Organisations are becoming increasingly confident about the benefits of introducing coaching into their learning and development strategies, with line managers holding a key role in its application. Below is a table showing a few examples of the 'myths and truths' about coaching.

Myth	Truth
Line managers already coach.	Line managers undoubtedly use coaching skills in their day-to-day working with their teams. Understanding this and building on their existing skills through coach training will give managers increased awareness of how they can improve their people's performance.
Coaching is only for senior people in the organisation.	This has been the situation in the past, and, increasingly, organisations are introducing coaching at different levels. There is an increase in line managers being trained in coaching skills, and the growth of an internal coaching facility is likely in the future.
Coaching is the best way to improve individuals' performance.	As organisations evaluate their learning activities more and more, there is growing evidence that coaching is a robust development tool when delivered by trained practitioners. However, coaching will only be effective when learners are committed to achieve and succeeds in meeting their outcomes.
Bringing in a coach is the way to manage poor performance.	Managing performance remains the line manager's responsibility. Ideally, the line manager will be trained in coaching skills and will be able to support their team members to improve their performance as needed. Coaching is not appropriate for managing disciplinary issues because of the need for commitment to achieve agreed outcomes.

How to use this Toolkit

This Toolkit has 30 units separated into three parts, many of which contain exercises and worksheets (Tools). The units are addressed partly to HR and L&D, partly to the trainer/training leader or facilitator (hereafter referred to as the Trainer) only, and partly to participants. Material that is solely for the Trainer's eyes is headed 'Trainer's notes', and at the top of

every page has the icon : this material is not available for customising or copying in any way.

Material that may be disseminated in printout or photocopy form for the use of participants is preceded at the top of each page by the icon . This material (generally headed 'Tool') is downloadable from the Toolkit's website and is customisable at the discretion of the purchaser of the Toolkit or the purchaser's Trainer.

If you work in an **organisation**, you can use the customisable documents provided as part of your Toolkit with your employees as the Trainer. The documents can also be customised to suit your organisation. For instance, you can add your own logo, insert or delete whole chunks of text or images, and change the formatting to suit your company branding.

If you wish to place the electronic files on a company intranet or use them across multiple sites or offices, please contact the CIPD via email (publish@cipd.co.uk) to apply for a multi-user licence.

If you are a **consultant**, you can adapt the participants' documentation to the needs of your client for a specific project. Your client and their employees have the right to keep and reuse the tools for the lifetime of this project.

If you have any questions about how you may use your Toolkit, please call 020 8612 3366 or contact us via email (publish@cipd.co.uk).

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References

CIPD (2006) *People Management Survey Results*. London: CIPD.

JARVIS, J., LANE, D. A. and FILLERY-TRAVIS, A. (2006) *The case for coaching: making evidence-based decisions*. London: CIPD.

Unit 16: Listening in a coaching relationship



UNIT 16

Overview

We have all had the frustrating experience of not being heard and, conversely, the pleasure of really being listened to. For an effective coaching relationship, it is vital for the coach to understand their coachees' perspectives. This can best be achieved by attentive and focused listening.

This unit is designed to help participants:

- understand the importance of listening when coaching
- recognise their own typical way of listening and its strengths or limitations.

Format, timing and resources

This exercise is in three stages designed to give each participant the role of:

- 1** speaker
- 2** listener
- 3** observer.

You will stop the participants between each stage and conduct a short debrief with the group. In total, the activity should take about 35 minutes: five minutes for the introductory instructions and ten minutes per stage.

- Flip chart and pens
- Tool 16.1: Part 1: Brief for the listener



- Tool 16.1: Part 2: Brief for the listener
- Tool 16.1: Part 3: Brief for the listener
- Tool 16.1: all stages: Brief for observers
- Tool 16.1: all stages: Brief for speakers
- Trainer's notes
- Tool 16.2: Good active listening
- Tool 16.3: Listening in a coaching relationship
- PowerPoint presentation.

Process

Part 1

The speaker is to talk on a topic of their choice for four minutes (eg, their journey to work each day, their last holiday, their hobby, their job, a film they enjoyed, what they dislike about public transport, etc).

The listener is to be their audience. They are given a brief that explains how they are to behave as they listen. This is *not* to be shown to the Speaker. See the sheet of instructions for detail. The observer is to observe and take notes on any reactions they notice in the speaker during the four minutes. Give out brief for observers and speakers.

- Call time after four minutes and lead into the debrief recording key points on the flip chart.
- Ask the speakers if they have any comments on their experience. Ask what did they notice the listener doing? How did they feel?
- Ask observers for any changes they noticed in the speakers during the four minutes. Ask did you notice changes in the way the person spoke? Did the speaker's body language change at all?
- Ask the listener how it felt to behave this way while listening.

Part 2

- Ask all the participants to change roles so that the observer becomes the speaker, the speaker the listener and the listener the observer.



- Repeat the exercise as above, using the Part 2 brief.
- After four minutes, stop the exercise and lead a debrief as previously. Where the speakers/observers suggest similar emotions or reactions to those already recorded, you may just like to tick them on the flip chart and only record additional comments.

Part 3

- All participants change roles as before so that they have experienced each of the three roles.
- Repeat the exercise using the Part 3 brief.
- After four minutes, stop the exercise and lead a debrief as previously.

Review

- Ask the group if they have any observations to make following the complete activity. Give out copies of Tool 16.2: Good active listening.
- Give out copies of Tool 16.3: Listening in a coaching relationship. Talk through and ask trainees to think about any descriptions they recognise.
- Suggest they may like to review their listening style at various stages during the rest of the day/evening.



Tool 16.1: Part 1: Brief for the listener

PART 1: BRIEF FOR THE LISTENER

Actually, you are to act as if you are not listening! You should look as if you are interested and display enthusiasm, but you are to act as if your primary interest is in being the speaker yourself. Your brief is to display the following types of behaviour:

- As the speaker starts to tell you something, nod in agreement and talk over them, saying, 'Yes, I know, I know. . . . I know exactly how you feel'. Or 'Yes I know . . . that happened to me once.'
- Tell your own short stories or anecdotes: 'That reminds me of a time when . . .'. Ideally, the story you tell should be only vaguely related to the one the speaker was telling, suggesting that you weren't really listening.
- Give uninvited advice: 'You know what you should do?'
- Contradict them, with a smile on your face: 'I'm sure you don't mean that.' 'That's not actually true.'
- Make statements about what the speaker is feeling: 'I can tell you're feeling angry/excited/anxious.' Select an emotion that is not likely to be true for the situation.

The exercise is only four minutes long, so make sure the speaker has a chance to talk for at least half of the time.

Part 2: Brief for the listener



TOOL 16.1

Actually, you are not to listen! You are to act as if you are a bored audience and are here because you have to be. You listen in 'polite' silence because you want the speaker to hurry up and finish so you can go. Your brief is to display the following types of behaviour:

- Sit in silence as the speaker talks. Try not to smile or give nods of encouragement. If you feel yourself nodding, do it in a way that suggests, 'Hurry up and get to the point.'
- Break eye contact frequently by looking off to the side, left or right. This will suggest that you are thinking about something else.
- If the speaker stops talking, look back at them to get them to start again: 'You were saying . . . ?'
- If they ask you a question, give a short, non-committal response.
- If the speaker directly accuses you of not listening, repeat back something you have heard them say, 'You were telling me about . . .'
- If they keep asking for your opinion or trying to draw you in, say, 'This is your time to talk – I'm here to listen.'
- Towards the end of the four minutes, look at your watch once or twice.



Part 3: Brief for the listener

PART 3: BRIEF FOR THE LISTENER

You are to be a model of good active listening! To do this, you should show the following behaviours:

- Sit facing the speaker so you can hear what is said and see their body language.
- Repeat points they have made using the speaker's exact words to show you've been listening.
- Summarise points they have made to check your understanding.
- Use non-verbal gestures of encouragement and interest: head nods, smiles, eye contact, lean forward.
- Respond appropriately to questions and invitations to join in the discussion or give a viewpoint. Your responses should be brief and link into what has been said already.
- Ask questions to clarify your own understanding.

All parts: brief for speaker



TOOL 16.1

You are to talk on a topic of your choice for four minutes. This should be something you can chat about quite easily in an informal way, eg:

- your journey to work each day
- your last holiday or countries you have visited
- a hobby
- your current job or your first ever job
- a film, TV programme or book you enjoyed
- things you dislike about public transport
- your school days
- your views on the 2012 Olympics in London.



All parts: brief for observer

You are to observe the speaker for the four minutes of the exercise. The listener has a brief that describes how to behave, and his or her behaviour may distract or encourage the speaker. You are to observe how the speaker reacts. Make notes on the following:

- what the speaker says and how she says it:
 - Does the speed of speech change?
 - Are there more or less gaps and pauses?
 - Does she raise or lower her voice?
 - Does she sound more or less enthusiastic about what she is saying?
- the speaker's body language and expressions:
 - Does she change the way she sits?
 - Does her expression change in any way?
 - Does she use more or fewer gestures?
 - Does her eye contact change?



Trainer's notes

This sheet gives examples of possible participants' responses. In Part 1 (Interruption and unwanted advice from the listener) and Part 2 (boredom and distraction in the listener), the speaker may have:

- stopped talking
- used a monotone
- become tighter in her body posture
- looked down more frequently
- paused more in her speech
- raised her own voice in order to be heard
- expressed annoyance.

The speaker may have felt:

- angry
- frustrated
- upset
- that she was belittled
- that she was not being heard
- that it wasn't worth the effort to try to explain.

In Part 3, the speaker may have:

- opened up more
- found more to say on her topic
- been more conversational in tone
- show more relaxed body language.

The speaker may have felt:

- relaxed
- friendly
- warm towards the listener
- at ease
- able to speak freely
- that it was a pleasant experience.



Tool 16.2: Good active listening

People's speed of speech is generally considerably slower than we can take in information. This can lead us to stop paying full attention when we listen to others for long periods of time. Active listening means being fully present in the moment and consciously focusing your attention on what is being said.

Try these techniques for active listening:

- Sit facing the speaker so you can hear what is said and see their body language.
- Aim to understand the other person's point of view, irrespective of whether you agree with it or not.
- Repeat points they have made using the speaker's exact words. This is often referred to as 'reflecting back' and confirms that you have been attending fully.
- Summarise points they have made to check your understanding.
- Use non-verbal gestures of encouragement and interest: head nods, smiles, eye contact, lean forward.
- Respond appropriately to questions and invitations to join in the discussion or give a viewpoint. Your responses should link into and build on what has been said already.
- Ask questions to clarify your own understanding.

You should *not*:

- become distracted
- mentally argue with the speaker
- become emotional
- interrupt
- get lost in your own thoughts about how well you are listening – 'Am I doing this right?'
- worry about what you are going to say or do next
- ask so many questions that you end up interrogating the speaker and detracting them from their point.

Tool 16.3: Listening in a coaching relationship



TOOL 16.3

A good coach is someone who makes space for the other person to express their views, thoughts and concerns and who listens without pre-judging. A good coach doesn't force opinions or solutions on others but asks appropriate questions to encourage others to think things through and to develop their own ideas. When coaching someone, it is important to 'listen between the lines' and to notice what is *not* being said as well as what is expressed verbally.

There are different types or levels of listening, and we will all tend to show different styles depending on the situation. Read through the following descriptions and see how many you recognise in your own coaching or managerial relationships.

Types of listening

'I'm sorry, can you run that past me again?'

If you find yourself saying this, or a similar phrase, it usually implies you've not been paying attention. You may have been nodding and smiling in the right places, but your thoughts have been elsewhere. This can often be a problem for busy managers, who dash into the coaching session straight from another meeting or who are distracted by other priorities or tasks.

If this is something you find yourself saying frequently, you need to assess how committed you are to being a coach. If it is a role that is important to you or an essential part of your job, you should make an effort to reprioritise the coaching sessions. The time you have set aside should be sacrosanct, and you should get in the habit of mentally leaving all your other commitments at the door of the coaching room.



'That reminds me of a time when ...'

If you find yourself mentally hurrying people along so you can tell your own story or tell them the answer to their problem, then this could be a major drawback in a coaching situation. Typically, you will have stopped listening as soon as you have your own idea about what you want to say next. Then you spend the rest of the time waiting for the speaker to finish so it's your turn to speak. Whilst your readiness to offer a relevant anecdote might keep conversation flowing at a social event, it is not appropriate in a coaching relationship.

If this is a style you recognise in yourself, the first step is to notice when you are doing it. In a coaching situation, your anecdote or experience might be relevant and helpful, but it may not. The first step is to mentally check how helpful it could be. If you think it could be useful, try to get in the habit of checking this out with the person you are coaching. For example, 'that reminds me of an experience I had when I was a supervisor, would you like to hear about how I reacted?' The key is to keep it short and focused on the points of relevance to the coaching situation and not to spend too long on your own memories.

'I totally agree' or 'How can he think that?'

When this is your mental reaction when listening, you are usually filtering what you hear through your own values, opinions, experiences and beliefs. As you are listening, you are focused on deciding what you agree with and what you disagree with, rather than seeking to understand the other person's views. Your stance is that of a judge – is this 'right' or 'wrong'? In doing this, you are assessing everything that is said against a template based on your own perspective.

If this is your usual style, you may find you spend a lot of time trying to convince others of your point of view. This is usually unhelpful in a coaching relationship. You need to judge when your own experience and knowledge can add value and when you need to hear more about the views of the person you are coaching. If you do feel the need to express your own opinion, try adding a question: 'It's interesting that you say



you've experienced *x, y, z*. My experience has been *a, b, c*. I wonder why that is? Maybe we could spend some time exploring that?'

'How interesting that she sees things that way'

People who have this reaction tend to listen with an open mind and accept that others have different views, experiences and beliefs. They are often intrigued and curious about what makes others tick and want to find out more. They may hear things they disagree with or that are different to their own perceptions but they are comfortable to discuss and explore these differences and to accept that the other person may not share the same viewpoint.

In a successful coaching relationship, there should be respect for any differences in opinion. An effective coach makes space to explore the consequences and benefits of different viewpoints.

'What's the real message?'

People who are aware of what is *not* being said are usually alert to body language and other non-verbal communication. They recognise the 'yes' that means 'no' – when someone is verbally agreeing but their body language is communicating something else. They notice the topics or issues the person avoids when communicating, or how their body language or voice tone changes at certain points. They are attentive to all aspects of the communication and are seeking to understand the real message that is being conveyed. They notice:

- **content:** what is said, the words that are chosen, what is *not* discussed, the analogies and examples given
- **voice:** the tone, volume, speed and pitch
- **body language:** how the speaker uses their body to convey what they are feeling through their posture, gestures, breathing, eye movements.

This is the ideal but cannot be achieved overnight. It comes with practice and focused attention, and, if done naturally, and seemingly effortlessly, helps to foster good communication.



PowerPoint presentation of Unit 16

'I'm sorry, can you run that past me again?'

'That reminds me of a time when...'

'I totally agree' or 'How can s/he think that?'

'How interesting that s/he sees things that way'

'What's the real message?'

Active listening dos

Face the speaker so you can see/hear them clearly.

Aim to understand the other person's point of view, whether you agree with it or not!

Repeat points using the speaker's exact words ('reflecting back').

Summarise points they have made to check your understanding.

Use non-verbal gestures of encouragement and interest: head nods, smiles, eye contact, lean forward.

Respond appropriately to questions and invitations to join in the discussion or give a viewpoint.

Build on what has been said already.

Active listening don'ts

Don't become distracted.

Don't mentally argue with the speaker.

Don't become emotional.

Don't interrupt.

Don't get lost in your own thoughts about how well you are listening – 'Am I doing this right?'

Don't worry about what you are going to say or do next.

Don't ask so many questions that you end up interrogating the speaker and detracting them from their point.