



***COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE - HOW TO REAWAKEN HUMAN  
POTENTIAL IN WORK, SPORTS AND EVERYDAY LIFE***  
(JOHN WHITMORE)

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT: ISSUE 7/2017.**

## INTRODUCTION

*Sir John Whitmore* authored five greatly successful books on the subjects of leadership, coaching and sports. He was a motor racing champion who later devoted himself to the psychology of sport and work. In addition to developing his career as a business consultant in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the United States, he collaborated with Timothy Gallwey to found Inner Game Ltd., an organization that offers coaching methods inspired by the world of sport. Winner of the President's Award of the International Coach Federation as a leader in the field of coaching, he worked as a consultant for large companies at the international level. The book that we are going to be reviewing has been translated into more than 20 languages and is currently in its fourth Italian language edition.

For almost two decades, this volume has served as a classic guide for company managers who want to inspire their collaborators to achieve their potential. The work draws on the techniques used in sports to suggest a method that the heads of professional studios can also use to guide their clients and collaborators to self-awareness, helping them to access their inner potential and to perform at maximum capacity.

The principal technique used by the author is that of open questions, which are administered according to the GROW sequence (goal, reality, options, will) to help coachees gain greater awareness regarding their objectives and how to achieve them as well as to discover ways of getting around the obstacles that impede progress toward these goals.

The book is therefore an excellent introductory guide for professionals who want to acquire the bases of coaching in order to enrich the tools at their disposal for helping their clients and better managing their studios.

The book is divided into four basic parts:

1. the principles of coaching;
2. the activity of coaching;
3. leadership, and
4. personal transformation through coaching.

### THE PRINCIPLES OF COACHING

Coaching finds its origins in sports activities. Toward the end of the 20th century, Harvard professor and tennis coach Timothy Gallwey

challenged the traditional methods of the teacher-student relationship with *The Inner Game of Tennis*. Following his theses, every athlete must first defeat his inner adversary in order to achieve success in competition.

Gallwey redefined the essence of coaching: it is an activity that serves to unlock the potential that people have to optimize performances.

Over the course of the ensuing years, Gallwey, Whitmore and other pioneers extended this concept to the activities of organization management.

Being an effective coach, mentor, counsellor or facilitator requires believing in human potential. Above all, a coach must believe that his coachee has the potential to improve. Experiments in the field of education demonstrate that a coach or teacher who has confidence in the abilities of a student has a direct effect on performances. An effective coach works to build the awareness, self-confidence and sense of responsibility of each coachee.

The coachee must reach the decisions, act on the basis of those decisions, and assume responsibility for his choices to ensure success and feed self-esteem.

The role of the coach is to stimulate and guarantee that the coachee actually carries out what emerged in the various coaching sessions.

### THE OFFICE MANAGER AS COACH

An office manager can be more effective when the relationship with the collaborator is one of trust, collaboration and mutual security. In many cases, this managerial approach substantially differs from the traditional boss/employee relationship in which the former imposes his demands on his subordinates. Rather than being dictatorial, the manager coach must have empathy, integrity, and not pursue his own success but that of the collaborator. The office manager will ask the coachee questions that lead to clarity on the task, making it more easily achievable; this clarity will enable the coachee to imagine success and to assume the responsibility for achieving it. Also the office manager will be facilitated in his task by working on consensus instead of hierarchy and will be much more appreciated and gratified in his task.

### THE NATURE OF COACHING

The first key to the success of coaching is awareness, which requires more attention to watching and listening in the workplace and to understanding emotions and work processes.

Awareness includes first of all self-awareness of emotions and desires that can blur perception.

The coach makes individuals aware of the uniqueness of their physical and mental state and their own abilities. Rather than imposing the “right” way to carry out a task, the method builds on the personal capabilities of the coachee and confidence in his professional ability.

The second key to the success of coaching is attribution of responsibility. Workers who have the autonomy to make choices must still assume the responsibility for those choices, and consequently are able to provide a high level of performance.

A good coach will act in such a way that the coachee gains the awareness and responsibility to achieve optimal results in the short term, and will also succeed in helping him improve his quality of life in the long term.

The techniques of coaching are generalist, so that very often coaches don’t have to be experts in specific fields in order to coach well, even if such technical skills can help to attain optimal results in some particularly problematical situations.

#### THE QUALITIES OF THE COACH

The ideal coach will possess the following qualities:

- ✓ patience;
- ✓ detachment;
- ✓ support;
- ✓ interest in others;
- ✓ ability to listen;
- ✓ perceptiveness;
- ✓ awareness;
- ✓ self-knowledge;
- ✓ attentiveness.

#### THE EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

By posing open questions at the start, studio managers can train their collaborators to think independently. The coach should then gradually narrow the focus of the open questions to increase the degree of detail, maintaining the coachee’s concentration and awareness, and refine the points of the task that the coachee needs to understand. The questions should follow

the flow of thought and interest of the coachee, and the coach must pay maximum attention to the responses.

The coachee’s tone of voice, choice of words, and body language will be able to provide the coach with insights regarding his behaviour. From time to time the expert manager-coach will summarize what the coachee is saying to make sure good alignment is maintained. In addition, the coach should remain aware of himself in each session in order to be able to note and manage personal reactions and emotions that can help or hinder the process.

#### THE GROW SEQUENCE

The sequence of questions in a coaching session can be divided into four groups:

- a) GOAL: the objective to achieve
- b) REALITY: the reality of which one is part
- c) OPTIONS: what the available alternative strategies are
- d) WILL: the future, the determination, the actions, i.e., what must be done by whom and when.

#### A. SETTING GOALS

At the start of a session, the coach will agree on the goal of the session with the coachee.

The goals can be short-term, like those relating to level of performance or productivity, but they can also regard the collaborator’s desires.

An executive should make every effort not to manipulate the collaborator’s goals. Instead, on the basis of his coaching skills, he should guide those goals to align with the company’s mission. The goals must be achievable but demanding, and be described in positive terms. In addition, goals should be ethical and respectful of the environment.

#### B. REALTY

Reality is an attentive, detailed description of the coachee’s present condition. This is the second step because starting out from reality could put the coachee into a negative condition (perhaps because the condition in which he finds himself is too discouraging), so first of all one makes him perfectly aware of his goal, and only later gets him to acknowledge the conditions in which he finds himself.

In this way, an unconscious mental bridge is also created: it’s like delineating the two points that

must connect a bridge, which will be later built by the unconscious and then by the conscious part. Bringing the coachee into contact with reality also means remembering that his perception of the world is not exempt from judgements that can obfuscate it. Therefore, in this phase the coach guides his client to get rid of his perceptive filters in order to bring him into contact with the current situation and, from this position, go on to identify the options that make it possible to achieve his goal.

#### **C. OPTIONS**

When the coach helps a coachee to take various courses of action into consideration, he should elicit the greatest possible number of alternatives so as to provide a broad base of choice.

The coachee should feel at his ease in doing brainstorming without the fear of expressing unsuitable ideas.

When the coachee finds himself short of alternatives, the coach can offer ideas that are not yet on the table, with the authorization of the coachee.

Once a list of options has emerged, the coach can encourage an in-depth evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with each option.

#### **D. ACTION**

In the final phase the coach will ask the coachee to determine his path of action towards his goal, posing questions that can nourish and sustain the coachee's determination.

#### **WHAT IS COACHING IN THE STUDIO GOOD FOR?**

The essence of coaching is to unleash people's potential in order to optimize their performances. Coaching shouldn't concentrate exclusively on the improvement of performances, however. Optimal results can also be achieved in learning and motivation.

In particular, the author subdivides the learning process into four stages:

- unconscious incompetence – low yield and understanding;
- conscious incompetence – low yield but recognition of deficiencies;
- aware competence – performances improved through conscious effort;
- unconscious competence – natural, automatic higher performances.

The coach can accompany the collaborator toward gaining awareness of his incompetence and then accompany him toward achieving unconscious competence through all the phases of learning.

#### **COACHING FOR THE MOTIVATION AND GROWTH OF COLLABORATORS**

One of the possible uses of coaching in the studio is that of helping the worker find motivation in what he does. In this case, particular sequences of questions will be used.

Another important use is that of using the technique of questions to give higher quality feedback on the performances provided, such as in the area of delegating, for example, with respect to the traditional ways that can be used.

#### **COACHING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TEAM**

The members of effective teams demonstrate confidence, commitment, patience, compatibility, adaptability, enthusiasm and altruism.

A coach can help to build a team through three phases of development:

1. Inclusion. This is when the person decides whether to become part of the working group. Most people feel a strong need for acceptance and an equally strong fear of refusal and the manager should provide a guide and facilitate acceptance by setting the climate of the group.
2. Affirmation. This is the period in which the group affirms its power and expands its boundaries. The individuals establish roles and functions, and competition reigns. The leader must face the challenges set by the members of the team, and a good leader will accept the challenges and encourage the members to assume their responsibilities.
3. Cooperation. This is the last stage, but the group must not be cooperative to the point of stagnating. Most effective working groups work in a cooperative manner while maintaining a measure of dynamic tension.

Coaching is of vital importance for the development of cohesive teams that work with success. The coaching techniques to help a team accomplish tasks are similar to those used in giving coaching to individuals.

In these contexts, doing coaching by example is fundamental, and the coach can set the climate of the team by providing a model of openness and honesty and demonstrating a willingness to invest time and energy for the common purposes. The coach will lead the members of the team to discuss and agree on common goals, as well as to develop shared basic rules.

#### OVERCOMING RESISTANCES TO COACHING

Even if everybody isn't open to coaching, a coach can efficaciously overcome many resistances by adopting an adequate approach.

Common barriers to overcome are:

- ✓ an authoritarian company culture, contrary to coaching;
- ✓ cynicism regarding the new approach;
- ✓ incomprehension of the coaching approach;

Schedule a meeting with the local Partner of **Clarkson Hyde Global** - and discover all of the advantages of a **Glocal organisation. Helping you take on the world.**

**Think Globally, Act Locally.**

- ✓ the belief that coaching is ineffective;
- ✓ the belief that coaching requires too much time;
- ✓ the belief that people prefer to be told what to do.

Also the office manager could exhibit internal barriers that prevent him from using coaching, such as:

- ✓ the fear of losing managerial power;
- ✓ the fear of being blocked;
- ✓ the fear of not attaining the desired results;

- ✓ the fear of changing what works;
- ✓ aversion to a softer approach to management; and
- ✓ the belief that only money motivates workers.

A manager who wants to adopt a coaching approach must let go of the old methods and the security they represent. Only removal of the old barriers can enable the new potentialities to emerge.

#### THE MULTIPLE ADVANTAGES OF COACHING

The benefits of coaching include the improvement of performance and productivity, the development of personnel, greater learning, and better interpersonal relations within the professional studio.

Individual collaborators will see the improvement in the quality of working life and will assume greater responsibilities, freeing up time for the manager and allowing him to be more productive in his role.

Coaching also sparks a greater number of creative ideas on the part of the members of the team, reveals hidden skills and reinvigorates motivation. Coaching can be extremely meaningful in times of crisis, as it helps people to make sense of difficult situations and to free themselves from self-limiting fears that impede action.

Finally, coaching can be used at the base of a new way of doing consultancy for professionals expert in economic and business matters to help their clients make a quality leap at the organizational level.

Contact the Clarkson Hyde Global partners, open yourself to them. They will know how to put effective questions to you and support you in the realization of your entrepreneurial dream.