

Coaching and Mentoring

What is coaching?

From the early forms of transportation, i.e. a stage coach, the word coaching literally means to transport someone from one place to another. Coaching is the word adopted by learning and development (L&D) professionals to describe a particular form of one-to-one support. One of the key benefits of coaching is that it helps people move forward or create change.

In its classical form, L&D coaching usually takes place as a series of discussions between two people, the coach and the client (or coachee). The coach supports the client by building a supportive relationship and asking powerful questions to help the client clarify his/her goals and identify resources, skills and strategies to achieve those goals. Goals in coaching could include anything from a good night's sleep to starting a business.

Coaching exists in many different forms in many different areas of human activity and performance. There are sports coaches, life coaches, musical coaches, voice coaches and sleep coaches to name but a few. Executive Coaching is the most common form of coaching in the workplace.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring differs from coaching in that the mentor is usually an experienced professional from the same field or industry as the mentee; which allows them to offer specific advice and insights to help the mentee achieve his or her goals. A mentor offers long-term advice, guidance and support, e.g. on career development, business strategy, leadership and people management. Where a coach doesn't need to be an expert in the same field of the coachee, the mentor has experience to offer from the same profession as the mentee. Mentoring could also be described as a form of apprenticeship, where an inexperienced learner learns the 'tricks of the trade' from a more experienced colleague¹. The term comes from the Greek myth in which Odysseus entrusts the education of his son to his friend Mentor.

Training and qualifications

- If you want to learn more about Executive Coaching the Academy of Executive Coaching run free open days (www.aoec.com)
- Several Universities offer short courses on Executive coaching, e.g. the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) at the University of Cambridge (<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/coaching-and-leadership>).
- There are also a number of postgraduate courses available in coaching and mentoring, e.g. at Oxford Brookes University, (<http://www.cipd.co.uk/cipd-training/qualifications/learning-talent/coaching-mentoring>)

¹ Mentoring – CIPD Factsheet. February 2009. CIPD London.