

Part I

Performance Coaching

MOTIVATING YOUR TEAM COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS

Many of the limitations we have in relation to our performance are the ones we place on ourselves.

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Coaching your team

This chapter is about:

Understanding the thinking of a performance coach. Team leaders going beyond the role of line manager, operating appraisal or performance management processes, the best team leaders and managers are moving into the role of performance coach. Performance coaches seek to empower team members to be highly effective by reducing or removing limiting control mechanisms and maximising processes that motivate.

Why is this important?

Generally long-lasting and meaningful change in people is internally generated. If organisations are to allow their staff to 'shine' and make the most of their potential then the role of team leader as performance coach is vital. If an organisation is to become an adaptable learning organisation then it must engage the hearts, minds and talents of its people, and this is rarely, if ever, done by tight control. I would suggest that it is now almost impossible for any organisation with more than a few staff, to be effective by using command and control mechanisms. If the organisation employs well trained or educated staff, who are expected to make decisions or deal with clients in relation to complex transactions, then I would doubt a team leader who utilises command and control will ever have highly effective team members.

Appraisal and performance management processes have had their successes. Appraisal and performance management have enabled organisations to integrate their processes but some organisations have not yet seen the potential for coaching within these processes. For organisations to be highly successful their people have to be allowed to go beyond conformance and the basic requirements of performance management. Clearly, conformance to a manufacturing or professional

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standard is vital in many organisations but for staff to be fully motivated and engaged they need to be allowed to rise above detailed control mechanisms. To foster this fully engaged mentality team leaders need to see themselves as not only managers, but also as leaders and performance coaches.

Self-review

How would you rate yourself in term of being a team leader who can act as coach in an effective performance-coaching situation? Complete this self-review before reading the rest of this chapter and see where you stand now. At the end of the chapter you can repeat the self-review to assess any impact.

Performance coaching should be:	Yes/Partly/No
Seen as being a key tool in helping staff focus on their core tasks.	
The key to informing training, development, target setting and development planning.	
A structured professional dialogue based on a combination of objective data and appraisee self-review.	
A professional process that is rational, logical and conducted with respect.	
Transparent, with no hidden agendas; appraiser, appraisee and key senior staff being able to see essential documentation.	
Sustainable because it is low in bureaucracy; involving the minimum of paperwork.	
Flexible enough to allow for unforeseen issues and problems that arise mid-year.	
A process that is reviewed annually by the users of the process.	
Democratic enough so that suggestions for improvement are accepted by senior staff, following review.	
Score: Yes = 2, Partly = 1, No = 0. 1–6 you need to update your knowledge of effective performance coaching. 7–12 you are getting there. 12 + the process is becoming effective.	

So how did you do in relation to team leader as performance coach? If you need to develop your thinking in this area read on.

Good practice

Team leaders, managers and senior staff need to understand and accept that one of their key roles is to coach their people, to help their people become effective in their task. Let us see how a leader can ensure performance coaching *does not* work – but in a world away from business and professional settings. This coach/manager is applying much of philosophy I hear when I work in many ‘professional’ settings, I hope you agree that this scenario illustrates the points of blockage in ‘tongue-in-cheek’ fashion. The interviewee is talking to the local sports reporter:

Scenario the manager

The board appointed me as head coach and manager of this team but I recognise my players as professionals. I don’t watch them play, I stay in my office and supervise the game by marking and commenting on the written plans they submit before each game. Granted, asking such talented players to submit detailed written plans makes them tired; they spend hours producing the plans the day before the game but I think it is worth it as I then know what it is they intend to do. They tell me the paperwork demotivates them and stops them training but I think it is good practice to produce detailed plans. I must admit they tell me the game rarely goes exactly to plan but even so they do try to stick to the plan, even if the game is not going well. We have lost quite a lot of games recently and the players don’t seem engaged, I don’t understand why, our plans are good!

The players wouldn’t appreciate my support and coaching before, during or after the game, I certainly don’t want to talk with them about their performance, this would be unprofessional, its just not done is it? Of course the one thing we never discuss is results; in fact, we are not sure how we would measure results even if we wanted to. This is a question of philosophy you understand, we all have different views on this I guess. We judge how well we are doing by the quality of our play, not results; result can be too crude a measure. To discuss results may irritate the players and that is to be avoided at all costs. We are a caring club so we don’t check result, we don’t certainly don’t ask if the spectators enjoy or benefit from the game, this would be too managerial. We value each individual too much to ask ourselves if a player is playing well.

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In actual fact, if we have a problem it is usually not the fault of the leadership but it is usually down to the players themselves, they can be just a little too individualistic and stubborn. I guess I will have to live with that fact as I am not sure what I can do about it. You see most problems in this club are the fault of the sport's governing body or the spectators. I wish they would leave us alone and let us get back to playing the game ...

How long would such a team manager last – in *any* area of business? Mind you I have been lucky enough, or is it unlucky enough, to be with several professional football teams when they have been 'briefed' by the coach and manager. The experience was a shock for me as I saw aggression from the manager and coach and a cynical detachment in the team members. I spoke to several of the team members after the session, on a one-to-one basis, and the players had no loyalty to the club. They had been switched off by the leadership. One well-known, household name, stated he could not wait to leave the team. The team dropped from the premiership very soon after, then the manager was replaced.

Leading organisations and leading teams is now an incredibly complex task, not one to be undertaken by well-meaning amateurs with no training in the task of being a professional coach or team leader. All team leaders and senior staff now need to develop a second set of professional skills knowledge and understanding, that of the professional leader. The time of the expert business or professional person putting themselves forward as 'gifted' amateur leaders is ready to be consigned to the waste bin of history! No matter how good a manager, engineer, teacher or lawyer you are you cannot trust to chance the leading of teams of expensive and well-trained staff; team leaders need to be trained and professional leaders of men and women. We need expert performance coaches to lead our teams if we are to go from being average in performance to being excellent.

In contrast to the poor experience I have had when observing well-known football teams, I have spoken to and watched many top rugby players go from strength to strength when the management of the team has been professional and positive. The 2003 World Cup winning England rugby team being a good example of effective leadership and coaching improving further the individual talents of the squad. There are managers in football and American football who seem to take success with them wherever they work, and there are others that seem to breed discontent and unrest!

Getting started

As a team leader or senior leader, how do you ensure your people are motivated to be effective, are able to work within the vision, mission and plans of the organisation, yet at the same time recognise and work within some degree of accountability and rational control? This is a question many leaders ask themselves, and there is no easy answer, but every organisation needs to find the balance between empowerment and control that best meets the needs of their particular context, staff experience and professionalism. As ever there is rarely a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to this question.

Clarity and freedom to operate?

It in my experience that all types of employee like a sensible degree of clarity in their day-to-day work. Most recently I have been working as a consultant to several highly effective organisations and I asked them to identify what it was that had made them effective and what they thought would enable them to stay effective. A shared vision, philosophy and sense of direction was what most agreed gave them a sense of clarity and shared purpose. They also added other concepts such as shared or distributed leadership, suggesting the senior leaders 'go with the best logic' even if this best logic is offered by a person who may be a relatively junior member of the team. They also suggested leaders need to show trust, be open-minded and be informed by values they recognised.

It may not be easy but I have found it is worth spending some time agreeing what effective practice actually looks like. If your team can agree what 'good' is in your context, they will be some way towards creating their own, shared clarity. When the team or the organisation has agreed what good practice or effective working looks like, they would need to discuss how this can be evidenced, assessed or measured. In this way effective performance becomes an agreed concept. It is vital to test these concepts out with your internal and external clients/customers/stakeholders because if their version of good does not match yours you may find yourself with a big problem. When you think you have agreed a rational and observable version of effective performance, you can then create a benchmark and quality measure to work within. In an ideal world this quality standard or benchmark would be internalised by your team, but in reality this limit of effective performance may be best illustrated as a set of parameters or limits that your team works within. If the parameters are not too tight and controlling, staff will be able to function with the maximum of freedom within the limits of effective practice demanded by your organisation in its context. I call this the 'earned autonomy model', and to date I have found it has worked well in all types of contexts where teamworking is essential but also where a good degree of autonomous

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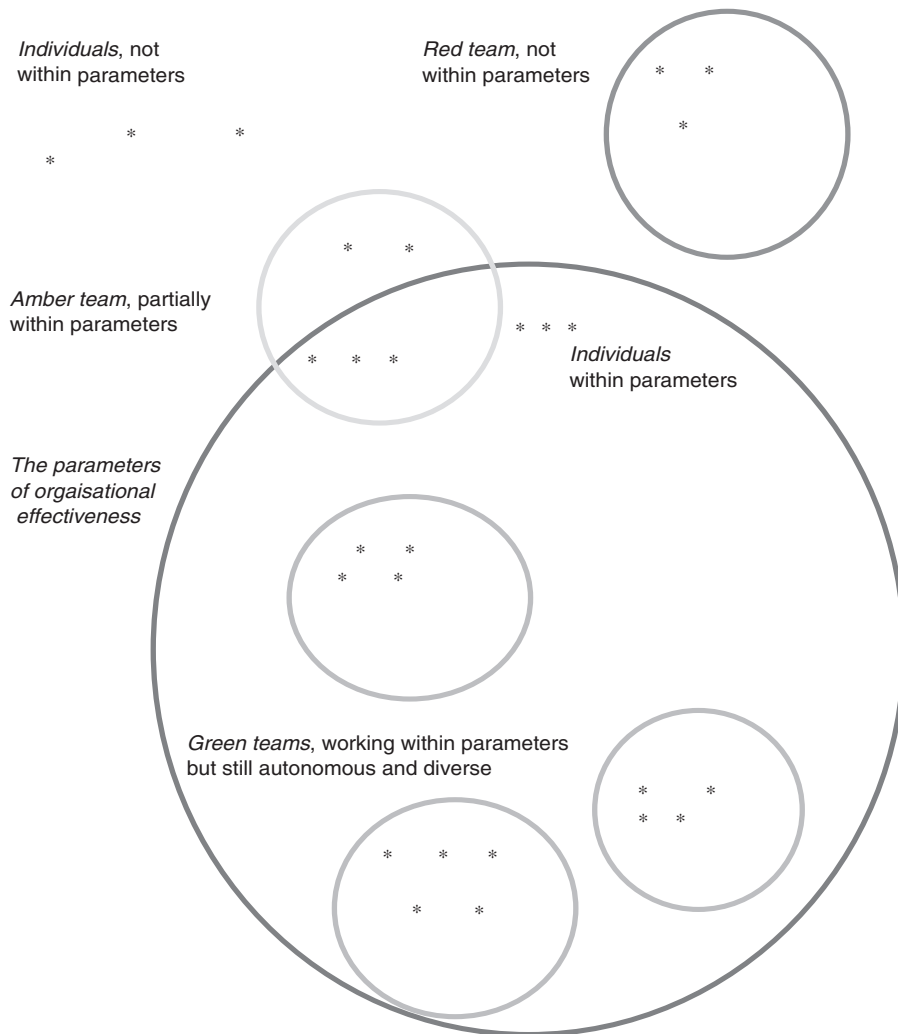


Figure 1.1 *Autonomous and diverse teams working within agreed organisational/business parameters*

decision-making and action is demanded of your team members. This model seems to work particularly well in professional contexts or where staff have a professional approach to their work.

Earned autonomy model

This model (Figure 1.1) takes quite a degree of thought but if you can hold the two seemingly alternative positions of being having clear and agreed controls and maximum freedom to operate, in your head at the same time, you

will start to see the simplicity of the model. In this way you can have controls your team work within, you can ensure a degree of accountability and quality control, and have a sense of clarity. These factors seem to motivate as suggested earlier; people like a degree of clarity and to have effective performance your team members need to know what effective performance looks like and know the limits of their freedom. You can also motivate your team by offering them a good degree of freedom to operate and make decisions, a degree of autonomy shows trust in the team leader and this again motivates team members.

This model is another form of effective delegation offering freedom within limits. Effective delegation is key in motivating your team and ensuring effectiveness of performance. This is where your coaching skills are tested to the full. You seek to ensure effective performance of each individual and team, but you now know tight controls do not seem to motivate or produce sustainable high standards of performance. As you become more experienced as a coach you will develop a 'continuum' of coaching, leading and consultancy style, all of which are correct to use in the right context at the right time. I have found the continuum of styles of coaching equally ineffective when used in the wrong way at the wrong time. There is as much theory linked to coaching, leadership and consultancy as there is to motivation, so I will not go into it here. However, I do include a list of works in the 'Further reading' list at the end of the chapter.

Coaching styles

Coaching styles can vary from the downright directive to the entirely client centred. In one mode the coach can offer clear advice, in another the coach may draw a solution from the team and in yet another the coach may allow the team or the individual complete ownership of the issue and the solution to that issue. In my professional context as a leader I have tried most forms of coaching when working with my team members. As a leader I found I could not allow my team complete autonomy in relation to their performance as we were all accountable for the performance results and, as such, I needed to have my say when the going got a little rough! This may be to do with my own stage of personal development but I think it is true to say most business and professional organisations are not democracies and it is irrational not to offer limits to freedom of action to your team. When working as an internal client-centred coach I could not let go of my obligation to the clients of the organisation where I am employed. I could not focus solely on the needs of my adult client (staff) at the expense of my main clients. I can easily work as an effective client-centred coach when working externally. When working with other organisations as a consultant I can step back from leadership and accept that the client owns the issue and the solution, as this is a legal and professional fact. I now adopt a more traditional

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coaching style when working with colleagues from my own team. I have accepted the ethical position that demands I put the needs our clients ahead of those of the adults I coach and lead. In a more traditional coaching role I can accept that I have a vested interest in the development of the coachee and his/her effectiveness in the organisation and the team.

There are tensions involved in operating as a coach and I doubt internal, full blown, client-centred consultancy/coaching approach can work to its best extent in one's own organisation with one's own team. Is the option 'to do nothing' real when working in the organisation that employs both the client and the consultant? In the organisation where I serve as leader I have a legal, professional and ethical responsibility to ensure effectiveness of the Sorganisation for the benefit of my clients. Clearly, I had a vested interest in my team's development and I found it hard to 'step back' and observe success and failure in the way I can when acting as an external consultant.

Coaches and team leaders do not change people

When you first start to observe effective coaches and leaders you may wonder what they have that enables them to be so good at changing the performance and attitude of their teams. Even when some great coaches and leaders move from organisation to organisation, success, to a greater or lesser degree, seems to follow them! I have watched business leaders, headteachers and sports coaches, in a variety of sports, move from one organisation and take a degree of success with them. It would be easy to put this consistent success down to sheer luck, and of course a degree of good luck is invaluable in any business, sport or profession, but it is more than sheer good luck. If you observe closely you will notice that good leaders and coaches do not change their people; instead they create the right culture and climate for their people to grow and develop, to be at their best. Like an effective gardener they know they cannot make the flowers grow but they can buy good stock, plant well, tend the soil, add nutrients and protect the new shoots from extremes until they are strong enough to stand alone in the worst of conditions. The really effective coach knows how to create the conditions for good quality team members to thrive; in short they know how to motivate. Even the best coach, like the best gardener, will fail if the stock is of poor quality from the outset; to have a great team first you must ensure you recruit the right type of team member with not only the right skill set but the right mindset. You will get nowhere with team members who are determined to fail. Like an effective gardener, sometimes the conditions or the seasons are not right for planting, so as a coach you need to pick your time well. You have to have a good sense of timing, when to push your people, when to support and when to end a relationship or contract. This is not easy.

A really great coach or leader knows how to apply so many skills in the right way, to the right people and at the right time, but how do great coaches do

this? I think really great coaches spend a lifetime changing themselves so they can be calm, confident, experienced and mature enough to reduce the background noise in their own minds enough to really see, hear, smell, taste, sense and feel emotionally what is actually going on and what is actually needed. This is a process of change that never ends for the greatest of coaches.

Be an expert single-tasker

You hear so much about 'multi-tasking' these days – this is the thing men cannot do well, we are told! When I think about best performance I usually observe people who are 'expert, single-taskers', not multi-taskers. There have been times when I have been playing rugby, cricket and squash where I have been 'in the zone' with a total focus on nothing else than the ball and the situation on the pitch/court. When I have been in the zone I have been focused on one task, I have given it my full attention with no thought of my concerns, my ego or myself. It may be the case that I have undertaken a series of single tasks very quickly but at no time was I doing two separate things at once, at least not in my conscious mind (clearly I was breathing and pumping blood, but not consciously at that moment).

In performance coaching, especially in one-to-one coaching or review meetings, single-tasking helps you really see, hear, smell, touch and sense with clarity of mind. If you single-task well, your full attention will be focused on the signals the individual in front of you is giving off, which in turn helps you understand what their issues and concerns may be even if they do not actually tell you what these are. As an effective single-tasker you can then start to help your team member explore issues they may not yet be fully conscious of. This level of awareness and skill takes sensitivity and experience but once the benefits of single-tasking are recognised you will not want to go back to multi-tasking. When it comes to coaching and working with your team members you need to focus on them, their performance, their concerns, their body language, mannerisms, tone of voice, eye movement, and so on. If you are undertaking a one-to-one coaching session or meeting, you need to put the team member at the centre of the meeting. You need to remove all other distractions such as phone calls, interruptions, excess heat or cold so you and your coachee can really plumb the depths of perception and feelings, not just talk of surface issues in between phone calls and interruptions. This is no easy task, especially for a busy manager or team leader surrounded by other people and ringing phones, but it needs to be done if your team member is to be valued, heard and motivated by the coaching session. So, should we start a light-hearted movement against the much credited multi-taskers and their 'attention deficit' working methods? Should we start a movement of expert serial single-taskers, hoping to bring some focus and quality back into interactions between people?

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In performance coaching, as in traditional performance management, the annual review is a vital meeting. The appraisee is often a little nervous as he/she is going to have all they have done in the last year analysed. The appraiser has to tread a fine line between listening, supporting and ensuring key targets are met and set. This is the meeting where single-tasking attention on the individual is essential. This scenario shows how not to do it.

Scenario

Jenny had had her appraisal meeting in her diary for some time now, she had reviewed her targets and other objectives, and she thought she had done well. Her team leader, Joan, had been positive in her feedback after lesson observations, and the mid-year progress review meeting went well. Joan had asked about training, development and progress towards targets and had assisted Jenny with a few minor issues. As a new member of the team, Jenny had been quite impressed with the attitude of her team leader and the performance processes in the organisation; in her last job it had felt like a bolt-on process and was negative. Jenny was a little nervous about the meeting with Joan but she had let Joan see copies of her draft assessments of targets hit and nearly hit so she felt she had done all she could.

At 9.30 a.m. Jenny turned up outside the room where she was to meet Joan. Jenny had had a nightmare of a drive into work and, to cap it all, when she arrived she found that the person who was to cover her tasks for that morning was ill and would not be coming in! Jenny had managed to get cover just in time for her meeting but her heart was still racing. When she knocked on the door Joan did not answer, in fact Joan was nowhere to be seen. Jenny sat down and waited. After a short while Joan arrived and stated that she was sorry for being late, she had realised that she had not put the meeting in her diary! Joan then announced that she had not read the draft review material, provided by Jenny, and asked Jenny if she could wait outside while she found the materials and reviewed them. Jenny reflected on life being less than perfect and left the room. After a few minutes another person knocked on Joan's door and went in, Jenny heard the two chatting and laughing for quite a time. When the person left Jenny expected Joan to appear and call her in, she was wrong. Now Jenny was confused, she liked and respected Joan but could not understand why Joan was so ready to waste her valuable time. After a little while longer Jenny started to think of all the work she had done for this meeting, in her own time. She also started to think of the work she had left with an unprepared colleague and what she would return to. If she could have known she would be sitting in the reception area for 20 minutes

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she would have brought some work, but now she was stuck, waiting. Her emotions changed from being positive to being confused, frustrated and angry. It was now clear to Jenny that the meeting would be rushed and badly managed and that she would not be in a logical or professional state of mind.

Eventually Joan appeared, with a smile on her face, and asked Jenny to come through. Jenny managed to ask why she had been kept waiting so long, Joan replied, with a slight laugh, that the person who dropped in was somebody she had not seen for some time and that they chatted about their time training in Personnel Management. At that very second the phone rang and Joan picked up the call and started to deal with the caller. Joan called it multi-tasking later, but Jenny was by now feeling ignored and undervalued. The meeting finally started and Jenny started to pull her thoughts together; at this point a knock on the door was answered by Joan! Jenny sensed an internal explosion of anger but she managed to keep it in. When Joan asked if Jenny would like to talk through the progress for that year Jenny replied that she would *not* which was most out of character for Jenny. At this point Jenny got out her note pad and started to make detailed notes in preparation for her complaint if things went wrong in this process, which she now considered demeaning an unprofessional.

Later Joan was reflecting on the meeting with Jenny and wondered why Jenny was regarded so highly by all the other team leaders and senior staff. Joan reflected that may be Jenny had had a bad day. Joan considered herself good with people and she had read all the books on emotional intelligence so she could not understand why Jenny was so detached and negative during the review meeting. Mind you, Joan had always thought performance management and performance coaching to be a bit managerial, and had never really found performance management or even performance coaching to be that useful. Joan wondered why so many of her colleagues valued performance processes so much!

A useful method

To ensure you at least start to allow your team members to create their own solution, to generate their own performance improvement techniques, there is a method of coaching that is well tried and tested. During my coaching and consultancy work, both internally and externally, the approach I adopt in most meetings is that of the 'skilled helper' as outlined by Egan (1998: 24):

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- Stage 1 Current scenario (What are the problems I should be working on?)
- Stage 2 Preferred scenario (What do I need or want in place of what I have?)
- Stage 3 Action strategies (What do I have to do to get what I need or want?)

I have found the three-stage approach outlined by Egan to be very effective. If you read more of Egan's work you will find that each of these three stages is subdivided but, in the heat of the moment during a dynamic coaching or consultancy session, I find the three stages sufficient. The meeting, be it an appraisal, review or coaching meeting, can easily be dealt with using these three stages. This approach engages the coachee in the process of issue and solution analysis, but the team leader can set the pace and agree, or not, the final action strategies. To be honest I find this three-stage approach useful in formal meetings and informal discussions. If a member of my team brings a problem to me, quite often I will follow the three stages and when the discussion is finished usually the team member has a solution and is motivated by the fact that I helped him/her develop it! This is also useful when dealing with team members who are good at 'upward delegation', which is another way of passing the problem to the team leader.

Scenario

Jill joined the organisation as a full-time secretary but now her life was changing, her family was growing and her situation at home could be regarded as comfortable; she did not need to work anymore. Her family was growing and she wanted to spend more time with her children and grandchildren. At an appraisal meeting Jill was asked what her future plans and aspirations were. Jill indicated that she might consider leaving the job and give all her attention to her home and family. Her team leader, Jack, continued with the skilled helper, staged approach, to coaching. He asked what was in her mind. Jill told him of her thoughts, wishes and concerns. Jack pointed out that it was not necessary to jump to one solution until they had explored all the options. Jack asked Jill to outline what she would like from her role in school. He let her talk for some time and from time to time he asked a question to clarify a point or explore a little deeper. When Jill had explored her own thoughts Jack asked her what she thinks the best solution would be, what would be an alternative strategy to the obvious one of resigning.

Jack and Jill discussed the options for action and agreed a way forward that would serve the needs of Jill and the needs of Jack and the organisation. Jill was offered reduced hours to ensure she could commit more to her family and enjoy the fruits of her hard work. Jill was also asked if

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she would like to expand her role to further motivate her, as she is a very able woman who is tempted by a challenge. She is also very loyal and would seek to ensure her organisation was not let down. Now Jill is the Business Manager, working part time. Jack gave Jill time to outline her problems and wishes; he then helped her devise a strategy to meet her own needs and those of the school. A win-win situation.

From team member to professional

I have spent many years coaching my people in order to get them to a stage where they become self-generating, self-motivated and understand why things happen and what to do about them. I have found team members can be naturally effective but they do not always know why. When they hit a problem they do not have the depth of knowledge, reading or reflection to find their own solutions. These 'naturals' are not good at reflecting on, conceptualising or articulating their successes and failures. Action without an underpinning of thought, knowledge or learning can be unwise. Conversely, you may have team members who have 'paralysis by analysis'; such team members always need a bit longer to think. They can think of a thousand reasons not to act and they may be bound by theory and or history. Learning without action can be unproductive. I try to get my team members to combine practice/action with learning/theory, as this combination should mean action is underpinned by theory and theory informs practice.

Practising	Professional action	Theorising
Unwise action: action without an underpinning of theory.	Informed action: action underpinned by theory and learning, learning that leads to considered action.	Unproductive inaction: theory without action.

This notion of encouraging your team members to think of themselves as professionals, not employees, is one of the key elements in the process of moving from performance management to performance coaching. Your team

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members need to be reflective, self-analytical, self-generating and be given a good degree of space in which to operate and make their own decisions within policy. Performance coaching will be much less effective if your team members are used to following orders as unthinking employees. You will have to work hard to move yourself and your team to the performance coaching mindset, a mindset that understands the links between motivation, respect, effectiveness, outcomes, success and performance in relation to the whole of the job or role.

Impact on your team

The impact on your team of using these concepts and tools should be that they become more engaged in the performance processes and direction of your organisation. From personal experience of leading several organisations and working with others as a director or as a consultant, I find these concepts motivate performance more often than not. If you try one or more of the methods I suggest, observe the impact and then adjust the approach to suit you, your team and the context of your organisation. Make these concepts your own or, if need be, reject them, but I think you will find your team will be more motivated and effective if you move from line manager to team leader as performance coach.

Impact on you

Now is the opportunity for you to assess the impact of this chapter on your thinking. Have a second go at the self-review and see if your mindset has changed.

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Seen as being a key tool in helping staff focus on their core tasks.	
The key to informing professional development, target setting and development planning.	
A structured professional dialogue based on a combination of objective data and appraisee self-review.	
A professional process that is rational, logical and conducted with respect.	

Transparent, with no hidden agendas; appraiser, appraisee and key senior staff being able to see essential documentation.	
Sustainable because it is low in bureaucracy; involving the minimum of paperwork.	
Flexible enough to allow for unforeseen issues and problems that arise mid-year.	
A process that is reviewed annually by the users of the process.	
Democratic enough so that suggestions for improvement are accepted by senior staff, following review.	
Score: Yes= 2, Partly= 1, No= 0. 1–6 you need to update your knowledge of effective performance coaching. 7–12 you are getting there. 12+ the process is becoming effective.	

If you want to explore any further any of the concepts I outline, I offer some suggestions for further reading.

Further reading

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