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CLASSIC APPROACH TO BUSINESS COACHING

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to present business coaching in a classical way. An overview of coaching definitions will be provided. Attention will be drawn to coaching components and varieties. Moreover, a brief description of coach competences and tools supporting their work will be offered.*

Our considerations should be started with a short overview of coaching definitions.

One of the approaches presents coaching as a didactic process oriented on the formation (improvement) of employee skills, conducted in a system: one coaching instructor per one coaching trainee [1].

According to A. Ratajczak and P. Pilipczuk coaching is the assistance and management of a person's skills and competences in a specific field, conducted individually by a coach. A significant element of coaching is a partner relationship and mutual trust between the personal coach and his/her trainee/client/sportsman [woman]/employee/team. The principal task of coaching is to support the person included in a coaching scheme in her/his achievement of the targets agreed upon with the coach [2].

Coaching, particularly its business variety, means the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of organization through enabling the employees to learn in a scheduled way under the coach's supervision. First of all, the process is to enable a more efficient problem solution, also the improvement of an individual employee's efficiency, particularly wherever any change in task performance is desired [3].

S. Thorpe and J. Clifford treat coachins as assistance provided to a given person in enhancing and improvement of action through consideration over the way he/she applies a substantial skill or knowledge [4].

Coaching is a process of improving competences in the area selected by the client, based on partnership and mutual trust. It helps people become what they want to be and become the best possible. It grasps and enhances whatever is most valuable in people. It also consolidates an organization not only through developing individual competences, but also through the formation of appropriate attitudes. Coaching is a process that lasts and is located in time. It is really significant because each effect achieved today is so reinforced that it also brings about effectiveness in the future [5].

However, in the opinion of Roberta Dilts, the coaching technique consists in grasping the strengths in people, helping them pass personal barriers and restrictions, in order to reach the target and helping them function more effectively in a team [6].

Coaching is a form of individual training and a method supporting the development and self-fulfillment in an individual Client, which enables the change of improvement of their professional and private life quality based on the predispositions, supporting values and tendencies, i.e. the specific needs of each Client. Coaching may be compared to a travel inside oneself demanding the entrance in the intrinsic world of a person in order to discover her/his individual desires and dreams, leading to the formation of their life and finding a living balance based on the building and realization of their most wanted and desired targets, both in the professional and personal life [7].

Coaching happens to be erroneously associated with training courses conducted in companies. The training courses themselves usually focus on providing some substantial knowledge and developing the competences of persons trained. Coaching is a form of skilful asking questions orienting the client on finding a way of action proper for him/her, to help them achieve the target being the subject of coaching

Coaching varieties and components

Coaching in terms of application is divided into business and life coaching. Due to the wide variety of topics included in its business part, so-called „executive” i.e. managerial, coaching is distinguished. The coach acts when such demand is produced by a company (here we may encounter group or individual coaching) or by an individual. This paper puts by far more stress on business coaching.

The coaching targets should be assumed according to the SMART principles, i.e. they should be simple, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely (there may also be a longer, SMART-ER version in which E means exciting and R- recorded).

The key to success in the coaching process is skilfull asking questions the client answers him/herself. It is asking questions, instead of providing advice, indicating ready asnwers (most often to open questions) makes the client consider, face ideas and thoughts, perhaps controversial to him/her, thoughts he/she subconsciously keeps away [6].

Coaching itself is a process consisting of a series of activities. Its components should be differentiated as follows:

- the person of a coach, i.e. trainer, guide
- the client, i.e. the coached, trained person, directed by the person conducting the coaching.
- the desired result included upon mutual consent in the contract the performance whereof the coach is responsible for
- didactic methods, i.e the entire workshop of skills and package of experience of the coach, being the basic or expanded therapeutic tools
- the coaching rules, i.e. the contract including the agreement between the coach and the client; the contract should include all the coaching components, clearly defined targets, expectations of both the client and the coach
- the final coaching analysis, i.e. conclusions and suggestions aimed at the maintenance of desired coaching effect developed by both parties [6];

Standards of work with the client

The standards of the coach’s conduct towards the client are identical for all types of coaching. All of them are based on getting to know the client’s functioning areas, making him realize such areas exist for easier diagnosis of the issue the coach has to deal with, as provided in the contract.

In business coaching the pattern of working with the client is based on reflecting his/her behaviors and situations by employee. The coach listens to it and asks questions, while the employee searches for the solutions. The role of the Coach is restricted to listening without searching for solutions. If the problem is not solved the employee and coach together work on its solution. The coach provides the employee with feedback, describing his impressions and findings in order to develop joint analyses of the strong and weak points and the results. The coach appoints further dated for coaching.

It is important to emphasize talents and strong points in the client as factors for intensified actions. This releases the sense of value in the client and wish for further cooperation, eliminating at the same time any possible doubts.

The creation of individual development plan, developing the integration strategy in new workplace and identification of the targets and professional aspirations helps guiding the client through the coaching process and most of all enables the client to feel safely at every stage of the process, because the client knows that the coach has every detail planned and nothing escapes the control. Therefore, these are not

chaotic, but safe actions, allowing for frankness towards the coach, which is one of the significant factors in reaching the targets. .

The Coach can manage crisis, conflicts and stress in the professional environment and guide the client thereto through the creation of professional target performance.

Four key elements are most important:

- Targets
- Values
- Opinions
- Action plan

We always have the Client's good in mind, therefore the whole process is based on strict confidentiality of all the information items and the Coach's ethic principles (ICC standards)

Certainly, the time and schedule of coaching is each time agreed upon in detail with the Client and in reference to the targets intended by the Client. Time is highly important here, the reasons including without limitation the fact that the establishment of new habits in thinking and action lasts. It is a question of realism, responsibility and caring about the coaching effect.

Providing feedback in coaching

Providing feedback is a significant coaching component permanently incorporated in this process.

Feedback carried out properly allows to make the actions more efficient, improves the morals and commitment, and most of all develops the employee. The purpose of feedback is to provide knowledge on the behavior and action in such a way that the recipient maintains the positive attitude towards himself/herself and what he/she does. Feedback may be provided whenever someone wants to and is ready to listen and whenever the coach knows what he actually wants to say. When differentiating the positive and negative feedback it is important to know the proportions – there may be much more positive messages than negative. A useful strategy of providing feedback is to start with asking questions that may automatically guide the coachee to the areas the coach noticed during his visit at the client's. If the merchandiser is conscious, experience, this may appear sufficient and the subsequent part of the session will continue under the reflection principle on the development needs and the plan to acquire them. If standard feedback is provided within the complete information presentation, it is important to serve it properly. It is very important for every human being to know someone notices his/her actions and appreciates her/him. Thus, during feedback sessions people need to be informed on what they do well and to what extent what they do converges with the expectations, is necessary, important. What is important in this context: is coaching in sales is to be effective, the time for feedback must be scheduled after each commercial visit. It is significant that it should not integrate into one unity and that the information is not provide in a rush between one and another client – this would not make much sense and we may also forget about any effective results in the long run. To make the conversation effective and promising a positive change we should concentrate on what is possible to be changed. The feedback is to be a description, not interpretation or valuation [8].

Coach's competences and tools supporting his work

The Coach is to help others achieve results on a higher level, if he is able to create a vision and draw the results desired by the clients in their imagination.

It is important that the coach believes in his own capabilities . He should have a kind of sensitivity that would allow him to recognize when to withdraw and not to develop a subject. A sense of humor is also important enabling to relieve the atmosphere in difficult situations [9]. He should also be sensitive to the information heard and consider various elements, the company situation, personal situations of all the people involved – generally speaking, he should have the image of the system he moves in. Moreover, he should get rid of his intuition that might impede good communication. The critical attitude towards his own opinions and flexibility in adaptation to the situation should represent the integral part of his attitude [10].

The Coach utilizes the conclusions on the client's observation. Helpful tools in obtaining information on the attitudes and competences of the client are environmental tests where people from the closest environment (peers, superiors) are the stakeholders. Such tests include for example the 360°, 270° and 180° method.

The test with the 180 or 360 degrees method allows for the assessment of the competences of the employees working for a company or organization members. The questions analyzed in this type of tests are related to the utilization of the behaviors and competences significant from the point of view of the company or organization and individual employees.

The 360 degrees test is to assess the whole environment of the tested person. On the other hand, the assessed person is at the same time the person assessing his/her environment. Peers, employees, superiors participate in the test and the assessed person completes the self-assessment scale.

The assessment of individual people is grouped and this is the basis for creation of a profile for further analysis and conclusions. The results obtained in such a way are highly reliable, because the coachee does not in consequence obtain the information on his/her assessment by the particular employees, he/she only knows the general neighborhood's opinion divided into competence fields and personal characteristics.

The test results indicate to the employees what characteristics may be found the advantages of cooperation and which of them affect it negatively. Moreover, there is a possibility to expand the perspective by the clients' or external cooperatives' assessment, if the cooperation with them is a significant aspect of managerial staff functioning. In case of executive staff the results obtained may be used for the determination of their work organization skills and team leadership extent.

The additional advantage of such tests is the employees' becoming familiar with the company strategic objectives and definition of the actual personal relationships present at the company. The results obtained may be the foundation for decision within the restructuring of the whole organization and its specific teams [11].

Benefits resulting from coaching

The benefits brought by coaching should be considered on two plains (like in terms of its division and application) of benefits for the company and the client.

Benefits for the company

Saving time and funds. Coaching is the fastest way of improving effectiveness. Coaching gives the company an opportunity to develop the employee on site and assistance in pursuit along the professional career path.

This is a perfect way to continue and develop the effect of training in the organization. Coaching enhances the implementation of desired changes, acquired knowledge and skills after return to workplace – i.e. in practice. It is characterized by precision in action and, in consequence, high effectiveness. It provides new opportunities to work with people who need it and in the scope useful for them as well as the opportunity to use the new strategies of action in the point of the highest demand and greatest influence.

Reinforcing a person, coaching causes the reinforcement of the organization unit in which such person operates. It helps promote change within the organization by people of strategic importance and stakeholders at various levels of management. Moreover the great power of coaching as an incentive tool is more and more frequently noticed.

Coaching is conducted in such a way that it does not collide with daily tasks and professional duties. There is also a possibility of remote coaching by telephone or email, as the continuation of coaching sessions - meetings.

Benefits for the coachee

Coaching helps discover the yet unexplored and therefore unused so far natural resources the person has. Individual approach is significant for the client – it enables him to feel awarded. Another benefit for

the coachee is the fact that coaching is a development process precisely combined with specific tasks attributed to a specific position, also considering the paths of long-term development (promotion).

Benefiting from individual strategies of learning and motivation, characteristic for an individual and developing the methods of achieving individual targets.

Moreover, such benefits as the development of job seeking strategies, support in effective job seeking, optimization of personal marketing tools, e.g. professional profile, development and maintenance of contact network, integration and valuation of situations, people and behavior interpretation helping at the acquisition and expansion of consciousness and results earlier settled, improvement of communication with employees reporting to them/peers and bosses at work, coordination and optimization of means and time or the ability to build a team and its coordination are worth mentioning here.

Summary

Coaching is a solution more and more frequently used by companies to improve effectiveness, efficiency, but also the well being of their employees. It brings about a number of organization benefits and, despite the potential risks related thereto, the sum of the advantages is by far higher, so the application of this form of team evaluation seems to be a very sensible decision. The appropriate selection of the coach is also important, because a coach who has knowledge, impartiality, being familiar with the coaching procedure, the ability of providing professional feedback and communication skills shall contribute to better existence of the staff in the company.

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