



CAN A LEADER BE A COACH?

Coach **Rashmi Shetty** explains how enabling leaders to become coaches can truly be a game-changer.

In today's industries, lines of accountability are blurring, and motivation is challenging. So, to get the most out of all types of teams – such as virtual, function specific, product and project teams – the need for managers and leaders to also wear a coach's hat is significant. A good leader can be a good coach and thereby bring out the best in their team.

Managers usually are responsible for the members of their teams. A small shift in how they play their role can make a big difference. The way they speak to their team members can help bring out the best in them. A conversant manager is someone who understands their team members' goals, and this is best seen at appraisal time. If during appraisals the manager can take the role of a coach, they can motivate and promote growth in individual team members and the team as a whole can better understand its potential.

AN EXPERIMENT IN MANAGER AS COACH

The role of a great leader is not to always hand-hold their team members but to help them extract the greatness they already have inside them. It was with this in mind that a client asked me to try an experiment and turn a manager into a coach, to see what impact that would have on team performance. The team chosen was a group of above-average performers who were losing their cool. They felt their potential was not being fully tapped – and management also felt the team was capable of

a lot more. With an average of five years in the company each, their loyalty to the organisation was very strong.

In order to challenge the team at a deeper level, it was important to help the manager, who was popular with his team, to alter his thought process slightly. The manager, in many ways, embodies the culture of the company and acts as a default mentor. Therefore, managers can be powerful coaches if they wish.

When I spoke to the manager, I explained how developing objectivity would help him become much more powerful in his role. A broader and more objective perspective would improve understanding of the bigger picture and help him develop the skills required to improve team performance. However, it took some time to understand that the role would need to change from simple knowledge transfer to learning coaching in order to help build team capability – and that it was not going to be easy, as the shift would need to start within him first.

The first stage was working on the concept that a coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, and someone who has you see what you don't want to see so you can be who you always knew you could be. This meant appraisals needed to shift from telling to asking. The manager was hesitant, as he was not sure how the team would respond and he worried that it might be a waste of time. He also doubted the efficacy of the model we were going to use. The model we used to set this process in motion was RISE (see panel).

A MODEL FOR LEADER AS COACH

- R** is for desired result
- I** is for introspection, which is the key to understanding the obstacles in the way of change
- S** is for stimulation from powerful questioning and visualisation techniques
- E** is for evaluation

A SUCCESSFUL RESULT

The manager slowly came to understand that playing the role of the coach was allowing his team to dip into their current perspective, which could open up newer perspectives. He only needed to create the space, bring in his presence and create room for conversation.

What followed next was powerful. We applied the Trust Equation developed by Maister, Green and Galford (see Figure 1), which illustrates trust as a function of credibility, reliability and intimacy in relation to the self-orientation of the manager.



FIGURE 1. The Trust Equation, from The Trusted Advisor by David H. Maister, Robert Galford and Charles Green

An increase in credibility, reliability and intimacy combined with reducing self-orientation can hugely increase trust levels. Once the team members started to see their manager as accessible, competent and as their progress supporter, their trust in him grew.

When the **result** was clear to them, they suggested what they could do and where they needed support.

Introspection gave them more options to align their personal goals with their professional ones.

Stimulation through questions and visualisation helped them clarify challenges and doubts.

Evaluation became an ongoing process for the team members to assess their progress and the alternatives if change was required.

With this shift, first in himself and then in the team, the manager realised how the team progressed without his mentoring or telling. He only needed to ask the questions; their answers were coming from within.

Recognising the benefits of this approach made for a great learning experience and proof that when leaders turn into coaches the benefits are huge. This experience confirmed for me that when leaders convert to coaches the results are powerful, proving John Wooden right when he said: 'A good coach can change a game; a great coach can change a life!'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



An attitudinal coach and motivational speaker from Bangalore, India, Rashmi Shetty is on a journey of self-discovery with gratitude. Her life lessons are from the Bhagavad Gita and the different roles she plays as a mother, visiting faculty to colleges, facilitator in the corporate world, storyteller and emcee. A radio host with All India Radio's FM channel for a decade, she is a recipient of a national and international awards for scripting and narrating radio documentaries.

www.coachrashmishetty.com