



PEER COACHING

Kateřina POJKAROVÁ¹

Abstract

There are many professional coaches that help people in many areas in their life. In some companies they think of coaching as a benefit for their employments. Professional coaches are quite expensive and that could be reason for not using this “method”. Nowadays, there is another option, which is peer coaching. It means coaching in not so professional way, but in more friendly and familiar way. This paper will describe what peer coaching is, the benefits of it and it will give some advices how it could start, even in transport company.

Keywords

peer coaching

1 INTRODUCTION

There are many organizations of professional coaches at world level (such as The International Coach Federation or The International Coaching Community), at European level (European Mentoring and Coaching council) or national (like Czech association of coaches). These organizations associate thousands coaches and offer professional services. Despite of that there is another way how to achieve benefits of coaching, even at workplace. The way is called peer coaching, which means coaching between teammates or workers at the same level in organization. Whitmore [1] states that coaching is “unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance”. In contrast to teacher, coach helps others to learn even when he doesn’t teach them. International Coach Federation [2] describe coaching process this way: “A qualified, trained, and paid coach works in partnership with a client in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” Thanks to coaching is coachee able to find for himself decisions and become a leader for his own live.

The whole idea of coaching comes out of assumption that coachee is the expert in his life, that means that he can discover what he wants to achieve and how. He doesn’t need mentor who give him not wanted advices. He is responsible and accountable for his decisions and for his life. What coachee needs is someone who encourages him to discover answers for him.

According to research done by ICF [2] there are positive results of coaching in general. Here are some results:

- 70 % higher productivity,
- 61 % better business management,
- 57 % better time management,
- 51 % better teamwork.

It also can bring more satisfied employers, with higher self-confidence (80 %), better relationships (73 %) and better communication skills (72 %).

¹ Ing. Kateřina Pojkarová, Ph.D., University of Pardubice, Faculty of Transport Engineering, Studentská 95, 53210 Pardubice, Czech Republic. Phone: +420 466 036 395, E-mail: katerina.pojkarova@upce.cz

2 EXPLANATION OF PEER COACHING

The difference between classical coaching and peer coaching is in the coach, who is not well trained professional, but one of teammate. It is someone who work at the same organisation at similar level, or it could be someone who works in other organization but still in similar level. Robbins [3] said: *“Peer coaching is a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace.”*

Robbins also see benefits of peer coaching, which can be analysing practices and their consequences, implement new strategies, build new skills and solve workplace challenges.

So the peer coaching is based on a professional (not only social) dialog, which can be held during formal or informal meetings, meals or walks. The relationships between peers should be founded on trust, without any type of competition. Both should feel confidential and know that it is voluntary. Peer coaching helps learn, share now ideas and solve problems connected with job. It's not about giving advices – and it could be quite difficult for coach in the beginning. He needs to learn how to actively listen, be a partner in discussion and help the coachee find answers for himself. He gives he an opportunity to search for own ideas, even if it takes more time. When coachee has the opportunity talk loudly what he thinks, it helps him make clear the whole problem, doubt previous assumptions, evaluate various ways for solving the problem and commit to one of them.

Coach and coachee can change their role, so both has the opportunity to think about their own problems and how to move on. These coaching dialogues are repeated in 2 to 4 weeks, and this process continues for months, as it is needed.

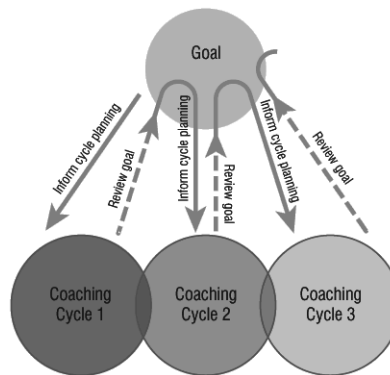


Fig. 1 Coaching cycle – goal based model (Source: [4])

2.1 Benefits of peer coaching

As Steffe Maier [5] says “Individuals use their own resources to find solutions to problems. The peer coach serves as facilitator, helping the other party identify and select the best options. Together, they share knowledge about successful interventions and techniques, redefine goals and opportunities and clarify facts and assumptions.” Dialog with peer can be much less frightening than with a manager and yet it could bring good results, such as increase problem-solving capabilities.

Motivation of employees increase when they feel that someone cares for them. As Pink [6] states, the motivation of employees are increase when there is purpose, autonomy and mastery, which is much better than just monetary bonuses. These type of motivation is counter-productive, because the vision of more money distracts brain from focusing on the task and then the productivity goes down. Peer coach can help coachee to find the purpose in his job and also improve his skills, his mastery. And then, the productivity can increase also.

Another aspect of coaching is better conversations in the work place, and better atmosphere. They are more willing to listen to others and are open to new ideas. The proactivity is another benefit of peer coaching. People learn to think more what they can do, what they can change, and they less think like victims. Suddenly there are more responsible employees who want to change things for better and help the whole organization to be a better place with better results.

Unlike professional coaching, this is cheap; there is no needed time for long travelling to coach (if the coach is from the same company), no need for special time, which is not suitable for the coachee.

2.2 Tips for start and improving peer coaching in organization

There can be some short training for everyone who wants to participate in peer coaching. In this training there is explanation, what does it mean, how the coaching process looks like and participants would have an opportunity to try some exercises. They need to know, that there are some points essential for peer coaching, such as:

- Trust between partners
- Emphatic listening
- Good questions
- Focusing on a goal
- Voluntariness and commitment

In the beginning, peers need to make agreement, in which they stated the goal of coaching, times and places for meetings, frequency and other organizational items. In the beginning of every session, one of the first questions should be: What would you like to talk about today? On what you would like to focus? And at the end of the session, useful questions should be: What do you take away from this session? What action will you take next?

Coaches would remember that

- Their questions should be open (like What you can do? instead of Will you do that?)
- Why questions hardly bring good results in coaching
- Simple questions are better than complicated ones
- They need to stay focused on the theme

They also need to be good listeners, so they should avoid any distractions, focus also on coachee's speed, tone and volume, be patient and stay still when the coachee is silent. This is time when he goes deep inside, where he can find the best answers.

Reframing or summary is another coach's skill. It can help coachee know that coach is really listening and understanding, and in the other way, coach will know if he didn't miss something important.

3 EXPERIENCES WITH PEER COACHING IN CZECH REPUBLIC

Due to simple research, there are quite enough people, who have some experience with coaching and few had an opportunity to try peer coaching (almost 30 %). Their experiences are "positive" and "good". For them the benefits are: birds-eye view of given situations, finding better directions and oneself's weaknesses and quicker learning.

On the other hand, people who don't have any experiences with peer coaching imagine these benefits:

- New, impartial, point of view
- Better understanding of solving problem
- More effective work with people, better communication
- Higher accountability of coachee
- Higher self-confidence, finding oneself's strengths and weaknesses
- Encouragement

- Finding better methods in a work

There are also those who don't know what it is, they think „there are no benefits”in coaching or peer coaching, it is only “new name for well-known practices” or even it means “a medicine man dancing around the fire”. Still there are a lot of people who see coaching or peer coaching as classical way, how to gives instruction to the coachee. More than 36 % respondents don't know what peer coaching is and they even don't try to guess what it could be. These results are quite similar in transport sector, with slightly more people who has experience with coaching.

Subjective evaluation of coaching benefits is 7.5 points (from 1-10 scale) with standard deviation 2.5. 67 % of respondents evaluate coaching with 8 or more points.

4 CONCLUSION

Peer coaching is not new thing but still it is something which is not used often in workplace and lot of employees still don't have any idea how it looks like, what benefits it can bring or how to use it in their job. For managers, or better for leaders, who know that their job is to take care for those who take care for costumers, this could be a way that can help their people and of course their numbers too. It requires a little effort in the beginning and patience for the results, but after a while, the culture and productivity will change for the better.



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