

Four Popular Coaching Myths Debunked

And how to really inspire
breakthrough human performance

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InsideOut DEVELOPMENT™

Myth #1. Coaches must be subject matter experts.

Most of our role models for coaching have always been experts giving advice. So it is easy to understand how people come to believe this is the way to help people in general—and in particular—to coach them.

So if this is true, how do the best “players” (athletic, musical, and corporate) in their field get better? After all, there is no one better at what they do—no one more expert than they are. Yet these top players almost all have coaches, sometimes several of them.

The truth about coaching is that you do not have to be more expert than your performers in order to be able to help them. The majority of performance issues are less about the performers not knowing what to do and much more about them doing what they know, but much more consistently.

Most times, the performers already have the knowledge they need (and therefore don’t need advice repeated over and over by the coach) but aren’t aware that there is a gap in how they express that knowledge, a gap between what they think they do and what they actually do. When the coach helps performers become aware of that gap, they are then able to take responsibility for doing things differently in order to close the gap.

The key difference is that the coach helps the performers increase their focus—arguably the most important component of peak performance.

Myth #2. Coaching takes too long.

This myth is based on the illusion that if we tell people what to do, this will be the quickest way to fix the problem. However, there are two assumptions involved when we tell people what to do. One is that our advice to them is correct, the other that they will execute our advice the way we mean them to. These combine together to give us four possibilities.

- a. Right advice and perfect execution. The outcome at first sight is a major problem that is solved. A hidden outcome is that when the next problem arises, the performers are much more likely to come back and say “what should I do this time?” The “monkey” of finding solutions is now squarely with the coach and the performers don’t have to take responsibility for developing solutions for themselves. A dependent relationship develops.
- b. Right advice with poor execution. This time the problem doesn’t get solved and the coach gets the blame because it was the coach’s idea. There is no responsibility/accountability for the outcome on the part of the performers.
- c. Poor advice with perfect execution. The outcome is the same as in “b”.
- d. Poor advice with poor execution. The outcome is disaster.

There’s an old saying: “There is never enough time to do it right but there is always enough time to do it over.” Proper coaching increases the probability of getting it right the first time and saves time in the medium to long term.



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Consequences of providing advice instead of coaching.

ADVICE	GREAT	Problem persists, but individual won't accept accountability.	Symptom solved, but individual keeps coming back for more help.
	POOR	Disaster.	Problem persists, but individual won't accept accountability.
		POOR	GREAT

EXECUTION

Myth #3. Coaching is for people who have problems

There is a lot of evidence in the corporate world to support this myth because much of the time it is the people who are struggling in some way that are assigned coaches, while those who are doing OK are not assigned coaches.

Perhaps there is something to be learned from the worlds of musicians and athletes. In those worlds, the better the performer the more likely they are to have a coach. In fact, almost every world-class musician and athlete has at least one coach they work with. They may be the best in the world and still want to do better. There is no problem as such, but there is a huge drive for excellence. Coaching is for anyone who wants to do better, go further, or even just feel better.

Myth #4. Coaching is cleverly telling people what to do.

"Coaching is telling people to go to hell in a way that they don't mind." This is an actual quote from a young strategic consultant. The underlying myth is that coaching is about finding "nice" ways to get people to do what you know they should be doing.

In our eyes, effective coaching is about results. To get results the coach will approach the performer in many ways, sometimes being "soft," sometimes confronting them, sometimes giving suggestions, sometimes pulling solutions from within the performer, but always doing this in a respectful way that honors the person and maintains their dignity.

Perhaps a useful mantra for coaches is to constantly check whether what we do when we are coaching is raising interference or reducing interference in the mind of the performer.

The origins of the word coaching provide a useful clue as to what works:

A coach conveys valued people from where they are to where they want to go.



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The coach being referred to here is a carriage or stagecoach, but the language gives us some interesting hints about what effective coaches do.

- a. “Valued people”—they have a way of making us feel valued.
- b. “From where they are”—they really get into our world and help us move forward from where we are.
- c. “They want to go”—they understand our wants and needs and help us align those with other constituents for a “win-win.”

To us, the most effective coaching occurs when the coach creates an environment where the performer feels safe enough to examine all of his or her thinking, feelings, and experience. Only then can they see the wood from the trees and make choices that make a difference. And that’s when transformation occurs. ■



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About the Author

ALAN FINE

Alan Fine is an internationally sought after performance innovator, the co-creator of the widely recognized GROW® Model, and pioneer of the modern-day coaching movement. In addition to his work in human performance, Alan is also a New York Times Bestselling Author, keynote speaker, and well-respected business executive and professional athlete coach. He has dedicated the past 35 years to helping people from all walks of life elevate their performance

and unlock potential.

Alan's work has significantly impacted the organizational culture and business results of companies like IBM, NASA, GAP, and Coca-Cola and touched the lives of athletes such as Davis Cup tennis star Buster Mottram, and PGA golfers Phillip Price, David Feherty, Colin Montgomerie, and Stephen Ames.

Alan's thought leadership on the nature of performance and the art of coaching for performance improvement includes his New York Times Bestselling book, *You Already Know How to Be Great*, as well as numerous other research articles and publications.

To learn more about Alan and his breakthrough message, visit alan-fine.com.

About InsideOut Development

InsideOut Development is an award-winning training and development company with over 25 years of experience leading clients to achieve results at the competency, culture, and business impact levels. We pair our innovative performance mindset with powerful, results-focused training programs, coaching services, and business performance solutions to help people take immediate action on what they already know and free up their capacity to learn what they need to perform at a higher level.

To learn more, visit insideoutdev.com or contact us at 888.262.2448.

