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*You Can Do Better:
An Insight into Corporate Coaching
through Cases in China*

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You Can Do Better!

An Insight Into Corporate Coaching Through Cases in China

Lawrence Leung

Executive and organisational coaching have become more and more popular in countries around the world. Any coach who is internationally mobile and works in other cities and countries must have a good understanding of how coaching is used differently and similarly. However, there have been few articles spotlighting the Asian context, compared to those for an American or European venue. Here, the focus is on China, often described as the next growth engine in the world economy. Though its different cultural and political environment may have inhibited some coaches from developing work there, I shall present various short cases of corporate coaching that illuminate true opportunities for what coaching can provide.

Over the years, management practice has evolved from a top-down, orders giving approach to a more advanced system with logical, demonstrably effective steps and procedures. However, people soon realized that, apart from an effective corporate system, the development of employees' potential and leadership was also very important. Coaching is an effective tool for developing the inner talents and potential within an organization and we shall get an insight into corporate coaching through real cases in China.

The Work of a Corporate Coach

A coachee from Hong Kong wanted to cooperate with another business owner to bail his company out of financial difficulties. According to his past experience with the other party who seemed disinterested in his business, he was very hesitant, thinking, "He certainly won't accept my suggestion; I'd better not mention it to him. It will surely be in vain."

Having heard this, the coach said to him, "He doesn't know of your intention to cooperate with him. He also does not know you even have such thoughts, yet you've made decisions for him. Could there still be other possibilities?"

The coachee thought, "Yeah, these are just my assumptions. He might not necessarily do so."

The coachee went on to talk to the other business owner and the talk went very smoothly. They formed an alliance and the coachee's company steered towards the path of recovery.

This case might seem simple, yet things are often so simple. We encounter such situations where we get trapped by our existing beliefs or assumptions. Once we shift our paradigm, we succeed. Many a time we do not know that it is ourselves that restricts us. We

attribute our predicament to others or the environment. This is where coaching could exert its use. Unlike an ordinary consultant, a corporate coach does not give you concrete solutions, rather, he mirrors your attitude directly and truthfully, helping you to clarify your present state and your direction, and empower you to discover more possibility and produce greater results.

The Focus of The Corporate Coach Is People's Attitude

Cai Zhi Ming is the director and operation manager of Guangzhou Zhan Tao Industrial Limited. Before, his management approach was to solve specific technical problems and give technical support to the employees. Although effective, it kept the company growing slowly.

Coaching made Cai take a deeper look at the potential of his employees, and the possibility of them exhibiting innovativeness and creativity on their own. He just enabled them to see their present position, the attitude they hold toward work and the impact this attitude would have on their completion of tasks.

With the shift in the employees' attitude, they grew to be more decisive, responsible and displayed a much more positive attitude. Delayed delivery, a headache in the past for Cai (perhaps for all printing corporations), has been greatly diminished. The current timely delivery rate now exceeds 90%, up from 60-70%.

Talking about coaching, Cai said, "Similar to the sports coach, the corporate coach aims to enable the coachees to do their best." The 21st century is a time of accessible and developed resources and many companies find it easy to get where they want in 'hardware'. However, it is hard to make improvement to the software—the quality of the people. Coaching is for bringing out the potential and talents of the people.

Mr. Zeng Ping, Operation manager of Guangzhou Mediafusion Group once said, "Coaching can be used together with the traditional management skills. It does not mean that all the traditional management skills need to be abandoned. I feel that it is not difficult to master the techniques in coaching; what is more difficult is to help other shift their paradigm. After I learnt coaching, I specially set aside a coaching session in my corporation. Employees can also reserve coaching time in advance and I provide them with coaching during that period. The concrete benefit is that the turnover of our affiliated media company rose from the past RMB 5 million per month to the present over RMB 11 million per month, and even exceeded RMB 15 million at one point in time."

Indeed, reliably influencing people's attitude is much more difficult than operating a machine. One may be proficient in skills and competent in knowledge, yet if lacking a positive frame of mind, his skills and knowledge will be largely underutilized. On the other hand, if he takes on a progressive attitude, he can turn out great performance. This is the reason why coaching increases productivity.

Coaching in Organizations Creates More Leaders

Sun Xue Qin is the general manager of DeCheng Credit Card Manufacturing Limited (Guangzhou). It was just four months after she started up her company when she came into contact with coaching. She had since been using coaching to support the growth of her company.

At the beginning, she managed the company alone and did well. However, after she engaged a coach, the coach challenged her one day, "You are doing very well now, but you are leading the people in running alone. If you can make everyone in the company the lead runner, just like each carriage of a train locomotive, just imagine how great the energy can be!"

Greatly inspired by what the coach said, she took up coaching and started to integrate coaching into the company's management. She set out coaching sessions for the employees, clarified their goals, and aligned their goals with the company's targets. The result was very encouraging. The company's turnover last year increased by 30% as compared to the previous year. Their objective this year is to increase turnover by another 50% and at the rate things are moving now, the target looks highly achievable.

A bakery owner from Jiangxi set up two bakeries. As he took on all the responsibilities himself ever since the start of the business, he always felt overwhelmed with too much work. He engaged a coach and through coaching, he discovered that the primary reason why

he felt overwhelmed is because he did not trust others and had the inner fear that others would mess up the work. Through the art of keen listening, precise questioning and powerful feedback, the coach enabled him to discover that his worries were based on his assumptions rather than the truth.

Having understood this, he was willing to empower others to take charge of some of the work and was willing to believe that others could do as well as or even better than he did. The shift in his paradigm brought about the change in his behaviors and action, including coaching his employees. He went to open up another eight bakeries, while he lives an easier and more relaxed life. Meanwhile, his employees also gained the opportunity to practice and improve their leadership, and had larger space for their growth.

You have done well but you can still do better. So we say, corporate coaching makes a successful organization more successful by continuously discovering new possibilities and developing talents and potential.

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The executive coach behind many top Chinese executives, Lawrence Leung is the CEO and Chief Executive Coach of Top Human Technology Limited. Listed in "Who's Who in the World" since 1999, Lawrence manages the foremost coaching company in China with offices spanning across Vancouver, Singapore and the major cities in China. Apart from being an accomplished coach, Lawrence is also a sought-after lecturer of coaching in leading universities as well as author of various coaching publications.

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