



COACHING VS MENTORING

Making Connections

Andrew McLaughlin | Connect Lounge | 27th March, 2019

There is a great deal of joy in learning when it's done right. As children, we all had the teacher who stood in front of the classroom, told us to take our textbooks out and then went through the lesson by rote. No imagination, no engagement, no connection.

This is not the case when we talk about coaching and mentoring. Both are development techniques that use personal bonds to make learning stick, bringing views from the outside-in to challenge pre-conceived assumptions of the individuals involved.

'One thing to remember that I have discovered through personal experience is that this whole engagement with people is joyous, and I use that word advisably' said Andrew McLaughlin at the outset of his Connect Lounge session. 'There's a huge amount of satisfaction in it, and that for me is one of the dominant themes (when we talk about coaching and mentoring).'

Humans desire connections

One of the most fundamental aspects of human psychology is our desire, closely approaching a need, to connect with other people. It elevates our thinking in almost every way and will both support and challenge our worldviews, which is crucial for critical thinking.

'The first thing I'd say is *talk to strangers*' said Andrew 'because everyone in the world knows something more about something than you do. Broaden, broaden, broaden, connect, connect, connect.'

In today's modern world however, we are being increasingly encouraged to distance ourselves from one another, primarily through digital means. Even phone calls between colleagues at each other's desks have been replaced by chat channels, and we find ourselves busily multi-tasking tasks that seem removed from any human activity.



And when we remove emotions from a task, we largely remove the brain's ability to remember and learn from it.

'There's some magic that happens when you talk to someone you trust' said Andrew. 'The human mind can't really solve problems purely by rumination alone. With rumination, the thought goes around and around in a circular fashion, but when you articulate an issue to another person in words, it then forms a reality in the outside world.'

When it comes to coaching and mentoring, this human emotion and engagement are inherent in the process. They are methods of learning and self-learning that is hard to match because they address so many of the core needs of a human mind.

When and Where

'My advice for mentors is never to say 'do this' or 'this will work for you'' said Andrew when talking about mentoring. 'Rather, say 'I did this' or 'this is what I experienced', and leave it up to them whether they can draw from your experience.'

For mentoring then, it is about sharing experiences. On the other hand, a coach's role is to facilitate the thought process of the other person, so you would much more rarely share your own experience. It may, indeed, muddy the waters of their thinking as humans are prone to draw conclusions from other people's experiences that aren't applicable.

'A good coach knows how to ask the right question' said Andrew 'they know how to facilitate a thinking environment.'

Breaking down the differences

Andrew also broke down the differences point-by-point. 'At certain points you will have to use both' he said, 'but you have to know which you are using at any particular moment.'

Mentoring

- On-going relationship that can last a long time
- More informal meetings as and when needed
- Long term broader view of person
- Mentor more experienced and qualified than mentee and passes on knowledge, experience and opens doors
- Agenda set by mentee with mentor's support and guidance
- Revolves around developing mentee professionally

Coaching

- Relationship has a set duration
- More structured, regular meetings
- Short term, focused on specific issues
- Focus on development, issues at work
- Coach does not need direct experience of coachee's role
- Specific, immediate goals



Every conversation is a potential coaching or mentoring opportunity

We are all coaches and mentors

'Coaching sits right in the centre of any managers key list of skills' said Andrew 'and it's something you do every day. If you cultivate it to its fullest degree, your career and other careers will benefit hugely. In the final part of your life, it's about passing the torch, and mentoring is a hugely satisfying way of passing that torch.'

Both subtle parts of the same art, mentoring and coaching are some of our most powerful tools to make learning and development impactful on both the teacher and pupil. At its heart, mentoring is about sharing experiences between two people from different ends of the spectrum while coaching is about drawing out the answers from another.

Learning is joyful, particularly when we do it with – and through – other people.

Individuals and organisations looking to make learning stick and to develop individuals as both people and professionals, should be using coaching and mentoring as core pillars in their strategy. By knowing and applying the subtle differences between the two, a leader can do the thing that great leaders do; create stars around them.