

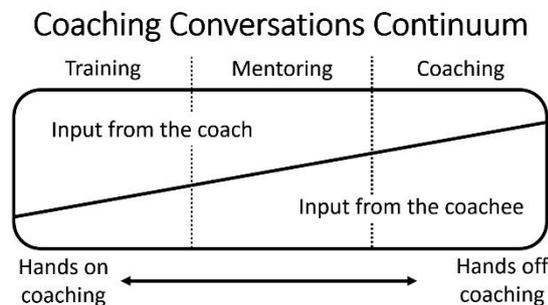
THE COACHING CONVERSATION CONTINUUM

The Coaching Conversation Continuum

The Coaching Continuum is a tool to explain the way a coaching discussion may at times move into training or mentoring mode as well as the ideal coaching approach. Here creative sector coach Alec McPhedran of Skills Channel TV explains the model to help new coaches appreciate the skill in flexing coaching conversations.

When I was being trained to become a coach, much of the advice was to mainly use open-ended questions such as who, what, why, where, when and how. Equally the use of TED, tell me about, explain to me or describe to me were also powerful open-ended questions. The aim was to ensure I the coach contributed very little to influence the coachee and that the answer sits within them.

This of course is true in one sense. That would be the perfect coaching session – I ask profound questions, you answer them, sort yourself out, you leave happy and I send my invoice. What a life.



The aim of a coaching conversation is to spend as much time as appropriate in the coaching area. The reality is that we move across the continuum. As long as we get back to coaching after offering a little training input or some mentoring considerations, then we have given development guidance to the coachee.

Alec McPhedran, Leadership Coach, 2016

As we develop out coaching understanding, we recognise that the perfect conversation doesn't always follow that model. Sometimes we have to use our experience and sometimes we have to step back a bit into training mode to explain a concept and then return to coaching on how they can use that concept to develop their ideas.

As I try to explain this to people I train to coach, it came over a bit contradictory or confusing. On that basis, and being a visual type, I developed the

Coaching Conversation Continuum to help get my point across.

Hands On and Hands Off Coaching

The more we instruct or influence the conversation, the less the coachee is allowed to contribute to the conversation. That is hands on coaching. If for example, I am trying to help a manager work through giving feedback on a colleague's behaviour, I tend to see how they would approach it and what the likely outcomes would be based on that approach. If it felt that it might not be the best approach, I could offer some ideas on feedback theory to help move the situation forward. A typical model I use, because of its simplicity and usefulness, is the AID feedback model. That is A for actions or actions I have seen, heard or felt. I is for the impact of those actions and the likely consequences and D for what should they therefore do about it in the future. On that basis, I am in training mode. Once I have put the theory across we then move back to pure coaching by getting back to asking them how they could use that model in that particular situation. I am back to guiding the thinking of

the coachee, not contributing ideas but simply coaching. That is hands off coaching – the main conversation coming from the coachee.

Training

In training mode, we instruct, tell. Much of the input to the conversation is from the coach. It is explaining ideas, concepts or theories.

Mentoring

A mentor is a more experienced or senior person who offers guidance, support and wisdom to another in developing them as a person. This is where the coach jointly contributes to the conversation with the coachee. The mentoring approach allows the coach to offer ideas from their experiences, points ideas in a particular direction and guides based on their wisdom.

Coaching

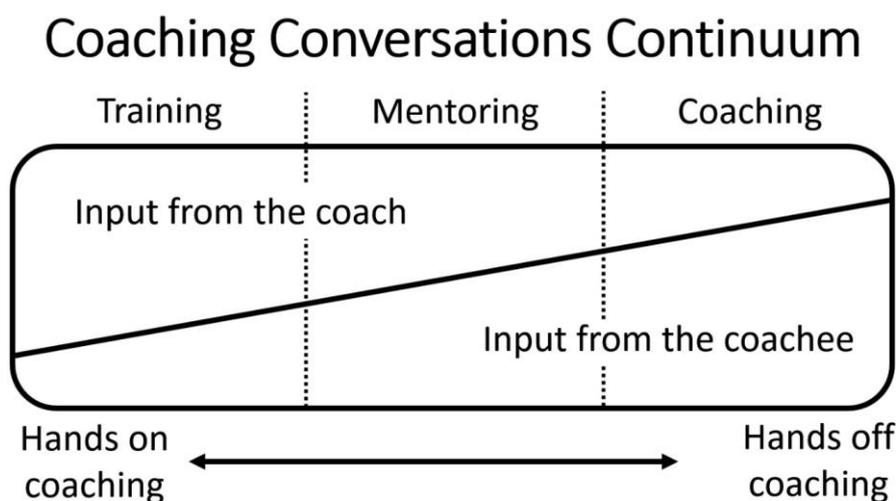
This is where the coach concentrates on the objective of the coachee and uses their questioning, active listening and summarising skills to guide the coachee. It's asking rather than telling. It allows the coachee to develop their thinking capability and self-belief in their capability. The main input on the conversation is from the coachee.

Coaching Conversation Continuum

The purpose of the coaching conversation continuum is to help a new coach understand that the conversation may dip in to the territory of training and mentoring but with the aim of making sure we focus on and always returning to the appropriate coaching approach. A pure coaching session is the Utopia but in many cases I have experienced, we do have to flex for the benefit of the coachee and their goal.

The Coaching Conversation Continuum has been developed by Alec McPhedran FCIPD, Chtd Mngr CMI, MAC, mCMI as a tool for people who coach; to guide them through the conversational management of a coaching session. Alec is the managing director of Skills Channel TV, the training company for busy creative people. He specialises in one to one coaching, facilitated learning, media training and team development. He developed the GENIUS Coaching Model, a guide to managing the flow of a coaching conversation. For further information, contact 0121 366 87 99 or visit www.skillschannel.tv.

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