

Competencies of a great coach; driving improved outcomes

The Golden Circle

An effective senior coach has the ability to manage multiple tasks in a fluid nature also respecting demands that are inflexible

WHAT

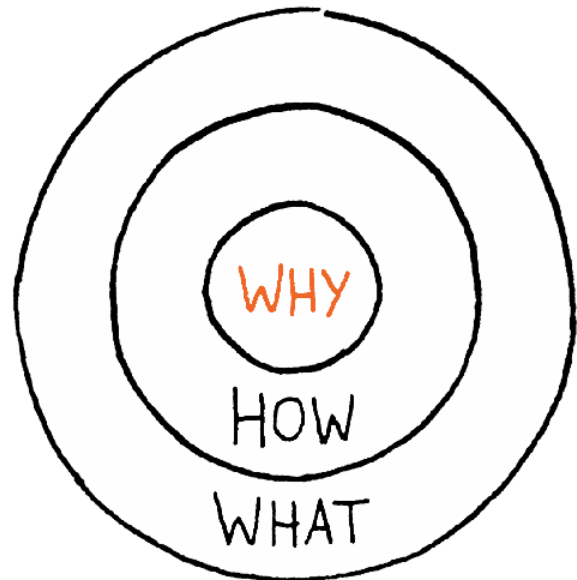
Every organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are products they sell or the services

HOW

Some organizations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

WHY

Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.



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It appears that coaching is often viewed as independent of learning and development within the school or department function. Usually linked to underperformance or outplacement, coaching is crucial to successful interactions at all levels of the school.

A great coach can bring out the best in us and develop a sense of comfort in vulnerability - the ability to hear critical feedback with open ears and to consider our behaviour and actions with deep scrutiny. They encourage, assess, analyse and query without judgement or assumption, provoking

thoughts and ultimately a change in behaviours to improve our work skills, wellbeing, career and/or communication skills.

The best coaches listen more than they speak and assist us in generating ideas through conversation. Rarely do we have tangible outcomes to demonstrate the value of coaching, nor do we normally demonstrate appreciation for the opportunity or experience. With such a deficit mentality, we see coaching as a "quick fix" to issues in our busy lives and as a way to respond to specific situations, attitudes, activities and employees.

Leading by example, you will need dedicated focus to extend your approach to individualise your practice for the diverse and unique individuals you will work with

Core competencies of great coaches are essential in all aspects of education and organisations, most notably essential to collegial leadership teams. Whether it be formal or informal, the role of a leader is embedded within a coaching function, ensuring we are able to achieve outcomes with efficiency. Extending staff capacity, building on what we have and removing bad habits are key to an effective organisation. To follow are the core competencies required by highly proficient executive coaches to positively impact individuals.

Compassion and care factor

It must be said that coaching is a very different role to counselling; from aims to interactions the process is incredibly different and must be respected as such. In saying this, a coach has the responsibility to connect with genuine interest to those they are engaging with. Boundaries of privacy and areas of knowledge allow the coach to engage with an emotional factor, the ‘Why’ factor. Simon Sinek articulates that the best way to engage change is through emotive connection to the process. Understanding ‘why’ offers understanding at a personal level providing meaning and insights.

Organisation and time management

Many of us have had leadership meetings, coaching sessions and appointments moved, cancelled or forgotten. An effective senior coach has the ability to manage multiple tasks in a fluid nature, also respecting demands that are inflexible. They have the ability to have others in their mind and so ensure that commitments are upheld. Additionally, they have the ability to share these skills in individual sessions to support prioritisation, attainable goals and realistic allocation of next steps.

Strategic thinking

Identifying all the pieces of the puzzle, potential blocks and solutions support coaches in enlightening others of their potential or the opportunity of a situation, change or business demand: the ability to state with clarity the “birds eye view” to:

- Prompt and extend discussion
- Recognise possible obstacles
- Seek out opportunities

Utilising strategic thinking will offer the interaction a depth and connection to the greater school and its objectives throughout coaching sessions.

Active listening

Truly in the moment, successful coaches are able to:

- Absorb what is said
- Hear underlying comments
- Note repeated phrases
- Identify emotional cues

These skills support those they are advising to feel at ease, comfortable and appreciated throughout

their development. Utilising language from those being mentored, noting common topics raised and responding with pause allows for extension on activities and so a progressive development over a brief or extended timeframe.

Critical questioning

Essential to all interactions, the ability to question others provides opportunity for deeper thinking, further analysis and contemplation. Considered open questions assist in gathering meaningful insights into individual thinking, behaviours and knowledge to guide next steps and further research to progress.

- What would you like to achieve?
- Why is this of benefit to you?
- Where has this goal come from?
- How will this look when achieved?

Targeted closed questions establish clarity, action-orientation and direction for those requiring management support in achieving their desired outcomes.

- When will you?
- What time will suit?
- How many...?
- Is that attainable?

Self-awareness

Last and possibly most essential, great coaches understand themselves well enough to know:

- How they interact in different situations
- Their preferred communication style
- How to adapt to others’ styles to achieve connection
- Their natural talents and how to maximise these with others
- When to control their need to speak to ensure others are heard
- How to create action from discussion

All in all, exceptional coaching requires individuals leading coaching discussions to have the natural capacity to understand their style of interaction, discussion and assessment whilst adapting to the individual they are supporting to work in their manner, interpersonal methods and terms. By adapting ourselves not only are we creating a deeper engagement in coaching, we are also role modelling the expectations we have of others to maximise the team, workforce or department we are leading and guiding.

To improve your skills as a coach you need to prioritise dedicated time to reflect on these competencies and so develop personal goals around your coaching style, questions and interpersonal style. To lead by example, you will need dedicated focus to extend your approach to individualise your practice for the diverse and unique individuals you will work with.

Bibliography

Sinek, Simon. *Start With Why*. 1st ed. [Kennett Square, Pa.]: Soundview Executive Book Summaries, 2013. Print.