



Why Coaching is the Best Approach for Leadership & Management Training

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For too many years training courses have been the "go to" solution for leadership development. If a leader or manager needed to enhance communication skills, a course on communications would be offered up. If one needed to enhance their ability to deal with conflict, a course on conflict resolution would meet the need. Such examples of stand-alone course offerings are usually very lucrative and easily repeatable from a delivery perspective but fail to deliver value. Why do training courses often not meet the needs of adult learners?

"Cookie-cutter" training courses which often "push out" information in a singular direction from trainer to learner rarely resonate with learners. Courses that focus on training the "masses" miss the individual needs of many with time-limited agendas, preset scripts, and predefined learning outcomes. Many participants will walk away with a nice workbook of ideas and concepts which fulfills the trainers mandate to provide some "takeaways" and the learner get a "resource" they will rarely, if ever use again.

In her best selling book, *Developing Great Managers*, author [Lisa Haneberg](#) outlines Adult Learning Basics which wonderfully aligns with the power of coaching. Here's a summary of her main points and how coaching can provide the perfect learning framework:

1. "Adult learners need to feel that the new information and skills directly link to and benefit their goals." ~ Goals are personal and specific to individuals. Training targets goals general enough to a group but are not always specific to the individual. Coaching is specifically focused on goals that the client identifies so it is always specific and relevant!
2. "Adult learners respond well to real-world examples and applications." ~ Training often utilizes case studies or hypothetical examples which may or may not be relevant to the learner's work environment. Coaching conversations are fully immersed in reality for the client and their personal experiences. As well, coaching is strongly focused on bridging today's reality to tomorrow's opportunity!
3. "[Trainers]...should have open conversations with trainees and ask questions that allow the trainees to discover and determine their development options." ~ Training by it's structure does not focus on individual development options but rather predetermined learning outcomes. Coaching provides the ideal framework for individual development options that efficiently utilize a client's time!
4. "Ask them to define their goals, as well as the information or skills that would most help them reach their goals." ~ For training courses, the goals are usually pre-defined regardless of how well these align with each individual participant. Coaching is always focused on the individual's goal attainment and usually begins with clients defining their goals or outcomes.
5. "Adult learners are invested in their careers and successes." ~ Training by the inherent nature of pre-determined learning outcomes defines what success should be. On the other hand, coaching provides the freedom and choice for clients to decide what career

success looks like for them as individuals. Coach and client can then begin mapping the journey to get there.

6. "Adult learners own their progresses and welcome clear feedback." ~ With training courses, the course time is set and all participants generally need to learn at the same pace to finish on time. Coaching can progress at the pace that is tailored to each individual. For some, more time is needed on difficult challenges and less on others, providing the fluidity that makes learning most effective.
7. "[Adult learners]...will slowly apply concepts and practices that run counter to their usual ways of thinking." ~ With training courses, if each concept is not fully explored to the level of the least knowledgeable participant, you risk losing some and possibly boring others. Coaching provides the space and freedom to explore concepts and practices to the level of depth for that client that can often facilitate a change of thinking.
8. "Adult learners cannot be forced to learn." ~ Training courses are usually offered to groups of employees at a time to minimize financial costs, reducing the flexibility for employees to learn at the right time for their needs. Coaching focuses on what is important to the client, at the time that is best for them, often providing discovery and learning as an outcome of the conversation itself!

This ideal framework provided by coaching maximizes the benefits of adult learning, while providing a ROI that very few training courses alone can. Next time you're looking to invest in training, consider how much more value could be gained with coaching as the framework for learning.

[Jerome Dickey](#) is a Certified Organizational Coach and member of the [International Coach Federation](#) who provides Leadership, Team and Conflict Coaching to individuals and organizations through [Agile Consulting](#).