

Career coaching: Who needs it and why?

(Published in Career Guide 2008)

John Quek says everyone needs a little coaching in their career.

Coaching is about change, reinventing oneself and the ability to constantly learn and grow.

Through various coaching techniques such as listening, reflecting and asking the right questions (rather than merely providing the answers), a coach can assist the individual to establish and clarify purpose and goals and to develop a plan of actions to achieve these goals.

The main objective of career coaching is to develop a more efficient, productive and competent workforce. It also helps the company to attract and retain the right candidates, avoid bad hiring decisions, and identify potential candidates for advancement opportunities.

Career coaching, together with appropriate compensation, benefits and training can raise an employee's self-esteem, improve job commitment and productivity. This requires a new breed of managers — those willing to invest time to build healthy and positive relationships with their employees.

Employees who are experiencing career unrest or job dissatisfaction should seek a career coach. A good career coach should be able to solve immediate career dilemmas and manage the employees' job path successfully through a transition.

Managers are suitable career coaches because they are more familiar with the employees' job scope, duties and responsibilities. But employees must be willing and able to confide in them and believe that their managers are sincerely concerned for their well-being.

Who needs it and why

Employees at different phases of their lives can have different priorities and mindset. A good career coach has to deal with the different categories of employees and manage their expectations and demands. For a better understanding of the different level of career coaching needed, the working life of an employee can be divided into four categories:

1. "Early pedestrians"

Fresh out of school, this group of employees, aged 18 to 29, may be still uncertain about the line of work that they wish to embark. Most of these individuals have no family or personal commitments in this phase of their lives and are willing to take on more risks; job hopping is prevalent among these

workers. They need lots of guidance to develop their potential and they have to focus on their own strengths before embarking their desired career path.

2. “Express lane motorcyclists”

These are the people in the 30 to 39 age bracket, who would have somewhat settled down in their field of work. Although some degree of job hopping may still occur, it is usually within the same industry. Some employees may view their current occupation as monotonous and are eager for a change for better job prospects and career progression. Many of them are faced with the need to balance work and personal responsibilities. Career coaching is essential to tap the knowledge and experience of these employees and the company must devise ways to attract and retain them.

3. “Middle-of-the-road drivers”

Employees in this category are looking for job stability, along with slight challenges and minimal risks. Aged 40 to 59, most of the workers in this age group would have worked for the same company or within the same industry for several years and would have acquired a vast amount of experience, skills and knowledge. Career coaching can be used to improve the employee’s internal motivation, job commitment and workplace productivity.

4. “Post-retirement pedestrians”

Coupled with retraining, job redesign and the introduction of anti-discriminatory guidelines and policies, a new lease of life can be given to this group of workers aged 60 and above. With the emphasis on rehiring older workers given Singapore’s ageing population, career coaching can give elderly workers new insights into their life by realigning their goals and priorities, and keeping them motivated and contributing to society.

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