

The Biblical Perspective of Coaching & Mentoring

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Abstract

The coaching relationship is performance focused; concentrating on what the learner wants to learn. It's, therefore, important to match the manager with a coach who has expertise in the relevant areas. Mentoring is a broader term describing the process of helping a man or woman realizes his or her potential in every pursuit: of spiritual, vocational, organizational and relational. The processes of coaching and mentoring involve the coach/mentor in guiding the learner towards goals. The coach/mentor is also alert for when the learner has missed the point or is avoiding an issue, or feels inadequate at some tasks. Coaching relates primarily to performance improvement in a specific skills area. Mentoring relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person. It can be a long-term relationship, where the goals may change but are always set by the learner. Coaching often serves as a stand-alone strategy for developing leaders or as one of several fundamental building blocks within leadership development programs. The Gospels suggest that one of Jesus' top leadership priorities was developing other leaders—who themselves were capable of forming new generations of leaders. Leadership replication and multiplication characterized Jesus' ministry, making possible the exponential growth of the early Christian movement as evidenced in Acts and the Epistles. This paper discusses the role of coaching and mentoring in leadership development and the way Jesus Christ used these aspects in developing second line leadership. The basis for the paper is the PhD thesis of the author.

Keywords: Coaching, Mentoring, Leadership Development, Scriptures, Jesus Christ

Introduction

The processes of coaching and mentoring (Kinlaw, 2000) involve the coach/mentor in guiding the learner towards goals. In meetings, coaches/mentors are seeking to assist learners towards their own realizations and understandings. It may take time for learners to see their

own blind spots, or for their underlying attitudes to come to the surface. The coach/mentor is also alert for when the learner has missed the point or is avoiding an issue, or feels inadequate at some tasks. Coaching relates primarily to performance improvement (often short-term) in a specific skills area. Mentoring relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person. It can be a long-term relationship, where the goals may change but are always set by the learner (Meggison and Clutterbuck). Coaching often serves as a stand-alone strategy for developing leaders or as one of several fundamental building blocks within leadership development programs (Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004). The Gospels suggest that one of Jesus' top leadership priorities was developing other leaders—who themselves were capable of forming new generations of leaders. Leadership replication and multiplication characterized Jesus' ministry, making possible the exponential growth of the early Christian movement as evidenced in Acts and the Epistles (Dwight Zscheile, June 7, 2006).

In an earlier era, the upper reaches of management believed (and some still do) that what mattered was the networking competency of the leaders, besides tactical thinking about the business. These rare and few CEOs have earnestly tried to adopt many methods to re-equip the managers several levels below them. To their credit, they have also successfully implemented change programmes, taking advantage of the influx of Japanese and American schools of practice and their advocates. For example, the Tata group has collaborated with teams of professors from Harvard and INSEAD respectively to offer two levels of programmes for strategic business-leadership and for general managers. All India Management Association (AIMA) and many other leading management schools are also sharper in their focus on this in the recent years. The Murugappa group has boldly sought to rewrite the book on managing the family-business interface at the very top levels (Ramachander.S, Nov 6, 2003).

The greatest teams seem to have the best captains. It is because, in a great team, every player is a leader in his own right. Great organizations, like great teams, foster leadership qualities in every employee, regardless of his or her position in the hierarchy. Sustained growth, flexibility, responsiveness and continued development of an organization in an environment of rapid change can prove to be an unworkable option, unless companies gear up to fostering and growing leaders on a continuous basis from within the organization. According to one report, almost 40% of leaders in new roles fail to meet expectations, primarily due to the absence of effective coaching and mentoring. While it is true to an extent that leadership is an inherent quality, an organization that develops and nurtures leadership potential will definitely find it less of a burden to come up with competent leadership, management and technical capacity to deliver organizational and customer expectations.

Developing Second Line Leadership through Coaching and Mentoring

As organizations expand, the use of coaching, the variety of ways in which coaching is utilized also seems to be expanding. (Field, 2007). Absence of adequate coaching and

mentoring is perhaps the major reason for the inability of companies to find competent leadership capacity in times of crisis. High-impact individualized executive coaching/mentoring programmes for the personal development of future leaders are perhaps the best bet. Existing leaders should take it upon themselves to observe, assess and aid the growth of employees with the talent and the ability to make it big.

Coaching

Training can help develop and hone existing potential, leadership or otherwise. A well-managed training programme can make the difference between 'attending' and 'learning' from a participant's perspective. The training process hence should be a strategic, systematic and deliberate activity aimed at ensuring an organization's future capability to fill vacancies, without patronage or favoritism within the framework of the merit and ability (Bindu Sridhar, Nov 24, 2004).

A study conducted in 1997, 31 managers underwent a conventional managerial training program where productivity was increased 22%. When the same group underwent eight weeks of coaching in conjunction with training, productivity increased by 88%. The laser-like focus provided by hands-on coaching was the driving force behind the 4x multiplier demonstrated by this study. Coaching is not just about leadership and it's not just for individuals who are failing. It is for anyone who wants to improve in any area.

Through strategic succession planning and by partnering with key employees in their career planning, organizations can prepare themselves for unforeseen change while holding on to their most important people. A succession plan should specifically focus on ensuring the availability and sustainability of a supply of capable staff that is ready to assume key or critical roles. All the other aspects can be incorporated into the organization's succession planning strategy to ensure that the right people are in the right place at the right time to achieve successful business outcomes (Bindu Sridhar).

The coaching relationship is performance focused; concentrating on what the learner wants to learn. It's therefore important to match the manager with a coach who has expertise in the relevant areas. The coach is entirely focused on the task and on the development of specific skills. Feedback is explicit to improve performance in a particular area but it is likely to take the form of questioning about the individual's decision making and thinking processes, encouraging them to consider alternative perspectives with the coach acting as a sounding board for ideas. Both coaching, which is broadly focused on current performance issues and mentoring, which tends to develop long-term skills and career prospects, trickle down through organizations. Senior managers work with middle managers, middle managers with their juniors (Kim Gregory).

Coaching, mentoring and formal as well as informal training are all part of a succession scheme to ensure that there is a cadre of capable people ready to assume leadership positions

when needed. Generally, mentors fill four roles; they are advisor, coach, facilitator and advocate. As an advisor, the mentor should encourage two-way communication and feedback and assist protégé with career and performance goals. As a coach, the mentor helps to clarify developmental needs, recommends training opportunities and teaches skills and behaviors. In facilitating, the mentor should assist the protégé in establishing a network of professional contacts and help them identify resources for problem solving and career progression. As an advocate, the mentor could represent the protégé's concern to higher management levels concerning specific issues; arrange for the protégé to participate in high visibility projects and serve as a role model. As indicated by an ancient Chinese proverb: "If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain, if you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees, if you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people."

Mentoring

Mentorship is a buzzword these days. It seems to have different meanings for different people. Some consider it a form of counseling, communicating, or learning by example while others call it leadership. But, whatever we want to call it, it is something that certainly can be beneficial to any organization. It is a proven approach and valuable tool for leaders. However, there seems to be some mystery surrounding mentorship. Maybe that is due to its different meanings; therefore people are unclear about this new tool. Mentoring is the presence of caring individuals who provide support, advice, friendship, reinforcement and constructive examples to help others succeed. Mentoring can mean the difference between success and failure (Penny H. Bailey, Feb, 24, 2003).

Mentoring is a broader term describing the process of helping a man or woman realize his or her potential in every pursuit: of spiritual, vocational, organizational and relational. The basis of mentoring is a "covenant," relationship between two individuals. A deep level of mutual trust and commitment is necessary. Critical to any succession planning effort, mentoring is one of the best means available to organizations to ensure they retain invaluable knowledge and experience. Junior team members are paired up with those more experienced to learn the intricacies and nuances of the organizational environment. The ability to discuss job considerations, career opportunities and problems with experienced and successful mentors can be the difference between success and failure.

While mentoring focuses on the values and whole person growth, coaching is much more task oriented. Coaching is the provision of the one to one help necessary for an individual to use their gifts and talents in the ministry of the church. Mentoring is the process of gaining wisdom from and tapping into the experience of others. We all have mentors, whether we call them that or not - heroes, people we seek to emulate, people we've learned from.

Bob Bieh (1997) states, "Mentoring is a lifelong relationship, in which a mentor helps the protégé reach her or his God-given potential". There are many different ways to build leaders. The key is building the right kind of leader. The most effective way to build quality leaders

who reach their fullest potential is through mentoring relationships. A mentor is a brain to pick, a shoulder to cry on and a kick in the seat of the pants.

After studying 2,500 senior managers over seven years, Michael Williams found that there are "seven key competency clusters that matter most today". These are: goal orientation, integrity, closest engagement with others, 'helicopter' perception, resilient resourcefulness, personal 'horsepower' and resonant communications. Thus writes Williams in *Leadership for Leaders*, "Underlying such flexibility and differentiation of response, however, must be a consistency of values and ground rules, if the leader's professional credibility is to remain the crucial source of influence." Goal orientation is about "focus on critical goals and the effective mobilization and direction of team members in pursuing those goals". Integrity has to be transparent and values clear; plus leaders have to stick to these principles "in day-to-day activity — especially when under pressure to deliver results."

Close engagement implies "sound relationships, while retaining professional individuality"; and this requires skills such as "active listening, influencing, giving feedback, coaching and mentoring." A cornerstone of the leadership mindset is 'emotional intelligence,' states Williams. Building blocks for this are emotional awareness, emotional integrity, emotional competence and emotional synergy. In other words: Know thyself, "to thine own self be true," exercise self-control and instill mutual trust. While the first two constitute 'emotional literacy', the latter two are 'emotional chemistry' (Michael Williams).

Twelve executives were grouped at the top of AT&T's international communication empire. Most intriguing, though, is that these very different men had a common management background. Robert Greenleaf, an officer for AT&T, found in his research that these executives were able men, but not exceptional. Each one, however, reported having one early boss who greatly accelerated his progress as a manager. "But most surprising was the fact that four of the 12," Greenleaf said, "had their early formative experience under one mid-level manager." He had mentored "one-third" of AT&T's top management. Throughout the company, from mid-level careers to upper-level executives, this one man had trained and spurred on business people in their formative years. Greenleaf says that he was "probably the most influential manager of his generation — significantly influencing the course of AT&T as a whole by his development of people." He was a master mentor, in the Sponsor category. Mentoring can be exceedingly powerful, to shape a family, a business, a church, a nation and even the whole world.

Mentoring is a trend sweeping through corporate America. One US study on the benefits of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2000) found that new insurance agents with mentors outperformed other new agents by 20% in their first year. It has gone beyond the hundreds of thousands of informal relationships that occur as ambitious employees and managers—not to mention would-be entrepreneurs—look for ways to achieve their career goals faster through the help of a more experienced advisor. Increasingly, companies are running formal mentoring programs as they see how they can shorten learning tracks, speed up managerial advancement

and build the next generation of leaders. Companies have found that mentoring initiatives benefit not only the mentored but the mentors, too. Those who act as mentors grow their coaching and counseling skills, expand their access to information and build contacts and gain a sense of well being from sharing their know-how with another. The role of mentor also varies—from the mentor as career counselor to role model to leadership coach. In creating the next generation of leaders, a mentor's commitment is to:

- Offer instructive stories to clarify what leadership is and its responsibilities.
- Counsel the protégé about values, integrity and ethical conduct when appropriate.
- Use the Socratic Method to explore various solutions to problems and identify the best paths to follow.
- Help the protégé recognize the outcomes of his or her actions and plans.

Along the way, the mentor offers skills, abilities and knowledge, but it is in offering the broader view that corporate leaders, as mentors, build the next generation of leaders for their organization. Organizations have come to recognize that developing future leaders is not a luxury, but a strategic necessity. Forward-thinking organizations have initiated leadership development programs in which mentoring plays an important part. Among these companies is the World Bank (Florence Stone).

Nevertheless, many of the large companies which have introduced coaching or mentoring, such as IBM, Ernst & Young, Citicorp and Motorola, report positive outcomes from their programs — in revenue growth, increase in market share, gains in productivity and better outcomes in staff retention (Laabs, 2000).

Coach or Mentor?

Then it's a big question whether to Coach or to Mentor? Mentoring and coaching are often terms used interchangeably, but there are important differences. Coaching is about helping people recognize how they might operate differently, use their strengths more or challenge the way people are thinking in order to help them achieve higher levels of performance. The coach works alongside staff to help them learn, on one to one basis, through self-exploration, building on existing talent and skills. Unlike mentoring, an effective coach won't provide the answers, but will ask all the right questions.

Jesus Christ – the Best Example for Coaching and Mentoring

Jesus is the greatest pacesetter He knew the power of example. He came to the earth and plunged into the culture and life of a Jewish state, living in the Roman world, as a carpenter. He lived daily for 3 years with 12 men. Jesus modeled all that He wanted these disciples to be and do. Jesus commanded: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19). He was not afraid of leading. Nor

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was he convinced that lone-rangers could learn from Him at a distance. He invited fellowship again: “Come to me, all of you who toil and carry burdens and I, yes I, will lead you into rest. Put on my yoke and learn from me. . . .” (Matthew 11:28-29, Williams Translation). Jesus got up-close and personal. “He ordained twelve that they should be with Him and that he might send them forth to preach” (Mark 3:14). Jesus wanted them to be “with Him” first, to share his life. Then He sent them to preach, to share his ministry. He considered life first and ministry second(Waylon B. Moore).

The simple words "Follow me," were Christ's invitation to the disciples to enter into a mentoring relationship that would change their lives and eventually change the world. Bruce Larson shares, "Mentoring comes primarily from Christian leaders who come alongside to model, to encourage and by example, to teach. It is Jesus' own method. He did not put his first twelve followers in a classroom for three years and teach them theology. They learned as they walked with him and shared his ministry." Mentoring is an ideal approach to a generation of young people who are "wired" relationally.

Mentoring is Mandatory. Mentoring relationships don't just happen. Neither can they be forced. Mentoring is an intentional two-way street. If we're going to effectively develop the leadership abilities of others, we must provide them with more than training and instruction. We need to “mentor” them. Jesus Christ first chose his disciples (Luke 6:12-13). Then he poured himself into them for the next three-and-a-half years, teaching them privately and empowering them to do ministry. He wanted to be sure that when he left, they would carry on his work as leaders for others to follow.

Jesus came to earth to accomplish the will of the Father by giving his life as a ransom (Mark 10:45). On his way to the cross, he taught, performed miracles and demonstrated the love of the Father to thousands of people. But why did he choose disciples? He could have come, lived, taught, died, been raised and gone back to heaven without having to bother with 12 guys leaving their families behind, arguing over who's the greatest in the kingdom, whining about status and asking a lot of frustrating questions. But his plan from the start was to involve others in the work of bringing people into the kingdom. Jesus demonstrated a principle, “You will never be an effective leader until you include those you lead in what you do.” (C. Gene Wilkes). In fact, it is interesting that no person in the Bible comes to faith in Christ apart from the work of another human being. Even Saul of Tarsus, when he was confronted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, was sent to another person who would tell him what to do (Acts 9). Jesus could have told him what to do, but he did not. He involved Ananias in the conversion of Saul. Wilkes continues: Jesus seldom did ministry by himself. Jesus was Master and needed no one to help him. Yet no matter what he was doing, he ministered with his disciples nearby. He usually had at least three disciples with him wherever he went. By constantly having his closest followers near him, he showed how the best lessons came from the classroom of experience. In the sense that Jesus was all-powerful and could do whatever he wanted, he did not need a ministry team, but he built one so that his mission would continue when he returned to the Father.

We see this clearly in Luke 10, as Jesus commissions 72 of his followers for ministry: After this he appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Luke 10:1-3 When Jesus commissioned them to go out in pairs, he knew that they would face hardship. After all, they departed without food, money or extra clothing (v. 4). Wisely, Jesus did not send them out alone; he sent them “two by two.” Not only did this satisfy the Old Testament ideal of confirmed witness (Deuteronomy 19:15), but it also met the practical need of each disciple for protection and encouragement. Jesus looked after his followers to the smallest detail.

First, they were well-trained. They knew where to go and what to say. They even knew in advance how to deal with rejection. In fact, Jesus was constantly teaching his disciples, formally and informally through his own example. He instructed them about the kingdom of God (Matthew 13), his mission on earth (Mark 10:32-34) and their own attitudes about being his followers (Luke 17:7-10). They had seen him deal with hostility and negative responses before. Jesus made sure that his followers were well-prepared. Second, they had a clear vision. They were impelled by Jesus’ urgent declaration that “The harvest is plentiful” (v. 2). Max DePree says that the first responsibility of a great leader is to define reality. That is precisely what Jesus did. Jesus painted a clear picture of what their mission would look like when it was complete: the harvest would be plentiful. And it was.

Not only did Jesus listen to their report, but he praised their efforts. And, more importantly, he praised them. He reminds them of their blessed position in history by saying, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (vv. 23-24). Think of the impact this must have had on Jesus’ followers – many of whom certainly came from the “wrong side of the tracks.” These oppressed people enjoyed something that made Old Testament kings and heroes green with envy.

Jesus mastered in leadership development. He trained leaders, tested them and then rewarded them. H.G. Wells wrote: More than 1900 years later, a historian like me, who doesn’t even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly on the life and character of this most significant man.... The historian’s test of an individual’s greatness is “What did he leave to grow?” Did he start men to think along fresh lines with a vigor that persisted after him? By this test Jesus stands first. Leadership is not merely a cognitive grasping of concepts. Neither is it just a matter of developing skills to their full potential. For leadership to be passed on, it must be modeled. Leadership, like most things, is more caught than taught. By allowing the 12 to follow him around for more than three years, Jesus was able to model leadership principles for them. He showed them what true greatness in the kingdom of God looked like. It looks like humility; it looks like service; it looks like Jesus himself (Kenneth Boa).

Jesus Christ mentored the Twelve and the Three. One of the three, Peter, in turn had some type of mentoring relationship with Barnabas ([Galatians 2:11-13](#)). Barnabas then imitated the method that he'd benefited from, by mentoring Mark and Paul. Through Paul, God erected a chain of Spirit-filled, world-changing mentors and church planters.

Another form of mentoring found in the Bible is side-by-side mentoring. An example of this is seen in Jonathan's peer-mentoring of David. In the New Testament God sent His Son to be the supreme model of mentoring. Day and night Jesus taught, encouraged, modeled and invested in the twelve. Jesus' training wasn't dependent on sermons to shape his men. "He ordained twelve that they should be with him . . ." (Mark 3:14). He shared his life and ministry with them daily for three years. Mentoring is relational and must be deliberate. Dr. Robert Clinton in *Connecting* suggests ways to categorize different kinds of mentors. There is the coach, spiritual guide and disciple. Then there are four occasional kinds of mentors: the teacher, the sponsor, the counselor and the historical mentor.

Jesus made his "private ministry" training his disciples how to pray, witness, nurture and disciple. Jesus refused to be comfortably insulated and mentored his team of 12 into greatness and extraordinary spiritual production. Biblical leaders, intimate with Christ's heart, mentor staff (Waylon B. Moore).

Conclusion

Most workers and managers experience their work environment as increasingly uncertain, with greater pressure to deliver high levels of performance using fewer resources and people (Macneil, 2001). A good mentor will walk with us through life, be a true brother or sister, challenge our thinking and faith, caution us when appropriate and share what he or she has learned that might help us. This is the idea behind the Bible's admonition, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Not only does a mentor challenge, but a mentor supports and encourages as well. The Bible says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). A mentor puts his or her arm around us to help us make it through those times when we doubt we can take another step – an absolute necessity on the road to becoming a leader like Jesus Christ (Kenneth Boa).

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