

Coaching, a scientific method

ROSELYNE KATTAR

- **What is coaching?**
- **What is The Scientific Method in coaching? What are the phases of this process?**
- **How does a coach help his client?**

This article tries to explain what coaching is about, how and why it works. If you want to continue the dialog, send me your comments or questions on my blog.

- **What is coaching?**

Coaching is helping the client to define the problem according to his own perception, find his own solution and strategy and then support him in the implementation of his own project.

We generally have the reflex to reject all ideas, propositions, solutions that come from outside. Even if at first, we seem to accept them as they sound interesting and rationale, after a while, we just forget about them and don't integrate them in our functioning.

We need to apply the strategies, the solutions we found ourselves because we own them, we believe in them: they come from us. Our motivation is high because we don't need to try to appropriate them: they are ours.

Whereas a consultant gets information, analyses it and produces the solution, a **coach** helps the client describe the problem, tell his story and how he understands the problem. He acknowledges what the client says and supports him in elaborating his own solution at his own rhythm.

- **What is The Scientific Method in coaching?
What are the phases of this process?**

The Scientific Model in coaching is a process that allows the client to define his goal, elaborate a strategy to attain the goal, reinforce his motivation to realize the plan, realize actions step by step and all along the process evaluate and adjust.

The first phase is to **clarify what is the present situation of the client**. What does he consider is a **problem**? What are his expectations in the future? What would be the ideal situation? What is his **goal** today for the next three months? What is the **priority**? What **changes** are necessary? How will he be able to tell that he reached his goal?

This is essential because when the goal is not well defined, the process is endless and unsatisfactory for both partners. It is difficult to succeed if the client doesn't know what he wants or what new situation would be acceptable for him.

In the second phase, the client **establishes a plan and a potential strategy to reach his goal**. What steps are necessary to reach the goal? What tackle first? How would you do that? What in your mind would help? Can you tell me about a time when you used to develop the resources you need now for this project? What have you learned then? How could you apply it to this new plan?

This step allows the client to draw the path toward the solution. It gives the foundation, the method to reach the objective.

The intention of the third step is to activate the client's motivation by asking him **to remember why realizing that particular goal is important to him**.

The realization may be difficult and he may be tempted to give up: *Well, that's how it is. It's not so bad after all. Maybe it's impossible to realize that. Maybe I don't have the resources to do it. I am too old or not strong enough to go through it, etc....* Activating the motivation of the client by helping him to visualize the change, feel the impact on himself and his environment (family, company, community) in the short term and long term will mobilize his efforts to reach his goal and be a great help to resist the temptation to give up.

The 4th phase is **when the client starts the action to realize his plan**. The role of the coach, at this moment, is to walk along his side in anticipating the details of how he will do it. He also helps him figure what are the risks that could occur and prevent them as much as possible. He creates with his client the best conditions to prepare success. He also proposes himself to be a resource for him if he is stuck.

- How much **time** do you think you can devote to your goal this week?
- What are the **most important** steps you could take this week?
- What are the **resources** you will need to realize it?
- What could be the **obstacles** to get through with it?
How could you handle it?
- How can I **help** you to keep to it?

The final phase is to **evaluate and adjust**. It is essential to go through the whole plan and reach the objective.

It is rare that the first plan works completely and perfectly from the first time, especially when the client wants to make crucial changes in long installed habits or tackle something totally new for him.

The role of the coach is then to acknowledge and celebrate his client's success and help him to adjust when necessary. It is also to support him when it doesn't work immediately. He shares with him his experience, listens to his feelings and guides his perception toward the positive output. He stimulates his energy to find new approaches that suit him better, may be simplify an action or make less significant steps so that he can go back to work and succeed.

When it is not possible to change the limiting factors for the moment, learn to modify the goal or the strategy and tackle the problem in a more efficient manner

All the process is consistent and when applied fully gives the best chances of attaining the goal.

● **How does a coach help his client?**

The coach **reflects** the information he receives, amplifies it and sustains it without altering it, changing it or distorting it.

When the coach reflects what his client said, he gives him a summary of his idea, plan or feeling without adding anything to it and without making any changes. He reflects all the client said and nothing else. He doesn't interpret or bring any distortion to what his client is expressing. The intention is to help him be aware of what he is saying or clarify what he just said and encourage him to go further in his analysis or proposition.

He reactivates his strengths and accompanies him until he realizes his goals. Doing so, he transfers to him the methodology to coach himself.

Generally, at the beginning of a session, I would first explain the process and talk about the confidentiality rule.

Then I would ask the client:

- What would he like to **change** in his life?
- **What** would be the two or three things we could work on in the next three months?
- **Why** these changes would be important to him?
- What would be his **priority**?
- **How** would it look like if he reaches his goal?
- What is he ready to **engage** to reach his goal in time and efforts

My favorite strategy in asking questions is to start with general open questions and get more and more precise as the client develops his situation, feelings about his problem, his goal and his strategy to attain it.

For example: when the client is trying to clarify the **problem**, my questions may be,

- Can you describe the situation?
- Who is involved in it? What are the relations between the people?
- What happens step by step? How is it a problem? For whom?
- How does it feel?

Or when the client is trying to define his **goal**:

- Can you describe the outcome if the goal is reached?
- What would happen if the outcome is there?
- How would it feel?
- Why do you want to reach that goal now?
- What are the steps to get there?

And when the client is trying to define a **strategy** to reach his goal:

- Have you already tried to make that change?
- What have you tried already?
- What has worked? What has not worked?
- What would be the first step to begin the change?
- What do you need to make that step?
- What will be the easiest part of it?
- What could help you maintain this change?

There are many ways of helping someone, different theories and techniques. But in the end, **every individual being unique**, the best way to intervene is try to understand the client, establish a rapport with him and then build the adequate intervention for this one person adapting it all the way according to his responsiveness. In the end, **the only person who can make the change is the client**. And what's wonderful about it is that they mostly do.