

The third 'generation' of workplace coaching: creating a culture of quality conversations (Anthony M. Grant)

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Aim of study

Concepts like 'Leader as Coach' and 'Manager as Coach' have dominated coaching literature and practice in the past few years. Anthony Grant a pioneer of coaching psychology discusses the evolution of workplace coaching, where leaders and managers are trained to coach their employees. Grant uses a real-life case study to demonstrate how a 3rd generation approach to workplace coaching, designed to enhance both performance and well-being, best serves the needs of contemporary organisations.

Background

What is workplace coaching?

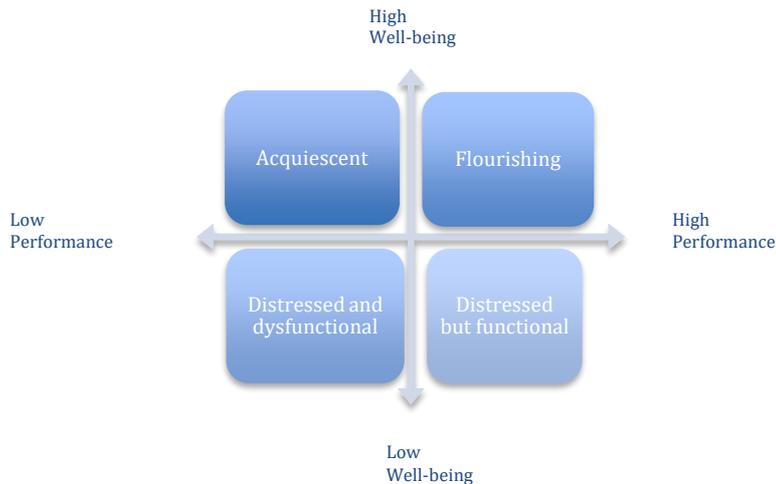
As defined by Grant "***the purpose of workplace coaching is to help employees, managers and leaders to attain work-related goals in terms of skills, performance, or developmental outcomes***". In contrast to executive coaching, typically provided by external coaches, workplace coaching is delivered by managers and leaders in formal or informal one-to-one sessions with their employees.

Key trends in 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation workplace coaching¹:

	The main focus	Core characteristics
1 st generation 1990-1999	Performance management Compelling others to change Dealing with 'difficult' employees	Command and control Coaching to specific rankings/ratings
2 nd generation 2000-2010	Changing others/driving change Maintaining authority and hierarchy Holding standardised 1-2-1 conversations Attaining specific predetermined goals	Prescriptive 'how to coach' models Sees change as linear to be controlled Highly jargonized training material Propriety coaching language IP owned by coach training company
3 rd generation 2010-	Attraction not coercion <i>Leaders modelling change behaviours</i> Shifting individual and organisational mindsets Putting principles into practice <i>Attaining organisational goals/actualising values</i> Change in both individual and systemic Ensuring synergetic goal alignment	Highly flexible and agile <i>Coaching as a quality conversation</i> not a goal-focused manipulation Appreciates the complexity of change <i>Seamlessly integrates with organisations' language, brand, culture and values</i> (more than white-labelled)

¹ Grant, 2017 p. 43

The engagement and Well-being Matrix²



Why focus on 3rd generation workplace coaching?

- A quick glance at the key trends table highlights the limitations of 1st and 2nd generation workplace coaching. It also shows **how organisations over the years have shifted their attention from managing performance, to building skills and talents of their employees.**
- **Creating a culture of quality conversations** where employees are coached to balance work and life challenges would be in everyone's best interest. As shown in the engagement and well-being Matrix, **high performance and well-being go hand in hand.**
- **Coaching agility** is another advantage of this approach – **moving away from formal sit-downs to informal/corridor coaching and collaborative conversations** makes the process more practical and accessible to the realities of corporate work.
- **Making change stick** by personalising coaching training methodology to organisational needs. Evidence shows that jargonized training material and language is eventually rejected by organisations as a foreign body (Lindebaum & Jordan, 2014 cited in Grant, 2017)
- **This approach also argues for simplicity.** There is something to be said about providing coaching training that is practical, supported by evidence based research, and in line with the client's values, language and cultural narratives.

Research design – methodology

- A theory building article on the 3rd generation approach to workplace coaching
- For more information on the design of the original case study see:
Grant, A. M., & Hartley, M. (2013). Developing the Leader as Coach: Insights, strategies and tips for embedding coaching skills in the workplace. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 6(2), 102–115. doi:10.1080/17521882.2013.82401

Comments

- Many of the suggestions made by Grant are very appealing, it would be interesting to see how they could be applied in other organisational settings

² Grant, 2017 p.44