

Chapter 1

Perspectives on Executive Coaching, Mentoring, and Counselling From Indian Mythologies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to point towards how modern-day coaching can benefit from the ancient wisdom of the world's oldest surviving civilization extant in India. Drawing from academic literature, this chapter looks into one instance of mentoring and coaching from each of the two great Indian epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, to define what constitutes coaching, the attributes of an effective coach, hallmarks of good coaching, and characteristics of a good coachee. With the insights and understanding offered in this chapter, coaches can quickly and effectively guide their coachees to achieve more confidence and motivation. This contributes both to the understanding and knowledge in the mechanism of coaching as well as to the practice and methodology of coaching.

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INTRODUCTION

The area of human performance technology (HPT) has been the subject of much interest and study. The International Society of Performance Improvement defines HPT as “a systematic approach to improving productivity and competence, using a set of methods and procedures – and a strategy for solving problems – for realising opportunities related to the performance of people” (ISPI, 2012). It has also been more simply defined as a systematic approach to improving individual and organisational performance (Pershing, 2006).

While many areas are related to improving human performance, fundamental and core is the direct intervention at the “person” level, achieved through coaching, mentoring and counselling. In today’s fast-paced and unrelenting business and corporate world, many have turned to coaching to seek peak performance (Mask, 2016). Mentoring and coaching in the modern business world constitute an effective method of achieving targets and goals both individually and collectively. This may include analysis of employee performance, individual skill sets, effectiveness in the application of the skills and also provide feedback to give course correction as and when required. Hence throughout the process of achieving a goal or target, mentors provide motivation and support to encourage employees to pursue their goals.

Based on data (Coonan, 2017) by the International Coaching Federation (ICF), its membership has tripled world-wide over the past 10 years. According to its 2016 Global Coaching Study (International Coaching Federation; PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2016), the number of professional coaches worldwide is estimated to be more than 50,000; and annual revenue estimated at US\$2.35 billion.

Coaching can be defined as “a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting to construct solutions and employ goal attainment process with the aim of fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the client” (Grant & Stober, 2006). The field of coaching has gained much attention, especially in the course of the past 2 decades (Kessler & Graham, 2015). The many sub-fields of coaching (e.g. performance coaching, leadership coaching, life coaching) that has emerged attest to its popularity and effectiveness. Coaching has generally been validated to be effective (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011).

In the recent decades, more discussion and debate have ensued on the nature of coaching. There were also discussions on differentiating coaching from counselling and coaching psychology. Inroads were also made to more

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