



# COACHING AS A TOOL TO AID LEARNING

Why use a Coach?

## ABSTRACT

I am an experienced coach and have worked with a broad spectrum of professionals – and law firms - on improving quality of working life and identifying and achieving goals. I can help you decide on the design of a programme of coaching for you or your staff, which can be tailored made to their needs.

Gill Steel

## Coaching as a tool to aid learning

### Why use a coach?

According to Harvard's Institute of Coaching 70% of those who receive professional coaching benefit in terms of improved performance, relationships and enhanced communication skills. Coaching can reduce procrastination and provide the support you need to reach short or long term goals.

We are all used to being taught but as we develop and learn for ourselves we often look outwards for someone who has more experience, who could offer ideas as a mentor and support us within our business. In the professional world today this person is often a coach.

### What might a coach help a lawyer with?

In the context of a law firm, a coach can provide essential support including:

- Helping a team leader manage their team better to get the best out the team.
- Assisting someone switching disciplines to find their feet in a new area of law.
- Supporting a younger lawyer, for example where there is a lack drafting or negotiating skill and a desire to experiment with improvement in each area to reach and maintain competence.
- Providing guidance for talented lawyers who are now taking steps into management for the first time.

A coach is also someone there to motivate you to complete a project that is both important and urgent, but which somehow languishes in your inbox because it's not client work. They might help you to determine your learning needs and then guide you in setting some personal goals. Working with a coach can help to keep you on target to achieve those goals.

### Traditional vs online coaching

Traditionally, a coach might be someone you saw offline – the teacher on a course, say, or a colleague in the office. There are clear limitations to this, both in terms of time available and location. For example, your firm may have people in different offices who need similar support, or you may be an individual looking to progress personally outside of work and cannot afford the time to meet up in person. Online coaching has none of these limitations. It is flexible, cost effective, accessible as and when suits you and can be tailored to individual need.

Coaching benefits both individuals and the businesses they work for - 86% of companies feel that they recouped the investment they made into coaching, and then some.

### **Gill Steel - coaching for the legal sector**

I am an experienced coach and have worked with a broad spectrum of professionals – and law firms - on improving quality of working life and identifying and achieving goals.

I can help you decide on the design of a programme of coaching for you or your staff, which can be tailored made to their needs. Below is one example of how coaching can work.

#### **An example of how I work**

An initial telephone conversation or Skype session is used to build rapport and agree what can be covered within the budget you have. This will lead into identifying the purpose behind the coaching programme and the goals you want it to achieve. The following example illustrates how the process can work.

**The learner:** a new team leader looking to motivate their team to achieve the team's fee target for the year.

#### **The process:**

1. Set the budget and agree how frequently the available hours might be used – e.g. one hour per month for six months; followed by a review to see if further time would be helpful.
2. A telephone call or over the internet discussion to brainstorm the key aspects of the problem the learner faces regarding the situation as is, the people involved and how the learner fits in.
3. From this list of hurdles, the coach and learner might decide on one priority issue from each aspect of the situation, the people and the learner that should be focused upon.
4. The following sessions could be devoted to devising the options that are most likely to make progress with each of these issues in solving the problem.

#### **Getting down to the issues:**

Where the problem is motivating the team to hit the team's fee target the brainstorm may identify several situational problems, including:

A lack of transparency about the link between budgets, targets and salaries and other expenses that must be paid. The learner may therefore need coaching to be able to explain simply to his/her team the way the firm's finances work.

A lack of cohesion and mutual support. The learner and coach may spend time looking at what personal styles are adopted by members of the team and how certain methods of approach might turn each from being just an individual to being a team player.

Not enough time to carry out initiatives. A review of time management techniques might be worthwhile.

Low levels of learner confidence. The coach will help the learner to drill down into why this is and how it might be improved.

Throughout, the learner will be encouraged to experiment and feedback what has worked and what has not worked so well and why. There could be telephone calls between coaching sessions if the learner gets stuck with reading or planning, subject to the budget set.

**Sample cost:**

Six one-hour sessions. Coaching infrastructure is made up of one hour with the learner and an additional hour to plan the content of the session and follow up with the learner afterwards. Therefore, the total cost would be for 12 hours at £250 per hour (£3,000 total). This could be spread over six months at the rate of £500 per month. Before the end of the budget is reached learner and coach review the process to agree whether it needs to be extended. The goal is to provide the learner with the tools needed to carry forward their learning without the need for the coach – until another project raises its head.

Working with a coach isn't just about having a cheerleader but also the support of expert guidance, confidence building and someone who will challenge and enquire into habits, thought patterns and processes that may have become stale and be slowing you down. Many people find the process to be transformative.

Coaching stats: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carleysime/2019/03/28/how-does-coaching-actually-help-leaders/>

**Interested in Coaching?**

Please feel free to contact me to explore how coaching might help you and/or your team. [Gill.Steel@lawskills.co.uk](mailto:Gill.Steel@lawskills.co.uk)