

# “An Effective Coach doesn’t sidestep his or her responsibility”



The rugby world cup is all but over and from an Irish point of view it was over almost before it started. As a result there has been serious criticism of the coach and players, and I have my own view as to who is to blame for the very poor showing of the team - but that is for another time.

Interestingly the term “coach” in business terms had, I understand, its origin in golfing circles, in that the techniques used to coach a professional golfer were then applied to the business executive.

So I want to look, in this article, at what a coach is, and to see if there any lessons that we can apply to the working environment. And who knows it may even shed some light on the problems facing the Irish Team?

So lets start by clearing up some definitions, and I’ll leave it to you to draw any sporting/rugby parallels:

- **An Executive Coach** is a person who focuses on a broad strategic and integrated perspective that enhances business results and works on the behaviours and attitudes that increase motivation and performance of individuals and the team. Put another way an Executive Coach seeks to answer the question: *“How do I create direction and then mobilise my team (or organisation)?”*
- **A Coach** is someone who reinforces behaviour that enhances business results for an individual and/or team. This is achieved by focussing on the skills, attitudes and behaviours that drive an organisation’s strategy. Put another way a Coach seeks to answer the question: *“How can I influence others to work together to accomplish corporate (or team) goals?”*
- **A Mentor** in contrast, is a person who facilitates organisational, career and/or personal transitions. This is achieved by linking an individual’s self-worth with the bigger organisational picture. Put another way a Mentor seeks to answer the question: *“What must I do personally to succeed within this organisation (or team)?”*
- **A Counsellor** is someone who addresses emotional and/or psychological issues. This is achieved by developing personal skills with client responsibility for the solution of the problem. Put another way a Counsellor seeks to answer the question: *Assuming I have control what must I do to solve this issue?*
- **A Consultant** is a person who provides capabilities, a perspective and/or data (from strategic to tactical) that the organisation often lacks internally. This is achieved by providing a systematic view of for example structures, systems, people and processes. Put another way a Consultant seeks to answer the question: *Where are the weak links in the organisation (or team)?”*

The reason a coach is therefore needed is to improve individual or team effectiveness, and to do so (s)he must establish a common mission and language. (S)he must also have the know how to frame and then address problems and decisions, and the ability to work through conflict among the team players so that critical goals are achieved. If these are not in evidence then the team is ineffective and the problem, I suggest, lies solely with the leadership/coach.

DBM has developed a proven four-step process that brings a logical and systematic approach to executive teams. Specific, measurable outcomes for the process are identified up front, in collaboration with the team

leader and players. And then over a prescribed period the leadership team progresses through the following phases:

1. **Awareness:** This is a “snapshot of the now” and through an appropriate assessment process, those being coached gain an accurate and personal understanding of their leadership strengths and abilities, as well as those areas that they need to develop to operate effectively as a team. They also acquire a balanced view of the factors influencing team success in their organisation’s/teams culture. Put another way this phase seeks to address the question: *“How does my performance link to the current business/team goals?”*
2. **Analysis:** This is a “vision of the next” and through the combination of self-knowledge with an understanding of organisational realities and team behaviours and values, those being coached develop specific plans to meet business/team objectives. They commit to short- and long-term plans to accelerate leadership capability, reach critical milestones, and correct counterproductive behaviour as need be. Put another way this phase seeks to address the question: *What do I need to do to close the gap?”*
3. **Action:** This is about “building potential” and those being coached act on team priorities and objectives, periodically obtaining input and assessing progress against specific criteria. Put another way this phase seeks to address the question: *“What action and feedback will get me to my goals?”*
4. **Achievement:** This is about “measuring business/team results and professional outcomes” and those being coached participate in the reassessment and feedback process that pinpoints both quantifiably and qualitatively, where they are achieving the desired professional goals and business/team outcomes. Put another way this phase seeks to address the question: *Have my business/team goals been reached?”*

Peter Drucker once said: “The Leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say “I”. And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say “I”. They don’t think “I”. They think “we”. They think, “team”. They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don’t sidestep it, but the “we” gets the credit.... This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done”. After all if Tiger Woods or Darren Clarke win a major golf tournament no one thinks to congratulate the coach, but when things aren’t going well then the coach is often brought into the picture. And his job is to enable them, through the coaching process to resolve their own lack of form.

I suggest that the effective Leader, be it in business or sport, is the person who has not only used all his/her coaching skills to lead the organisation/team to achieve its goals, but has also recognised their input. But how many Leaders give the credit to their management and staff? I think not as many as should, and certainly there are many still employed who have indeed, as Peter Drucker has rightly said, have “sidestepped responsibility”.