

Discover: Coaching!



Coaching vs. Mentoring: What's the Difference?

What's the difference between coaching and mentoring? At first, they seem very similar. Both are one-on-one relationships where the coach or mentor invests in someone he or she believes in. Both involve regular meetings, use covenants to structure the relationship, and offer support, encouragement and accountability to help people grow.

But there are also major differences. A mentor is a more senior individual who *imparts* what wisdom, opportunities, or knowledge to a more junior individual. The focus is on what the mentor gives to the mentoree. By contrast, a coach works to *draw out* the abilities, wisdom and sense of purpose that is already in you. The focus is not on what the coach has to give you, but on what you already have that can be maximized.

Here's an example of each approach. A manager has a job opportunity that would move his career forward but requires relocating across the country and leaving friends and family behind:

The Mentoring Approach

"That sounds like a great opportunity! It must be rewarding to be recognized like this.

"Yeah, it sure is!"

"I had a couple of opportunities like this when I was just getting started in the corporate world. One was a great move, the other was a disaster."

"What was the difference?"

"One was a young, suburban community with a lot of people in our age group. My wife really thrived on the fellowship, and she loved the cultural opportunities in the city. The other was a in western Nebraska where people were spread out all over. They offered me 40% more than what I had been making, plus a VP title, which was a big step up. But my wife never felt like she fit in, she never really made friends, and it was very hard on her and our marriage.

In retrospect, she didn't really want go: she was just deferring to me. I didn't really tune into what my wife wanted, and that was a mistake. What are you hearing from your wife on this decision?"

The Coaching Approach

"That sounds like a great opportunity! It must be rewarding to be recognized like this.

"Yeah, it sure is."

"Let's think it through. How would this change your life relationally?"

"Well, probably the biggest difference is with my parents. We'll miss going over for Sunday dinner, and the free babysitting. Vacations and dates will be a lot tougher. Oh! Mom and dad are going to really miss doing the grandparent thing. I better talk this through with them."

"Is that a step you want to take?"

"Yes. I'll do that this Sunday."

"How else will this affect you and your wife's relational life?"

"We'll be able to make new friends eventually. It'll be harder for Patrice, because I'll be spending a lot of time at work while she is stuck at home with the kids. Her mom's group is a big deal for her. We better talk that one over, too. We better check and see what kind of group experiences are there for Patrice, too..."

The mentor is gently pushing the younger manager toward what is really important in life, and giving wise counsel gained from his own life experience. He's conveying information the client might need by

Discover: Coaching!



sharing personal story and drawing a universal lesson from it. Mentoring focuses around one person imparting wisdom to another.

Instead of giving counsel, the coach asks questions to help the manager think through the implications of pursuing this opportunity and take specific action steps he chooses to help him make a wise decision. By pushing him to think instead of offering advice, the coach builds this person's decision-making ability. And because this individual developed his own solutions, he really "owns" them and is more likely to carry them out.

When I'm mentoring, I'm teaching a person, letting him draw from me or learn from my experience. When I'm coaching, I'm pushing a person to draw from his or her own resources and experiences. *Coaching is helping people learn instead of teaching them.*

*Adapted from the book, Leadership Coaching, by Tony Stoltzfus
To purchase this book, [click here.](#)*