

The art of Learning Leadership

Coaching and mentoring is believed to be one proven way of exponentially enhancing job

satisfaction and performance of employees.

However, according to a research carried out by

global consultants Blessing White and reported on September 19, 2007, it has been found that coaching of em-

ployees by managers contributes little to either their performance or job satisfaction.

Nearly 700 mid-level employees in North America, Europe and Asia were asked to evaluate coaching's impact.

The survey found that fewer than one in four (23 per cent) respondents said coaching contributed significantly to their performance, and a majority (60%) reported slight, little or no impact.

Likewise, just 20 per cent indicated coaching had contributed significantly to their job satisfaction and 10 per cent thought it had actually diminished it.

"What we learned about coaching's impact has real consequences for organisations concerned with employee performance," Blessing White CEO Christopher Rice said. "The findings should prompt management to address the evident shortcomings of coaching by managers, make them more accountable, do more to reinforce it and even offer tangible incentives."

Essential for success is effective training for the

managers, Rice said.

"We found that 73% of those in our study attended coaching training, but given our findings, we have to ask of what it consisted," he said.

There is also a pivotal personal dimension, Rice said.

"Managers need to establish individual partnerships with the employees they're coaching," he said. "Each person is motivated by a unique set of values, attitudes, skills and goals, and great coaching must be based on a clear understanding of what these are."

Internal coaching appears to be in disarray, Rice said.

"We see missed opportunities to use coaching to boost performance, leverage individual contribution and align employees with business goals," he said.

Of the 677 respondents participating in the Blessing White survey, 30 per cent are supervisors or managers, and 23 per cent are specialists or professionals. Only 3 per cent hold administrative or clerical positions.

LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

■ (Learning) is the acquisition and development of memories and behaviours, including skills, knowledge, understanding, values, and wisdom. It is the goal of education, and the product of experience.

■ (Leadership) is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the institutions of which they are members.

In my seven years of purposeful engagement with more than 50 organisations facilitating about 500,000 person-days of learning and development interventions and touching lives of close to 7,000 individuals, I have come to realise that some myths and assumptions related to enabling learning and development are responsible for seriously impeding the process and thwarting the purpose of learning, as mentioned above. These are:

■ Learning is about transference of information.

Anyone who or even anything which is reasonably informed and knowledgeable can therefore take on the role of a trainer.

■ One who has been a great performer can be a great trainer / teacher / guru.

■ A seasoned manager with all his wisdom can be an effective coach / mentor.

■ Training is about telling or yelling. Thus some slideware driven sessions run by a reasonably good presenter / speaker can be an effective programme.

■ It is important to keep the participants in good humour even if it means pampering them with what they want.

Simplistic assumptions underlying these myths include

■ Learning is a one-way traffic – from the trainer to the learner

■ As learners, we are al-

ways ready to receive.

■ Effectiveness of learning is a function of the impact of telling.

■ Acquisition and cognition of information and knowledge changes the way we do things.

■ There is no need of any engagement. It's a mechanical process.

■ The underlying suggestion in the very word training is that of delivery – what I have to 'give'. It does not include the responsibility of making the other 'receive'; definitely not realise and learn.

The need of the hour is Learning Leadership.

Learning Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to acquire and develop skills, knowledge, wisdom and values to contribute to the growth and evolution of the individual and the organisation of which they are members.

The cornerstone of Learning Leadership is a learning architecture that has been founded on the basic tenets of humanistic learning and the following associated beliefs:

■ Whatever we are looking for is already there – waiting to be discovered.

■ Intimate insight derived through first hand experience and reflection is more fruit bearing than instructions told or sold

■ Learning leads to continuous movement - driven by a will to learn and happening by choice

■ The process of learning is all pervasive and overarching. It needs us to be con-

scious of this process to learn meaningfully.

■ There is a context or a cause outside the learner which drives the volitional learning process and content.

For inspiring Learning Leadership, therefore, it is absolutely essential that the aspirants

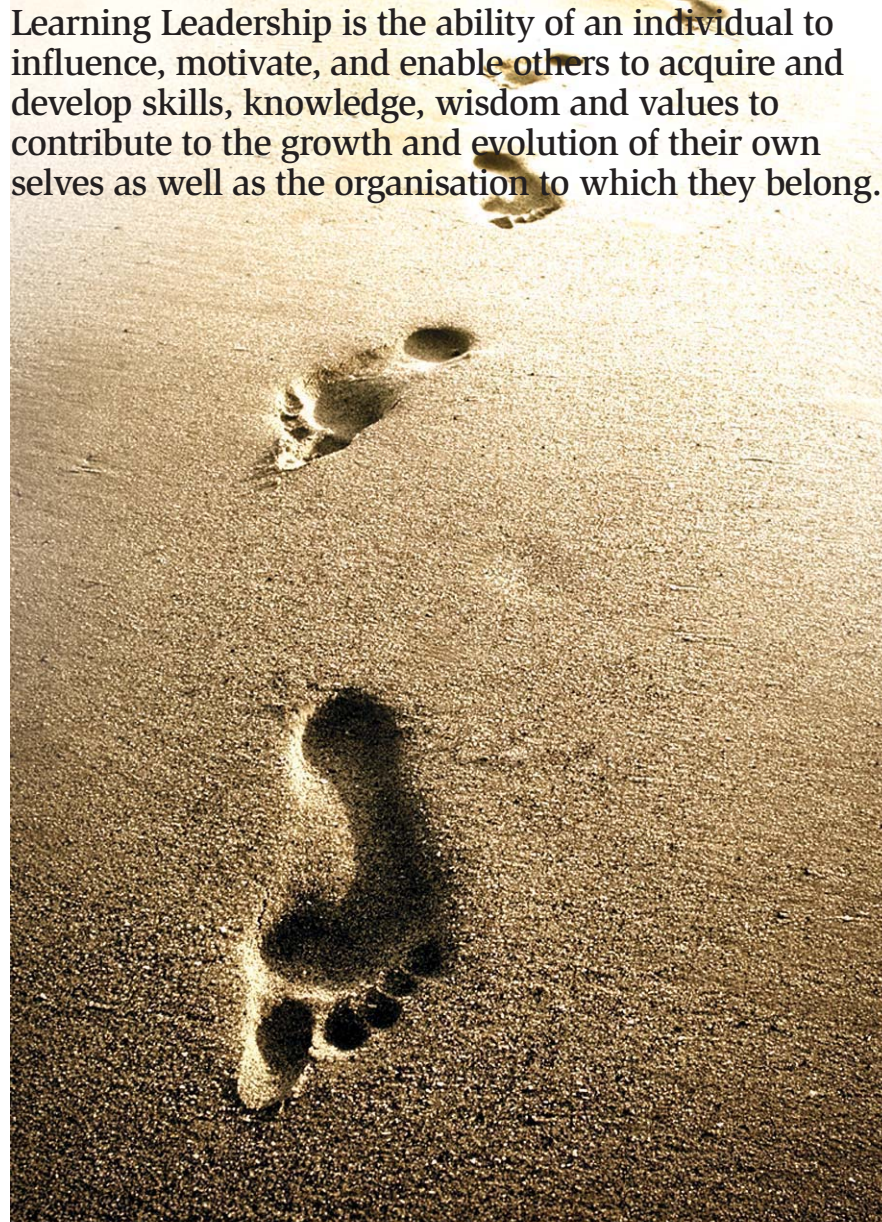
■ Take the position of a guide by the side rather than a trainer at the centre enabling the process of learning, irrespective of the subject matter and content and

■ Leverage ones own personal power and influence to awaken the facilitative 'power of the presence'.

Learning Leadership is not a skill to be learned through training. Excellence in Learning Leadership can be attained through adopting and imbibing a certain mindset, a way of life, by intent. It demands a sustained investment towards exploring into the deeper realms of one's own self, making discoveries and gathering insights about one's own conditionings, uncovering the limitless power within and experimenting with functional and more humanistic ways of accompanying.

In the current economic context, it is pertinent that the L&D organisations responsible for leadership / management development within organisations take a step back and give a hard look at the ongoing L&D roll outs.

What has been working all these years may not work any more.



Learning Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to acquire and develop skills, knowledge, wisdom and values to contribute to the growth and evolution of their own selves as well as the organisation to which they belong.