Coaching has two main effects in the work context, it increases a person’s performance at their tasks and it can develop them to higher levels of thinking and skills. Few coaches make the distinction, and even fewer focus on one or the other. To understand the difference in business, we need some basic definitions. First, performance is applied to work… and what is work?

*Work is the exercise of reflective judgment and discretion in the pursuit of goals within a given time span.*

This is an unusual definition and brings out many aspects of work that we overlook. First it means that goal setting is a core aspect of work. Reflective judgment, is based on knowledge and experience. It means assigning value after reflection and therefore implies goals, values and priorities. Discretion means choice, so work is about choosing between different courses of action based on knowledge and experience. There is room for intuition and artistry. The mention of time is also important. The more senior the manager, the longer the time span they need to consider. CEOs of companies must consider at least five years in advance.

**Potential and Performance**

Everyone has knowledge and skill, but do they choose to use it? And... are they allowed to use it by the working situation?

So we can make a distinction between potential and performance. Performance is what people do in the workplace. They decide to apply certain of their skills depending on how motivated and committed they are. Also the procedures and systems of the workplace allow them to perform at a certain level. Performance coaching helps people to give their best at work, given the system constraints they are under.

Potential is what people are capable of given the right tools and environment. Coaching can help turn performance into potential, by helping them increase their commitment and overcome blocks in the system. It can also help them overcome limiting assumptions about themselves and others that are stopping them form working at their best.

**Development**

And there is something more. Over time (sometimes long periods of time) Human beings develop. Think back to what you could do and think ten years ago. (Ignore physical strength).
DEVELOPMENTAL AND PERFORMANCE COACHING

How is your thinking different?

How are your relationships different?

What problems can you solve now that you could not then? Perhaps you did not even see them as problems back in time. There is overwhelming evidence that we develop through different ways of thinking in defined stages, where our thinking becomes wider and deeper.

This is development across time. Whereas learning and performance are on the same level, development moves upwards.

Development is the equivalent of moving house to a higher floor where you can see more.

So performance coaching helps the person to live better and more comfortably at the level they are at. This is very useful. Developmental coaching, does not rearrange the furniture of the present mental abode, but opens the door to moving to another mental home altogether.

What does this mean for coaching?

It means that people cannot be defined by their current performance. It suggests that people never apply all their skills and knowledge, so coaching can always help them and the business move forward.

Most business coaching is performance coaching, and sometimes it has developmental effects.

Organisational problems

There are three main types of business problems that coaches may have to deal with.

- The client is psychologically unhappy or disturbed. (Intra psychic problem). In this case a therapist or counsellor would be better than a coach.
- The client is feeling good, but is not motivated to perform at their best. (Values problem). A coach can help here.
- The person is OK, but the system stops the person from working to their fullest, and the person gets the blame. (Intra systemic problem). Client and coach may be able to see the problem in the system and fix it.
- The person’s skills and knowledge is not sufficient to do the task. In this case, coaching can help them to improve their performance.

However there might be a problem that the person’s skills and knowledge cannot be brought up to the required standard at that time. The person is not developmentally ready to assume the task which he is asked to do. This is an example of a person promoted beyond their present capability. In this case, the person probably needs to move to a job that is within their capabilities. Later, developmental coaching can help them to achieve the levels of thinking and capabilities they need to do the job. Thinking is a capability and can be developed like any other.

Coaching can help requisite organisation, (that is, to fit the right people in the right jobs and develop people to fit into the jobs in which they find themselves). The level of work complexity and the level of the person’s ability to think systemically, need to match.
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In the wider sense, business needs to define structures around people not people around structures.