

## The Importance of Mentoring in the Development of Coaches and Athletes

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*Mentoring has been considered an increasingly important element of coaching development programs. It occurs when a teacher willingly invests time in the personal development of a student or athlete, when a trusting relationship evolves, needs and interests are fulfilled, and imitation of behavior takes place. The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring experiences of expert team sport coaches. More specifically, the intent was to determine if any of the coaches were mentored through their development as athletes and subsequently as coaches, and if in turn they mentored other athletes and coaches during their careers. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 coaches. The data were analyzed inductively using qualitative procedures outlined by Côté and colleagues (1993, 1995). Results revealed that most coaches were mentored by more experienced coaches during both their athletic and early coaching careers. As a result, they gained valuable knowledge and insights that helped shape their coaching philosophies and enhanced all facets of their performance. Once they reached a level of expertise in their field, they themselves began to mentor athletes and younger coaches. The benefits of establishing structured mentoring programs for developing coaches and athletes are highlighted throughout the article.*

KEY WORDS: Coaching, Mentoring.

Mentoring is a process that requires further research and is believed to lead to high levels of success in both personal and professional endeavors (Merriam, 1983). In sport, it is evident that the role of the expert coach entails more than teaching individuals how to shoot correctly or how to dribble

The importance of coaching and mentoring extends broadly from the coach / mentor to the learner and the organization as a whole. Benefits to the Coach or Mentor. The coach / mentor plays a very important role in transferring knowledge to the individual and helps the person in enhancing his personal and professional growth. The following reasons explain the importance of coaching and mentoring to the people who are conducting it:

- Increased job satisfaction
- Further enhancement of their own skill level
- Advantage of their own professional development
- Enhanced skill in problem analysis and Both mentoring and coaching offer incredibly valuable developmental support. However, one offers high-level guidance for long-term development, while the other helps provide a more immediate improvement in targeted areas.

**History and Definition.** A character in Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey" could be called the original mentor. When Odysseus, King of Ithaca went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted the care of his kingdom to Mentor. Mentor served as the teacher and overseer of Odysseus' son, Telemachus. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines a mentor as "a trustee

**Benefits of coaching and mentoring in organisations.**

- Links to good management.
- Corporate strategy.

Coaching is concerned primarily with performance and the development of definable skills. It usually starts with the learning goal already identified...The most effective coaches share with mentors the capability to help the learner develop the skills of listening to and observing themselves, which leads to much faster acquisition of skills and modification of behaviour. Coaches also share with mentors the role of critical friend – confronting executives with truths no one else feels able to address with them. The coaching agenda is co-created by the coach and the coachee in order to meet the specific needs of the coachee. The mentoring agenda is set by the mentee. The mentor supports that agenda.

**Questioning.** Asking thought-provoking questions is a top tool of the coach, which helps the coachee make important decisions, recognize behavioral changes and take action. There is less interest in specific, measurable results or changed behavior and more interest in the overall development of the mentee. Now that you have a basic understanding of the difference between coaching and mentoring, how will you know which is best – working with a coach or working with a mentor? When to Use a Coach. Develop raw talent with a specific new skill. To gain the full benefits of coaching and mentoring as learning and development tools our research supports the following recommendations:

- Coaching is a facilitative method of learning and communication that all finance professionals should be practising from the moment they first interact with colleagues, stakeholders and clients.
- mentoring – a term that originates with Homer; in the Odyssey he tells of Mentor, who passed his wisdom and knowledge to others. Assessment, guidance, advice and, possibly, instruction are key activities in the mentoring role. Many of our contributors wanted to emphasise that the terms coach and mentor should not be confused, as the latter has a much more directive style.