

DEVELOPING COACHING SKILLS WITHIN THE MANAGEMENT OF A F.E. COLLEGE.

THE CLIENT

In 2023 Growhouse took our first step into leadership development in the education sector. The goal: to enhance the existing skills of managers at all levels within the organisation with a basic understanding of coaching skills and how to use them to deliver outstanding results.

Our client – rated ‘good’ by OFSTED – operates over five locations, serves over 10,000 learners every year and employs over 600 people.

The program worked with around 60 members of staff, all of whom had management responsibilities from teacher practioners all the way up to the CEO.

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THE CHALLENGE

In the pressured environment of a large college how can managers use coaching skills to create a more engaging, collaborative and nurturing environment for their colleagues? Multiple studies show that the way we are managed is the biggest single factor in our experience of work. The education sector in the UK is a challenging place to work and those challenges can be mitigated or made worse by the approach of managers.

THE PROGRAM

The 60 participants were divided into three groups with each group attending a full day's training and then, after 4-6 weeks, a half day of reflection and consolidation.

The approach was conversational and practical, with each group covering the same core material in order to enable conversations across the three groups.



THE FRAMEWORK

The framework of the program was based around 'The Enabling Manager' model found in the book of that name by Myles Downey and our own Ian Harrison.

The framework seeks to set coaching tools within a context of three different types of conversation that are needed to fulfil a management role. The following extract is from chapter 3 of the book:

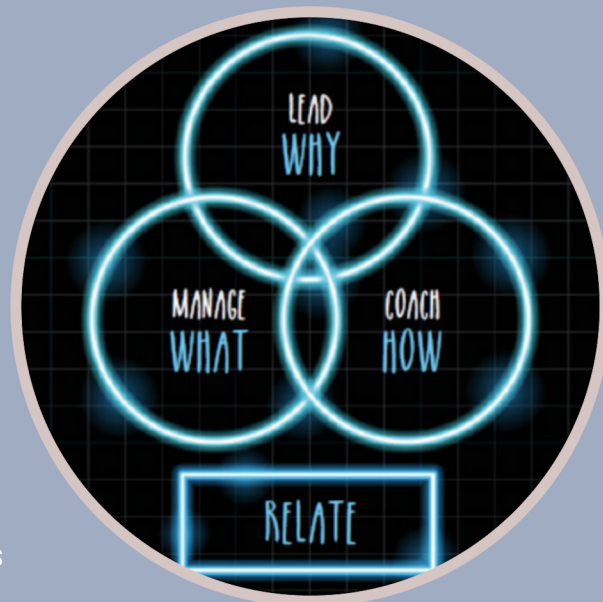
"The Enabling Leader model identifies four inter-related activities:

Relate: every great team is built on the foundation of good relationships and the first, essential activity of anyone seeking to align and enable their team is to build and maintain effective relationships.

In broad terms the other three activities can be summarised as follows. To Lead is to provide context – to explain WHY the work is being done (Align). To Manage is to communicate the practicalities – to explain WHAT work needs to be done and WHAT the business requires in terms of processes and procedures (Align). Finally, to Coach is to work with your team to determine HOW the work will be done (Enable)."

The program gave significant time to practicing coaching skills and conversation as to how and when these could fit into the varying roles of the participants.

The half day follow up session gave participants to share stories of how they had used the skills in the intervening period and to reflect on what had worked and what had not worked. Time was also given to consider the use of coaching skills in giving feedback and when leading meetings.



"You've exceeded my expectations with your approach to helping us develop our coaching skills."

THE OUTCOMES

Due to the limited nature of the project the outcomes from this project are anecdotal.

- During the half day follow up sessions many participants had stories of how they had used the skills that we were able to discuss together as a group.

According to senior leadership, in the 6 months following our work:

- some participants have sought out further opportunities to develop their coaching skills.
- others have changed their approach to working with learners
- managers have said it has made them work differently to get the best from their team

REFLECTIONS

Given the limited nature of this project the short term outcomes appear to have been significant. The following possibilities would have given a greater opportunity to embed the skills discussed and to ensure longer term outcomes:

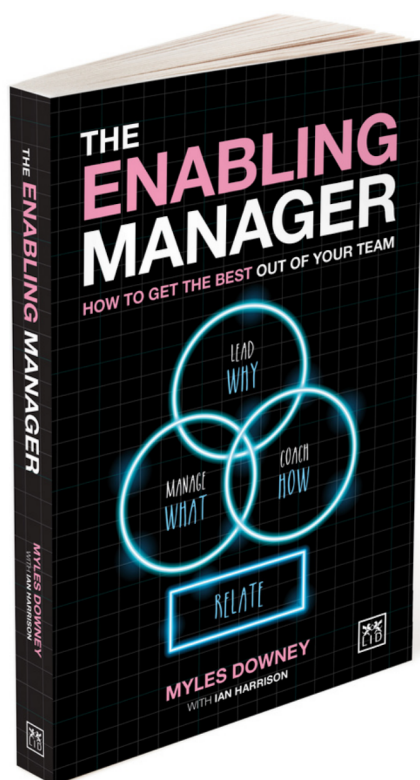
- In an ideal world the training would have been accompanied by observation of management in practice and direct feedback to participants.
- The prohibitive costs of such observations could have been reduced if the observations and feedback were undertaken by members of staff under the supervision of Growhouse.
- The identification of a set of champions with responsibility to continue to promote the use of coaching skills. This group could have been exposed to more in depth training and be supported to promote the use of coaching skills within the context of management practice within the college.

THE ENABLING MANAGER

The workplace is changing. People today want to work in different ways, with different values, but are constrained by management practices that have not evolved significantly in the last fifty years. This book describes a management approach fit for now. The approach comes from profound insight gained from working with organisations of all sizes to help them get the best from their people. Each chapter is full of practical pointers on how to use the skills discussed, and ends with ways to experiment with the ideas and skills yourself.

Whether your role is defined as manager, team leader, section leader, supervisor or even CEO, this book will give you the skills you need to lead effectively in the new world of work..

Praise for 'The Enabling Manager'



"This book addresses the considerable gap between the way we have led organisations for years versus how we should successfully lead in today's challenging and uncharted times. Not only does the author explain the "how" but the "why" too, giving the reader a deeper understanding and underpinning knowledge necessary for success in the coaching-led approach of "align and enable". This book is insightful, inspiring, and motivating, and is a must-read for leaders at all levels, from new team managers to seasoned CEOs."

(Matt Jones, Managing Director, Hello World Group Ltd.)

"Our leaders and managers are jointly and collectively responsible for creating an exceptional culture, trusted relationships (psychological contract) and providing opportunities for growth for each and every member of their team. "The Enabling Manager" coaching models and practical tools really do support us in achieving these goals and lead to business performance and success when applied by managers day to day."

(Helen Pullen, "Head of Learning and OD,
Financial Service Company")