## THE BENEFITS OF COACHING:

Picture your team with improved: competence, confidence, self-awareness, accountability, resilience, relationships, decision making, the list goes on. What difference would it make to you and your company if you could reap these benefits? What would these improvements enable you to do more of/ less of? Almost 30 years ago, as a John Lewis line manager, I learnt how to use coaching as a leadership style. This skill changed my life, reducing my stress levels and making my role as people manager much more enjoyable. My team grew in skill and self-belief, enabling them to use their initiative more and take greater ownership. Business successes swiftly followed.

## WHAT IS COACHING?

At its heart, coaching is just a really useful conversation. The aim of this structured style of conversation is to enable the speaker to produce – and risk assess – their own solutions. These could be solutions to maximise on an opportunity or to fix a challenge. Coaching is about asking questions and listening, rather than telling or providing the answers. The person you are coaching will have much more of the airtime than you.

## GETTING STARTED WITH COACHING: OUR TOP TIPS FOR MANAGERS

### Adjust your mindset

- Let go of feeling that you must provide all the answers.
- Believe that, if you create the right environment, others can come up with quality ideas. If you regularly give your team the answers, they must get used to your new approach.
- Don't give up if they respond to your question with "I don't know, what do you think?".
- Recommend they get a coffee, think about it and then reconvene to hear their thoughts.
- Caution - if the person cannot possibly know the answer, don't coach them. If it's an emergency situation, again, don't coach (e.g., you wouldn't coach someone on how to evacuate during a fire!)

### Avoid leading questions

- Resist the temptation to ask questions which contain your idea or solution. For example, replace "What does Rosie think?" with "What resources do you have available to support you?" This broadens it out so they can think about people, systems, documents, etc., rather than just your idea to speak with Rosie.
- Use open questions to glean more than a Yes or No answer and widen their thinking. Open questions start with: WHAT, HOW, WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHY?
- To avoid sounding critical, be mindful of your body language and tone when using 'Why?'

### Zip it!

- Ask an open question and wait. Allow silence. Don't interrupt. In this busy world, space and time to think are priceless.
- If you are used to telling, the silence may feel lengthy. It won't be. Someone recently told me that research shows we usually interrupt others within 17 seconds!
- You may be tempted to rephrase the question, thinking that they've not heard or don't understand. If you genuinely think they are stuck, ask "What are you thinking?", but don't let that be an excuse for impatience.

### Learn GROW

- The simple and memorable GROW coaching model is widely attributed to coaching guru Sir John Whitmore. It's easy to learn and has a built-in risk assessment, which is why so many businesses use it to help create a coaching culture.
- Here is the model with some sample questions:
  - **Goal** – What do you want to achieve?
  - **Reality** – What's happening now/ what have you tried already?
  - **Options** – What could you do?
  - **Will** – What will you do?

## FINALLY …

Managers worry that coaching is too slow. With practise, you can coach in a water cooler moment or walking up the stairs. Not too much to ask, if you want to reap the benefits described earlier.

**A REAL LIFE EXAMPLE:** 8 weeks after our 'Coaching for High Performance' half day workshop Stephen Rowe, Managing Director of DEKRA UK Ltd., described these valuable outcomes: "Educating our entire line management team has been transformational for employee engagement – both for the line managers and for the staff that they have coached - we have seen more engagement, more ideas, more ownership – and this correlates strongly with business performance".