

An Alternative to Giving Advice

It is so easy to offer advice when asked for input. In many cases it feels fantastic being asked, and sometimes even when not asked, to offer a ready solution and send the other person on their way with a greater sense of how much you know and is needed. Sometimes the advice is given at the first hint of what the solution might be, not taking the time to hear the person out, because “it is so obvious” and after all “that is what they want”.

Of course, there are times when it is appropriate to offer advice, examples being: You are the subject matter expert and they specifically need your expertise that they do not possess themselves and cannot develop easily in the time available.

Hmm, that’s about it.

However, there is an alternative to advice giving that, while taking more time and effort, offers great rewards both to the provider and the seeker of guidance: ***having a coaching conversation***.

With a coaching conversation your responsibility as the provider is to enable the growth and development of the seeker, while leaving responsibility for what action to take with the seeker. Give advice, and it is your solution, your approach, your responsibility, and there is no ownership by the seeker. By having a coaching conversation you facilitate the thought process of the seeker, open and extend their capacity to develop their



Conversing about possibilities and generating insights

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Abstract

Advice is easily and habitually given. Often the better alternative is to have a coaching conversation which enables the recipient to grow and develop through gaining their own insights and approaches.

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own solutions, enable them to have “ah ha” moments of realisation from which they permanently own the insight and develop in them a greater sense of self-esteem. In general, the benefits to you as the provider include a rich and meaningful conversation, the knowledge that someone else has left your space with greater capacity within themselves, and most likely you have strengthened the relationship with and the loyalty of the seeker to you.

At its heart, the ***coaching conversation*** is a dialogue in which you, as the provider, listen for understanding and potential, use questions to discover and extend the seeker’s thought process, provide open, clear, balanced and honest feedback, and facilitate the conversation so it remains on track. It does require ready solutions to be parked, for you to value the seeker as someone worth your time and investment, and for you to develop your capacity to truly be with someone else instead of caught up in what you need to do next.

As someone who is often approached for career advice, I vouch for the personal benefits of shifting tack and developing capacity to have coaching conversations.

I experience a much deeper connection with and richer experience of people with whom I have such conversations. I enjoy my shift of attention being from “being right” in the advice I give, and all the responsibility that goes with that, to the appreciation of the qualities and capabilities of the person I am conversing with, and recognising the genuine intent within them to perform as well as possible. It is a refreshingly different and exciting place to function from. Anyone can occupy this space.

What motivates you and strengthens your desire and capacity to perform? Of the people who have had the most profound and positive impact on your development, what were the key qualities they exhibited?

If you find yourself offering advice, what factors are you aware of that encourage this behaviour? Do you have any interest in strengthening being less advice-giving? If so, what could you do to bring about that change within yourself?

Coaching can support you create the best outcome when working with areas covered by this article.

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