

Book Review: 'Managing Coaching at Work' – Jackie Keddy & Clive Johnson

The essence of this book is about planning and preparing to implement a coaching initiative and to embed its uses and applications throughout the organisation, by monitoring and coordinating the process, including coach selection, and by evaluating, promoting and extending its reach.

Its main contribution to the field of coaching is in its thorough and comprehensive approach to the topic – ideal for coaching champions or project leaders tasked with getting coaching off the ground!

People who will benefit most from this book are likely to be HRD, OD, L&D champions and keen line managers tasked with taking in-house coaching forward, but who don't have so much experience in this field.

What feels original is the author's undoubted credibility in this field, gained from many hours of practical consultancy work with a range of clients and sectors. They have amassed a wealth of knowledge in developing and sustaining coaching initiatives, and have neatly drawn the learning from those experiences together for our benefit to save time and energy re-learning the lessons! A number of short case studies are cited as examples of this collaborative work, and these are generally useful.

What feels slightly re-cycled material (for some) is the many references to known tools, theories and methods, such as Kirkpatrick's 4 levels of evaluation. Although these references do serve a purpose, as they bring in more widely used techniques from related fields, the authors could have saved space and repetition here by just citing the tools, enabling readers to follow up themselves. I found myself skipping through pages that I already knew about.

The book is organised in 3 parts – Contexts, Implementation and Outcomes

Part 1 – Contexts, covers what is coaching, why we need it, where coaching could fit in, and what could be on the agenda for coaching. This part sets the scene for the implementation stage by covering quite a lot of known ground, especially to people who work in L&D and coaching consultancy world, but is a useful addition for others who may not have been exposed to putting forward business cases within the corporate environment.

The chapters include debates on the 'manager as coach' with benefits for and arguments against the case. The topic of developing a coaching culture is aired here with definitions of what coaching is and is not. The uses of coaching for general development and as a management style are also highlighted here.

The benefits coaching can bring including ROI are covered here, with the authors saying that coaching must 'fit the needs of the organisation' (rather than be adopted as a fad or good idea). The authors recommend that the 'agenda' for coaching be identified early on prior to implementation, and represent both the individual and the organisation.

The need to consider evaluation to avoid disappointment in outcomes and ROI later is made and a large section discusses why coaching works, and brings things up-to-date with recent discoveries in neuroscience, which is interesting.

The agenda for coaching is covered well and cites a U.S. coaching network within Hewlett Packard as an example of fit with the company culture. The business applications for coaching are clearly stated e.g. managing talent, first 100 days, competency development, etc. and this section would help to build a business case internally.

The authors cite a survey of collective experiences from over 40 organisations who have implemented coaching, finding that only those that had stated a clear purpose for the coaching could confidently state that there had been a positive return. This implied that many organisations seem committed to a coaching initiative without a clear focus but are willing to make the journey without the rigour needed to prove its value!

Part 2 – Implementation, includes the initial steps from needs analysis, to recruiting coaches, engaging stakeholders, and planning initial implementation. I personally found the number of checklists and diagrams a distraction rather than an aid but others might find them helpful.

This part even includes consideration of an accreditation process to provide credibility and for internal coaches seeking formal recognition for their role.

Part 3 – Outcomes, is largely about the constant need to evaluate and to sustain the case for ongoing coaching, why coaching can go 'off the rails', matching supply with demand, and leaves the reader with thoughts on further change and transition, learning, and on developing coaching through coaching supervision and by planning for future needs.

In summary

Managing Coaching at Work is a good addition to the bookshelf for those concerned with creating the conditions for culture change through coaching. It provides many practical frameworks and checklists to plan and implement the key steps needed to introduce and sustain a coaching strategy. There is an abundance of support and guidance in the appendices, plus website references with several free downloads available.

This book will appeal particularly to champions of internal coaching who wish to take the organisation forward as part of an overall people development strategy.

Value for money? I'd say "yes" - by saving valuable thinking and experimentation time, so well worth it.

Reviewer:

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