

## **Review of Coaching for the Future published in the Spring edition of Business Executive, 2004**

In *Coaching for the Future*, Janice Caplan provides a practical guide to coaching and mentoring for HR and line managers. She describes the different uses of coaching and mentoring and gives readers what they need to know to make the case for coaching in their organisations and arrange for its implementation. The book is easy to read and makes extensive use of case studies from a wide range of businesses to make its points and provide inspiration to the reader.

The use of coaching and mentoring has burgeoned over the past few years with the result that there is much confusion and little consistency over terminology and standards. Caplan clarifies and simplifies. She gives practical guidance on every step from the identification of coaching needs, through to the coaching contract and evaluating success. She suggests that taking on a coaching role can help HR in their quest to become strategic business partners. She also offers guidance on choosing a coach and matching coach and learner. A list of questions that can be asked when selecting a coach is especially helpful.

Although the book does not aim to teach you how to coach, Caplan's overview of various coaching frameworks and her description of coaching skills provides a valuable synopsis to enhance the reader's understanding of the topic and its many business applications.

*Coaching for the Future* is based on a model where "a coach is a collaborative partner who works with the learner to help them achieve goals, solve problems, learn and develop." This contrasts with the model of coaching prevalent a decade ago, where coaching was primarily remedial and emphasised where performance and behaviour were unsatisfactory. In this new coaching model, employees are successful and seek help to undertake fresh challenges and keep up with change.

In making the case for coaching, Caplan argues persuasively that coaching and mentoring suits the attitudes and needs of our times, fitting into our perspectives of our working lives and what we wish to get out of them. She suggests that a leadership model focusing on coaching and collaboration is pertinent to the independent-minded knowledge worker. She also provides some illumination on the difficult question of organisational culture, writing about the benefits of a 'coaching culture'. She indicates that the development of the right culture lies in encouraging people to look at situations from different angles and explore alternative strategies. She also addresses the role of the manager and puts forward some useful guidance on how managers can take on a coaching role to get the best from their staff.

Caplan also discusses factors that are driving organisational change, such as the need for learning and knowledge sharing, as well as the work/life balance debate. She shows, in some detail, how coaching programmes can be crafted to help the organisation achieve its goals and individuals to reach their potential.

In setting out the different applications into which coaching has evolved, Caplan discusses how coaching and mentoring can be used to underpin the aims of classroom training and , using lively case studies, she shows the possibilities offered by online coaching.

Coaching for the Future puts across the clear message that coaching and mentoring provide means of learning that offer considerable payback but to achieve this it is essential for the aims of the coaching to be aligned with business strategy and integrated into HR processes.

This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the pitfalls and benefits of coaching and implement or extend its use in the organisation.

Janice Caplan  
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