

Philosophy of Coaching and Basic Structures of a Coaching Session

Coaching has become a buzzword in the world of management today. But what are the strengths and limits of the term ‘coaching’ in a church planting context? Are there any parallels between coaching and Jesus’ way of working with other people? This session will present basic tools in coaching, typical structure of coaching sessions and principles of giving constructive reflection in watching how others are coaching.

Jiří Unger is the President of the European Evangelical Alliance and the Executive Director of the Evangelical Alliance in the Czech Republic. Jiri leads national church planting initiative which in 2012 started to train 18 church planting teams from the Czech Republic. Jiri has been trained in both secular and church planting coaching. Jiri is member of the international leadership team of church planting movement called M4 and serves on the Steering committee of the European Leadership Forum.

I. Systemic coaching vs. traditional church planting coaching

A. Assumptions of Systemic coaching

1. Person as a living system can't be directly changed, directed or taught from outside but all these processes take place within each individual
2. Every individual (or system) naturally resists instructive intervention from outside as extraneous or alien
3. Living System have very good ability of self-organization. If they are allowed to respond on the basis of free will and choose their reactions on impetus from outside, they tend to adapt optimally to changing needs, requirements and environment and lead themselves or learn in direction of its own continual change.
4. Systemic coaching is based on assumption that key resources and knowledge is already available in the person who is the best expert on his life or options. Key need is not to get advice but get help how to use our won resources more effectively. (Giving advice is allowed on the basis of mutual agreement and when all own solutions were used, and only in a form of providing alternatives and not one imposed solution)
5. Coach is not an expert on the issue or ministry, but expert on process, tools and constructive questions supporting the person in using his resources and finding his solutions that are believed to be always greater in number or quality, because he is the expert, he knows the situation or issue best, he is closer to it and it's in his competence.
6. Coach doesn't take over ownership of the issue by expert advice imposed on the coachee or leading questions or hidden manipulation

7. Systematic Coaching focuses on desired behavior, future or solution projection and less on negatives (not problem focused)

B. Risks and Biblical criticism

1. Aspect and power of sin is underestimated – all living systems among humans are corrupted by sin and evil and do not self-organize in the best or good direction
2. God is avoided as supreme resource of knowledge or as active agent in coaching
3. “Wisdom is in the body” vs. individual resources and solutions perspective
4. Relationships matter

C. Traditional CP coaching

1. Assumptions
 - a. Believing in them
 - i. Positive and affirming
 - ii. Faith in them and recognizing their gifts
 - iii. Confident in their call
 - b. It's God's mission
 - i. He is already there and at work
 - ii. Faith to find a way
 - c. It may not be like anything I've done or seen before
 - i. Range of differences. model of church, culture and context, tradition and theology, leadership style and personality
 - ii. Required attitude
 - a) Humble: other approaches can be better than mine
 - b) Open: there is so much we've not seen yet
 - c) Unthreatened: different doesn't necessarily mean better
 - d. With the Holy Spirit, there is wisdom among us
 - e. Clear expectations - avoid disappointment (coaching contract).
2. Aims of coaching sessions/visits
 - a. Get a broader/ fuller perspective
 - b. Observe the leader and the project (in their mission context, leadership group, public gatherings)

- c. Help them generate creative and original ideas
 - d. Build functional relationship to develop the leader
 - e. Encourage and raise faith
 - f. Prevents isolation
 - g. Identify and understand key skills
 - h. Clarify issues and get focus
 - i. Confront errors and solve problems together
 - j. Reach decisions, for personal development and study, and for project implementation
 - k. Pray and listen to God
 - l. Set an agreed program of action and study
3. Typical elements of a coaching session with individual CP
- a. Agree on the timeframe and the agenda and/or objectives (with priorities)
 - b. Start general, focusing on life issues and “connect” at the relational level.
 - c. Review recent developments/encouragements and disappointments.
 - d. Celebrate successes and blessings.
 - e. Check progress on previously agreed action.
 - f. Explore application of church plant principles from the last training session.
 - g. Question and explore more deeply the agreed issues/agenda
 - h. Explore things he/she is learning and things God is saying..
 - i. Summarize periodically to keep things on track and give feedback.
 - j. Encourage risk-taking and regularly affirm this.

- k. Take notes and decide on new specific actions that are agreed on (this could include things such as study or seeking the Lord).
- l. Take time for specific prayer and listening to God (during the training process, remaining open to the Holy Spirit throughout).

II. Synthesis?

A. Possible structure of coaching session based on CP process and training and aspects of systemic coaching

1. Create relaxed atmosphere, start general, focusing on life issues and “connect” at the relational level, (first meeting incl. defining framework of coaching, roles, rules and introduction), Explore things he/she is learning and things God is saying. What has happened in the area of previous coaching session? Pray together.
2. Team or individual assignments and progress review, previously agreed action plan/points reviewed; celebrate successes and blessings.
3. Generating of potential topics/subjects for individual coaching conversation
4. Identifying and agreeing the key area/issue/ that the coaching session will be mainly focused on and that is most relevant change that CP wants to see in his life right now.
5. Formulation of key expectations, outcomes or smart goals related to the bullet point above, that would make CP satisfied if they are achieved in his life or ministry. Using of open and constructive questions and other tools.
6. Prayer and listening to God and his wisdom, repentance if necessary, prayer about any obstacles that may prevent God to do his will or prevent CP to pursue what he believes God sends him to do or change.
7. Agreement on the process, method or actions steps to achieve goal above. Time frame. Any practical outcomes from the CP? Next meeting date.
8. Closing feedback
 - a. What was most useful or meaningful during the coaching session?
 - b. Presenting alternatives, inspiration if requested and only as suggestions not imposed on the CP as expert solutions.
9. Implementation