

COACHING

INTRODUCTION

One of the best and most effective forms of training is by means of a one-to-one relationship between a trainer and trainee. This is because the trainer can have a close and flexible relationship with the individual trainee. This enables a learning event to be developed to suit both the learning needs of the trainee and to satisfy operational requirements. The term 'coaching' is used to describe this form of training. The Glossary of Training Terms defines coaching as:

"Systematically increasing the ability and experience of the trainee by giving him or her planned tasks, coupled with continuous appraisal, advice and counselling by the trainee's supervisor."

In a one-to-one relationship as described in the definition there are two people involved, the 'supervisor' (or the more appropriate word 'trainer') and the 'trainee'. We also make reference in the definition to 'planned tasks'. Recognising the considerable impact both has on the success of coaching activities is important. For example:

- The trainer has to recognise an individual's training needs, and plan an appropriate coaching session.
- The planned tasks provide the basis for the training needs, and the justification for providing coaching.

TASKS

The definition for coaching refers to trainees being given planned tasks. This draws attention to the learning being work-related and the coaching process intended to improve or develop a person's performance. A task is an element of work leading to a specific result. Here are some examples of tasks:

- Preparing and delivering a lecture
- Calculate Income Tax
- Interviewing a client
- Start a computer
- Writing a letter
- Preparing Plan Proposal
- Formulating Projects

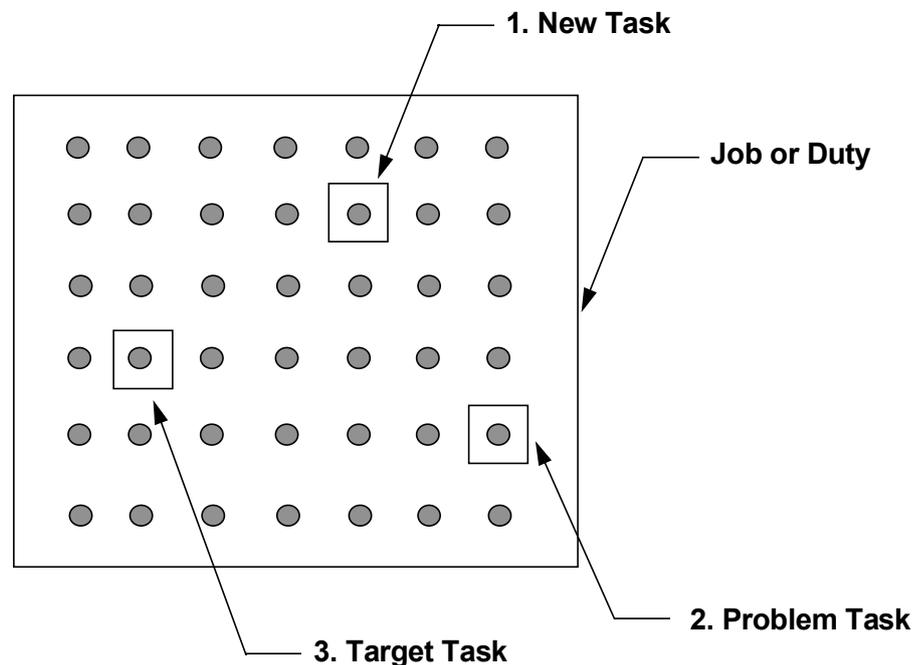
There are many tasks in a typical job, and no clearly defined limits to what constitutes each. The range of activities that form a single task depends on circumstances. While coaching, what matters most is that a person's training needs are met by helping them to learn how to perform a specific task. It is also important that we treat the task as a

self-contained part of the person's overall job, and that we will give the person sufficient time and opportunity for practice.

Tasks are work-related activities, where each task should have a clearly defined beginning and end. A trainee can probably perform satisfactorily a range of tasks within

their job or duties. Figure 1 represents the scope of the job or the range of duties they are required to perform

The person in the job or carrying specified duties is competent to perform most of the tasks and does not require training. However, we highlight several dots to indicate:



1. A task that is new to the person and one he or she will need to learn.
2. A task that is a problem where the person needs help to learn how to do it better.
3. A task that is especially important and is a target for the person to achieve competence

Fig-1

PLANNING TASKS

When planning to increase or change a person's repertoire of tasks the following questions must be carefully considered:

- How well will a new task fit into the person's existing duties and responsibilities?
- How easy or difficult is the new task to learn?
- Are other people performing the task already and is their performance satisfactory?
- If the task is being performed badly by others what affect will this have on the trainee?
- If others are performing the task can they assist with coaching duties?
- Is there a clearly defined standard of performance for the particular task?
- Will the trainee be keen and willing to learn the task, or is it one being imposed on him or her?
- If the trainee is already performing the task, does he or she know that it is not being performed satisfactorily?

Planning a task is therefore not something one does without consideration of these and other questions that might be pertinent to the situation. It is essential to establish a sound reason for asking a person to learn a task, and to ensure that we then provide adequate learning opportunities.

TYPES OF TASKS

The list of tasks given earlier indicates the wide range of tasks to be encountered. Some will be straightforward and relatively easy to learn; others will be more complex, usually involving decision making. We can make a useful distinction between these two types of task:

Reproductive Tasks

These are tasks that are always performed in the same way. Satisfactory performance occurs when the person performing the task follows established procedure, observes all the rule and regulations, accuracy, etc. and in effect, repeats a model performance. For example, each time you start a computer you follow the same procedure - this is a reproductive performance, and would be done in a similar manner by anybody using a computer.

Productive Tasks

These are tasks that require a different performance each time they are done. Two people can perform the same task, and do them differently but correctly. Usually, the reason for this is that a person has to decide and apply a considerable body of knowledge

and experience to what might be a unique performance. Also, there is no clear-cut, and definitive 'correct' result. For example, each time you conduct an interview you do it differently, depending on the individual being interviewed; a colleague could interview the same person and do it differently, but equally successfully.

The distinction between the two tasks becomes important for coaching activities because:

- There is one way of doing a reproductive task and the trainee has to learn what this is, and be given sufficient 'drilled' practice to ensure competent performance.
- Productive tasks require the trainee to acquire knowledge and use it to plan and decide. Because each performance of the task is likely to be different, the trainee cannot learn in the same way as for a reproductive task. Instead, the trainee has to develop competence by performing the task in many different situations.

Making a clear-cut distinction between the two types of tasks is rarely possible. A typical task will usually contain elements of both productive and reproductive performances. Although the ways in which people learn the two types of tasks are different, most tasks will contain elements of both and the coaching procedure needs to be adjusted accordingly.

APPLYING THE FOUR WAYS OF LEARNING

All four ways of learning - Trial and Error, Thinking, Being Told and Imitation - should be used to create an appropriate learning event. Figures 2 and 3, below, illustrate how they can influence the sort of learning event needed to learn either a reproductive or productive task.

Learning Event for a Reproductive Task

This shows a learning event for a reproductive task. Here, there is one, and one only, method of performing the task. You should know what this is and have the necessary degree of expertise to help the trainee learn it by using an appropriate combination of the four ways of learning. For example:

Imitation Demonstrate performing the task, ensuring that the trainee can observe all actions you have taken.

Being Told Explain why the task has to be performed, and the correct procedure to be followed.

Trial and Error Let the trainee try, following the demonstration and using the information provided in the explanation.

Thinking Ask the trainee questions to check understanding and competence to cope with any possible variations that might occur. Fig -2

Learning Event for a Productive Task

This shows a learning event for a productive task. Here, there is no one, correct way of performing the task. Each performance will in some way be different. This is reflected in how you use the four ways of learning. Notice the greater emphasis on thinking and the minor importance attached to demonstration and explanation. This will influence how you can help the trainee to learn. For example:

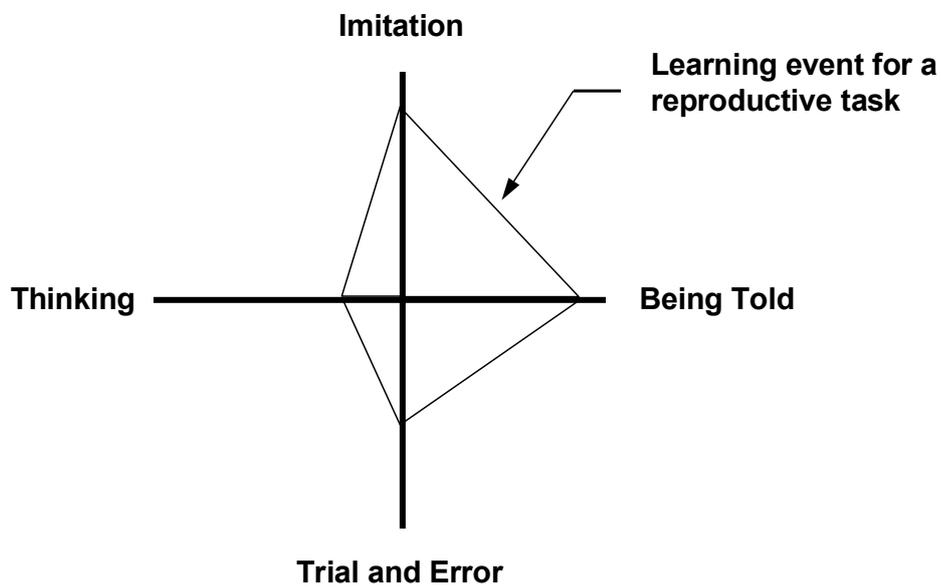
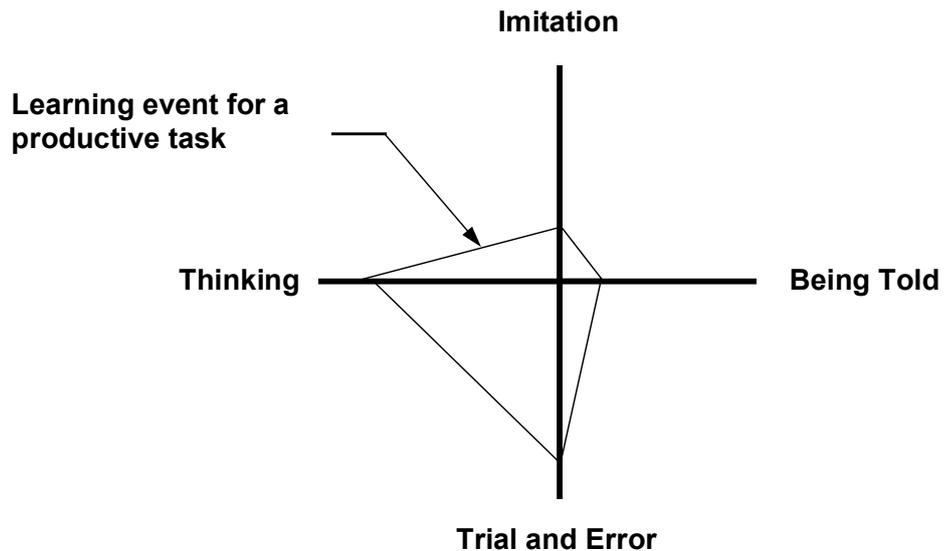


Fig-3

Imitation Where possible demonstrate the reproductive elements in the task and



respond to the trainee's requests to show how you would cope with typical situations that might arise.

Being Told Respond to whatever explanation the trainee might request.

Trial and Error Opportunities have to be created to enable the trainee to practise performing the task and to cope with variations that are likely to occur.

Thinking Productive tasks require the application of a combination of education, experience and professional expertise towards performance of a task and the achievement of a successful result. This requires the trainee to think about how they might perform the task and 'to think through' the consequences of certain actions.

RELATIONSHIP WITH TRAINEE

Coaching a person to learn a new task, or helping someone overcome performance problems by means of a one-to-one relationship can prove very demanding. Coaching can often be a highly productive task to perform and sensitive use of the four ways of learning will be one factor influencing any relationship with a trainee.

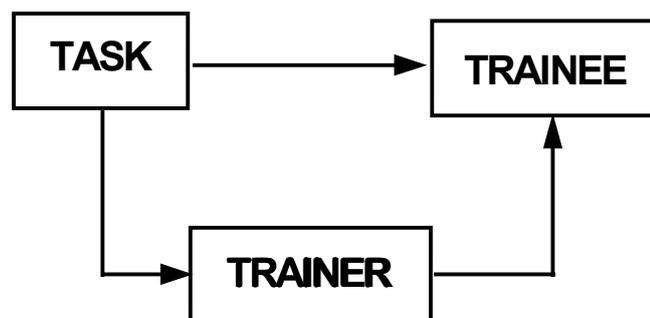
The trainer's relationship with the trainee is something that has to be developed. There cannot be a 'right' or 'wrong' technique for a coaching session because there are too many variables to take into account. You can adopt two basic approaches:

Using a **trainer centred** approach is particularly suitable for reproductive tasks because you are the focal point and the trainee is learning the task directly from you, or under your supervision.

Using a **trainee centred** approach exposes the trainee directly to the performance of the task and provides a direct opportunity to learn about it. Your role is to provide guidance, advice and, when requested, instructional support. This approach is particularly suited to



A Trainer Centred Approach



learning productive tasks.

Fig-4