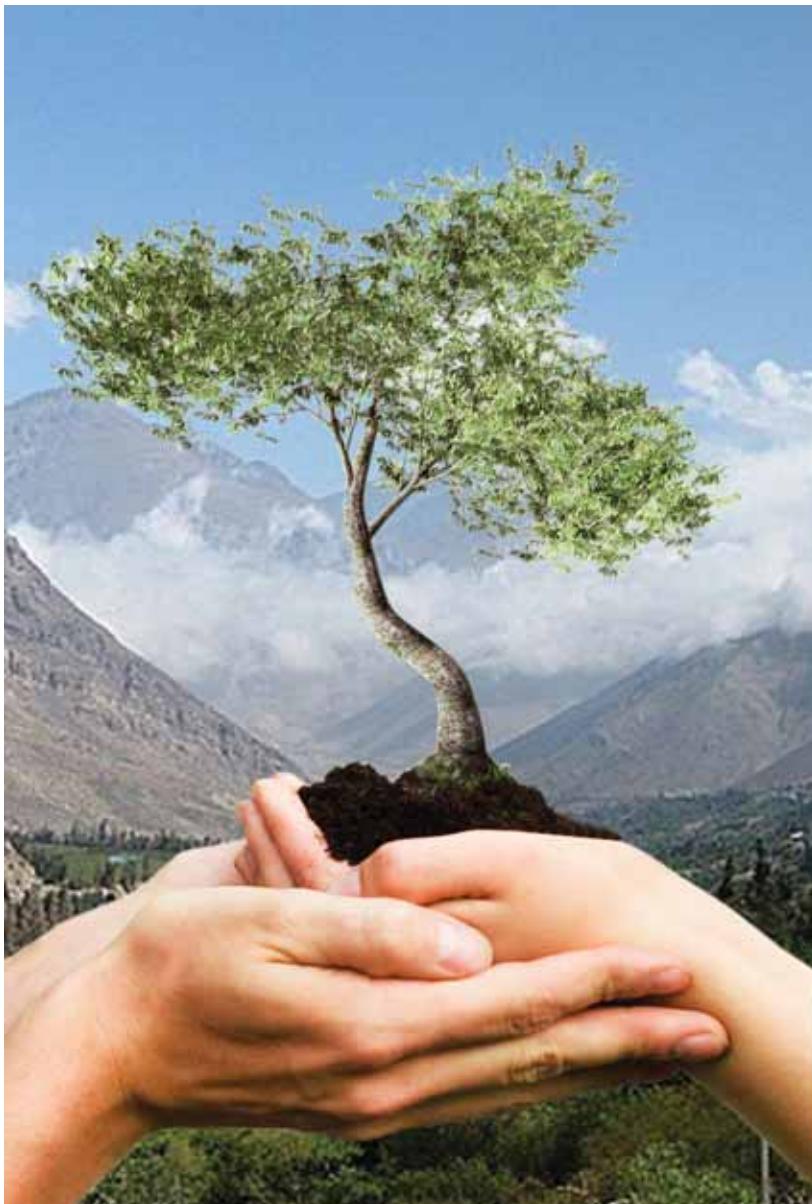


# find the guru within

■ BY DR SUJAYA BANERJEE



Coaching and mentoring have been buzzwords in business circles for a while now. Unfortunately, the popularity of these terms have led both well-meaning and unscrupulous to apply these terms to old means. As a result, these terms are often in danger of being misrepresented, misperceived or dismissed off as old or contemporary, and almost always promising more than delivering. The truth about effective coaching and mentoring is that there are no quick fixes with these processes. Good coaching or mentoring is a skill—even an art perhaps, that goes beyond good intention. It requires in-depth understanding, high emotional quotient and plenty of practice to deliver to its astonishing potential.

Coaching is directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills, through tutoring or instructions. Mentoring is always one-step removed and is concerned with long-term acquisition of skills in developing careers, through advising or counseling.

Coaching is the management form of a transformed culture and as the style changes from directing to coaching, the culture of the organization also begins to change. Hierarchy gives way to support; blame gives way to honest evaluation; external motivators are replaced by self-motivators. Protective barriers fall as teams build, change is no

longer feared but welcomed, satisfying the boss becomes pleasing the customer, secrecy and censorship are replaced by openness and honesty, pressure at work becomes challenging and short-term fructifying reactions give way to long-term strategic thinking. These are some of the characteristics of an

## Coaching and mentoring to drive organizational excellence

emerging business culture; however, each business will have its own unique mix and priorities.

For all those embarking on the journey of coaching and transformation of work culture, I explored the Lominger list of competencies to help us unbundle the desired coaching behaviors. This is defined as "Developing Direct Report and Others" and it unbundles as follows:

### At the unskilled level, the behaviors are:

- Not a proper developer or builder
- Doesn't have time for long-term development
- Doesn't see long-term development as his/her job, plays it safe
- Doesn't know how development really happens
- May not hold career discussions or provide coaching, may not push people to take their development seriously
- May prefer to select talent rather than develop them
- May not support or co-operate with development systems in the organization

### At the skilled level, the behaviors are:

- Provides challenging and stretching tasks and assignments
- Holds frequent development discussions
- Is aware of each individual's

career goals

- Creates compelling development plans and executes them
- Pushes people to accept development motives
- Takes on those who need help and further development
- Co-operates with the development systems in the organization
- Is a people builder

### Overused skill:

- May concentrate on the development of a few at the expense of many
- May create work inequities as challenging assignments are parceled out
- May be overly optimistic about how much people can grow
- May endorse the latest developmental fad within the organization

### Causes for these would be:

- Don't believe people can really develop
  - Don't get paid to develop others
  - Don't have the time
  - Don't know how to develop people
  - Don't think it's his responsibility
- Coaching and mentoring is often considered as "mushy in its intent". Many business managers are of the opinion that organizations must hire competent people, who can deliver and develop competencies on-the-job, and prepare themselves to handle their next role. Expecting managers to own up on the development of their team members, particularly those with considerable competency gaps are seen as drags. They slow down the pace of deliveries and achievement. This is particularly so in the case of entry-level talent who can be sacked without giving a fair chance to perform by a manager, who in turn is unskilled in the competence of "Developing Direct Reports and Others".

Focusing on coaching and mentoring as key leadership skills and behaviors is a way of changing the organizational culture, by reducing power distances. Emphasis



### DR. SUJAYA BANERJEE

Chief Learning Officer ■ Essar Group

Sujaya Banerjee has experience of over 20 years in HR. She holds an MBA with a specialization in HR and holds a Doctorate in Organization Development and Performance Management. She started her career with Godrej Soaps Ltd and later took a sabbatical to participate in Rotary International scholarship that took her to Brazil and the United States. She joined the ADNOC Group (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company) as Head of HRD in 1993 and was responsible for setting up several development initiatives including performance management, executive development and succession planning. On her return to India, she joined Lowe Lintas & Partners, as Sr. Vice-President HRD and Personnel and also set up Northpoint Centre of Learning. She moved back to the Oil & Gas Industry as Director HR at British Gas, India. Sujaya is currently Chief Learning Officer, Essar Group overseeing Learning and Organizational Development for the multi-national infrastructure, conglomerate with flagship companies like Essar Steel, Power, Energy

## COACHING & MENTORING AT ESSAR

**Essar's Find the Guru Within** is based on a philosophy that binds the coached and the coach, the mentored and the mentor. It is an extension of Essar's strong value system. At Essar, everybody works towards bringing self-awareness, apart from providing ample opportunities to the leaders and managers, to self-actualize and have the most gratifying learning experience of working together. The Coaching & Mentoring philosophy provides the platform for any manager / supervisor to gratify the need for recognition and contribution to a larger purpose.

This philosophy is not a prerogative of the Essar leadership coterie. It is not an exclusive club for the elite, rather it offers an opportunity to every manager / supervisor to mentor, coach, guide and reach out and above all, play the role of a Guru. This practice contributes significantly to the lives they touch, in their otherwise daily, routine tasks.

**Find the Guru Within** is a corporate adaptation of the ancient Guru-Shishya (teacher-disciple) tradition that makes learning an enduring process of the two-fold enlightenment. This theme builds and develops diverse talent through on-the-job coaching and cross-functional mentoring. Thanks to the magic of this guru-shishya tradition, learning at Essar evolves, develops and matures across generations. This proactive transfer of skills, learning, knowledge, spirit and values, has created vibrant pockets of self-motivated leadership across the organization – a feat that has transcended the Group into a people-oriented, learning organization from a people-sensitive, caring organization. **Find the Guru Within** inspires diverse talent – in terms of age, tenure, position, business group, department, geography and expertise – towards self-development, as well as peer and subordinate development through on-the-job coaching and cross-functional mentoring.



on coaching and mentoring practices spell the kind of leadership desired within the organization, which requires leaders to be anchors, the fulcrums in the lives of their teams. This drives the need for owning their development, learning and succeeding by the manager. This by itself can cater to all the drivers of engagement-positively and powerfully, impacting retention of talent. That the organization has a strong coaching and mentoring practice is very attractive for all talent-especially young talent, and great for employer branding as it offers a differentiated employer value proposition. Coaching and mentoring has the power to bring purpose and passion to jobs, transforming organizational culture, the quality of leadership and enhancing the happiness quotient within organizations. Organizations become not just places for transacting business, but temples that unleash human potential and attain the stature of becoming the alma mater of employees rather than the organization they work for.

"Find the Guru Within..." - Essar's coaching and mentoring practice is a great example of an organization that has built its success stories through the power of knowledge transfer across generations. One simple belief has enabled Essar's "Find the Guru Within..." journey- a belief that within the core of every single manager is a coach, teacher, tutor, guide and mentor. Also, if every leader is oriented differently and provided the tools and guidance, he can become a great coach or mentor.

Today, with over 50 per cent of organizations constituting Gen-Y employees - there cannot be a more powerful proposition than coaching and mentoring to attract young talent. This belief needs to be supported by strong practices, rigor and role models who have succeeded through great coaching and mentoring.

Coaching and mentoring are natural skills like parenting. If managers and leaders care a little more for their teams than for their bottom line - by coaching and mentoring them - the bottom line would actually take care of itself. HC