

# Coaching and Mentoring: A Definition of Terms...Maybe!

## by Beverly Kaye

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In the world of organization and human resource development, the concepts of mentoring and coaching are nothing new. Both have always “been there”, usually happening informally, but occasionally “designed” as interventions to solve particular business issues.

The last five years have seen a groundswell in both areas. And it’s not just been more of the same; organizations have begun to use mentoring and coaching more purposefully. HR and OD practitioners have worked to utilize both interventions to meet pressing business problems having to do with the development and retention of talent, as well as the growth of future leaders. These interventions have been more systemic, more thoughtful, and more innovative than ever before.

The literature has defined coach, mentor and manager in a great variety of ways. Some say that the coach, the mentor and the manager are three distinct people – different in position, role and responsibility. Others say they are one and the same. They are intertwined. If you forced me to choose, I’d side with the group that suggests they are, in fact, very different. Although I also suggest that any manager worth his or her “salt” *should* do both. The best of managers do some coaching and some mentoring as part of their management or leadership responsibilities. Those who subscribe to the latter definition invest heavily in training their managers in both of these roles.

The following table distinguishes some of the characteristics between a mentor, a coach and a manager who is just “managing”.

<b>Coach</b>	<b>Mentor</b>	<b>Manager</b>
<b>Has an individual perspective:</b> provides insight and perspective aligning an individual's developmental goals with those of the organization.	<b>Has a horizontal/systemic perspective:</b> provides insight and perspective that matches the flow of business across several different functions.	<b>Has a vertical perspective:</b> provides key insights and perspectives about the function or department they manage.
<b>Provides an external mirroring:</b> models effective two-way communication and feedback in order to improve the performance of the learner.	<b>Provides indirect authority:</b> not responsible for managing the performance of the learner.	<b>Provides direct authority:</b> responsible for the learner's performance and success on the job.
<b>Advice to further development:</b> shares confidential and personal feedback but encourages learner to share development plans with others.	<b>Advice to broaden viewpoint:</b> allowed to share information to which the learner is seldom privy.	<b>Advice on Performance Improvement:</b> able to provide feedback on an ongoing basis so the learner knows how he or she is performing in relation to goals and objectives.
<b>Fosters self-insight:</b> concerned with helping the learner grow through introspection and feedback from others.	<b>Fosters self-responsibility:</b> concerned with helping the learner take charge of his or her own growth.	<b>Foster accountability:</b> responsible for monitoring performance and progress through appraisals and other formal systems.
<b>Concerns about personal growth:</b> concerned that the learner is successful at learning and becoming a more effective leader.	<b>Concerns about thinking:</b> ultimately concerned that the learner gains perspective and is successful at learning.	<b>Concerns with productivity:</b> concerned with the learner's success on the job.

Research on retention suggests loud and clear that stars don't leave organizations for dollars. They leave because no one in the organization seemed to care about their learning and their growth. They leave if they feel they are not being developed. Whether you train your own managers to be effective coaches and mentors, whether you institute a formal mentoring program using your senior executives, or whether you employ external or internal coaches, it is important this message gets out loud and clear. Author and career consultant Donald Miller said something I have never forgotten:

*“Behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth. Somewhere, some way, someone **cared** about their growth and development.”*

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