

Developing leaders

Citibank Malaysia

Over 300% increase in leaders bringing others to new solutions

The project

In June 2010, 78 high-potential leaders from Citibank Malaysia completed a short coaching skills training program, *The Art of Coaching: building commitment and engagement in teams*, run by Results Coaching Systems. *The Art of Coaching* is part of a wider leadership development initiative called LEAD, in which top leaders engage in a series of training, mentoring and other learning initiatives over a 12-month period.

The objective of *The Art of Coaching* program is to help leaders learn how to be less directive *and* subsequently more effective when leading others to solutions. Our hypothesis is that helping people to find their own solutions to problems is a highly effective way of increasing their commitment and engagement. The experience of finding a solution to a difficult problem is often experienced as one of *insight*. Our results show that using a specific type of questioning approach is a faster method of helping people achieve insight, and find solutions, than techniques such as advice giving.

Our goal in this program was to measure the increase in peoples' capacity to bring others to insight that was achievable in a one-day training. This report is a summary of our findings.

Summary: Average number of solutions found in 6-minute interactions

Pre-training
18%

Post-training
67%



About the training

The group of 78 participants was split into three. Each smaller group of 26 participants experienced one full day of person-to-person training followed by two tele-call training sessions, over one month.

The training was held on site at Citibank's learning centre in Kuala Lumpur. Participants first learned about how the brain works in relation to helping people solve problems in a neuroscience module of approximately one-and-a-half hours.

This module included a basic understanding of the threat and reward response, the **SCARF** model and the neuroscience of insight.

Participants then learned a process called *The Dance of Insight* in which they followed a series of steps in order to activate the optimum mental conditions for insight to occur.

We believe that the neuroscience module, while not essential, does significantly increase peoples' understanding of the skills they are learning, and the subsequent degree of accuracy with which they are then able to apply these skills.

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How the data was gathered

At the start of the training, participants were asked to write down a business challenge they had been faced with for some time, and for which they had failed to find an effective solution.

Participants were then randomly paired up. The **coach** in each pair was randomly chosen and instructed to have a conversation with their colleague to help that person solve their problem, using whatever technique they thought would be effective. In a debrief, we discovered that the majority of the techniques the coaches used involved either giving direct advice, or asking questions as a prelude to giving direct advice. We have observed this same result on each and every occasion these training exercises have been run globally.

After interacting for six minutes, a specific question was asked of the coachee: *'Have you seen a change in your problem, some kind of insight, such that you are now very likely to take an action that you would not have taken before this conversation?'*

Toward the end of the one-day training, participants were randomly allocated into groups of three and instructed to identify another workplace challenge. They then did the six-minute exercise again. After the exercise the same question was asked about who had experienced insight. The number of people who had insights each time was collected and turned into a percentage of the number of interactions.

In summary, across all 78 participants, the average number of solutions that were found in six-minute interactions before the training was 18%, and after the training was 67%. This is a significant improvement of more than 300% in the effectiveness of peoples' problem-solving techniques. The significant shift involved the coach inhibiting their desire to solve a problem for the other person, and instead asking questions to help them reflect on their own thought processes.

Overall results

	Pre-training	Post-Training
Day 1	27%	67%
Day 2	0%	63%
Day 3	27%	70%
Total average	18%	67%

Feedback from participants

"I have realised that what I need to do to create a more effective team is to improve peoples' thinking, not just tell them what to do."

"Until you get to insight, there is no engagement or commitment. These insights actually have to come from the coaches themselves."

"Today created self-awareness in me. I usually just talk or instruct rather than trying to discover. Now I realise that understanding, communicating and making sure I am open is important to be a relevant manager."

"It (the program) is simple, clear and engaging."

"One thing that I learned that was different from other coach training – there is questioning until the coachee comes to insight. This has to come from the coachee. I've realised it's about them finding another way to change."

