

## ARTICLE: GOOD COACH – BAD COACH

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Think back to when you found yourself at the crossroads of *how* you impart knowledge. The scene is usually this: An employee describes a problem and then asks: ‘What should I do?’ In this instance they want you to tell them what to do perhaps to avoid accountability. Or they might ask: ‘What would *YOU* do if you were me?’ Tempting isn’t it? The trap has been set. Obviously you could just *tell* them what to do and save time. You might reason; it’s my job to provide direction and telling them exactly what to do will ensure the project is done correctly.

Experience has taught me that I don’t want to be the answer man. Why? **First**, I am not that smart! I’ve only done this living thing once and fortunately, I’m still at it. **Second**, what may be right for me may not be right for someone else. In addition, the way I would go about executing a decision is probably different from the way someone else would. This difference in execution would have the potential of creating a different outcome. **Third**, what if I’m wrong and they follow my advice and disaster ensues? [“Should I marry him?” Sure, go ahead he seems like a nice guy.] Three months after the wedding they are involved in an ugly divorce. Now I am partly responsible for complicating the both of their lives, their family and friends lives.

All of us at times get stuck and that is precisely when we need someone to help us figure things out and get unstuck. There is a better way than just giving an answer to help an employee in that situation. Instead of telling them what to do, you could choose the more challenging and yes, time-consuming route by asking questions.

Here you would be applying a best practice coaching technique. You are helping them to think things through and thus teaching them *how* to reach their own conclusions. New thoughts create new pathways in the brain and if used often enough the way a person *thinks* begins to change.

Science tells us that in our brain, information in the form of coded electrical or chemical signals travels from neuron to neuron, crossing many connections called synapses. “A memory of some type is created at the nerve synapse when the coded signal passes through, leaving behind its individual imprint,” says the book *The Brain*. When the same signal passes the next time, the nerve cells recognize it and respond more quickly. In time, this creates a new pattern of thinking in the individual.

Part of our job as leaders is to help our team make good decisions and not to make decisions for them. (**Good Coach**) If your management team has a track record of making good decisions you no doubt have been applauded for producing exceptional results.



Since your role as a leader involves the coaching and mentoring of others, you should consider this next question as food for thought. Why is it better to help a person by asking questions rather than just giving them the solution? The answer is simple. Since *thinking* precedes *behavior* an employee who is making bad decisions must change the way he/she thinks. Reasoning Point: If someone else is always solving your problems (**Bad Coach**) you are being denied the opportunity to grow your *thinking ability*.

Thinking ability requires carefully weighing options before making important decisions. At the same time the decision-maker needs to recognize that no one option may have all the benefits. The person who develops and utilizes thinking ability also draws upon their past experiences in business and in life. They should also have the humility to seek the experience of others.

It is also important to understand that what *follows* a decision may be more important than the decision itself. The drive and commitment to have a decision succeed also counts. Persistence, follow-through and personal accountability are all crucial to a successful outcome. The book *Overcoming Indecisiveness*, by Dr. Theodore Isaac Rubin, points out: “It almost always is the decision-maker and not the particular choice that makes the decision work. . . . The failure of the decision has little or nothing to do with the choice. The failure is directly traceable and proportional to lack of dedicated commitment.”

It takes self-discipline and patience to be the *Good Coach* but it is beneficial to everyone in the long run.

**About Jason Kleid:** Jason is focused on optimizing performance and getting results. Underscoring this philosophy is a belief that it is always the individuals in any organization, where the greatest potential for improvement and possibility of change resides. It is the mind (one’s thinking) where new ideas broaden understanding and cause things to happen. However, it is the heart (inner person/motivation) where transformation occurs.