

Help people to help themselves

We often find ourselves faced with people asking for help: with technical questions; difficult interpersonal scenarios; customer relations; and operational processes.

Our response is invariably a demonstrated desire to help and, in our time-strapped times, the natural reaction is to promptly provide the 'right' answer and carry on. However, this begs two questions: what is the 'right' answer; and who should be working it out?

Coaching as a situational tool

Coaching is widely known and adopted as a highly effective development tool to build people's confidence and competence. Fewer people are aware that coaching can also be used as a powerful situational tool.

So, next time someone comes seeking help, instead of advocating a particular course of action, try asking a few key questions that will guide them along a path to their own conclusions. The four most effective are:

- What are you trying to achieve?
- What's happened so far?
- What are the options you have considered?
- What do you think is the best way forward?

Naturally, the conversation may need to go into a little more depth to keep it on track, so follow up with questions like:

- What makes you think that?
- How do you think that might work out?
- What needs to happen for that to be possible?
- This will help guide logical thinking and keep things going in the right direction.



This may seem a little more long winded and time consuming than just giving out the answer. Yet enabling someone to work out their own solutions both helps build their self sufficiency and encourages individual ownership. In the light of their closer knowledge of the situation, it can also lead to a more appropriate outcome.

Conclusion

So, give people the opportunity to solve their own problems rather than act the guru – it will help everyone in the long run!

Bourton Group has supported many businesses from a wide range of industries to implement Lean improvement techniques via tailored engagement programs.

We work collaboratively to deliver on efficiency objectives and targets, with returns on investment of over 20:1 being reported, along with wider benefits of reducing waste, decreasing time to complete activities and improvements to quality – all of which have been directly attributed to Lean.