



David
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on coaching for
improvement

When I studied quality auditing I learned the basic attributes of an effective auditor – a natural curiosity, becoming an active listener, a need to fully understand the circumstances, and the ability to ask incisive questions to initiate change. When I studied non-directive coaching I discovered that the basic attributes of an effective coach were exactly the same as an effective auditor. In short, I discovered the power of ‘the question’ in terms of both quality and performance management. When carried out in its purest form, quality auditing – like contemporary coaching – doesn’t set out to give advice, mentor or instruct. Organisations might utilise coaches to improve performance and auditors to improve quality, but is there an opportunity here for auditors?

A critical stage in the audit process is when auditees must identify the root cause and implement corrective action. Auditors can encounter obstacles at this point as auditees sometimes struggle to locate the underlying cause of

an issue or find it hard to think of an effective corrective action plan, and some auditees ask for advice although this may not be appropriate – even for internal auditors.

But what can auditors learn from non-directive coaching that could help in these situations? A good coach is an expert at facilitating the exploration of options, breaking down action plans and empowering people to feel a true sense of ownership so they remain accountable.

With the impending arrival of ISO 9001:2015 this is a golden opportunity for the new age auditor to become the ‘auditor-coach’ as the new standard looks to create a more entrepreneurial business environment where effectiveness trumps all.

Traditional HR and quality departments can now come together to effectively coach performance in order to reach new heights of quality.

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