MEETING OUR LEARNER AND PERFORMER NEEDS

'It's all about gathering the appropriate information'

As a coach, our learner's and performer's needs are central to everything we do and the associated decisions we make. However, how do we really know what their needs are and then how are we able to monitor if they are being met or not? What it arguably boils down to is how good are we gathering information on their needs. By gathering the right information from the start we can plan to meet learner and performer needs from the outset, and then monitor what we are doing based on this information. So how do you ensure you've gathered the right information and do you have a reliable system that ensures you are gathering their needs as opposed to what you or they want?

The 'Who', 'What', 'How' and 'Where' process of information gathering can really help support creating an optimum plan:

'Where' we Coach

Environmental Considerations

Amount of challenge

'How' we coach
Learner's learning
Coach's coaching
(in response)

'What' we coach
Performance models
Progressions

'Who' we coach
Motivations
Goals/Aspirations
Optimum learning env.

The process must start with understanding 'who' I am coaching (the learner/performer), as they are the heart of the process! To really start to understand who they are, consider the following:

- **Who (am I coaching)**
  - What motivates the learners/performers?
  - Why are they there?
  - What are their goals and/or aspirations?
  - What type of learning/performance environment do they need?
  - What would they describe as an optimum environment to support their learning/performance?

Once we have learnt about our learner we then need to explore 'what' is needed to support them best in their paddling and achieve their goals and aspirations:

- **What (am I going to coach)**
  - What skills/techniques are needed?
  - What is the optimum performance model for these?
  - Has the technical, tactical, psychological and physical components been considered?
  - What is the starting point?
  - What are the appropriate progressions?

We now need to consider 'how' we are going to coach to ensure learning happens in a way that supports the learner best.

- **How (am I going to coach)**
  - How can my coaching best align with motivations?
  - How can my coaching support their optimum learning/performance environment?
  - How do they like to learn?
  - How do they need to learn?
  - How do I best coach to support their learning?

Finally to bring it all together we need to gather information to help us decide 'where' we are going to coach – if we don't choose the right classroom then learning will not happen!

- **Where (am I going to coach)**
  - What is the optimum location to use?
  - What are the environmental considerations (wind, water levels, tides etc)?
  - Is the environmental challenge appropriate?
  - What are the risks?
  - How dynamic/changeable is the environment?
  - What are the safety considerations?

With the above information gathered we are in a great place to meet our learner's and performer's needs. We need to be mindful though that these needs will evolve and change, the process will require constant monitoring. Doing this by going back and checking the who, what, how and where information gathered will allow us to know what is working and what needs to be changed, and from this adapt our coaching sessions accordingly. If a session is not really working then change it, and I can guarantee it will be one of the above that will need to be changed and therefore make the difference.

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