

SMART Coaching

In the last issue of *evolve* Rob Taylor looked at why we should coach our people. In this issue Rob looks at how we can coach using Huthwaite's SMART system.

So why SMART? SMART is a Structured Measurement And Reinforcement Tool that gives managers and senior managers a way of ensuring that powerful coaching and reinforcement is going on.

At its core is the notion of accurate observation plus the use of hard evidence to produce change.

Let's go back to basics. Huthwaite International has always based its training interventions on hard evidence, produced using empirical research. As the diagram below illustrates, first we observe interactions in terms of behaviours used and the reactions they produce. Then we divide the interactions into two groups, those outcomes that are successful and

those that aren't. Comparing the behaviours used in each group tells us what it is people do that is more likely to lead to a successful outcome.

The result is a robust skills model that means:

- We know what behaviours to train people in so that they improve their performance.
- After training, we can measure the changes in their behaviour, or we can help you measure them.
- You can see the progress they are making.
- You will know how to help them to sustain that change.
- You will be able to relate changes to both behavioural and bottom line results.

The way we do this is by implementing the SMART system. The processes that make up the system are illustrated and briefly discussed opposite.



The Smart System

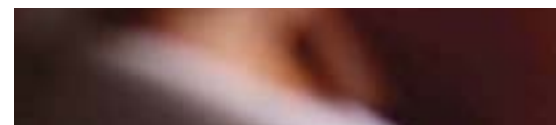
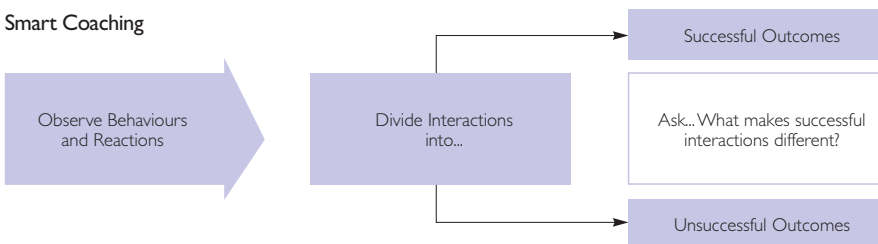
Process 1 – A key strength of the SMART System and the coaching that it generates is its basis in hard behavioural evidence.

We first spend time with the coaches, ensuring that their observation is accurate and their coaching effective. The coaches are usually line managers, but can be colleagues, 'buddies' or functional specialists, like HR or Marketing.

Processes 2 & 3 – Once we have a pool of people able to accurately observe an interaction, they sit in on examples of them as low-key observers. They record the behaviours used by the participants and then enter them into the SMART system. SMART is a web service, accessed via the Internet. Coaches can either enter the data directly, when they are on-line, or remotely, if they are using an unconnected laptop at the time. The next time the machine is connected to the Internet it will download the data, synchronise the databases and store the behavioural profile for the interaction, plus any other relevant information.

Because every client organisation is different, we customise the SMART screens to collect additional information that helps to analyse the data collected during observation and make it more meaningful. For example, if the interaction is a sales call, we may well record the customer type or the product range being discussed. If it is an internal meeting, the type of meeting may

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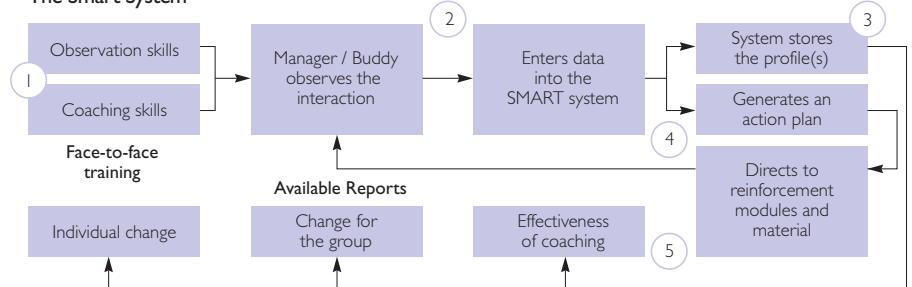
be recorded. This allows us to provide reports in Process 5 that highlight issues that are unique to your organisation and its environment.

Process 4 – Once the data from an interaction is entered, the system summarises and interprets it. The output is a series of ‘expert’ comments and a suggested action plan. The manager uses these to coach the individuals, or, where the observer was a colleague or buddy, the data forms the basis for discussion and self-coaching.

Process 5 – The final set of processes found within the system are the reports. Again, we customise these to client and project requirements, but they tend to fall into three main areas:

- There are reports for each individual that provide feedback on how their behaviour profile in specific situations has changed and developed over time.
- A second set of reports summarises the individual reports to allow managers to compare and contrast behavioural progress within their subordinate group.
- Senior Management receive the final set of reports which illustrates the level of coaching activity, and links this activity to bottom line or behavioural data. Other reports in this group synthesise the behavioural data with

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any additional information collected, and can demonstrate some powerful correlations. Taking the examples mentioned before, the report could show what customer types or products your salespeople have difficulty with and why, compared to others.

Summary

As we indicated in the first instalment of this article, if you design effective skills training courses and get the correct people to them they will have an immediate effect. But that's not enough. If you want to sustain the effect, you need a support and reinforcement process to ensure that the behaviour change becomes permanent. Only this way can we ‘change behaviour; change results’.

The elements that make up the support and

reinforcement process can be many and varied. However, at the core of the most effective approach is a cyclical process of practice, accurate observation, meaningful analysis and powerful feedback. The Huthwaite research and its SMART system gives you the means to adopt this approach.

If you would like to know more about the SMART system, please contact us by telephone on **+44 (0)1709 710081** or email **info@huthwaite.co.uk**.