



## Mistakes to Avoid for a First Time Coach

### Description

“Congrats Prakash, on completing your Coaching training and becoming a coach!” Prakash accepted my compliments with a smile on his face. He said, “Hemant, I am happy at the same time a little anxious about starting my first coaching engagement next week. And I don’t want to make any mistakes. Can you guide me?” I readily agreed to guide him through my own experience. I went back in time, almost 3 years back when I was a new coach. Here are a few mistakes which I made and request new coaches to avoid:

1. **Coaching is advising:** Even though I knew that as a coach my job is not to advise, often my clients would ask me for my suggestions. Instead of exploring the solutions with them, sometimes I would give them solutions from my perspective. This was not effective and the clients did not take any action because these solutions were not their own and may not work in their life situation. Also that the client may become dependent on me for solving all their problems.
2. **Being judgmental:** One of my clients approached me with a problem of procrastination which was stopping him from achieving his goals. Instead of exploring the root cause of the issue, I started focusing on why procrastination is bad and how it must be stopped. After a few sessions, the client stopped expressing himself and when I asked him he shared that he feels being judged. That’s when I realized my mistake and stopped it from there on.
3. **Choosing the agenda:** One of my clients requested me to choose the agenda for the session. I chose the topic of “Changing Habits”. During the conversation he did not open up much and kept saying that all his habits are good and nothing needs to change. Because this agenda was not important for him, he was never interested in the topic. I learned a big lesson not to choose an agenda for my client. Yes, as a coach I may help them explore different areas to choose from but never decide a topic for them.
4. **Focus on my performance as a Coach:** I was **coaching** a senior manager of a large corporate and he was a prestigious client for me. During my sessions with him I always wanted to impress him or tried to look good as a Coach. This took away my attention from what he wanted to achieve from each session and I was not fully present in the coaching conversation.

5. **Prescribing actions:** I insisted my clients to take certain actions after each session. For example, some writing assignments, some reading etc. without even explaining to them the reason for each assignment and not asking for their willingness to do the same. It was no surprise that some of the clients never completed their “homework” ?
6. **Not reviewing progress:** One of my clients after completing 5 sessions told me one day, “I am not sure if I am making progress and I have no idea where I am going with coaching”. I was surprised and felt insulted too. Actually as a coach, it was my mistake that I did not create an effective method for reviewing and measuring progress.

## Category

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