

people-ASSiST™ - PURPOSE AND CONTENT

people-ASSiST™ is a ‘toolkit’, designed to support professional and in-house coaches as well as managers who use coaching, mentoring and the ‘helping skills’ to help the individuals they manage. The kit places emphasis on *coaching*.

Purpose

The intention of people-ASSiST™ is to provide a comprehensive back-up resource relevant to a coach or manager’s experience and needs, which may include:

- Support during the consolidation of initial coaching training – especially to help break the confidence barrier which many managers feel when they first attempt to coach
- Help to move managers to the next stage in their coaching proficiency
- Help to sustain managers’ readiness to coach
- Providing a refresher for managers who may have neglected coaching practice after earlier training
- Providing a comprehensive catalogue of ‘tools’ for experienced coaches to mix with their own tool sets.

For novice coaches, progressive use of the kit, mixed with post training support, should mean that users come to rely less on tools as *aide-memoires* or scripts¹, and more as a reference for approaching a wide range of applications (i.e. using coaching skills should become instinctive).

Users

Intended types of users are:

- Newly trained managers and coaches
- Managers who have received coaching training – both wishing to develop skills and those who need refresher support
- Mentors
- In-house coaches
- Professional coaches.

The needs of these groups are clearly distinct – an experienced coach should not need ready reminders of basic coaching concepts, whilst managers who are new to coaching may need more guidance as they begin to put their new skills into practice.

The kit is therefore designed to be *scalable* to meet particular needs – it is for companies or individuals to decide which content to include or exclude as an individual’s coaching proficiency develops. The base of topics covered in the supplied tool-set is considerably larger than most would want to offer to a particular user type at one time.

¹ Suggested question sets are provided to help beginners lead into and maintain direction in a conversation, rather than as ‘structured scripts’ to adopt rigidly. However, unplanned questioning appropriate to specific conversations is encouraged.

Scope of coverage

Originally intended as a pure coaching resource, people-ASSiST™ has been extended to include a range of disciplines which managers can call on to help staff move from ‘A to B’ (usually by finding answers to their own questions). This is partly to acknowledge the differing definitions used by organisations for ‘coaching’ and ‘mentoring’, and partly recognising that many of the ‘tools’ provided are equally relevant for coaching, mentoring and other interventions.

Coaching by managers may include pre-agreed coaching sessions, use of coaching skills in other 1:1 meetings with staff (such as development planning meetings), team coaching and ad-hoc, brief and informal conversations; coaching by professional and in-house coaches invariably involves a clearly contracted relationship, dedicated conversations, and a separation of coaching from other types of intervention.

Definition: ‘Tools’

A broad definition is intended by use of the term ‘tools’ – including exercises, hand-out ‘tip sheets’, problem solving techniques, forms and templates to support coachee thinking and activities (either before, during or after coaching conversations). These are intended to supplement but not replace the core ‘tools’ of coaching (including the primary skills of appropriate questioning, listening and engagement), albeit the kit is also intended to help instil these as a ‘second nature’ for users.

Research and Development Contexts

people-ASSiST™ was developed following 2 phases of research – (1) to explore experiences implementing coaching and the role of post-training aids, and (2) a user pilot of an initial prototype version. Pilot participants included public and private sector organisations from a wide variety of industry sectors, and included a significant number of organisations with mature coaching implementations, as those at a very early or yet unstarted stage. Several US-based organisations were also consulted during both phases of research.

The current version is therefore the result of direct user feedback. Feedback overwhelmingly pointed to a preference for brief key notes, as opposed to longer sections. The research also indicated variable manager confidence to coach and a fall-off in coaching interventions some months after training. Furthermore, the findings revealed that preparation constraints ahead of coaching conversations and a reluctance of many managers to document conversations are significant issues.

A tangible desk-aid was developed first in preference to a software-based product, as this was identified as being the format preferred by most users during research. A personal PC/laptop version is planned, whilst all tools and materials can be incorporated into company intranet resource bases (subject to licence). All tools are also provided on a CD-ROM contained within the kit, allowing unlimited reproduction or printing by a user.

Content sources

The toolkit is authored by Clive Johnson, a highly experienced and accredited coach, management consultant and trainer. Clive's 20 years' experience includes work for more than 30 of the UK's leading organisations, as well as for many smaller businesses and multi-national clients. Content research drew on more than 100 published sources, including current thought leading on coaching and mentoring themes and standard texts and teaching models.

Design principles

The tools are designed to be quickly understood and put into practice by anyone, whilst minimising the risk for a novice coach opening up issues which are particularly sensitive for a coachee. Coaches do not have to have a grasp of psychological concepts to use the tools safely.

The personal organiser design is intended to allow scalability as coaching needs change, whilst supporting easy supplementing or customisation of materials (e.g. including adoption of preferred coaching models or in-house terminology). The organiser also allows use for other purposes (e.g. including key note training inserts) and is small and portable, and so should encourage regular use.

Integration with training

people-ASSiST™ can be adopted completely stand-alone of training or be used to support any training programme. It is *not* intended as a substitute for foundation training (the latter being essential to allow role-plays and skill practice), but does allow self-learning of new concepts and topics.

If required, introduction of the kit may optionally be combined with either foundation or brief refresher training, including familiarisation with the product as an element.

Pricing

The standard entry price for 1-5 kits is £155, excluding delivery charges. This is a 1-off payment (no licensing fee applies). The product is zero-rated for VAT purposes for UK sales. Additional pricing applies for customising materials and product branding (which may include imprinting of company logos on the product folder).

Alternative folder styles and colours are available, including non-filoFAX products (the filoFAX A5 zipped 'Graphic' folder is used as a default, usually in matt black or grey steel colour). Pricing varies depending on folder style.

Product description

- A5 zipped Personal Organiser Folder
- Shrink-wrapped Inserts (adapted to need): 214pp 100 GSM gloss-finish A5 duplex, full colour; sectioned: introduction, primer, applications, tip-sheets and tools, conversation notes, learning journal and coaching schedule
- 1x Audio CD-ROM (coaching primer topics, also included as hard copy within the main kit content)
- 1x Tools CD-ROM (copies of all forms, tip-sheets and exercises, provided as .pdf files for easy email exchange or printing); PC and Macintosh compatible
- 12x 60x95mm laminated Cue Cards
- A5 Organiser Hole-punch
- Section Index Tabs
- A-Z Index Tabs
- 8-pocket Cue Cards Holder
- 2-pocket CD-ROM Holder
- Perspex Fly-sheet.

- Additional inserts:
 - Applications Index
 - Generic Questions Prompt
 - Conversation Notes (template for short-hand note taking)
 - Learning Journal
 - Coaching Schedule
 - Personal Information Sheet.

Additional copies of any insert may be printed from the supplied CD-ROM.

Further information

For further information or to request copies of supporting research papers, please call Clive Johnson on +44 (0)1273 326822 (email: clive.johnson@proactivestyle.com).