



The Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme at Scope

Richard Bragg explains how a simple approach to coaching is transforming management at Scope, reinvigorating the organisation so they're fit to fight for equality for disabled people.

What was the business problem you were trying to solve?

The impetus for launching the Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme came from a desire to manage people in a better way. Everyone at Scope wants to be a disability gamechanger, to work for equality for disabled people across England and Wales. For us to do that, we've got to perform really well. So, we want to support and improve the way we work together. One of the ways to do that is to use coaching as a really effective, every day management tool.

There had been very little management development at Scope for a long time and our traditional performance management approach was very tired. The focus had been on an annual appraisal, with lots of lengthy form filling, and it had become more about the paperwork rather than the conversation itself.

We wanted to change that, and there was definitely an appetite to not just tweak it a little bit but do something significantly different. So, we developed and launched an approach called Grow our

Gamechangers with the Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme at the heart of that. Whilst we dropped the old annual appraisal system, everyone still has objectives, but the focus now is very much on having coaching conversations on a regular basis rather than an annual review.

It's been a really significant shift, but the old culture was very stale - either it wasn't working or people were largely going through the motions.

The old style annual performance system didn't have much energy or engagement to it, so we were really pushing against an open door when we suggested that we do something better!



How did you create the programme?

We have three people in the L&D team at Scope and we all contributed. We had a creative day and decided that, more than anything else, we wanted the approach to be really simple and effective, to be something that people used every single day, in work and in life, not just something that they do once a year.

We designed a one day, face-to-face training course with minimal coaching theory and a focus on practice. Helen Howe, Head of Talent Acquisition & Development at Scope, wrote most of the course herself. We also created a simple checklist to help reinforce the key messages. We launched the programme in January 2020, first to our leadership teams and then across the organisation.

Because of Coronavirus, we've had to quickly rethink our approach, and we launched a virtual Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme in August.

What does the Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme involve?

Originally the programme started as a one day face-to-face programme that we wanted all managers at Scope to complete - that's approximately 300 managers from our 800 staff. The course covers the why, the what and the how of coaching, specifically using the GROW coaching model: why coaching is so effective, what our coaching approach is, how we recommend people do it and the skills involved. We usually have about a dozen people going through the programme together, although we could take up to 20.

At the moment though, we're focusing on the virtual training course - lockdown has helped us all develop our tech skills! The virtual course is two hours long and we've capped the numbers for this at 12 people to keep things manageable, as the focus is still on practice. We're focusing on the really key points from the face-to-face training course. Whether virtual or face to face, the essential elements are the same: building rapport; active listening; what makes a good question.



We then use virtual breakout rooms, so people get a chance to have a go. We do this in triads: one person is the coach, another is the coachee and someone else takes the role of the observer - or more of a listener on the virtual course. That's deliberate because observation and feedback is a really powerful part of practice.

We're training our managers so they know how to use coaching in a really simple but effective way. That's both in terms of regular one-to-ones with their teams, and as a daily approach that they can use for all conversations. We call it Coaching in a Coffee Cup as it's something that anyone can use in the time that it takes to make a cup of tea or coffee.

The course - whether face to face or virtual - is reinforced with A Manager's Guide to a Good One-to-One. This is a very simple aide memoire, a crib sheet with bullet points of what we suggest they include for each one-to-one and coaching conversation.

We've deliberately kept everything straightforward, we didn't want to make it too complex or over-engineer it. We encourage people to use it as soon as possible after the course - the next day, if possible. The key message we want to get across is that coaching is a really simple tool that you can use every single day. And although we're focusing on training managers first, we want to expand this to all staff - coaching is a skill that everybody and anybody can use.

Coaching is an everyday approach at Scope, it's not saved for an elite group or extraordinary circumstances. It's a key part of people development, with managers encouraged to take a coaching approach to all conversations, to support everyone to find answers themselves.

How have you promoted it?

We briefed the senior leadership group, then the leadership group and so on down from there. This was really vital.

Before coronavirus, we had run 14 training courses - one per area for our shop managers and area managers around the country, with very little publicity needed. For our head office, the coaching programme has been promoted in weekly office meetings and various internal communications, but our big launch wasn't possible in the end.

It's unfortunate because, due to coronavirus, we had to cancel a lot of our promotional activity, and some staff have also been furloughed. But we'll be having another marketing push later this year when we're also launching our new eLearning platform, provided by the Charity Learning Consortium.

The Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme will then become embedded into the learning management system (LMS). Whether that will be as a stand-alone programme, or part of a wider coaching section, we're not quite sure yet, but there will be lots of resources, information, videos, and people will also be able to book onto the course itself from the LMS. This means that people can keep referring back to useful information, and they'll know exactly where to find it.



What have been the results?

Evaluation can be tricky in L&D, but it's been a particular challenge this year because of coronavirus and staff being furloughed. What we do know is that we had very good feedback straight after the course. We've received lots of anecdotal feedback from people saying they were using coaching the next day. That it has transformed approaches to situations, right from the day after the training, which is wonderful to hear. So overall, I think we can say that the programme has landed really well.

The programme is also a really good opportunity for us to talk about our values as an organisation. For example, if you have the choice of doing two things, which one is more aligned with our organisation's values?

Coronavirus has meant that it has been an incredibly disruptive time for the organisation, so coaching skills have been invaluable. In the current circumstances, virtual coaching can work particularly well for people who are working remotely. It's really inclusive and accessible and means you can coach anybody, anywhere, even if you've never met in person. It's absolutely possible to build a rapport and an effective coaching relationship online, as long as everyone (coaches and coachees) has the support and direction they need.

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The Coaching in a Coffee Cup programme has transformed approaches to day-to-day management at Scope, right from the day after training.

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Richard Bragg's top tips for launching a coaching programme

- **Keep it simple**

There are programmes out there which are very complex, which explain different approaches to coaching, for example. We just keep it very simple and focus on putting coaching into practice.

- **Keep it practical**

Don't talk about theoretical concepts - use real life examples of what people are finding challenging, either at work or outside of work. Bring the coaching approach to that, so they can see how it can help.

- **Ask people to practise every day**

It's so important to use coaching each and every day. Encourage people to use coaching as soon as possible after training, and get into the habit of using it on a daily basis. It's a way of living and working, not just for managing your own team. Our ethos is that this is a really useful, everyday tool.



About Scope

Scope has around 800 staff working in more than 200 shops and offices throughout England and Wales.

The disability equality charity provides practical advice and emotional support to disabled people and their families whenever they need it most. It uses its collective power to change attitudes and end injustice and campaigns relentlessly to create a fairer society.

Scope says “We won’t stop until we achieve a society where all disabled people enjoy equality and fairness.”



Richard Bragg is the Lead Training and Development Specialist at Scope. He has worked in L&D for more than 20 years - for the last 15 years in the charity sector. Before joining Scope Richard worked at Royal Voluntary Service.