



Book Recommendation

The Coaching Habit by Michael Bungay Stanier

Michael Bungay Stanier is a charismatic writer and coach with a conversational, upbeat style which may belie the depth of expertise on offer. His beguiling, quirky humour has us laughing as we read what should be common sense principles, but you know how uncommon, common sense is! This book is the best-selling coaching book of this century and in 2019 he was named the #1 thought leader in coaching.

Stanier's message is encapsulated in the subtitle: *Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You lead Forever*. Again, a seemingly simple dictum contains layers of wisdom. Leaders as coaches (and coaches as leaders) have long known that the question is the key to the coaching approach. Stanier suggests that for all that knowledge, there is still a lot of telling and advising coming from both. In coaching circles, it is also known that the temptation to **tell** rather than **ask** is always there. We also know that for the coach, the telling takes away the client's agency. For the leader, it creates a habit where others come to them – the leader who 'knows best' – and neatly transfers the problem to them to solve, potentially overloading them and limiting their own opportunities for growth.

So, what in Stanier's view is the answer? Develop a habit to ensure you stay with the question. He goes so much further than saying that though; his book provides 7 clear and well trialled and effective questions that he has developed during his years as a top performing coach. Each question is accompanied by a template to walk us through acquiring a new habit to replace the debunked habit we may have been using. The clarity and ease of this template – three steps – is masterful and compelling. Add a large dose of Stanier humour and canny knowledge of the universal types of situations which arise in the business context, and I wager you will laugh your way into successful application of them.

At **my manifesto**, we love the emphasis Stanier puts on the AWE question (And What Else?). He refers to this question as the best coaching question in the world. We know the power of AWE too. It may seem counterintuitive, that such a question – so open, so unspecific – has such power. Stanier, in typically economic fashion, attributes its power to three reasons: more options can lead to better decisions, you rein yourself in, and you buy yourself time. His lovely expansion of those three reasons is wonderful. Do yourself a favour; read this book! You certainly won't regret it!