

“WATCH THE BALL”

There is little doubt that in ball sports it is crucial to watch the ball. But does the command “Watch the ball!” actually result in us doing that? Not according to John Whitmore in his book [“Coaching for Performance”](#).

If it did, many of us would be far better at our sport. Unfortunately, questions like “Are you watching the ball?” and “Why aren’t you watching the ball?” don’t help either.



Watching the ball is important in tennis – but how do you coach someone to do just that?

Whitmore contends that an altogether different order of question is needed; two examples he uses for tennis are:

“Which way is the ball spinning as it comes towards you?”

“How high is it this time as it crosses the net?”

This type of question compels the player to watch the ball if he or she is to give you an answer.

The same principle can be applied to business coaching and business training. For example, try asking somebody who is not familiar with the term, what the Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) of their plant machinery is. Or try just explaining the formula to them. You are unlikely to get an activated response. But if you ask them how their plant is performing and how they measure it, they are more likely to become familiar with the term and learn how to calculate it, to answer the question. Through their focus on a higher order, they accept and learn the concept more quickly.

In the business coaching lexicon, these higher order questions are referred to as “Powerful Questions” – something that coaches and trainers need to be proficient at. In fact, this is a skill that all of us could benefit from!

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