To coach, to mentor, or both? Many people confuse mentoring with coaching. While they are closely linked, they are very different activities. An effective manager's skill-set, however, for developing their people needs to include coaching and mentoring.

Being a manager as coach involves the manager helping employees to learn and improve work performance while providing guidance, encouragement, and support. The aim is to help the employee take greater responsibility for their own professional improvement, learning, and skills development.

The effective manager as coach has strong coaching skills, including presence, listening, and powerful questioning, as well as the ability to provide effective feedback. Essentially, it is about empowering people to develop and grow professionally in the organization.

The role of manager as coach is similar to that of an external coach providing coaching services to individuals in the organization. Like the external coach, the manager's role as coach is to support the learning and development of the individual to meet organizational requirements. So a manager can substitute for or perform the role of the external coach for their team.

The issue is how the manager balances the coaching role with their other roles with respect to managing staff, in particular their role as mentor or teacher. Mentoring is defined as a one-on-one relationship between a less experienced person and a more experienced person, while coaching is intended to address the professional development of the individual. The difference is that the mentor's focus is on sharing their knowledge and experiences with the mentee to help them develop increased knowledge or competency.

To be effective as a manager who develops people, managers need to know when to coach and when to mentor, when to ask and when to tell. And that gets down to whether the staff member has the knowledge and skills but just hasn't made the connections, in which case they need to be coached, or whether they really don't know and lack the dots that need to be joined, in which case they need to be mentored.
A manager who constantly tells, assumes that the employee doesn't know and doesn't have the knowledge, this disempowers the employee and demotivates them. Managers as coaches are expert at developing their people because they have good skills in asking the right questions at the right time but also give advice in a timely manner.