Improving Performance through Coaching

Coaching is a technique designed to develop individual skills, knowledge and attitudes. It is most effective when it takes place informally as part of normal management process such as one-to-one or team meetings rather than formal coaching sessions.

Types of coaching include:

- Helping people become aware of how well they are doing and what they need to learn
- Controlled delegation
- Using situations and individuals experiences as leaning opportunities
- Helping individual to learn through effective questioning rather than force feeding them with instruction of what to

Coaching allows managers and reviewers to engage in developmental conversation with members of staff without them themselves having to be an expert in a particular area. It uses appropriate questioning techniques to challenge the role holder, enabling them to explore issues, resolve problems and take maximum leaning from experiences themselves.

A coaching approach to management:

- Helps others to find their own way of doing things
- Avoids telling other what to do
- Lets others do the thinking
- Reduces the managers need to control
- Allows things to be done differently to how the manager might do them
- Allows mistakes to happen as a learning experience
- Takes notice of different styles of working
- Allows managers to notice and value different style of working
- Requires manager to adapt their style to suit and get the best from others
- Requires managers to ask questions and listen more than talking, telling and offering solutions.

The benefits of a coaching approach to management?

What are the commonest managerial responses when a member of staff says, 'I've got a problem'?' The answer is, 'I'll look into it and leave it with me!!).

- What is the long term benefit of this approach?
- How much as the member of staff learnt from the manager?
- What will happen next time there is an issue or a problem?

A coaching approach:

- helps turn problems in to learning opportunity,
- Develops skills for the future
- Empowers staff to think and resolve issues
- Improves communication and develops trust relationships between managers and staff
- Promotes just in time learning on the job rather than depending on sporadic training
- Promotes employee ownership and buy in
- Employees feels values for their contribution
- Improves productivity through ongoing learning and reflection
- Fosters entrepreneurial and creative thinking.
Coaching skills and approach

Coaching in the workplace requires the manager/reviewer/coach to use structured and effective questioning techniques that enable the coachee (role holder) to explore their situation, options, barriers and benefits without imposing their ideas or preferences upon them.

The GROW model

The GROW model is simple model that can help structure and effective coaching/developmental conversation.

Goal
• Goals can be set for example, in terms of what will be achieved from a meeting or a performance goal to be delivered in the work environment (e.g. an improvement to SET scores).

Reality
• Understanding where the coachee is now in terms of achieving the goal.
• Understanding whether the coachee has the means of achieving the goal.
• Identifying and obstacles preventing the goal from being achieved.
• Clarifying and assumption being made in achieving the goal.

Options
• Helping the coachee consider different ways of achieving the goal, identifying more than one possible solution.

Will (wrap-up)
• Commit to action any solutions/approaches/ideas identified (see guidance on setting SMART objectives to help clarify goal/objective parameters).
• Help understand any barriers or constraints that may prevent the goal being met.
• Agree future interactions between manager/reviewer/coach and coachee to monitor progress and share learning.

Using the model above, it is possible to structure the questions asked by the manager/reviewer/coach to help get the best from the meeting and the individual staff member.
The following are examples of questions that can be asked for each section of the model:

### Goal
- What form of outcome are you seeking by the end of this meeting?
- How far and how detailed do you expect to get in this meeting?
- In the long-term what is your goal related to this issue/objective? What is the time frame?
- What intermediate steps can you identify, with their time frames?
- How will you know when you have achieved your goal?
- How stretching do you think this goal will be for you?
- Does anyone else need to know about this goal or be involved?
- Do you need support from anyone else?
- How much personal control or influence will you have over your goal or objective?
- What is the time frame?
- What will be your milestone or KPI’s on the way to achieving your goal?
- How will you measure your progress and/or effectiveness?
- What may stop you achieving this goal?

### Reality
- What is the present situation in more detail?
- What and how great is your concern about it?
- Who is affected by this issue other than you?
- Who knows about your desire to do something about it?
- How much control do you personally have over the outcome?
- Who else has some control over it and how much?
- What action steps have you taken on it so far? What results did you get?
- What has stopped you from doing more?
- What obstacles will need to be overcome on the way?
- What if any, internal obstacles or personal resistances do you have taking action?
- What resources do you already have? Skill, time, enthusiasm, money, support etc?
- What other resources will you need? Where will you get them from?
- What is missing in this situation?
- Intuitively, what is really going to happen here?

### Options
- What are all the different ways in which you could approach this situation?
- Make a list of all the alternatives, large or small, complete and partial solutions?
- What else could you do?
- What would you do if you had more time, larger budget or if you were the boss?
- What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet, with a new team?
- Would you like to add a suggestion from me?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these in turn?
- Which would give the best results?
- Which of these solutions appeals to you most, or feels best for you?
- Which would give you the most satisfaction?
- What if........?
- Imagine you had more energy and confidence than you have now, what would you then try?
- What should you do?
**Will (Wrap up)**

- Which option/options will you choose?
- To what extent does this meet all your objectives?
- What are your criteria and measurements for success?
- When precisely are you going to start and finish each action step?
- What could arise to hinder you in taking these steps or meeting the goal?
- What personal resistance do you have in taking these steps and why?
- What will you do to reduce or eliminate these internal or external factors?
- How do you want things to go?
- Who needs to know what your plans are?
- What support do you need and from whom?
- What do you need to know or skills do you need?
- What will you do to obtain that support?
- What could I do to support you?
- When will you have achieved these actions and goals?
- From 1-10 what is your commitment in achieving this goal?
- What prevents it from being a 10?
- What could you do or alter to raise your commitment closer to a ten?
- What one small thing can you do within the next 4-5 hours to move you forwards right now?

(Adapted from John Whitmore, coaching for performance 2002)

**Questioning Skills**

The value of asking the right questions cannot be overemphasised, if you want a person to take the maximum learning from a situation, to think about how they think or how they feel about something, open questions need to be asked. These are simple questions that cannot be answered briefly or with a “yes” or “no”.

Open questions commonly start with a:

- What
- Where
- When
- Who
- Why
- How

Using a variety of questions is an essential part of coaching. The following list of indicative questions is designed to assist in formulating questions that might help the coachee clarify the issues being discussed.

- What are you expecting from the situation?
- How do you feel about what is happening?
- What would have made things better?
- What assumptions are you making about the situation
- How do you know?
- What would be a satisfactory outcome?
• Can you see any advantages/disadvantages to that?
• Why does it have to be that way?
• Is there a way you could have done things differently/What other options are open to you?
• What would be the consequences of taking different action?
• What is the worst thing that could happen?
• Who else could assist you with this issue?
• What is your strongest feeling about this situation?
• When have you experienced the same feelings?
• Do you believe that this situation can be resolved satisfactorily?
• What else do you need to know or find out?
• If you could start again how would you act differently?
• What would be the easiest/hardest solution?
• What do you remember thinking but not doing/saying?
• What did you feel but not reveal?
• What surprised you about the situation?
• What else can you do now?
• What would you say the first step is?

Scaling Questions

A useful technique for moving people along and helping them decide on action is to use scaling questions. These require the coachee to consider the question differently and therefore to think differently about the issue.

Questions might be:

• On a scale of one to ten, where 1 is no chance and 10 I’ll complete the programme, how likely are you to finish this course of study?
• On a scale of one to ten, how much do you want this change?

A series of questions based on the scaling starter,

• On a scale of one to ten, how well are you doing at the moment?
• On the same scale, how do you think your colleagues would rate you?
• So if you are at six now, what would you be doing differently to get to seven?
Questions about progress,

On a scale of one to ten, how much progress have you made in this year?

Listening

A key part of asking questions is the ability to genuinely listen to what is being said by the coachee. This helps:

- To show interest
- To allow the other person to express themselves
- To show respect
- To find out information
- To ensure understanding
- To find out new ideas
- Build effective relationships and trust
- To genuinely explore and delve deeply into situations with the coachee

Some keys to listening well:

- Prove you care by suspending all other activities. Give 100% attention.

- Prove that you are listening, respond: responses can be both verbal and nonverbal (nods, expressing interest), but must prove you received the message, and more importantly, prove it had an impact on you. Speak at approximately the same energy level as the other person...then they'll know they really got through and don't have to keep repeating.

- Prove understanding: To say "I understand" is not enough. People need some sort of evidence or proof of understanding. Prove your understanding by occasionally restating the gist of their idea or by asking a question which proves you know the main idea. The important point is not to repeat what they've said to prove you were listening, but to prove you understand.

- Prove respect: Prove you take other views seriously. It seldom helps to tell people, "I appreciate your position" or "I know how you feel." You have to prove it by being willing to communicate with others at their level of understanding and attitude. We do this naturally by adjusting our tone of voice, rate of speech and choice of words to show that we are trying to imagine being where they are at the moment.

Action Planning for Improvement and Development

An outcome of the coaching process will be a set of clearly defined areas and actions that the coachee themselves have identified. It is important that these are captured and documented and used are part of the object setting and development process. Further guidance on setting SMART objectives and generating development plans are available in:

- Guidance on Objective Setting
- PDPR Personal Development Planning
- PDPR Behavioural Competency Reference Guide