

Coaching for performance & development

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

Coaching is important to empower, develop, assist and motivate employees to achieve. Adopting a coaching approach in performance conversations provides the opportunity to bring out the best in employees by sharing expertise and perspectives, developing self-awareness, developing necessary capabilities, building on strengths, prioritising wellbeing, and recognising achievements.

Essentially coaching involves providing a combination of direction and support to an individual in order to help motivate them and assist in navigating obstacles or problems that might hold back their performance. This is different from instruction where a manager only provides detailed direction on what needs to be done and exactly how to do it based on their perspective. A coaching approach focuses on partnering with an employee in your team to help them explore different options, try out new ways of working, and eventually find the right answer for themselves.

KEY BENEFITS OF COACHING

- It can elicit new levels of performance that the employee may not have believed that they could achieve
- Builds self-awareness and capability in others, helping them apply their strengths to new challenges and realise their potential
- Encourages people to think for themselves rather than be reliant on you as their manager to have all the answers
- It can help re-focus people who have lost confidence, motivation or engagement with elements of their work

WHEN TO USE COACHING

- When supporting a new employee to integrate into the organisation and get up to full performance in their role
- In day-to-day conversations about work progress and issues or problems that arise on the job
- When an employee has become stuck on a problem or feels blocked and not able to find a solution
- When an employee is taking on new responsibilities or is unfamiliar territory and have to apply their experience in new situations
- When an employee is working through change and considering the implications of new requirements in their role

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- In preparation for an important piece of work, presentation or event to help bring out their best performance when it matters most
- When an employee's performance is variable, e.g. they have shown they are capable but don't always demonstrate this
- In formal performance management and development reviews to assist them in moving towards longer-term career goals, helping to create the focus and confidence to progress in this direction.

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR COACHING

Like any of the quality conversations needed for performance management and development, it is important that you have already established rapport and mutual respect with an individual employee before you consider using coaching. There are three other key ingredients that need to be in place for coaching to be effective:

- **Capability** – a pre-requisite for coaching to work is that the individual has the underlying ability and relevant strengths to achieve the given task at hand. Coaching can help someone build their skills, knowledge and confidence, but if they do not have the right ability or strengths that fit with the job role then this should be addressed first.
- **Motivation** – they need to be energised, see the task ahead of them as important and relevant to them as individual, and be personally committed to achieving the target outcome. Everyone's motivation can fluctuate from time to time. Coaching can help tap in to someone's motivation to enhance this but they must be sufficiently open to the process, willing to try different approaches, and take personal ownership in participating. Without this baseline level of motivation, coaching will not be productive.
- **Resources** – they need the appropriate equipment, data, processes, time, feedback and support from others in order to be set up for success. If these things are not in place, even the most experienced and capable person will not be able to perform no matter how much coaching they receive.

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HOW TO USE COACHING

One of the most widely recognised and used models for coaching is the G.R.O.W. framework which provides a basic structure for clarifying their focus, identifying new ways of working and building motivation.

➤ **Goals** – You start by clarifying what is the person aiming to achieve in the future. You can use S.M.A.R.T. approach to setting goals and objectives to create clarity and alignment between what the employee is working towards and what the organisation needs to achieve. You may need to work with the employee to help them sharpen or refine their goals so they feel confident about achieving them and see them as personally relevant. Some questions to ask might include:

- So what is the goal you have set yourself?
- What does success look like?
- Why do you want to achieve that goal?
- How important is the goal?

➤ **Reality** – The next step is to clarify what their current situation is in relation to achieving a particular goal or objective, using feedback and introducing relevant data to help build awareness. It is often our beliefs about what we are able to do or what is possible that hold people back from the performance they could potentially achieve. You may need to provide some constructive challenge around some of these beliefs at this stage to introduce a new “reality”. Some questions to ask might include:

- What has led you to this goal?
- How has the current situation affected you?
- What has influenced you to behave in this way?

➤ **Options** – Having established what the person’s current situation is, the next step is to help them explore alternative courses of action that may be available to take things forward and work through these to identify what they will do next. Some questions to ask might include:

- What do you think your options are?
- What are the best and worst things about the options?
- If you didn’t have any constraints what would you do?
- What other approaches might bring about success?

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- Will – With a new approach identified, the last step is to help the person decide actions are they committed to take forward, when they will do this, and what support they will need. In the first instance this could even be to experiment with a different way of working and see what impact it has. As the employee develops their capability and confidence over time, they are likely to become more willing to challenge themselves and stretch to new approaches that may not have believed were possible before. Some questions to ask might include:
- When are you going to start?
 - What actions are you going to take?
 - Who can help you?
 - On a scale of 1-10 how confident are you in achieving the goal?

KEY POINTS

- Coaching is about helping someone build their capability and confidence to find solutions for themselves rather than the Manager just telling them what to do.
- There are some core ingredients that need to be in place to enable coaching for performance and development to be effective – the basic capability, necessary resources, and motivation to participate and take personal ownership.
- Like other good quality conversations, you need to have established good rapport and mutual respect the individual employee first before getting started.
- To be effective in using a coaching process, you as the Manager will need to be comfortable in stepping back from trying to solve problems for the individual employee you are working with, avoid jumping in with your own personal views, and focus more on the process of helping them find them to find solutions that work for them.
- Consider using a structured approach like the GROW model to help the employee identify constructive ways to enhance their performance.