



COACHING CHALLENGES ...AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM!

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Of all the training and development fads that have come and gone over time, the topic of coaching has remained towards the top of most peoples' list of critical topics. And that's for good reasons.

Coaching is a crucial activity that ensures:

- skills and knowledge are passed on,
- expectations are set for performance,
- motivating praise is given and areas of under-performance are addressed.

There is also an increasing recognition that coaching is not just something that managers

and team leaders do with their people. Staff sometimes need to coach their managers. Team members need to be able to coach each others. The reality is, coaching is a multi-directional activity.

Coaching, though, is a people oriented task and many have difficulty with it.

There are numerous tricky situations that can arise when coaching someone. Four of the most common coaching challenges are described below, along with some practical how to's for dealing with them.

Coaching Challenge No. 1

HOW TO GET STARTED WHEN GIVING FEEDBACK AND COACHING



An essential part of coaching someone is giving them feedback about their performance telling them what they are doing well, and also what they could do

better. But knowing what to say and how to say it can create a lot of anxiety.

So how can we overcome this fear? There are four ways to get started.

1. General enquiry

'General enquiry' is the easiest way of getting started and involves asking a general question about work and how things are going. It is a good way to break the ice with little anxiety on either side. The problem is that the discussion may go in a different direction to what you want.

2. Seek feedback first

A good way to have more control over the situation than the general enquiry is to seek feedback from the other person first and listen to what they have to say. That allows the person giving feedback to have their say later. The person will usually be more prepared to

listen to your feedback because you have listened to them first.

3. Give positive feedback first

Another way to get started is to give the person some positive feedback first and then tell them about the areas you are not so happy about. This is a popular technique because you can establish some rapport when giving the positive feedback which enables you to follow-up with the issues and concerns. There is a danger, however, that if you use this technique too often it may appear manipulative and people can become suspicious if you give the good news first because they will be expecting the bad news to follow.

4. Direct approach

The most direct way of giving someone feedback is to just do it, without beating around the bush. You need to keep your voice constructive and respectful, be specific and concrete and never mention the word "attitude". It is important to be brave and avoid delay.

It doesn't matter which of these techniques you use to get started. What is important is that you do something to deal with the issue.

Coaching Challenge No. 2

GAINING AGREEMENT ON PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS



One of the many challenges faced when coaching is getting the other person to agree with your feedback. The other person may want to disagree for a variety

of reasons but without their agreement on the issues it can be difficult to resolve them.

So, how can you gain agreement?

1. Give specific feedback

Make sure your feedback is concrete and specific. Describe behaviour and results achieved, or not achieved, and never discuss personality traits or attitude.

2. Use multiple examples

It is crucial to have illustrations or evidence or examples when giving feedback, especially negative feedback. This ensures that you show that you know what you are talking about and also helps to clarify to the other person what the issues are.

3. Explain consequences

Explaining the consequences of someone's behaviour can really motivate them to want to change. Let them know how their behaviour affects productivity, or other peoples' work, or customer service, or the team's motivation.

4. Get 100% commitment

To be absolutely sure that you have the agreement of the other person and their commitment to change, use the following 2 step model:

- Step 1: Ask the other person if they think it is fair that you are pointing this issue out to them.
- Step 2: Ask them if they agree with you about the problem.

Use the two questions "Is it fair me pointing this out to you?" and "Do you agree with me that this is a problem" to get the other person to accept responsibility for their behaviour and discuss concrete ways in which the person can change.

Coaching Challenge No. 3

FINDING OUT THE REAL REASON FOR UNDER-PERFORMANCE



If one of your team is not performing well and you know something is wrong but you're not sure what, you will need to do some coaching to get them back on track.

But the challenge can be finding out what is really going on?

There are 4 crucial tips to remember:

1. Avoid making assumptions

An effective coach avoids jumping to conclusions and does not make assumptions. Instead they go beneath the surface to find out what's really going on.

2. Ask drill-down questions

To really investigate deeply, a coach needs to ask drill-down questions to get information.

3. Summarize to check understanding

When the information starts to come out, the coach needs to summarize to check their understanding of what is going on. It can be very powerful to combine these last two skills ask a drill down question, then summarize to check understanding and repeat them over and over.

4. Show empathy

Sometimes a person can feel uncomfortable when a coach is exploring the underlying issues. So you need to let the other person know that you understand how they feel. You can show empathy by saying something like 'I know this is difficult for you'...or 'you seem upset'. This is an important way of encouraging the other person to keep talking.

An effective coach seeks information, encourages exploration and gets to the real issues.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU GET STUCK AND THE COACHING DOESN'T WORK?



Coaching helps people grow and develop. But sometimes, the coach can get stuck and it can be hard to overcome the blocks.

You can recognise being stuck because the person being coached doesn't accept your feedback, disagrees with your suggestions for improvement, blames others for the problem or simply doesn't see the need for any change.

Here are 3 ways of getting 'unstuck':

1. Establish the trend or pattern

The best thing to do when you are stuck like this is to have more examples or illustrations to make your point. And you can do this by looking for multiple examples of the same behaviour and then pointing out the pattern or trend. By looking across a number of examples and identifying a trend or pattern the coach can create motivation for change.

2. Using the 'here and now' technique

Sometimes the person continues to resist and the coach needs to use another technique, the 'here and now'.

There are 4 steps to this technique:

1. Describe 'here and now' behaviour
2. Offer your own reaction to the behaviour
3. Relate it back to the workplace
4. Check for agreement

The reason this approach is so powerful is that it is real, it is current and it has a bit of shock value because you are not talking about something 'out there'. And it is a great way of getting unstuck.

3. Plan for improvement

Once you have given the feedback and the person has taken it on board, they are more open to planning ways to improve.

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