

# Coaching Skills for Managers

Dr. Anita Pickerden



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1<sup>st</sup> edition

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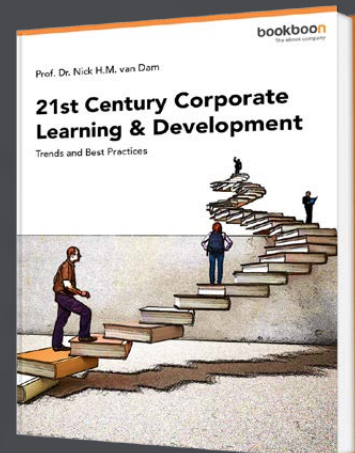
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# 1 Introduction

Are you a new manager or supervisor? Or have you been asked to incorporate coaching into your management role? Perhaps you're keen to expand your knowledge and skills on the subject. If so, then this book is written for you. This little e-book is a basic introduction to coaching, with some examples and exercises, to give you the confidence to get started. Of course, I hope that you will see the benefits of using coaching techniques in your day-to-day work, and will want to read more or take a coaching course, so there are some useful links in the final chapter. You might also see the value in engaging a coach yourself to help you move forward in your career. In the meantime, let's make a start.

Some people like to debate the difference between Coaching and Mentoring. Is there a difference? Technically, yes, but in practice it's not that important. Usually mentors are people in your organisation who are already skilled at your job, who may have worked there longer, and who can help you to progress in the company. A coach does not necessarily need to know all about your job role, or the people involved in the problem, but can ask meaningful questions, help you plan your next steps and then encourage you as you move towards your agreed goal. But coaching by managers and supervisors usually involves a combination of the two approaches, so you are using your own experience as well as helping your colleagues to make progress in their work.

## 1.1 So what's the difference between coaching and managing someone?

Managing someone will often involve telling them what to do, and may include telling them how to do it and when the task should be completed. Coaching is not about telling; it's more about asking questions, and listening to the answers. It's about challenging when the answer doesn't sound right, and pointing out any inconsistencies in what they say. When you coach someone you are letting the person you are coaching (we usually call that person a coachee) identify the problem and then formulate a plan to get to the desired result, then encouraging them to keep working their plan. People may often have the answer within themselves, but they may not realise it. So your job as coach is to help to tease out the answer and help them to move forward.

When you have understood and become confident in using these simple tools and techniques you will probably find that coaching forms part of your daily work as a manager.

### **But first, a word of warning:**

At the risk of stating the obvious, people don't always do what they're told.

This blindingly obvious fact has some interesting implications for you as a manager or supervisor; for example, simply telling people what to do by issuing instructions, even detailed instructions stating when, where, how, how many, what shape etc., etc., will not always get the job done to the specification and standard you expect. This is not because people are stupid, lazy or that they mean to deliberately mess up. They may simply have been distracted, or not fully understood, or not realised the urgency of the task, or it might even be that your instructions were not quite as clear as you thought they were.

You will probably find that people are much more likely to do something if it is their idea, or they feel that they have what the business jargon calls 'ownership'. That may be because they have seen a specific benefit to the task being completed properly, for example recognition within the company or even an improved chance of promotion or bonus. As a manager or supervisor you are rarely able to guarantee promotion or bonuses, but you can certainly guarantee to recognise an individual when they have done well. So by enabling your colleagues to see that benefit through your coaching will enable you to help them to own that task.

Coaching can often be used to improve performance and even to embed new knowledge and skills, so could be offered as an alternative to sending someone off on a training course. Each session could be preceded by some reading or online learning, and the purpose of your coaching session could then be to reinforce and practice those new skills. Many companies have found that incorporating coaching into management will improve the way that employees feel about their company; they may feel more motivated and work harder as a result.

What you are asked to achieve with your new coaching skills will probably depend on your employer's approach, for example some companies use a combination of (a) qualified external coaches, (b) internal coaches who have gained some coaching skills and qualifications, and (c) managers who have developed coaching skills as part of their supervisory skillset. This might sound like a huge investment but those companies will tell you how coaching has improved employee engagement, productivity and therefore the bottom line. Other companies might be just starting to think about using coaching and you might be at the very start of the process.

This book is not aiming to teach you everything there is to know about coaching. But it is going to introduce you to some of the basic skills, tools and techniques of coaching, so that you will begin to feel more confident when coaching your team members and other colleagues. We will start by looking at one of the most important aspects of coaching; how to build rapport and become a better listener. You will probably remember times when a manager has appeared to ignore what you were saying, and you'll remember how that felt; building a good relationship with your coachee is vital to getting good results.

Next we will consider the best place to hold a coaching session and how long each session might take, and how to ensure that your coaching conversations are kept private and confidential. I hope it goes without saying that confidentiality leads to trust, and when your coachee trusts you, your coaching is likely to be more successful. We will then start to set the agenda and structure the coaching session to ensure that you cover the topics that you need to in the time available. We will use the GROW model as a basis for the session (agreeing the Goal for the session, what's the Reality of the current situation, what are the Options available to the coachee, and Will the coachee do what they have identified as being the best option).

Now we're getting into the tools and techniques, and the next chapter will cover the importance of asking questions, and the sort of questions that will help your coachee to make progress, as well as some questions to avoid. As you start to coach people you will soon see that they often limit their own progress themselves by making assumptions that they simply can't change. These limiting beliefs and negative assumptions will make their progress much slower, so the next chapter will show you some ways of challenging those assumptions in a manner that will encourage your coachee to become more open to alternatives.

When you have helped someone to reach a conclusion or decide on a course of action, you will then need to help them to create a plan so they can take manageable steps towards their new goal. At the next coaching session you will be able to see how they are progressing and, if they have not made progress, re-visit the plan and discuss what was stopping them, so we will look at some of the different ways that you can help them in the planning process. As we close your toolbox of new skills, we will consider how to give, and how to receive, feedback. Feedback has an important role to play in coaching, and is a very useful way of helping your coachee to improve. We finish this book with a section on useful websites, books and coaching courses to take you further in your coaching journey.

So, let's get started.

## 2 Building Rapport and Listening

Let me ask you a question: Can you think of a time when you have been trying to talk to someone and they have looked away, checked their phone, read their papers, or carried on typing and looking at the screen? How did you feel when that happened? Probably you felt that you were not being listened to, or even that you were just interrupting their work. Well that is the exact opposite of building rapport! And yet that is exactly what some managers do without even thinking about it. As a manager you may feel confident that you can listen to a colleague and carry on typing at the same time: but your colleague certainly won't feel that.

### 2.1 What is rapport?

Rapport is about people being on the same wavelength as each other, showing mutual respect and sharing a common goal or interest. The quickest and most effective way of building rapport with a coachee is to focus on them and their situation, for example when you are giving them your full attention, encouraging them to talk by giving them eye contact, nodding in agreement where appropriate, leaning forward and looking interested. Rapport can sometimes be created by mirroring the other person's movements or speech patterns so, for example, if they fold their arms or nod their head you can do a similar movement. However that can appear forced and un-natural, so use it very sparingly.

If you are going to coach someone in your team, they have to be confident that you are listening to what they are saying, and that they can trust you with their concerns. So, put your phone onto divert, silence your mobile, switch off your computer, and give the coachee your undivided attention.

You want to put the coachee at their ease so make sure all the non-verbal messages are that you are there to help them to achieve, and not to discipline them. So if you are sitting down try to ensure that the chairs are the same height – if they sit on a low chair and you are towering over them they are going to feel intimidated. Similarly if you are standing, avoid a 'toe to toe' discussion; it can be very off-putting if you are in their face, and they won't be receptive to new ideas. Speaking calmly and slowly can give you credibility that you know what you're talking about, and help to build trust. These techniques need practicing to get them right, so either role play with a friend or stand in front of the bathroom mirror and see if you are looking as though you're listening and paying attention.

#### 2.1.1 So, can I take notes?

Yes, but its good practice to check first with the coachee, and to agree that the notes are simply to help you keep track of the important points rather than to provide a word-for-word report to your boss! If you are going to keep notes, it is important that they are stored somewhere safely so that other people are not going to see them, as this would break the trust you have so carefully built up.

It's also important to put the coachee at their ease because when they feel comfortable they can think more clearly as they discuss the situation. Remember, this is different from a management meeting where you are telling someone what to do, when and how to do it. You may find it helpful to engage in a few moments of small-talk first before launching straight into your coaching session, but that depends on how well you know your coachee, and on their communication preferences.

### 2.1.2 Exercise

List five sentences, that you will feel comfortable saying, to help build rapport with your coachee:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## 2.2 Becoming a good listener

Having established a good rapport with your coachee, being able to listen well is the most important skill of any coach. This is very different from a normal conversation, where you may often be thinking of what to say next when the other person is speaking. We are talking here about "Active Listening" and that means concentrating fully on the words that are being said, and also on how those words are being said. For example, someone may say "I'm not angry about that", but you can see that everything else about them, their tone of voice, their facial expressions, their body language, are all suggesting that they are indeed very angry about that.

In their book, *Coaching with NLP*, Joseph O'Connor and Andrea Lages suggest that people generally engage in one of four levels of listening, the first being of simply hearing that someone else is talking. At this level you will probably not be concentrating on what they are saying, and you will most likely be doing something else at the same time. The second level is "listening to..." where you may be trying to work out what this means for you, or becoming aware that this conversation is covering similar points to an earlier conversation you've had with someone else. This is everyday listening, but not really sufficient for a coaching conversation.

The third level is known as “listening for...”, so you may be coaching someone and be listening for the coachee to describe a feeling or a concern. O’Connor and Lages suggest that the best coaching listening is the fourth level, that they call “conscious listening”, where you give your coachee your full attention, and try to still any internal dialogue you might be having with yourself, so that you become completely focussed on what your coaching is saying. This takes practice as you are trying to take in the words and concerns of your coachee, encouraging them to talk, not interrupting them, but giving them your focussed attention. However, at the same time you will be wanting to guide the coachee through the session, you will need to be aware of the time, and the agreed goal for the coaching session.

Just as you want your coachee to feel comfortable during the coaching session, you will find that making yourself comfortable will help you to listen more effectively. This will help you to pick up clues and to ask appropriate questions that encourage your coachee to go deeper into a situation.

So, by saying things like “what specifically upset you about...?” or “can you give me an example?” shows that you are listening, and that you would like further information about their situation. You may also demonstrate that you are listening well when you demonstrate that you understand what they’ve said by re-phrasing their concerns. Examples of re-phrasing might be:

“So it seems that your main concern with giving presentations is that you don’t know if you will be able to answer people’s questions, have I got that right?”

“Do you mean that you fear that one of your team members may not do as you ask?”

This gives your coachee the opportunity to agree that you have understood them, or to correct your understanding.

### 2.2.1 Exercise

During a normal conversation, start listening to a friend or colleague and give them your full attention. Encourage them to talk by nodding, smiling, leaning forward to show you are engaged in what they are saying.

After the conversation, make a note of how that felt for you, and what you learned from listening in such a deep way.

# 3 Time and Place

## 3.1 How long should a coaching session last?

This is a tricky question, as a professional coach may quote an hourly fee, setting up the expectation that each session will last for an hour, an hour and a half, or two hours. However, telephone coaching may often be as effective over a series of 30 minute calls. When you are using coaching techniques as a new management skill it is often best to allow yourself an hour. That way, if you finish in 45 minutes, you still have time to reflect on how well you've done, and what can be improved next time. You will also want to give yourself time to make a few confidential notes so that you can remind yourself what you covered before your next session.


### 3.1.1 Example:

4<sup>th</sup> June: Jason (the coachee) had tried a couple of times to lead the team discussion, but was still very nervous, and felt he'd allowed Arthur to take over the meeting, and then he couldn't regain control. We discussed his nervousness, and thought about the causes. Jason felt he was not well prepared, and will make some notes of what he wants to cover in the next meeting, and will write an agenda on the whiteboard to indicate what will be discussed. We agreed to review this in two weeks' time.

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Personal reflection: I felt I was doing better today. I listened more, and managed to ask him questions rather than advise him what to do. Next time I will make sure that I continue to ask questions, and stop myself from simply telling him what to do.

### 3.2 How many coaching sessions will someone need?

Sometimes it might be useful to schedule a series of coaching sessions, for example at 2pm each Monday for five or six weeks. This is likely to work well when you want to help someone through a difficult work challenge, or to encourage steady performance improvement. Regular coaching sessions would be appropriate if you were coaching a newly promoted supervisor, or had given a challenging project to a member of staff that you wanted to support.

However, you can also use your coaching tools and techniques at any time should circumstances demand it, for example if you notice that someone is performing a task well below the standard expected of them, then a brief, one-off discussion could lead to the desired improvements.

### 3.3 Where is the best place to meet?

This will depend on where you work. You will want to meet somewhere where your conversation will not be overheard. Some companies have a number of meeting rooms where a conversation can be kept private and which can be booked for your coaching session. You might be lucky enough to have your own office, so that you can shut the door and place a “meeting taking place” or “do not disturb” sign on the door. If not, then find somewhere that you can hold a private conversation, and where you will not be interrupted. Confidentiality is of course one of the most important aspects of coaching.

Confidentiality can take several forms: firstly, whatever is said to you in a coaching session must never become the subject of idle gossip either inside or out of the workplace.

For example: you walk into your boss's office and the first thing she talks about is the person who has just left. How confident will you be that your conversation with her will be kept private? Correct! As soon as you leave her office she will be gossiping about you. So do make sure that you don't give yourself that sort of reputation.

The second part of confidentiality is observing the fine line between reporting back to your manager, and providing a word for word account of your coaching session. This will depend on the 'contract' that is made between you and the coachee, and between you and your own line manager.

### 3.4 Agreeing the 'contract'

Let us first consider an agreed set of coaching sessions; you have identified a need to improve the performance of one of your team and have now scheduled a series of one-hour meetings each week for four weeks. Your coachee is well aware of the reason for the meetings and you have chosen an appropriate location.

At the start of the first meeting it will be important to agree what is known as the contract, so that the coachee understands the boundaries of the discussion and knows how much of the discussions will be confidential.

#### 3.4.1 Example:

“Well John we are going to meet each week for four weeks to work on improving your team briefing skills. Each meeting will last for around one hour and I shall give you an assignment to do in between each meeting. Let me assure you that, while the senior manager is aware that we are having these meetings, and their purpose, I will not be reporting back or providing a word for word record of what has been said. I would like to take a few notes, just to keep me on track, but I will keep these very safe. For your part, I would like you to agree to be punctual for each meeting, and to engage fully and to provide honest answers to my questions so that we can make some meaningful progress. Are you happy with that?”

On the other hand, if the need for coaching has been identified by your manager, you may need to provide regular updates and reports, in which case you should say so, so that your coachee is aware of the exact level of confidentiality. It goes without saying that, having agreed the level of confidentiality, you must not break it as that would instantly destroy the trust that you have worked hard to build.

#### 3.4.2 Exercise:

Over the next week, see how many of these you can do:

1. Catch yourself deliberately keeping a confidence, where you might normally engage in some light-hearted gossip.
2. Identify a suitable place at work where you can hold your coaching sessions without interruptions.
3. Role-play with a friend a brief conversation where you explain what the coaching session is about, and how you will protect their confidentiality
4. Have a short conversation with a friend where you take some notes about the conversation without breaking rapport.

# 4 Why are we here?

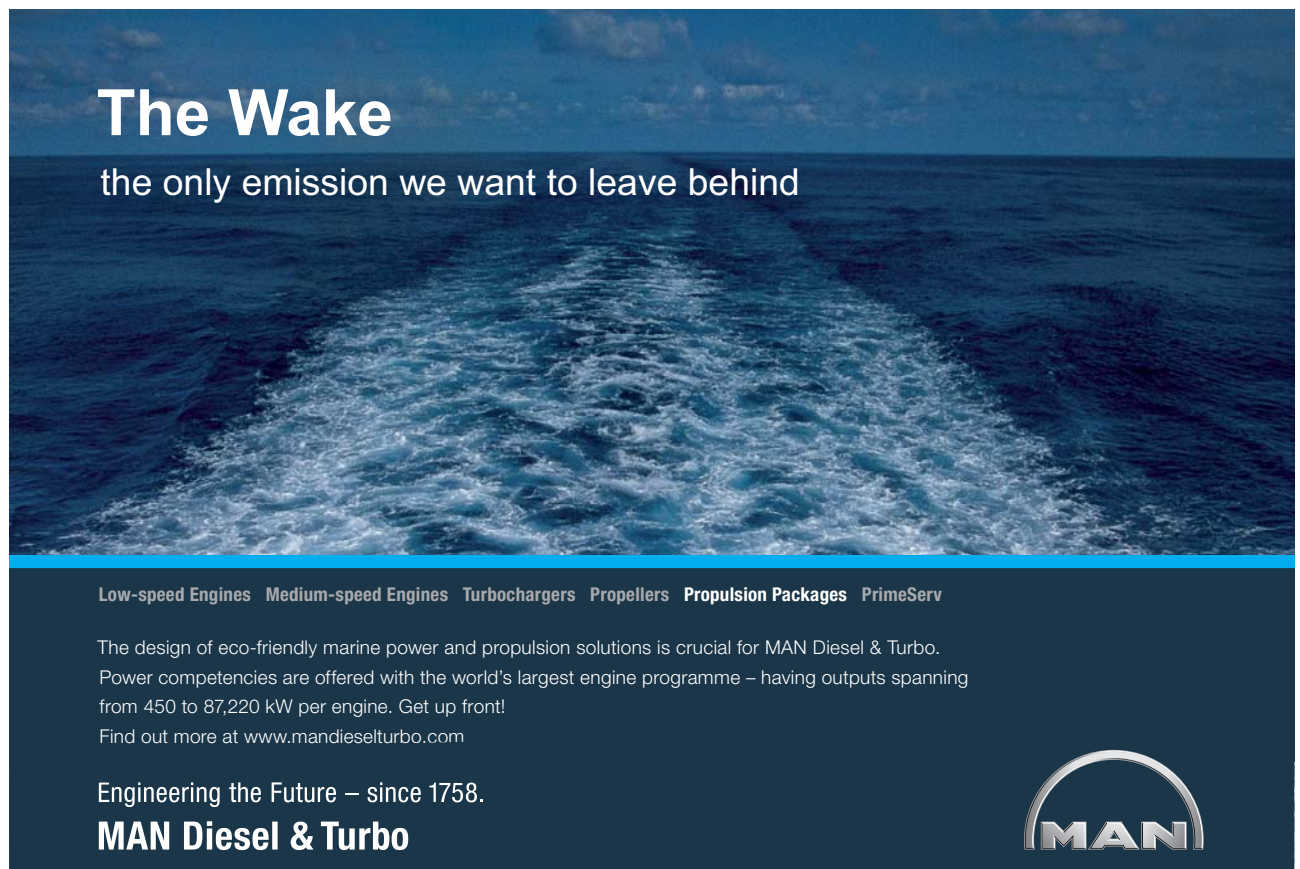
In this chapter we will be looking at the various ways of setting an agenda for your coaching session and considering how to structure the session in order to cover what you need to discuss in the time allowed. We will also examine a commonly used model for a coaching session known as the GROW model.

## 4.1 How to set the agenda

It may be that a member of your team identifies the need for coaching during a regular appraisal discussion, and asks you to coach them through a particular situation. Coaching is much more effective when you are both agreed on the topic and on the boundaries of the coaching session. Experienced coaches will often pick up the topic from the initial small-talk of ‘How are you?’ or ‘How have things been over the last week?’, but to start with it’s safer to get to agreement on the topic.

Examples:

‘Right, Jane, so today we’re going to talk about your confidence when briefing the team, are you okay with that?’




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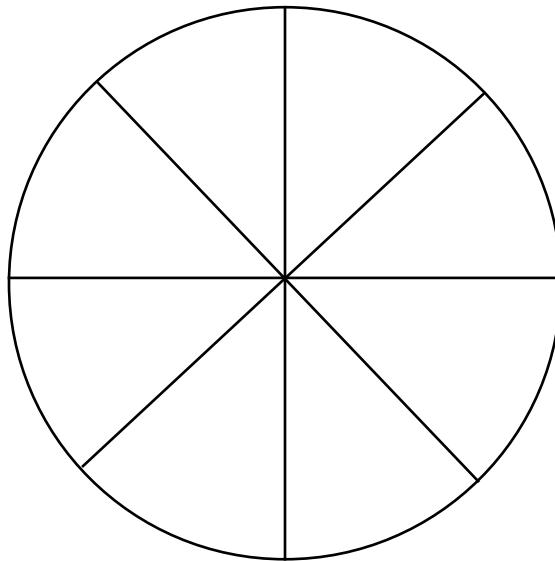
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‘Well, Jay, what would you like to talk about today?’ and if the topic starts to sound too broad to deal with in a one-hour session, perhaps a follow-up question: “And which specific aspect of [...] is causing you the most trouble?”

## 4.2 The Wheel of Work

This is a good way to identify the most important work-based issue challenging your coachee, and is based on a widely used model called the Wheel of Life. Draw a wheel with six or eight spokes and invite the coachee to label the spokes with aspects of their work that are important to them, for example output, team, manager, wages, professional development, job role, etc.



Then add a number from 1 to 10, to indicate how happy they are with each area of their work. This will show where the problems lie. So if the spoke labelled ‘team briefings’ only scores a 1 then you know that this is the most difficult part of the job for the coachee. It’s always worth asking the question, “which of these do you want to tackle first?” so that they don’t feel overwhelmed and panic about facing a problem that has kept them awake at night.

## 4.3 The GROW Model

This is the most popular way of structuring the coaching session and probably the easiest way of keeping track. It also enables you to recall what you discussed and what plans the coachee had made so that you can pick up at the next session.

GROW stands for Goal, Reality, Options and Will.

#### 4.3.1 Goal

Let's say that you've decided to coach your colleague to improve an aspect of their performance. Then it's worth spending some time deciding on the goal; in other words, being very specific about the level of improvement required on that particular aspect of performance, the date by which improvement will be achieved, and how you and the coachee will know if they have achieved it. So you have a clear goal for the series of coaching sessions. However, you may want to break that big goal down into smaller chunks, so you may want to ask your coachee "What do you want to have achieved by the end of this session?" Be aware that an hour is a relatively short space of time so make sure that the goal for each session is realistic and achievable. You will make far more progress by taking your coachee through small steps than if you were to try to solve all the problems in one go.

#### 4.3.2 Reality

What's the level of your colleague's performance right now? And exactly how far is that level from where it should be? At this point it's worth remembering that you are not trying to be the coachee's best friend, agreeing with their unrealistic ideas of how great they are, or accepting excuses "it's not my fault it's everyone/everything else's": in the long run that simply won't get the results you need. As a coach it is your job to get your coachee to be realistic about the situation.

Example:

Coach: "what do you think about your level of performance?"

Jenny: "Well I think it's not too bad"

Coach: "I'm going to have to disagree: on Tuesday last week [specific date] you know that we needed you to produce ten widgets [specific thing] but you only produced six [specific amount]. You need to be really honest here and accept that your level of performance is not adequate".

Jenny: "Okay you're probably right. I know I've not been doing as well as some others."

You'll often find that people can accept this approach if you are fair and firm and don't accept excuses. It's important at this stage to gain the coachee's understanding of the exact gap between what is required and what is currently being delivered. On the other hand, it may be that you are trying to explain to the coachee that their performance is not as bad as they think it is. If we consider again the example of the coachee who is scared of giving presentations, they may think that they are truly hopeless, whereas you can reassure them that, although there are areas for improvement, the whole presentation was not a complete disaster.

Here are some additional questions that may help you to get to Reality:

“What exactly is the situation at the moment?”

“Who else is involved in this, or affected by it?”

“How much personal control do you have over this situation?”

“What steps have you taken so far?”

“What help can you get from other people?”

When you are sure that your coachee is being more realistic and is looking honestly at their situation, you can then help them to explore the alternative ways of solving the problem.

The advertisement features a central graphic on the left with three stylized human figures inside a circular arrangement of four arrows, surrounded by several gears. To the right of this graphic, the text 'UNLEASHING CHANGE MANAGEMENT' is written in large, bold, blue capital letters. Below this, the dates 'OCTOBER 18 & 19, 2018' and the location 'DE RODE HOED AMSTERDAM' are listed in smaller blue capital letters. At the bottom of the ad, there is a silhouette of an Amsterdam cityscape including a windmill, a bridge, and various buildings. In the bottom left corner, the text 'Global Executive Events' is written in a serif font.



### 4.3.3 Options

Here is where you help your coachee to explore a wide range of different options, consider the likely outcomes for each option and then choose the one that they think will work best. In many coaching situations you will notice that your coachee seems to be stuck on only one course of action, and can see no alternatives, even though there may be several different possibilities. Those of you who regularly use Microsoft Word, for example, will already know that there are always several ways of achieving a particular result; you can use the drop-down menu, or Control + a letter, or a shortcut and they will all give you the result you need, even though you may have a preference for using just one.

A good way to start is to ask your coachee to list as many alternative ways as possible, no matter how unrealistic, fantastic, silly, expensive or impossible they may be. Five alternatives would be good; ten would be better, and fifteen would give you plenty to work on. Encourage your coachee by asking “And what else?”. The purpose of listing the options is to get the mind working to solve the problem rather than just concentrate on how difficult it may be. Even when your coachee has listed all her options, you might still have one or two ideas that are not on the list. Bearing in mind that you are not trying to tell her what to do, you might ask a question such as: “I have another possible option. Would you like to hear it?” and it is then up to the coachee to decide if she wants to hear it, or wait until she’s thought some more.

Once the list is written down the next step will be to rate each option by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each. Some of the more outlandish ideas will be quickly discounted, but there may be several ideas that are worth considering in detail, and then your coachee can choose the best option for them. Remember that it is the coachee’s choice and not yours; there will always be an opportunity to try a different option at a later coaching session.

### 4.3.4 Will

When your coachee has made their choice, it is up to you to check that they have the will (or will-power) to put their choice into action. Here you can ask some quite penetrating questions, that will test the will of your coachee without pushing them into a solution that you think is the right one. So it is important to find out more detail about the chosen option. John Whitmore, in his book *Coaching for Performance*, suggests the following questions are particularly powerful in helping your coachee to clarify their decision:

“What (exactly) are you going to do?”

“When are you going to start?”

“Will this action meet your goal?”

“What obstacles might you meet along your way?”

“Who needs to know?”

“What support do you need?”

“What other considerations do you have?”

“How likely are you to carry out these actions – on a scale 1–10?”

As a manager / supervisor, you are trying to ensure that these actions are carried out as planned, so it may be useful to note down the answers and read them back to your coachee to ensure that you have fully understood what they’ve promised themselves they will do. This will then form the initial part of your next coaching session, as well as helping with the planning process.

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# 5 Asking questions

## 5.1 Why do we ask questions?

Our brains seem to be pre-programmed for discussion and questions. It seems to be that a question, even if we ask ourselves, will always prompt the brain to try to find an answer. Whereas a simple statement can often be ignored. We have already established that telling someone what to do is not as effective as when the solution comes from the coachee themselves. The job of the coach is not to preach, impose rules and discipline or give instructions – it is to help the coachee to want to adopt a course of action that will lead to some sort of improvement. That is not to suggest that you cannot influence the coachee to come up with the best answer, it's just that you are not trying to control them. Let me give you an example of a controlling question:

“Why were you being so hostile and un-cooperative?”

This is a controlling question and immediately suggests that you are being critical of their behaviour, and that the coachee is being forced to justify their actions. They are more likely to deny being hostile or uncooperative rather than consider alternatives.

“What caused you to act that way?”

This is a better coaching question because it provides the coachee with an opportunity to explore the reasons for their behaviour without feeling personally criticised.

It is important that your questions should be in positive terms, so that your coachee begins to take ownership of their situation and of the solution; negative or very critical questions will simply close down their creative thinking. Questions that will put the coachee into the wrong will not get the results you are seeking

“Why did you do something so stupid?” and

“Why can't you deal effectively with this problem?”

These questions will simply make the coachee defensive, and they won't be thinking about how to solve the issue.

## 5.2 Good questions are open and simple

In her book, *The Coaching Manual*, Julie Star suggests that coaches should aim for questions that are open and simple. An open question is one where the coachee will be prompted to give a thoughtful answer rather than a simple yes or no. For example, if the coach says “were you nervous about that?” then the coachee could say yes or no and you will get very little additional information, whereas if the coach were to ask “tell me how you felt about that?” then a yes/no answer won’t work: the coachee has to describe their feelings about that situation, and you will gain a better understanding of the problem.

A simple question is one where only one question is being asked, rather than a complex question where several questions have been rolled into one:

“When you think about briefing the team, what goes through your mind, and do you feel nervous, and why do you think that is, and do you think you can do something about it?”

If your coachee is asked such a complex question they are unlikely to be able to answer all the various parts of the question, in fact they probably won’t remember many of the parts of the question. It’s much better to split the question up into simple questions so that the coachee can address each aspect in turn.

## 5.3 Wouldn’t it be easier simply to tell people what to do?

Yes, it would certainly be easier for you in the short term, but you won’t get the long term results you wanted. Remember that people are much more likely to act correctly if they fully understand the reason for the action, and they have ‘bought in’ to the action. That will be more likely to happen if you coach them, and probably won’t happen if you just tell them what to do.


Here are some examples of helpful questions that coaches often use to move the conversation on, or to get the coachee to stop and reflect upon their situation. Most good coaching questions are simple, open questions that start with What, Where, When, Who, Why and How. This helps your coachee to think through their situation in a more structured way. However the Why questions may take the conversation into the realm of personal beliefs and values, and you may want to practice ways of bringing the conversation back to the topic. Let’s use an example of a coachee who has to make an important presentation to the team and is nervous about this, as they have done very little public speaking. Your job as coach is to improve their presentation skills, so that they will be able to get information across to the team, but first you will need to deal with the nervousness.

Question	This will help your coachee to...
What happens when you think about making a presentation to the team?	Clarify their thoughts about giving presentations Start to explore their feelings
And how many of these things have happened when you have given presentations in the past?	Identify whether their fears are imagined or based on past experience
Taking your first example (e.g. losing their place), What is the worst that might happen if you do lose your place?	Put their fears into words, and to realise that the very worst may not be so bad after all
And what might you do to prevent that from happening?	Start to come up with ideas to avoid that particular disaster
Taking your second example (e.g. people stop listening), What is the very worst that might happen if you do lose your place? (repeat as often as necessary)	Work through each of the fears in turn, and start to think about solutions.
Who could help you with that?	Identify supportive colleagues who might help with a rehearsal or a read-through of the slides.
What might be your first step in solving this?	Start the planning process, and continue with the next steps.
When are you going to start?	Take action and set some deadlines
How will it feel to have given a successful presentation to the team?	Think beyond the event, and start to imagine success
Shall we start to plan what you will say in your next presentation?	Achieve effective presentations, having overcome their nerves

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In her book “Time to Think”, Nancy Kline suggest that the most important questions should provoke the coachee to think through their situation. She recommends asking “What are your thoughts?” and then simply letting the coachee have the space to talk around the problem and often come up with a solution. This would make sure that the coach is not imposing their own solutions onto the coachee’s problem, and gives the coachee plenty of time to think their way to their preferred solution. This is a very specialised form of coaching that would probably require additional training, but it does remind all coaches not to interrupt the coachee mid-sentence, and not to impose our solutions when the coachee is much more likely to follow through when they have come up with the answer themselves.

#### 5.4 It’s not what you say, it’s the way that you say it

Your tone of voice is of crucial importance for a good coaching session. You can very easily tell what someone really thinks by the way that they speak to you; they may be friendly and interested, they may be expressing sympathy, or they may sound sarcastic or bored. If you are not sure how you come across then practice saying a single sentence while trying sound, for example, angry, bored, sneering, curious, sympathetic. If you are still not sure then ask a friend or colleague to listen to you and they will quickly let you know! You can then start to adopt an interested, warm and engaged manner, which will put the coachee at their ease, and more willing to answer your questions. Also, make sure that you don’t succumb to the temptation of finishing your coachee’s sentences – that will show that you are not listening properly.

#### 5.5 What if I don’t know what questions to ask?

It’s quite normal for new coaches to lose track of the conversation, get distracted, or not know what question to ask next. The important thing is to relax and not panic, and to be honest with your coachee. You could say “I’m so sorry Julie, I’ve lost track, can you repeat what you said?” and this time really focus on what she is saying to you. It might be that she has mentioned something earlier in the conversation which has sparked a thought or idea in your head, and then you have been distracted by that and now can’t remember what she is saying. So be honest and tell her that you’re still thinking about her earlier comment, and suggest that you spend a little more time on that before proceeding.

Sometimes you might feel that the conversation is going round in circles, and then it’s quite acceptable to say “Okay, let’s take a moment to recap our conversation. What are the important points for you so far?” This will give you an opportunity to restart the session and regain control, and also to make sure that you have understood what your coachee has been saying. If you recap the conversation and your coachee says “no, that’s not what I was saying” or “that’s not what I meant”, than you can re-explore the point and that will make a much more successful coaching session.

## 5.6 Questions to avoid

You will already have understood that its best to avoid controlling or complex questions, and most of the time you will get better quality answers when you ask open questions, but here are a few more questions that are best avoided.

“So what’s all this nervousness about then?”	Much too vague
“Isn’t that a bit unfair on the rest of the team?”	Judgemental
“And how did you feel about that – nervous?”	Suggests an answer
“And how is that going to help put things right?”	Implies criticism
“Why are you so bad at giving presentations?”	Critical and damages confidence

## 5.7 Exercise

Write down three or four questions that fall into the following categories:

1. Questions that gain information and clarify the coachee’s situation  
e.g. What does that mean for you? How does this relate to your current challenges?
2. Questions that look for evidence or check underpinning beliefs  
e.g. How do you know that’s true? What evidence backs up what you’ve just said?
3. Questions that invite your coachee to consider consequences and implications  
e.g. What might happen then? If you choose this option, what will be the result?

## 6 Challenging assumptions

In this section we will consider how negative beliefs can prevent someone making progress, and look at a number of examples of how to challenge those beliefs and encourage positive change.

Henry Ford is reputed to have said “If you think you can, or you think you can’t, you’re probably right”. This simple phrase can explain how some people respond quickly to coaching, and others may take longer to make changes in their work patterns. Our own personal beliefs can either help us or get in the way; for example, if you believe that you can learn to drive a car then, even if it’s difficult to start with, you are more likely to persevere and continue with your driving lessons until you pass your test. On the other hand, if you think that you will never be able to learn, then every lesson will feel like torture, and you may have to retake your test many times before you finally pass. So you will find that some people that you coach will hold beliefs that can prevent them from progressing to success.



The advertisement features a central image of a smiling teacher leaning over a laptop to assist two young children, a boy and a girl. To the right, there are two smaller circular images: one showing three children looking at a book together, and another showing children working at computers in a classroom. The background is a vibrant yellow and orange swirl design.

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You will soon be able to work out whether you are coaching someone with negative beliefs about themselves by listening to the words and phrases that they use:

- “I can’t do that because...”
- “It’s too hard for me to change this”
- “I always mess up my presentations”
- “People expect too much from me”
- “They shouldn’t do that to me”
- “I’ll never be able to...”
- “Everything I do is wrong” – these attitudes can stand in the way of change.

There is a very strong connection between the beliefs we hold, the emotions that we feel and the actions that we take. These are also connected to how we feel in our body (often called our physiology) and, all taken together, these can impact how we relate to our friends, family and work colleagues.

Let’s take the example of the possibility of redundancy in your company.

If you **believe** that you will easily find another job then you will take **action** by looking in the jobs pages and registering with job agencies. It is likely that your **emotions** will be happy, anticipating success, and excited about the future. You will feel **physically** energised, waking early to check your emails for job offers. This will all have a positive effect on your friends and family.

However, if you **believe** that you will never find another job, then your **actions** may be different; you might sulk or get depressed, you might even think about sabotaging the company in some way. It is likely that your **emotions** will include sadness and fear of the future, and this will affect you **physically** by disturbing your sleeping and eating patterns. All of this will have a damaging effect on your family and friends, and you could find yourself very lonely indeed.

The good news here is that people can choose their beliefs and, as a coach, you may be able to help them to change their thinking about a situation to become more positive about the outcome.

So you may need to challenge their assumptions and negative beliefs to encourage them to open their minds to other possibilities. It may be too big a jump to go from very negative to very positive in one session, but even a small step can move your coachee forward to thinking differently.

## 6.1 So, how would I challenge my coachee?

Well you might start by thinking about a form of words that works for you, and that does not ruin the rapport you have built up with your coachee. For example, you might want to point out a slight difference between what they say and what you have observed: “That’s interesting, as I’ve often noticed that you have performed that task much more efficiently than the others in the team. Were you aware of that?”

Sometimes your coachee may talk about “everything being terrible”. My coach used to draw a very large letter E on a piece of paper, and fill it with lots of small letter Es, and then ask me “do you mean every single thing that has happened to you this week was terrible? And wasn’t there one small thing that was not quite terrible? And was there more than one small thing?” Such a gentle, humorous way of challenging soon got me to accept that there had in fact been lots of very good things that had happened during that week!

## 6.2 Cognitive Dissonance

There may be times when your coachee expresses a desire (e.g. for promotion) and yet formulates a plan of action that is almost guaranteed to prevent it from happening. They feel a level of discomfort and yet can’t explain it. This is often known as cognitive dissonance, which happens when someone is holding two conflicting beliefs, or carrying out two conflicting actions.

The classic illustration of cognitive dissonance can be found in Aesop’s Fables, written some 600 years BC. In “The Fox and the Grapes”, a fox wanted to eat some grapes that were hanging from a very high branch. When the fox couldn’t find any way to reach them, he decided that the grapes were probably not worth eating, with the justification the grapes were not ripe or that they were sour (which is where our phrase “sour grapes” comes from). This example describes a pattern: your coachee wants something, finds that it is unattainable, so reduces his discomfort (dissonance) by criticizing it, or saying “I never really wanted it anyway”.

## 6.3 Challenging actions

As a coach you may also find yourself having to challenge what your coachee is actually doing. For example, you may think that your coachee has not fully bought in to the ethical stance of the company, or is making inappropriate remarks to colleagues, or is accepting work that is below standard. It would be no help to you or to your employer to simply listen to them and not to challenge when you know that they are wrong. In their brilliant 2009 book “Where were all the coaches when the banks went down?”, John Blakey and Ian Day suggested that being too ‘non-directive’ and simply listening to what is said can lead us to stop challenging when we see something is wrong. They advocated a FACTS-based approach which includes some valuable advice on providing honest feedback, and also challenging the coachee to improve their performance in specific ways. (This book is now out of print, but was replaced with “Challenging Coaching” published in 2012, which built upon their earlier work).

## 6.4 Questions that may challenge beliefs and actions

In the previous chapter we considered the way that questions can help someone to identify problems; You can also use questions to uncover assumptions and beliefs. Try asking probing questions to help your coachee uncover the assumptions they are making and this will then provide you with an opportunity to question the validity of such assumptions. For example, “How do you know your team members do not trust you?”, “What is your manager saying that makes you think you are not doing a good job?”, or “What would happen if you did say no?”

You can then try asking some questions that will challenge your coachee’s views and help them to consider the alternatives to their view. Consider questions such as “Why is it so important to take this action now?”, “Are there any other factors that may have made this situation worse?”, “And when you did take action in the past, what happened?”. These are a very gentle way to challenge the beliefs and assumptions that are holding your coachee back.

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# 7 Planning the next steps

When you have helped someone to reach a conclusion or decide on a course of action, you will then need to help them to create a plan so they can take manageable steps towards their new goal. At the next coaching session you will be able to see how they are progressing and, if they have not made progress, re-visit the plan and discuss what was stopping them. You may remember from Chapter 4 that you have already tested their commitment to carrying out the plan by asking them “How likely are you to carry out these actions – on a scale 1–10?” You will also find that people are much more likely to carry out their plans if they write them down, breaking large tasks down into smaller, more manageable chunks.

## **Example:**

Let’s consider Julie, who has recently been promoted to team leader but, having been a member of the team for a number of years, is now nervous about telling the team members what to do. You have worked through the GROW model and have established that Julie’s Goal is to increase confidence in directing the work of the team; the Reality is that she has very little self-confidence at present; working through the Options Julie has decided to hold a daily team briefing where she can practice and grow her confidence; you have tested her Will to do this, and now you encourage her to write down the steps for planning.

Julie’s Action Plan:

1. Tell the team there will be a five-minute team briefing each day at 08.45
2. Make notes of what to say
3. Write the subject of each briefing on the notice board
4. Deliver the team briefing
5. Review the briefing, and change the notes if necessary.

When she has written down the steps, it is useful to consider each step to see if she will need any additional resources. These may be tangible items like paper and marker pens, or they may be in the form of moral support, or identifying someone to practice on before delivering the briefing. As her coach, you may also want to explore with Julie how she is going to feel once she has delivered a whole week’s worth of team briefings, so that she can start to anticipate success. It could be helpful to schedule your next coaching session at the end of that week, so that you can help her deal with any disappointments as well as celebrate her achievements.

## 7.1 Dealing with obstacles

There are many reasons why a plan doesn't happen, and you as a coach can help your coachee to overcome obstacles and barriers to success. At this stage, it's always worth asking your coachee what obstacles they think may prevent them from achieving their plan, although they may not be aware of some of the barriers to success, or may simply refuse to acknowledge them. But each obstacle that your coachee identifies can then be discussed, and a strategy for overcoming it can be put in place.

### Example:

Likely obstacle	Julie's Possible Solutions
People might not attend my meeting	Give them a reminder Invite my manager to attend the first meeting Finish on time
They may not do as I ask them	Get their agreement when I allocate the tasks (it's harder for them to break their own word)
I might be too nervous to challenge them	Role-play different scenarios where someone says or does something that I need to challenge. Practice, practice, practice.
Production figures may go down if I'm holding a team briefing every morning	Keep my meetings to time Make sure my briefing is relevant to the day's production needs.

## 7.2 Procrastination

After you have worked through Julie's list you can then gently suggest some other obstacles that might prevent the plan from working: for example, you may know that she has a tendency to procrastinate, putting things off until it's too late. So the action plan that she has written down needs two further columns, that is WHEN she is going to take each step, and when each step will be completed. The Action Plan will start to look something like this:

Sub-goal / task	Date/Time when started	Date/time when achieved

At your next coaching session, you can work through the action plan and check to see whether all of the actions have been begun on time and which of them have been completed. You will then be able to look objectively at the results.

**Example:**

Coach: Well Julie, at our last session you planned to give a presentation each day, having made some notes, and written the topic on the notice board. How did that work out for you?

Julie: The week started well, but I didn't have time to prepare the notes on Wednesday morning, and the team briefing went badly, so I didn't do any more briefings.

Coach: So let's start with Monday and Tuesday. What went well?

Julie: I made notes, and followed them. I felt more confident, and dealt with questions.

Coach: Okay, so what happened on Wednesday?

Julie: I started writing my notes late but they didn't sound right, so I was trying to re-write them, and then all of a sudden it was 8.45 and I had no real idea what to say. So I tried to wing it, and people stopped listening, and then George asked me why I was wasting everyone's time, and I just gave up and closed the meeting. I was cross with myself for messing up, but then too scared to do the briefings on Thursday and Friday.



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Now you have a clear idea of the problem, and you can start to help Julie to review her plans, and to consider what had made her leave writing her notes until the last minute. Thoughtful questioning will help her to identify a more effective way of planning for her team briefings.

### 7.3 Perfectionism

Another possible block to progress is perfectionism. If your coachee is a perfectionist then they may set themselves unrealistically high standards which no human being can achieve, and then try over and over again to reach those standards, and eventually give up, beating themselves up for failing to be perfect. This is a self-destructive way to be at work, and can often cause problems for the team. For example, if you give a team member two weeks to write a report, then it may not be done in time because your team member has re-written it several times in order to get it 'just right'. However, in many work situations, perfection is not what was wanted, just an adequate report. We can all do things slightly better, but the difference between 'good enough' and 'perfection' is often too costly in terms of time and resources.

It can be worth spending some time with your coachee to tease out what's happening when they try to get everything perfect. It could be that they lack confidence, or they may be afraid of appearing to be a fraud (e.g. "The others will soon find out that I'm not as good as they think I am"). Some people have what is known as all-or-nothing thinking, where anything less than perfect is a complete failure: for example the parent who criticises their child for only getting 99% in a test. Again, asking open, simple questions will help your coachee to see that in many cases, partial success is a great start.

### 7.4 Exercise

Write down your own Action Plan for improving your coaching skills. Include your start and finish times and dates, and consider whether there are any obstacles to your success and how you might overcome those obstacles.

# 8 Giving and receiving feedback

## 8.1 What is feedback?

Most of us are familiar with feedback, whether at home or at work, and it has often come to mean that there is about to be some fairly negative criticism of something you have done or said. Literally, however, feedback means giving information back to a person; so it can be the answer to a question such as “How am I doing?”, or it could be praise for a job well done. It could be very general (and not at all helpful) such as “You’re hopeless” or it could be very specific, such as “This report is excellent, but I would like it in Helvetica font rather than Comic Sans”, which is much more helpful because you now know exactly what to do. This is not to say that negative feedback is not a useful tool in coaching and in management generally, but the manner in which feedback is given is absolutely crucial to ensuring an improvement.

Feedback in coaching must be delivered in a way that allows the recipient to improve. So it’s not very helpful to say ‘you should improve’ or ‘you ought to be more assertive’. What the coachee needs to hear is what was good/not so good about their performance so far and exactly how they can improve it to the required standard, and then go beyond into excellence.

Example:

Manager: “Your performance has improved over the past few months, and I’ve noticed that your production figures are increasing. I do need these figures to be 5% better by the end of next month.”

This gives clear feedback and sets targets for improvement. However, a coach might be able to give similar feedback but place more individual responsibility onto the coachee while allowing them room to consider your suggestion.

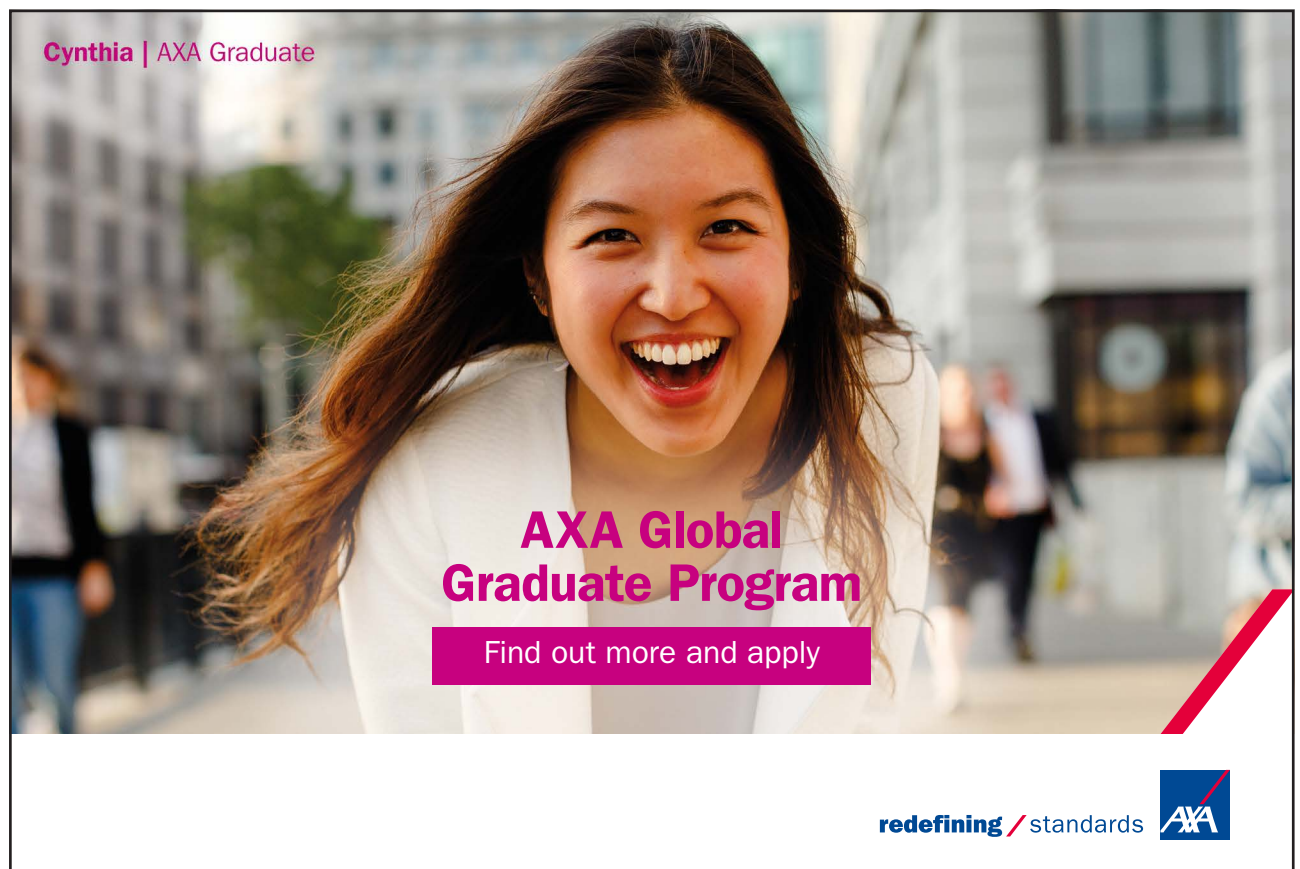
Coach: “Your performance has improved over the past few months, and I’ve noticed that your production figures are increasing. I do need these figures to be 5% better by the end of next month. Do you think if you moved Sally onto the larger machine, and Ken onto the smaller one, you might be using their skills in a way that would help you achieve this target?”

You will notice that this uses the coaching technique of asking a question rather than telling the coachee what to do, but also provides helpful guidance as to how they are to increase their production figures.

## 8.2 When should I give feedback to my coachee?

The simple answer is whenever you feel that it will be helpful to your coachee. So ask yourself whether your feedback at this particular moment will have a positive effect, and whether it motivates your coachee. Will your feedback help to prompt ideas, or will it interrupt their train of thought, by imposing your own ideas? There are times when feedback given very early on in the coaching session will re-assure your coachee that you understand their predicament, and that you are genuinely interested in helping them to solve it.

Sometimes your coachee will ask you directly for feedback on a specific point, for example “Do you think I’m handling this problem badly?” or “Was that a better presentation?”, or even “Do you think I’m capable of doing this?”. However you should be on your guard in case what they are really saying is “Tell me what to do or what to think” which is really their way of avoiding any personal responsibility for the problem. Julie Starr, in *The Coaching Manual*, suggests a useful answer to such a question: “Well, I can easily add my view, but what I’m really interested in is what you think.” This places the ball firmly back in the coachee’s court.



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There may be times during the coaching session when you will want to draw your coachee's attention to something they have said or done, and this can be to challenge them, or to reinforce appropriate behaviour. For example, you might have noticed that each time they mention a specific team member they frown or speak more quietly. So you could say "I've noticed that each time you speak of George you frown and talk more quietly; is there something about him that is causing you some anxiety?" This will create an opportunity for your coachee to discuss their concerns in more detail, as well as demonstrating that you have been paying close attention.

Usually, the final five to ten minutes of the coaching session will contain some feedback, so that you can re-cap on what has been discussed, and let your coachee know what progress they have made. This will help them to feel more positive about their next steps, and know that you have been listening carefully to what has been said. For example, you might say "Well as we come to a close for this time, I'd like to say that you have approached coaching with an open mind, and have been very willing to work through the topic. Now let's think about what you can do between now and our next meeting to keep up your progress."

### 8.3 What not to say

You will know from your own personal experience that for feedback to be effective it should be based on facts or behaviour rather than the personality of the coachee. So phrases such as "You really messed up" or "You're so clumsy" or "That was stupid, why did you do it like that?" will only serve to put your coachee on the defensive, rather than thinking positively about how to improve. Equally, if you are giving praise that is insincere it will not have the effect you wanted; "You're great" or "yes, that's fine" gives the coachee no idea how to improve their performance. "That presentation was better, and you seem to have the timing right, now let's work on how you project your voice" will get your coachee ready to work, feeling that they have improved in some areas and still have some way to go.

It is important that you do not give feedback just to sound important, or to impose your control over the coaching session, such as "Okay, I think you've spent long enough thinking about that, let's move on". This could suggest that you are expressing frustration with the coachee, and that may prevent them from thinking clearly. Of course, it does remind them that you are their manager, and they should do as they're told, but that's not the purpose of the coaching session!

Even if you can avoid personal criticism such as "You are useless", it is still important to avoid being too judgemental, such as "That report was rubbish", or being too general in your feedback, such as "The content of the report was okay but the layout didn't do it justice", which gives your coachee no idea what you wanted. You might start to encourage the coachee to take ownership, but be careful that they don't give a detailed answer, so "How did you feel you did with that report?" will probably just get the answer of "Okay." It would be more helpful to ask a series of questions so that the coachee starts to think constructively about the report, and is more likely to accept your feedback.

## 8.4 What to do if your feedback gets a negative response.

So you have a positive intention of helping your coachee to improve, you have made your feedback factual and based on behaviour rather than personal criticism, and you feel that what you have said is constructive and helpful, and yet your coachee has reacted negatively to what you have said. What should you do? Well this is bound to happen occasionally, and you need to be prepared for it. Many people think that if they complain about an assessment it will automatically be changed in their favour, that they have a right to be considered competent even if they are not. Remember that you are not trying to be their best friend, you are coaching them to improve their performance, and so you must stand your ground.

It may be that you did not choose the best form of words to deliver your feedback, and it will be worthwhile spending some time later to consider how you could have said things differently. But for now, you need to deal with an angry or upset coachee, without getting angry or upset yourself. Start by acknowledging their feelings, perhaps by saying “I can see that you are upset. Tell me why you are so upset.” This gives your coachee an immediate opportunity to put their feelings into words, and enables you to find out whether there is something else that is bothering them.

If their reaction was purely about what you have said, then you might say something like “I may have expressed myself clumsily, for which I apologise, however the fact remains that your attendance and punctuality are not as good as other staff members, and we must work out a way to improve this. So, how are we going to do that?”. This brings the conversation back to the topic and takes the emotion out of the situation.

Do remember that there is always an option for you to bring the coaching session to an early close, or to take a break to diffuse the situation. You might say “I can see that you are very upset right now. I don’t think we should continue until you have had the opportunity to feel more like talking. Why don’t we take a break now, and resume in half an hour? Does that work for you?” Your coachee may quickly calm down and want to continue straight away, or they may be glad of a short break before resuming the conversation.

## 8.5 Asking for feedback on your coaching session.

If you want to improve your coaching skills then you will have to ask your coachee for their feedback so that you can think about how to improve. This can be a scary thing for you to hear and for your coachee to give, especially if you are their line manager, but it is the best way for you to know whether your coaching has been effective, and whether you need to re-think your approach. When I started coaching I wanted to find some people to practice on, so I offered some free coaching sessions in exchange for feedback, and this quickly improved my confidence and my technique.

If you genuinely want to know how to improve then you need to remember to ask open questions rather than closed questions such as “Was that helpful?” which will only elicit a yes or no answer. Obviously you must use words that you are comfortable with, but the following may be helpful:

“Now I’d like to ask you a couple of questions about how you found this coaching session, so that I can make sure that it is of maximum benefit to you, and also so that I can improve my own coaching skills. Firstly, what was helpful to you?”

“And did I give you enough time to think about my questions and give your answer?”

“And finally, is there anything I could do to make the coaching better for you?”

Needless to say, if your coachee does give you some feedback, it is important that you consider it, and make the necessary adjustments to your coaching. If you feel that the feedback has been very negative then give some time to considering the facts, and the session, and then decide how to act on the feedback.

## 8.6 Self-Assessment

Take a little time after your coaching session to think about how it went, what important topics were covered, what your coachee will be doing before the next session and also what you are going to do to improve your coaching. For this, you might find a SWOT exercise useful, where you list the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats you noticed about your session. Or you could ask yourself the following questions:

What went well, and why?

What didn’t go so well, and why?

So next time, I will...

Regular self-assessment will help you to become a great coach, and to use coaching confidently in your management.

## 9 Useful sources of information

### 9.1 Coaching Courses:

There are many providers of coaching skills and qualifications. The Institute of Leadership and Management (<https://www.i-l-m.com/>) and Chartered Management Institute ([www.managers.org.uk](http://www.managers.org.uk)) accredit coaching courses that are offered by colleges, universities and private training providers across the UK.

Specialist organisations include

Barefoot Coaching: <http://www.barefootcoaching.co.uk/>

Centre for Coaching: <http://www.centreforcoaching.com/>

The Coaching Academy: <http://www.the-coaching-academy.com/>

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This is not an exhaustive list, and I would suggest that you search for coaching courses in your area. The most important thing when you are considering taking a coaching course is to research a number of different providers and decide which one is most appropriate for you, in terms of the way the course is delivered, the follow-up support, the type of qualifications, whether there are assignments or exams, location and, of course, the cost.

## 9.2 Books:

There are hundreds of books about coaching, some help you to coach yourself, and others provide useful hints and tips. This list covers those books that have been mentioned in the previous chapters.

Challenging Coaching: Going beyond Traditional Coaching to Face the FACTS by John Blakey and Ian Day, published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing 2012

Coaching for Performance: GROWing People, Performance and Purpose by John Whitmore, published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing 2003

Coaching with NLP: How to be a Master Coach by Joseph O'Connor and Andrea Lages, published by Element / Harper Collins 2004

The Coaching Manual: The definitive guide to the process, principles and skills of personal coaching by Julie Starr, published by Prentice Hall Business 2010

Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind by Nancy Kline, published by Cassell Illustrated 1999

# 10 About the Author

Training initially as a lawyer, and specialising in employment and discrimination law, Anita managed the Legal Unit for Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau and later ran the Birmingham office of the Women's Legal Defence Fund.

She then spent over 20 years in further and higher education, delivering professional and management development programmes for both public and private sector organisations. Anita designed and ran leadership development programmes and project management courses for managers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. At the same time, she developed a professional interest in coaching as a way of improving management skills, attended the Centre for Coaching based in London, gaining Certificates and Diplomas in basic coaching techniques as well as qualifications in Psychological Coaching, Coaching for Performance and Organisational Stress Management.

Anita achieved an MSc in Training from the Centre for Labour Market Studies at Leicester University in 1999. She was awarded her PhD in 2013, after researching the Work Life Balance issues for older workers in the Fire & Rescue Service as they prepared for retirement.

Anita now runs a successful training and coaching business, specialising in coaching for work life balance, and assisting businesses to improve their employee engagement [www.anitapickerden.co.uk](http://www.anitapickerden.co.uk)

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