

Performance Management

Coach's starter kit

Stratus's coach's starter kit gives you an insight into the core skills required to coach someone.

1. Understanding your role as coach
2. Having a coaching model that you can base your coaching around
3. Common coaching pitfalls
4. Overcoming resistance to coaching
5. Effectively dealing with emotions in a coaching environment

1. Role of the Coach

- Explore and define common goals
- Identify "current reality"
- Seek out the options
- Support continuous growth
- Continuously challenge and encourage
- Celebrate success
- Encourage and motivate performance shortfalls

2. The GROW coaching model

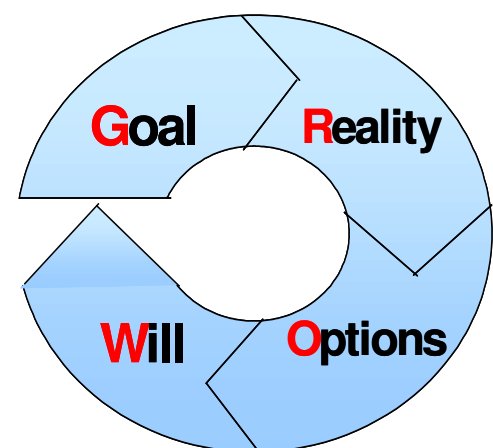
GROW stands for Goal, Reality, Options, and Will (or what will you do?)

GOAL addresses areas to work on, desired outcomes, expectations, objectives, a SMART objective.

REALITY addresses the present situation, who is affected, personal control over outcomes, action steps taken so far, obstacles, resources, current level of knowledge or skill.

OPTIONS addresses different ways to approach something, alternatives, impact of budget, advantages and disadvantages, solutions with the most appeal, most satisfactory ideas.

WILL (What Will You Do?) addresses choosing an option or options, how well it matches objectives, critical success factors, potential hindrances, personal resistance, level of commitment, levels of support.



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GOAL

Coaching objectives:

- Establish what they want in the time available. For example, greater clarity; more options; a decision
- Check how their goal fits with their “Desired Future” Vision/Mission
- Gain clarity of what they really want (level of interest/passion understood)
- Ensure that some part of each goal is within the performer’s control or influence
- Draw out challenging and attainable goals, dream goals, and minimal acceptable goals
- Ensure positive focus and positive language
- Ensure the goal is SMART and has objective and subjective measures

Effective questions:

- What is the aim of this discussion?
- What do you want to achieve long-term?
- How much personal control or influence do you have over your goal?
- What is a short-term goal on the way to their vision?
- When do you want to achieve it by?
- Is that positive, challenging, attainable?
- How will you measure it?

REALITY

Coaching objectives:

- Draw out what makes this an issue for them
- Draw out various influences on the issue (people, place, time, power, money, attitudes, behaviors, rules and regulations, roles, and so on)
- Explore not only their perspectives but also those of others involved
- Challenge their assumptions
- Ask for greater detail (you said that they are always arguing – how often have they argued in the last 10 days?)
- Ask about the consequences of past actions or interactions
- Ask them to use their intuition to help to understand what is really going on (beneath the surface issue, are there power and control issues or confidence issues going on?)

Effective questions:

- What is happening now? (What, When, Where, Who, How Much, How Often)
- Who is involved (directly and indirectly)?
- When things are going badly on this issue, what happens to you?
- What happens to the others directly involved?
- What is the effect on others?
- What have you done about this so far?
- What results did that produce?
- What’s missing in the situation?
- What do you have that you’re not using?
- What’s holding you back?
- What is really going on? (intuition)

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OPTIONS

Coaching objectives:

- Check on what they have thought of so far
- Challenge assumptions
- Explore variables
- Keep an open-mind - avoid prejudging
- Reserve coach's suggestions until their ideas have dried up
- Weigh the strengths and weaknesses, benefits and costs, of each option
- Check their enthusiasm rating (1-10) for each option

Effective questions:

- What have you thought of so far?
- What other options do you have?
- What else could you do?
- From whom might you seek advice?
- Who has handled this sort of problem really well?
- What if you have more time?
- What if you have even less time?
- What if you had total control?
- What if you had open funding for this issue?
- What if you had a magical wand? What would you most want to change and to what? (even an attitude)
- What quality in yourself, if enhanced, would most help your situation? (For example, confidence, tolerance)
- Knowing what you know now, what if you could have a fresh start?
- What if you had a really wise old friend, who knew you and your situation really well, what advice would they be giving you?
- Would you like another suggestion?
- What are the benefits and costs of each?

WILL

Coaching objectives:

- Ensure action steps are agreed with timescales
- Check for what might stop them, explore limiting beliefs and obstacles
- Create the process for monitoring and evaluating progress

Effective questions:

- Which option or options do 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 might stop you?
- What personal resistance do you have?
- What will you do to eliminate these factors?
- Who needs to know what your plans are?
- What support do you need and from whom?
- What commitment on a scale of 1–10 do you have to taking these agreed actions?
- What prevents this from being a 10?
- What could you do or alter to raise your commitment closer to 10?

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3. Common coaching pitfalls

Often it is the behavior of the coach that gets in the way of the original understanding of the need for improvement.

ASSUMING

Many coaches bypass the need for agreement because they assume that the person they are coaching sees things in the same way as they do. If the individual has not been getting feedback from other sources regarding this issue, the need for basic agreement as a basis for the feedback session is even more critical.

Remedies for assuming behavior include:

- Using questioning skills to help establish context and mutual understanding
- Checking for clarity through the use of restatement and summaries
- Establishing specific contracts or action plans for change back in the workplace

AVOIDING

Addressing problem areas with people can be very uncomfortable and having the role of counselor/coach does not make you exempt from those feelings of discomfort. It is easy to convince yourself that your performer is an intelligent person and will surely discover these issues by themselves. You can focus on other things, right? Wrong. Unless the real issues get put on the table, nothing can change. Think back on what you have learned from past experience and you will likely realise that avoiding comes primarily not from a desire to save the other but from a desire to save yourself from those aforementioned uncomfortable feelings.

Remedies for avoiding this include:

- An open exchange of positions. This does not eliminate the need to state your case but remember that such statements do not have to be made in a confrontational manner.
- Sticking to the facts as you understand them and opening up a dialogue. You may have to deal with some emotion but questioning skills, restatements, reflections of feeling all help to establish a shared understanding of the situation.

GENERALISING

Conversations that describe behaviors in broad, general terms leave a person feeling as if they are just like everyone else. It is not until you get down to specifics that real insight occurs. This is where doing your homework pays off. When you can give specific examples of problem behaviors, it is much more difficult for the coachee to dismiss the information you are trying to share.

Remedies to consider include:

- Using first hand reports where possible and not relying on passed-down information
- Focusing on specific behaviors both in the workplace and in the feedback session to illustrate impact
- Building the context for why it is important to consider this feedback from a firm and client perspective
- Speaking for yourself

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SARA stands for:

- Shock
- Anger
- Resistance
- Acceptance

4. Overcoming resistance to coaching

People often resist what they know to be right. We all know about the harmful effects of cigarettes, food high in fat, and not exercising. We all know about these issues, but we still smoke, overeat, and turn into couch potatoes after work. There is a predictable pattern to the reactions of people who receive feedback. Just remember SARA.

Shock and/or surprise — Hard as it may be to accept, the first reaction to feedback is always a, “This is hitting me out of the blue,” or, “No one has ever said that to me before.” Understand, from the other person’s perspective, it feels as if it was out of the blue or they are convinced that they have never heard that before. Before a person can move out of this first step, they must come to an agreement about the need for improvement. Understanding is dependent upon acceptance and while an individual is in shock they are unlikely to integrate feedback well. As a coach, remember that there may be times when you have to give them time to integrate the feedback provided so keep your feedback slow and simple.

Anger — Do not be surprised if anger raises its ugly head about now in the process. “Who,” they demand, “told you that?” This is a tricky stage. These are the moments to use listening and reflecting on the feeling so you can find the messages underneath the anger. Anger at this moment can also come from lack of honest feedback people have received in the past.

Resistance/Rationalisation — Typical resistant behaviors include the use of the “yes, but...” response or individuals attempting to explain away what they have heard with statements that begin with “if they only understood...”.

However, resistance and rationalisation is not all bad since it does represent that the individual is, at minimum, thinking about the message being delivered. However, the thinking is misdirected and it is your job as coach to bring them back on track. Attention to body language, eye contact, and holding up a mirror (For example, “I get the sense that you are not ready to hear this now.”) are generally effective in helping coaches to lead resisters to a better understanding of their behavior and how they might behave differently. Your listening and attention skills are crucial here.

Acceptance—Finally you are at a place where real change can occur. The emphasis here is on the word can because acceptance does not necessarily result in change. When you reach acceptance it is important to determine whether you have “guarding compliance” or real commitment to change. This is why it is important to establish actions for change post-session and to follow up on these actions that are committed to. Remember that you are interested in actions that they are willing to take and not necessarily in actions that you are willing to suggest. Help them to discover what they can commit to.

Given the nature of many coaching encounters, there is not much time for an individual to go through the stages of SARA, but they must. Change cannot occur until a person has traveled through these four stages. It is during follow-up conversations and when you check on progress that you will likely see evidence of movement. If you have a person who does not appear to be able to move through the process, you may just want to call another face-to-face.

SARA is a handy reminder that much more is going on behind a head nodding in what you hope is agreement. Everyone goes through these stages after bad news and good news—getting laid off or winning the lottery. Skillful coaches not only recognize SARA when they see it; they look for the stages and modify their behaviors to fit the changing framework of the other person.

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5. Effectively dealing with emotions in a coaching environment

- Be prepared to manage and help people work through their emotions about feedback
- The order in which we deliver feedback can affect how person receives the message
- Listen and observe—let emotions be expressed
- Determine if there are some positives in the negatives
- Do not discount or ignore emotions
- Acknowledge emotions
- Probe for cause
- Maintain composure (do not also get emotional); do not argue
- Objectively re-state other person's viewpoint
- Ask for their interpretation of performance from the project manager's perspective
- Deal with implications and effective behaviors, not just providing a list of behaviors to be changed
- Discuss real alternatives or options

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