

# Successful Coaching Skills and Models

# Paul Newton



PAUL NEWTON

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# **SUCCESSFUL COACHING SKILLS AND MODELS**

Successful Coaching Skills and Models

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Preface</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Coaching Skills</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1	Active Listening	9
1.2	Asking Questions	12
1.3	Goal-setting	18
1.4	Giving Feedback	20
1.5	Building Rapport	22
1.6	Demonstrating Empathy	25
1.7	Using intuition	25



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<b>2</b>	<b>Coaching Models</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1	The Inner Game	28
2.2	The GROW Model	29
2.3	The TGROW Model	33
2.4	The coaching TGROW acronym stands for:	33
2.5	The OSKAR Model	35
<b>3</b>	<b>Organizational Barriers to Coaching</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>49</b>

# PREFACE

This eBook follows on from our 'Principles of Coaching' title. This eBook describes the seven key skills that are needed for successful coaching. These are: active listening, asking questions, goal setting, giving feedback, building rapport, demonstrating empathy, and using intuition. It also explains popular coaching models including GROW, TGROW, OSKAR, and solution-focused coaching. before

You will learn how to:

- Use active listening techniques to demonstrate genuine interest in the coachee
- Ask different types of question to focus attention, elicit new ideas, encourage exploration, and foster commitment
- Develop rapport and give feedback in a way that is positive and non-judgmental
- Use the GROW, TGROW, and OSKAR models in a practical coaching session with a team member
- Recognize and overcome organizational barriers to coaching

# INTRODUCTION

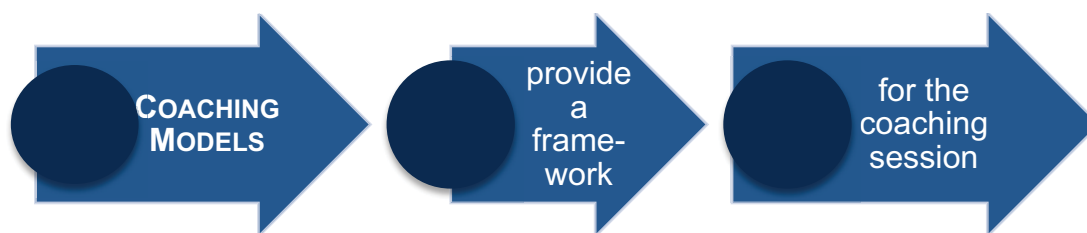
There is a set of key skills and competencies that all good coaches possess and that you will need to develop in order to be an effective coach. The basics of these skills can be learned but they can only be perfected with practice and reflection.



For example, you can be formally taught how to set goals and how to use questions effectively. But it is only through regular practice that you will be able to build rapport and use intuition effectively. The essential competencies and skills you need to develop are:

- Active Listening
- Asking Questions
- Goal Setting
- Giving Feedback
- Building Rapport
- Demonstrating Empathy
- Using Intuition

In addition to these skills, there are a number of coaching models that you can use. A model is simply a predetermined procedure that provides a framework for navigating a route through a coaching session, as well as providing a means of getting the session back on track if necessary.



It is a good idea to become familiar with the models available and then to use your own judgment about which of them to use and when. Not all coaching sessions need a model and you will need to be flexible in your approach. This eBook describes three well-known coaching models:

- GROW
- TGROW
- OSKAR

Regardless of the coaching model you decide to use, the culture and ethos of your own organization will have an impact on your ability to perform as a coach. Some organizations may lack an understanding of the value of coaching, not see it as a priority, or have a low level of coaching skills and experience available within the organization. These are issues that you need to consider and assess how extensive they are when deciding if coaching is the best way to develop your staff. If there are too many obstacles then you may find that attempting to use coaching will have a detrimental rather than a motivational effect.

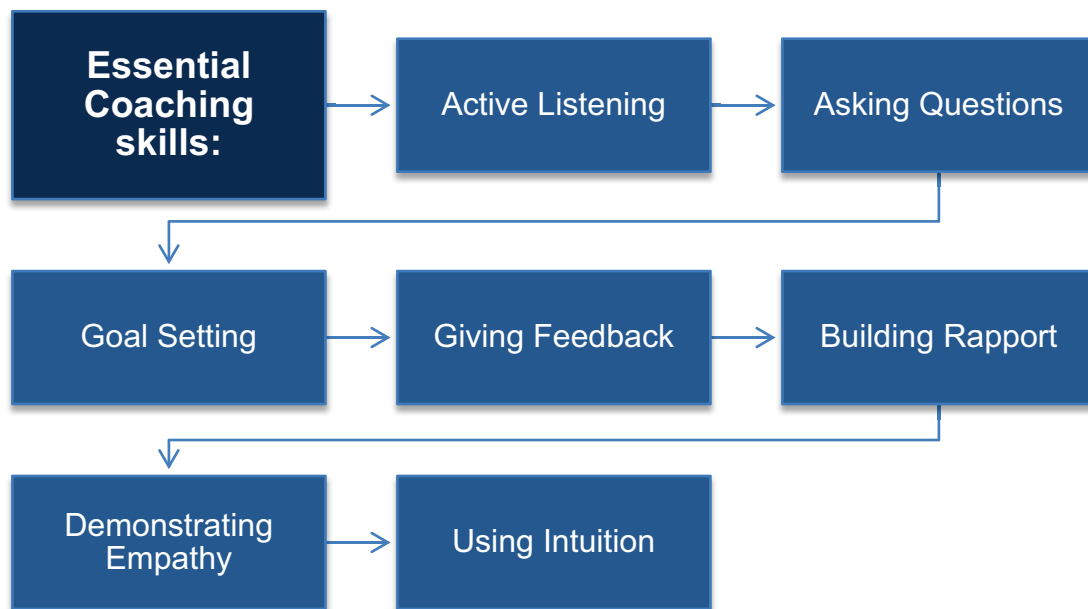
#### Key Points

- The essential competencies and skills required by a successful coach are: active listening, asking questions, goal setting, giving feedback, building rapport, demonstrating empathy, and using intuition.
- GROW, TGROW, and OSKAR are popular coaching models.



# 1 COACHING SKILLS

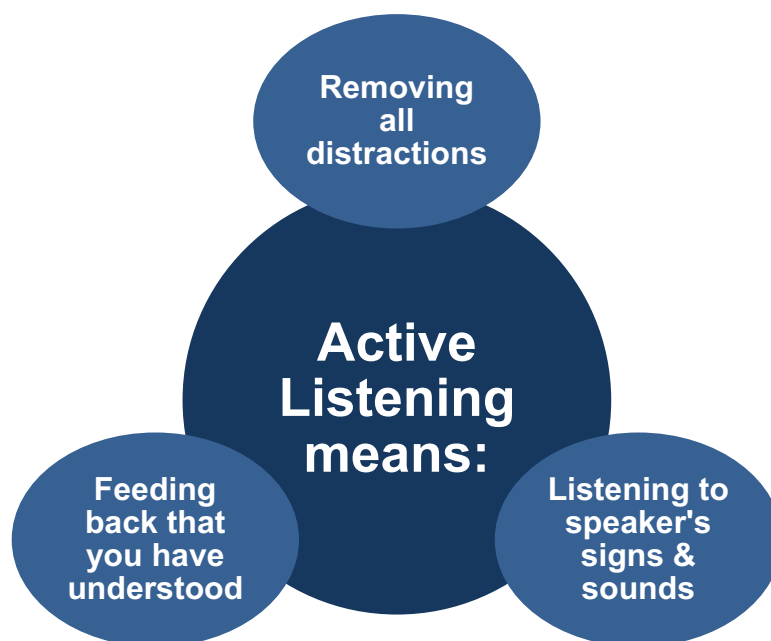
This section describes the essential competencies and skills required by a successful coach.



## 1.1 ACTIVE LISTENING

This skill underpins the whole coaching process and you will not be able to coach people without it. Active listening requires you to put your own concerns, attitudes, and ideas to one side while you listen to your coachee. This demonstrates to that individual that you are giving them your undivided attention.

You need to hear exactly what is being said to you so that you can use the coachee's knowledge to give you an understanding of the performance issue you aim to address through the coaching process. By truly listening you are able to form questions that aid the coachee's thinking process.



So what does active listening entail? The essence of this skill is your ability to prevent distractions breaking your concentration during the communication. Without these distractions you hear ‘all’ that your coachee is saying. You are able to observe all the conscious and unconscious signs displayed, enabling you to discern the true meaning behind the spoken words.

As with communication, active listening is a two-way process and the final element of this competency is your ability to feed back to the coachee that you have comprehended what they have really said. By utilizing such techniques you will begin to develop rapport and empathy with the individual.

Others will use the same methods as you to assess how well they are being listened to. An obvious way they can detect your level of attention is through studying your body language and posture. The amount of eye contact you have with the coachee, your use of non-verbal signs, such as a nod or a smile, and verbal signals such as uttering a ‘Uh huh’ or ‘Mmmm’ whilst they are speaking are just some of the ways people assess how well they are being heard.

Phrases you use during the exchange will also communicate how well you are listening. They also demonstrate that you are attentive to and accepting of what the coachee is telling you.

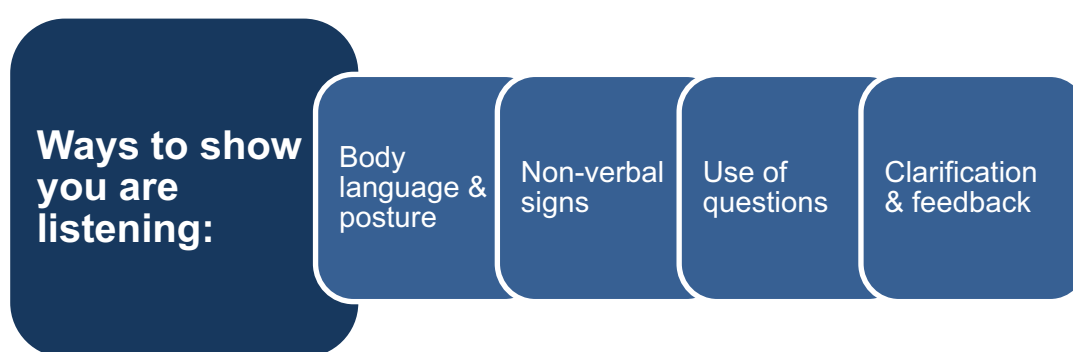
For example,

*Attentive – ‘Can you tell me what you did when that happened?’*

*Acceptance – ‘That’s an interesting perspective on what happened. What made you think that?’*

This technique leaves the coachee in no doubt that you are giving them your full attention and sends a powerful double message – firstly, that you are there to support them in whatever they are doing; and secondly, that you are paying attention and expect them to follow through on any commitments they make.

It is essential that you as a coach curtail any natural tendency you may have to rush in with suggestions or solutions. If you do not do this you will be unable to avoid acknowledging your own emotions during the communication. You need to allow the coachee to present the whole picture so that they expose the level of their knowledge and the extent of their ideas on how to address the issue facing them.



By allowing several seconds of silence before you ask a question or give feedback you will ensure that the coachee has said all they want to.

You can also indicate your attentiveness by accurately paraphrasing the coachee's words into a statement that communicates your impartiality and comprehension. This also enables you to demonstrate that you have understood their explanation of the issue.

Active listening will also enable you to give reasoned and constructive feedback during the coaching process. This behavior has additional benefits in that your coachee will feel that their views and interpretations of events are valued, encouraging them to explore ideas and their thinking in order to attain their goal.

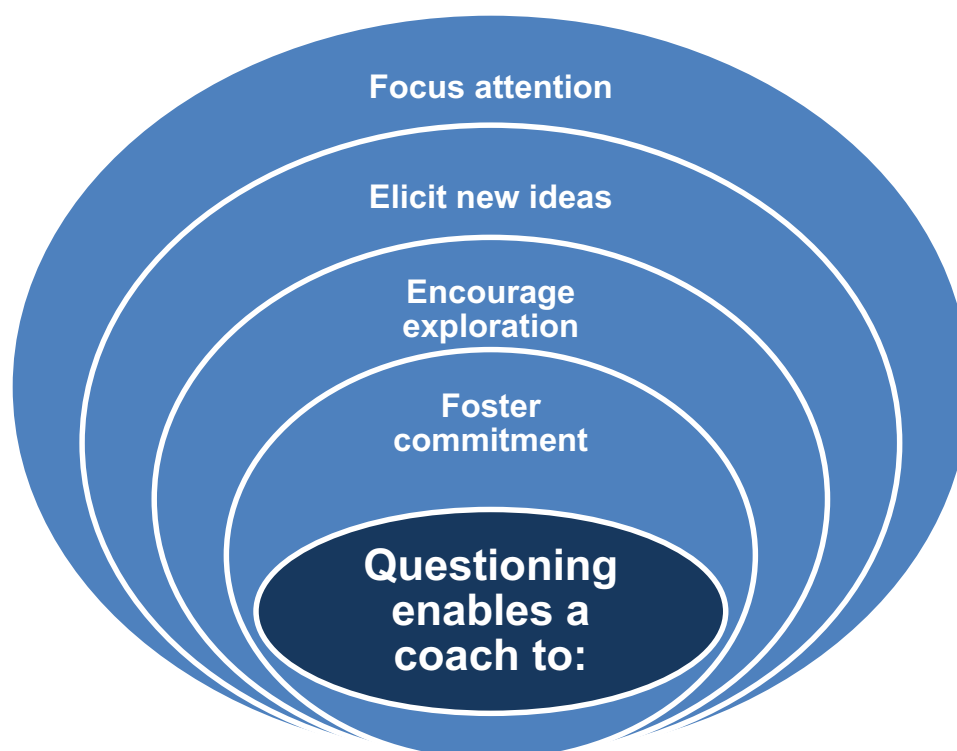
To be an effective coach you must show that you are genuinely interested in the other person and what they have to say, and want to help them develop their competencies to improve performance. A significant way to achieve this is through the use of questioning, which is discussed in the next section.

**Key Points**

- Active listening demonstrates to the coachee that you are giving them your undivided attention.
- Active listening involves body language, non-verbal signs, the use of questions, and feedback

## 1.2 ASKING QUESTIONS

A significant part of active listening that warrants further exploration when being used by a coach is the art of questioning. The most effective way to elicit the coachee's ideas of how to approach the issue facing them is to ask the right questions.



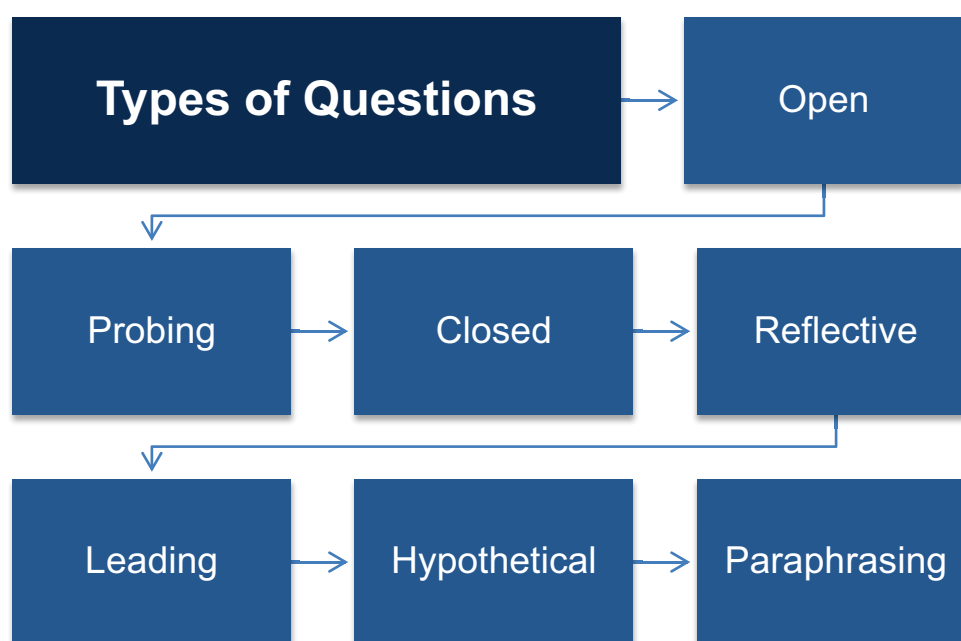
Developing the ability to ask 'searching' questions that draw out the information needed to aid the coachee's understanding and help them find a resolution is crucial to your success. A coach uses different types of questions during the coach meeting to:

- Focus attention
- Elicit new ideas
- Encourage exploration
- Foster commitment

This technique enables you to focus attention on the issue at hand whilst encouraging its exploration and the creation of ideas. Questions will also allow you to obtain the commitment of the coachee to acting towards achieving their agenda's aim.

Using questions to focus the thoughts and attention of the coachee on a particular issue that they may take for granted and therefore gloss over is important in attaining the coaching objective. As coach you will use questions to 'zero' in on particular aspects of a problem or issue that you want to encourage the coachee to think about in detail.

This exploration presents the coachee with the opportunity and time to delve into processes, procedures, commonly held views, and ideas that in the normal course of events they would discard.



You can also use a question to prompt the coachee to look for a new idea or solution that would not have occurred to them otherwise. It is important to point out that the idea may not have occurred to you either. Through the use of questions you may encourage the coachee to come up with something completely novel.

Questioning offers you the opportunity to persuade your coachee to consider the potential problems that might result from a particular course of action. Finally, allowing the coachee to develop the idea themselves means that they are much more likely to commit and follow through a course of action. This is because they have a much greater sense of ownership of and commitment towards the actions when putting them into practice.

The skill in coaching is knowing when and how to use different types of questions to maximize your effectiveness. The different types of questions are:

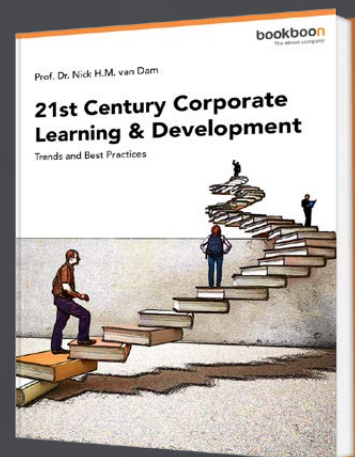
- Open
- Probing
- Closed
- Reflective
- Leading
- Hypothetical
- Paraphrasing

**Open questions** are commonly used to encourage the coachee to speak so that you can gather the necessary information. They often start with why, what, where, which, and how. You will find that they work best when the conversation is already flowing freely.

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For example:

*‘How was that strategy useful?’*

*‘What did you do to keep your team on track?’*

*‘How would you respond to this customer’s concerns?’*

**Probing questions** can be used to clarify something that has already been said or to find out more detail about it. Many of them are helpful in creating rapport, but you must take care not to overuse them as this can make the coachee feel as if they are being interrogated or even attacked.

Make sure your verbal and non-verbal signs are neutral or supportive when asking such questions. This type of question is useful in uncovering details that may have initially been overlooked or thought irrelevant.

For example:

*‘Why do you think this is the case?’*

*‘What does that mean?’*

*‘What are your options for solving the problem?’*

*‘Could you be more specific?’*

*‘Who is involved? Who are key stakeholders?’*

*‘What needs addressing?’*

*‘Is there an option that you have not yet considered?’*

*‘How have you managed to put up with the situation to date?’*

*‘How would an objective observer describe this situation?’*

*‘What do you care most about in this situation?’*

*‘What are your concerns?’*

**Closed questions** require the coachee to give a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. Such questions should be used sparingly because they tend to make any conversation feel awkward and one-sided, but in some instances an affirmative or negative answer is all that is needed. When coaching they are best avoided as they can harm the rapport and empathy that are an essential part of the process.

**Reflective questions** are frequently used to check and clarify your understanding. This style of question reflects back to the coachee what they have just said using their exact words and allows them to fully explore their knowledge of a situation.

It also provides an opportunity for the coachee to give voice to the emotions they felt at that particular time without you having to interpret why this happened in your question. Using reflective questions means that you can avoid having to express an interpretation or judging why the coachee felt this way.

For example:

*Coachee – ‘I feel frustrated with myself.’*

*Coach – ‘And what is this “frustrated with myself” experience like?’*

*Coachee – ‘Those people in dispatch are always messing me about.’*

*Coach – ‘What does that “messing you about” behavior involve?’*

**Leading questions** need to be used with care when coaching because they imply that there is a right answer to the question, which is something that contradicts the ethos of coaching. They are useful in situations where you require a desired answer or to influence people’s thinking.

When coaching you need to ensure that you don’t unconsciously ask a leading question. You will become better at controlling this the more you actively coach people.

For example:

*‘So wouldn’t it have been better to...?’*

*‘Don’t you think we should have...?’*

**Hypothetical questions** allow you to gauge how the coachee might act or what they think about a possible situation. They are effective in getting them to think about and discuss new ideas or approaches to a problem.

For example:

*‘What would you do if...?’*

*‘What would happen if...?’*

**Paraphrasing questions** are one of the best means of checking your own understanding of what the coachee has said.



For example:

*Coachee – ‘I can’t deliver on that unless accounts get the information to me the same day.’*

*Coach – ‘I’m hearing you say that you could deliver if the accounts department were able to get the information to you on the same day you requested it. Am I understanding this correctly?’*

Selecting the right type of question to support the coachee in attaining their coaching agenda will become more natural the greater opportunity you have to practice such skills. But keeping in mind the common pitfalls will help accelerate this development.

The most common errors inexperienced coaches make are asking leading or too many closed questions. They also ask questions that reflect their own knowledge rather than searching out that of the coachee.

Often they fail to ask enough probing questions to follow up issues raised. Some styles of questioning used by the coach can imply their own views, give advice, or be judgmental, which will hinder the coaching objective.

Whenever you ask a question think about how and where you are trying to ‘take’ the coachee. If the question you ask does not result in a positive step forward then you must ask yourself why.

*Did you ask it in the wrong way?*

*Could the words you used be misinterpreted?*

*Was the type of question appropriate?*

The answers you get by asking yourself these things will enable you to develop your questioning competency and alter your behavior in the future.

**Key Points**

- Different types of question can be used to: focus attention, elicit new ideas, encourage exploration, and foster commitment.
- Open questions are commonly used to encourage the coachee to speak so that you can gather the necessary information.
- Probing questions can be used to clarify something that has already been said or to find out more detail about it.
- Closed questions are best avoided as they can harm the rapport and empathy that are an essential part of the coaching process.
- Reflective questions allow the coachee to fully explore their knowledge of a topic or situation.
- Leading questions need to be used with care when coaching because they imply that there is a right answer and this contradicts the ethos of coaching.
- Hypothetical questions are effective in getting the coachee to think about and discuss new ideas or approaches to a problem.
- Paraphrasing questions are one of the best means of checking your own understanding of what the coachee has said.

**1.3 GOAL-SETTING**

Coaching is a goal-focused approach, so the ability to elicit clear, well-defined, and emotionally engaging goals from a coachee is another essential competency for you to possess.



Goals operate as a self-regulatory instrument that guides the planning and focuses the coachee's energies and thinking on a clear objective. Whilst the individual being coached is responsible for setting the agenda (goal), as coach it is your responsibility to be familiar with how to set motivating and attainable goals.

One of the most popular goal-setting tools is the SMART method. This means that the goal must be:

- **Specific** in its definition of what the coachee wishes to achieve at the end of the process.
- **Measurable** so that progress towards it can be tracked.
- **Attainable**, meaning that whilst it might challenge the person in terms of their knowledge or skills it is not an impossible aim.
- **Relevant** to that individual in order to perform their role better.
- **Time-bound** – that is, completed within a defined time frame.

Coaching meets the 'time-bound' criterion because by its very nature it is short term, while its focus ensures that it is 'relevant.' You will work alongside the coachee using your questioning techniques to ensure that the coaching goal they set has a clear statement of what they want to achieve (and so is 'specific'), as well as being practical in terms of its 'attainability.'



The coachee's goal must also be 'measurable.' Without this aspect neither you nor the coachee will be able to assess how well they are progressing towards their goal.

The questions you ask need to have a goal-focused mindset. For example,

*'How does doing X help you reach your goal?'*

*'What measures will you use to track your progress?'*

*'How realistic do you think X is?'*

Setting this type of goal benefits the coaching process as it motivates the individual and it is easy to recognize when the goal has been attained.

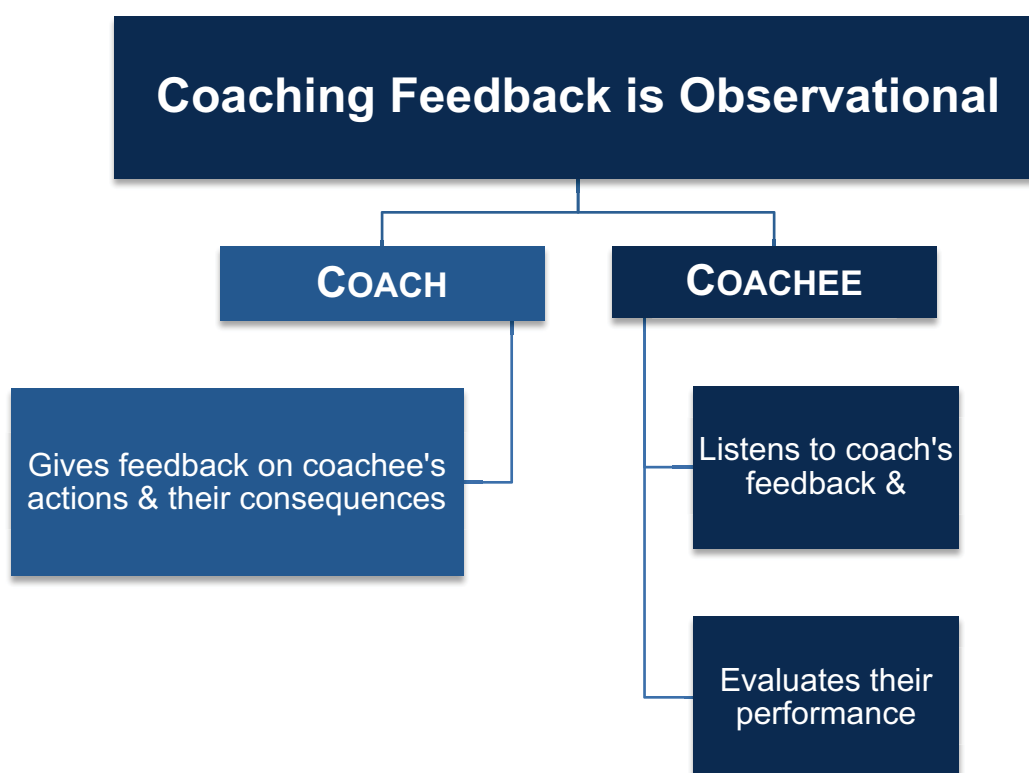
You can download the free eBook 'Effective Goal Setting' from this website. This eBook explains how to use the theory of goal setting to set practical targets that can be incorporated into the coaching process.

#### Key Points

- One of the most popular goal-setting tools is the SMART method. This means that the goal must be: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
- The ability to elicit clear, well-defined, and emotionally engaging goals from a coachee is an essential competency.
- You can download an eBook on 'Effective Goal Setting' from this website.

## 1.4 GIVING FEEDBACK

The key to delivering effective coaching feedback is that it is observational and non-judgmental. You must provide clear, specific feedback about the coachee's actions and their consequences, so that the coachee can evaluate their own performance.



If you do need to give negative feedback then remember the following guidelines:

- **Make sure you've already given some positive feedback**  
People will accept negative feedback far more easily if you have already said something positive about their behavior. This is because having accepted the positive statement their innate sense of fairness encourages them to give equal weighting to the negative one. If you give the negative feedback first they may reject it along with any subsequent positive comments.
- **Deliver feedback on specific behavior**  
Do not criticize the coachee: make the comment specific to the behavior they exhibited and the situation in which it occurred. You could ask if they were aware of how others reacted to their behavior.
- **Focus on the future**  
You can only give feedback on past events but try to keep the focus on finding new options for the future.
- **Avoid blame**  
Faced with blame, all the coachee can do is defend him or herself.



By focusing on the behavior and how the situation could be handled differently in the future you can keep the atmosphere of the meeting positive and avoid any resentment of the coaching process from taking root.

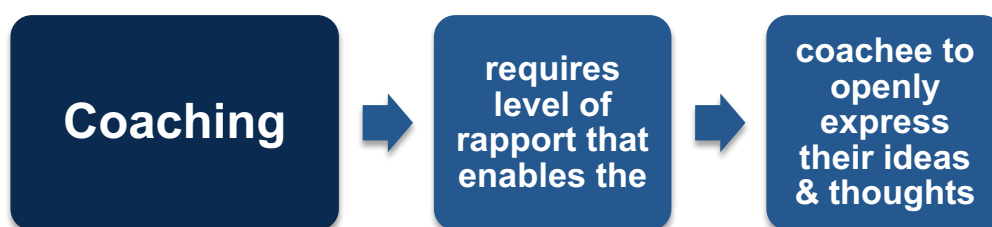
#### Key Points

- All feedback must be based on observed behavior and be non-judgmental.
- Try to keep the focus of your feedback on finding new options for the future.

## 1.5 BUILDING RAPPORT

The word ‘rapport’ describes the amount of warmth present in a conversation, and is affected by how connected the participants feel. If you have good rapport with someone, you will feel comfortable and relaxed in each other’s company to the extent that you can talk frankly and openly with neither side feeling defensive.

In the coaching relationship, the focus should be on the coachee’s professional goals and how they can be achieved. Coaching is not counseling so it does not require the coach to know too much about the coachee’s private life or to become their ‘best friend.’ Your aim as coach is to create a level of rapport that means the coachee is happy to talk honestly about their work performance.



Your key to building genuine rapport with your coachee is to draw upon other experiences in your life where it has come naturally. If you’re like most people, when you welcome guests into your home you are typically glad to see them, and you want to make them feel welcome and at ease. While the specifics of what you might say to a team member are different from what you might say to a houseguest, the motivation and attitude behind the words should be the same.

In the coaching meetings, after an initial greeting, open the conversation with a remark that lets the coachee know that you are genuinely interested in them and what they have to say. Then follow this with a question that leads the conversation into the aim of the coaching. Remember to actively listen and display your interest in what the coachee is saying, and avoid doing too much of the talking.

Where you already have a good and open working relationship in place, you don't need to do anything specifically to build rapport since it already exists. However, if you don't really know the coachee, then you will need to build a foundation for the coaching relationship. You need to allow sufficient time for the coaching process and this aspect should not be hurried.

Any attempt to rush it carries the danger of being seen as artificial, something you need to avoid at all costs. This is also true of the often-cited advice from coaching trainers that you should mirror your coachee's body language and speech patterns. If you are not skilled in this activity it can come across as false and potentially annoying, which will be detrimental to why you are conducting the coaching, especially if you work together.

It is also a risky strategy to begin the coaching meeting by talking about the coachee's personal interests. Unless you are absolutely sure of your ground, talking to someone about a topic you have only a passing interest in or about which you know very little usually comes across as artificial and false.

If you do decide that this is appropriate then you must be sure that they really are interested in the subject. Do you have solid evidence that it is an ongoing interest rather than something that they only did once? Is it something that you know enough about or are sufficiently interested in to engage in a meaningful conversation about? If you look blank, confused, or bored when they begin talking about a topic they care about then this will be counterproductive.

The safest course of action is to talk about something that is work-related and about which you believe they have a genuine interest in or at least an opinion about. Don't make the mistake of asking them about something they are directly involved in, because this may trigger defensive behavior. The sort of topics you could talk about are:

- The strategic goals of the organization,
- The activities of a competitor, a customer, or a supplier etc.

The aim is to keep the resulting conversation work-based, 'real,' and non-intrusive. Once you get to know the coachee better you can begin to talk about things outside of work, but only if it feels natural to do so and helps you in facilitating the coachee's thinking.

Another reason for keeping the initial conversation work-based is that it leads naturally into talking about their work-based goals, whereas moving from a non-work topic to a work-based one can be awkward, particularly if the non-work-based conversation is going well.

Finally, don't try to build rapport for the sake of doing so. When the coachee appears comfortable with the conversation, and is relaxed and confident enough to put forward their ideas and thoughts you have created the right level of rapport for coaching to be successful.

#### Key Points

- Rapport represents the foundation of the coaching relationship.
- It needs to be genuine and based on your professional relationship with the coachee.
- Avoid focusing on the coachee's personal interests unless you are really interested in them yourself.
- Ideally, talk about something that is work-related and about which the coachee has an interest or opinion.
- Avoid anything that could make the coachee feel defensive.



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## 1.6 DEMONSTRATING EMPATHY

Empathy begins with awareness of another person's feelings and develops naturally out of active listening. It will have an impact on the level of rapport you are able to create. Obviously, it would be easier to be aware of the coachee's emotions if they simply tell you how they felt. However, unless you are dealing with someone who is unusually candid you will need to interpret non-verbal cues. You also need to pay attention to the precise language they are using in response to your questions or during the communication.

Your role as coach is to determine how the coachee feels and the strength of this feeling. You can show empathy by acknowledging their emotions, whether they are positive or negative.

For example:

*'I can see why that upset you.'*

*'I can understand why that made you feel good'*

The ability to empathize is critical for a good coach, as it not only helps you to accept the coachee on his or her own terms, but also to 'tune in' to the things that are important to him or her. A basic guideline for showing empathy is not to invalidate the coachee's feelings by diminishing or ignoring them.

### Key Points

- Empathy helps you to 'tune in' to the things that are important to the coachee
- It is as important as the more tangible coaching skills, like questioning and active listening

## 1.7 USING INTUITION

Using intuition is equally as important as active listening and questioning skills. It also has a key role to play in establishing rapport. The definition of the word 'intuition' in the Oxford English Dictionary is:

*'Immediate insight or understanding without conscious reasoning.'*

Accessing and articulating your intuitive sense about something that concerns the coachee adds another dimension to your usual logical and rational perspectives.

It is quite common to experience a reluctance to speak out about any intuition you may have because there is always a risk that you have misread the situation and the coachee will become confused when you articulate it.

The easiest way to begin is to ask for clarification by saying such things as:

*My intuition is telling me that...*

*I would like to check something out with you, if I may.*

*I am wondering if...*

*I have noticed that...*

*I am not sure how to describe this, but...*

The key to all of these approaches is that you are asking the coachee if your intuition is correct or at least on the right lines. The coachee can reply in the negative, but if you are on to something they will usually encourage you to elaborate and you can then explore the new territory together. Intuition and inner knowing are powerful tools in a coaching relationship.

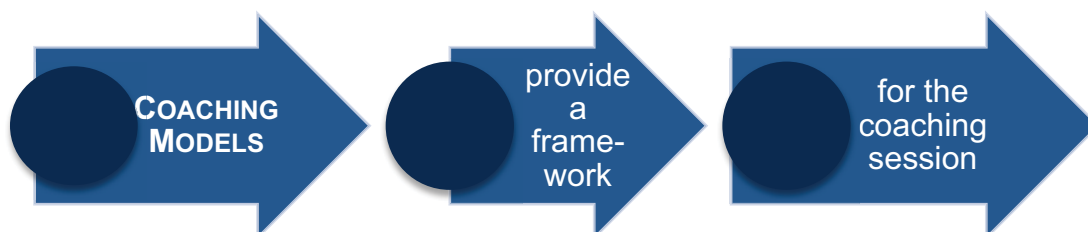
The development of these less tangible skills and competencies is just as important as the development of some of the more tangible coaching skills, such as questioning and listening. Being able to share your intuition as a coach encourages the coachee to do the same; it helps to build rapport as well as their self-awareness, leading to moments of insight and sustainable change.

#### **Key Points**

- Intuition has a key role to play in establishing rapport.
- Accessing and articulating your intuitive sense about something that concerns the coachee adds another dimension to your usual logical and rational perspectives.

## 2 COACHING MODELS

There are a number of coaching models that you can use. A model is simply a predetermined procedure that provides a framework for navigating a route through a coaching session, as well as providing a means of getting the session back on track if necessary.



It is a good idea to become familiar with the models available and then to use your own judgment about which of them to use and when. Not all coaching sessions need a model and you will need to be flexible in your approach. This eBook describes three well-known coaching models:

- GROW
- TGROW
- OSKAR

Before looking at coaching models in detail it will be helpful to understand some of the background to the coaching process. Tim Gallwey was a tennis coach who noticed that he could often see what a player was doing incorrectly but that simply telling them what they should be doing did not bring about lasting improvements in their game.

For example, a common problem is that players take their eye off the ball. Traditionally, coaches would try to remedy this by reminding the player to keep their eye on it by giving simple instructions like ‘Keep your eye on the ball.’ Unfortunately, this advice is quickly forgotten and players often revert to old habits, leading to a lot of frustration all around.

Gallwey’s breakthrough came when he decided that instead of giving an instruction, he would ask the player to say ‘bounce’ out loud when the ball bounced and ‘hit’ out loud when they hit it. The result was that the players started to improve without a lot of effort because they were naturally keeping their eye on the ball without consciously trying to do so. They were in fact playing a simple game (saying ‘bounce’ and ‘hit’) while they were playing tennis.

## 2.1 THE INNER GAME

This experience lead Gallwey to draw the following conclusion:

*‘There is always an inner game being played in your mind no matter what outer game you are playing. How aware you are of this game can make the difference between success and failure in the outer game.’ (Tim Gallwey, creator of The Inner Game)*

Once Gallwey saw how play could be improved in this way he stopped giving instructions and started asking questions that would help the player discover for themselves what worked and what needed to change.

For example:

- The first stage in this process would be to set a target that the player wanted to achieve – e.g. improve their first serve.
- Gallwey would then ask how many first serves out of ten they would like to get in.
- The player would then make ten serves and see how many they were already getting in out of the ten.
- He would then ask awareness-raising questions such as:
- *‘What do you notice you are doing differently when the ball goes in or out?’*
- This would enable the player to discover for him- or herself what they were changing about their mind and body when the serve was and was not successful.

This is the essence of coaching: getting the coachee to set their own agenda and think about how they can change to achieve their desired goal. It provided the basis of a coaching framework – the Inner Game.



A number of principles have been developed out of Gallwey's experience with tennis players. While they originate in sports, the same principles can be applied to many learning situations.

*It is more effective to focus your attention on a relevant aspect of what is actually happening while you are learning, instead of what you 'should' be doing or trying to get it 'right' according to someone else's perspective.*

This may seem blindingly obvious; however, in practice it rarely happens. In our tennis example the player would probably be focusing on trying to remember what the last coach said about serving and would then become more and more frustrated if his or her attempts at improvement did not work.

*The best learning happens when we are focusing on the present.*

This means we are not struggling to prove or remember something but rather making discoveries as we go along.

*The less we interfere with our learning, the faster we progress.*

We can easily interfere with the learning process by, for instance, trying to look good or using a lot of unfocused effort.

Coaches using the Inner Game soon realized they could apply these principles in other learning situations. This led to the development of 'GROW' a structured framework using the Inner Game principles to achieve goals.

#### Key Points

- A coaching model is a predetermined procedure that provides a framework for navigating a route through a coaching session.
- A number of management coaching principles have their roots in sports coaching.

## 2.2 THE GROW MODEL

The originators of this coaching framework saw that, just as in sports, many individuals were struggling to achieve goals because they were not learning from experience and were not aware of the knowledge within themselves that would help them.



GROW is an acronym of the four key elements of a coaching session.

- **Goal** is the endpoint that the coachee wants to achieve. The goal must be SMART so that the individual knows when it is attained.
- **Reality** is where the coachee is now. This requires the current issues and the challenges to be stated. Then an assessment of how far the coachee is away from their goal can be made.
- **Obstacles/Options** – first the obstacles stopping the coachee attaining their goal need to be identified. (Without any obstacles the goal has already been attained!). Then the coachee needs to come up with different ‘options,’ or ways to deal with them.
- **Way forward** – once the coachee has defined their options they can then devise the necessary action steps required to meet their goal.

The value of GROW is that it is easily understood and straightforward to apply. The version described in this eBook to help you develop your coaching competencies has a double/two-fold definition of the ‘O’ – **O**bstacles and **O**ptions.

Each coaching session must have a goal that is specific and measurable. This will help the coachee move from their current reality to their goal. Within these sessions you will explore the obstacles the coachee faces and what potential options exist for removing them.

The GROW process is not necessarily sequential and each of the stages may be revisited several times during the coaching session or process. The objectives of each stage of the GROW process are summarized in the table below, with examples of the types of questions you could ask as coach.

	Objective	Example Questions
<b>Grow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree the discussion topic</li> <li>• Agree specific objectives for the session</li> <li>• Set a long-term goal or aim if this is appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would you like to discuss?</li> <li>• What do you want to achieve in this session?</li> <li>• What differences would you like to see on leaving this session?</li> <li>• Do we have sufficient time available to for you to attain this?</li> </ul>
<b>Reality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite self-assessment of topic &amp; situation</li> <li>• Give specific examples of feedback</li> <li>• Check assumptions for validity</li> <li>• Discard irrelevant assumptions &amp; history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you know that this is accurate?</li> <li>• How often does this occur?</li> <li>• What impact or effect does this have?</li> <li>• Are there other factors that are relevant?</li> <li>• What is X's perception of the situation?</li> <li>• What have you done or tried to date?</li> </ul>
<b>Obstacles Options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify obstacles</li> <li>• Find out if the coachee believes there is more than one</li> <li>• You should consider &amp; discuss the different types: people, resources, environment, etc.</li> <li>• Make sure to cover the full range of options</li> <li>• Invite suggestions from the coachee</li> <li>• Offer suggestions carefully</li> <li>• Ensure coachee makes the option choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What prevents you from achieving your goal?</li> <li>• What else could be preventing you?</li> <li>• What personal changes do you think you would have to make to achieve your goal?</li> <li>• What is hindering you from changing?</li> <li>• Do any of your direct or indirect behaviors, attitudes, competencies, skills, etc. contribute to or help to maintain the situation?</li> <li>• What alternatives are there to that approach?</li> <li>• Who might be able to help you?</li> <li>• Would you like me to make suggestions?</li> <li>• Can you identify the pros and cons for that option?</li> <li>• Do you have a preferred option you'd like to act on?</li> </ul>

	Objective	Example Questions
Way Forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a commitment to act</li> <li>• Identify the potential obstacles</li> <li>• Plan detailed actions within a set timeframe</li> <li>• Agree what support will be given</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your next steps?</li> <li>• What timeframe will you set?</li> <li>• Can you anticipate anything getting in your way?</li> <li>• How will you keep a log of your progress?</li> <li>• What support might you need?</li> <li>• How and when can you get that support?</li> </ul>

Within this table are a number of statements that you need to address before moving to the next step of the GROW model coaching framework. The table also provides some sample questions you can use to help your coachee identify what is preventing them from attaining their goal and then how they can change this situation so that they can successfully achieve their goal.

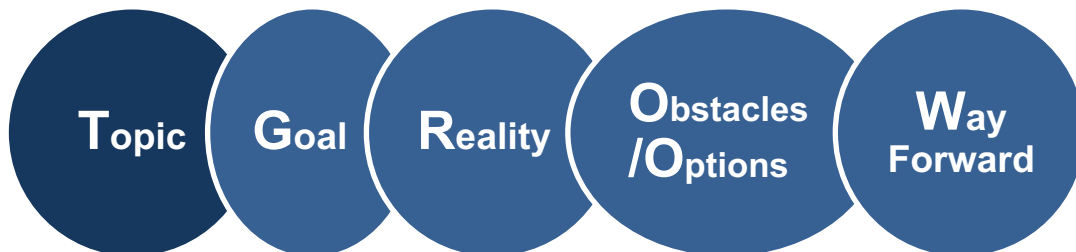
#### Key Points

- The GROW model is easily understood and straightforward to apply to management coaching.
- GROW is an acronym of Goal, Reality, Obstacles and Way forward.
- The 'Goal' is the endpoint that the coachee wants to achieve. It must be SMART so that the individual knows when it is attained.
- The 'Reality' requires the current issues and the challenges to be stated before an assessment of how far the coachee is away from their goal can be made.
- The 'Obstacles' stopping the coachee attaining their goal need to be identified so that the coachee can come up with different 'Options', or ways to deal with them.
- The 'Way forward' involves defining the necessary action steps required to achieve the goal.



## 2.3 THE TGROW MODEL

Whilst the GROW model is applicable to a wide variety of situations, the eminent coaching guru Myles Downey felt that an additional element would make it more pertinent in the environment of organizations.



Downey felt that the first element of a coaching model should be 'Topic,' creating the acronym TGROW.

## 2.4 THE COACHING TGROW ACRONYM STANDS FOR:

- **Topic** – this covers the wider environment that impacts on the specific issue to be addressed through coaching. It will reflect the level of importance the issue has within that wider area and the impact it may have on the coachee's long-term aspirations.
- **Goal** – a specific measurable endpoint that the coachee wants to attain.
- **Reality** – the current situation the coachee is in now and all the issues he or she is facing.
- **Obstacles/Options** – what is stopping the coachee attaining this goal – obstacles – and what 'options' are available to the coachee to resolve this issue.
- **Way forward** – the required steps needed to execute the chosen option and attain their goal.

Downey's reasoning for making 'Topic' the first element of his coaching model was the need to have an appreciation of the environment the organization is in.

This wider picture enables you, as the coach, to understand the 'context' of the issue to be addressed through the coaching. Once the context has been defined you can help the coachee to set appropriate goals that are motivating for the environment they work within.

For example:

*An organization is in a highly competitive market where customers have come to expect next day delivery. Orders are being canceled and refunds given when the delivery does not arrive the next day.*

*Your TOPIC is Customer Service within your organization.*

*Your GOAL could be to reduce cancellations and the refunds from the current 10% of weekly orders to 1% within 3 months.*

This enables you to understand the environment that your coachee, who is the Customer Services Manager, is currently in and why the goal above is so important to that individual. For instance, the manager's annual bonus depends on keeping the percentage of cancellations within strict limits. It could also impact the track record required to gain a promotion. These details also give you the reasoning behind the coachee's motivation to change.

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The sort of questions you would ask to help the coachee define the ‘Topic’ element would be similar to those listed below:

- What area or areas are you concerned about?
- What aspect of your role would you like to talk about?
- What is important to you?
- What does this mean to you?
- What areas do you want to address?
- What is behind this?

Some have felt that these models have a tendency to keep on drawing the coachee back to the problem rather than move their attention on to finding a resolution. This view led to the development of our third coaching model OSKAR.

#### **Key Point**

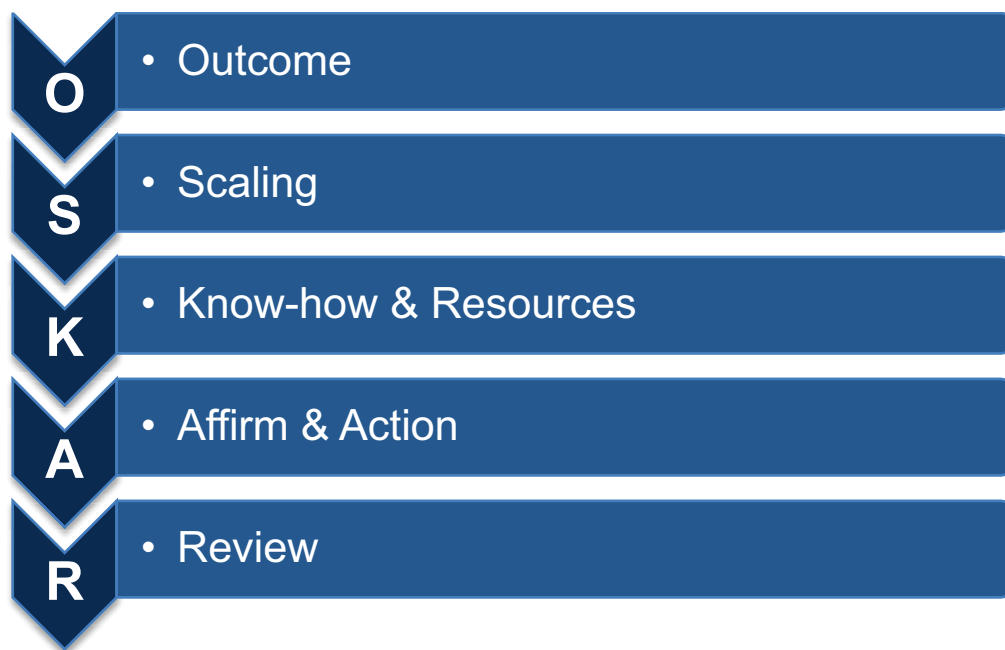
- The TGROW model covers the wider environment that impacts on the specific issue to be addressed through coaching.

## **2.5 THE OSKAR MODEL**

This is a solution-focused model that requires you to ask questions in such a way as to move the coachee’s attention away from problems in favor of solutions. Instead of discussing difficulties and their causes, the coaching session explores:

- Desired goals
- Exceptions that have led to success in the past (times when the problem did not occur)
- Solutions (the changes that will have occurred once the goal is reached) as well as existing resources.

At heart this solution-focused approach involves finding out what works and doing more of it. It also entails stopping doing what doesn’t work and doing something else.



It is easy when coaching to focus on the problem and to explore it in great depth in order eventually to reach a solution. In particular, people are often keen to find ‘the cause’ of the problem and identify all the effects. Time spent doing this, however, is time that is not spent on finding a solution.

### **Outcome**

This is similar but different to the ‘goal’ in most coaching models. The outcome is not simply the goal of the coachee. It is the difference that the coachee (and those around them) wants to see as a result of the coaching.

This establishes a ‘platform’ from which to coach. It clarifies:

- What the coachee wants to achieve (long, medium, and short term)
- What they want to achieve from the session itself
- How they will know it has been useful to them
- The perfect scenario desired by the coachee

You ask the coachee to suppose that suddenly and miraculously overnight the goal was achieved and the problems vanished. The typical questions you might ask at this stage are:

*'I want you to imagine that you have attained your goal. What changes do you see in your working environment?'*

*'You've come into work today to find that this problem has vanished. What changes have occurred?'*

*'What do you want to achieve?'*

*'Are there times when the solution is already present, or something similar? Can you identify what is different about these times?'*

This leads to a discussion not merely about results, but also about the small and visible signs that the results are starting to happen, something that helps the coachee visualize their desired outcome.

### Scaling

By asking the coachee where they rate things on a scale of 0–10 (where the Outcome is ten, and zero is the complete opposite), you will both find to what extent the current situation is working. By using this scale in your coaching you are likely see two things happen:

- The current situation is rarely zero
- Often there is already some limited progress towards the outcome even at the very beginning of the process.

The typical questions you would ask at this stage are:

*'On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing the worst it has ever been and 10 the preferred future, where would you put the situation today?'*

*'If 0 is no achievement and 10 is complete goal achievement, where are you on the scale already?'*

*'You are at "N" now; what did you do to get this far?'*

*'How would you know you had got to N+1?'*

## Know-How and Resources

You have identified how far along the scale the goal is. Now you have to help the coachee establish what factors are already contributing to getting the situation incrementally closer to the outcome.

The sort of questions you would ask at this stage are:

*‘What are your strengths?’*

*‘What helps you perform at “N” on the scale, rather than 0?’*

*‘What knowledge do you currently have that is helping you?’*

*‘What resources do you have?’*

*‘What skills do you currently have that are helping you?’*

*‘What attitudes do you currently have that are helping you?’*

*‘When does the outcome already happen for you – even a little bit?’*

*‘What did you do to make that happen? How did you do that?’*

This stage really is about finding out what is working – that is, what is already happening to get the situation closer to the objective. The search for know-how may be extended to include the coach, other people, and teams. The focus is always relentlessly on what works or what has worked rather than what won’t work or what is wrong.

## Affirm and Action

The ‘A’ in OSKAR stands for two steps:

- Affirm
- Action.

Affirm involves providing positive reinforcement to the coachee by reflecting back positive comments about the key strengths they have revealed in terms of their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. For example:

*‘So your knowledge of “X” is extensive and has enabled...’*

*‘Reacting to the situation in the way you describe was excellent because...’*

*‘The level of skills within your team is much higher than others I’ve seen in this situation.’*

*‘How can you use these resources and strengths to help you achieve your goal?’*

Recognizing these qualities helps to build the coachee’s self-belief, as well as enhancing the relationship between you and the coachee.

Action involves helping your coachee determine what actions they will take to keep moving toward the outcome. This means doing more of the things that have already been recognized as working rather than anything new or different. For example:

*‘Will keeping that successful process in place help you complete that action?’*

*‘What did you do to get this far?’*

*‘How can you do more of that?’*

*‘Do you think altering the current procedure has any additional benefits?’*

## **Review**

This final stage of the OSKAR coaching model involves reviewing progress and takes place at the beginning of the next coaching session. You should ask ‘What is better?’ rather than whether a particular action was carried out, or what happened. This keeps the focus on the things that are moving the process in the right direction.

You can go back to the scale to find out how much things have improved and what has helped the most, provided the emphasis remains on reviewing the positives. Typical questions for the review would be:

*‘What is better?’*

*‘What did you do that made change successful?’*

*‘What do you think will change next?’*

This model’s focus on finding a solution highlights key differences from a problem-based approach. Firstly, it clarifies what goal you want to attain by asking what you want to change rather than asking you to describe and assess a problem. It also asks what recent improvements the coachee has seen instead of recent difficulties.

## Principles of Solution-Focused Coaching:

Focus on solutions not problems

Start with premise that people are competent

Expect success & progress

Make least change to attain greatest result

Keep on doing what works

Stop doing things that don't work

From a motivational perspective the solution-based model is more positive because it sees people as having problems rather than them being the problem! This is also reflected in you asking the coachee to explain what progress has been made and not asking for an explanation of the problems.

Finally, as the coach you get the individual to focus on the strengths and resources of the central issue, not the opposite aspects. The main principles of solution-focused coaching can be summarized as follows:

- It has a focus on solutions, not on analyzing problems
- It begins with the notion that people are competent
- It has an expectation of success and progress
- It believes that making the least change leads to the greatest results
- If something is working, keep on doing it
- If something is not working, stop doing it

The OSKAR coaching model is a framework to help your coaching sessions focus on solutions rather than problems. It doesn't mean that you refuse to discuss the problem, but it does mean that the focus is on finding a solution.



There are other coaching models available, but you should ensure that the one you decide to use has a sound foundation in coaching principles and is not a marketing tool for an organization's services or products. This sometimes occurs when a coaching organization wants to differentiate itself from a rival or to create a proprietary method that can then be sold or licensed.

### **Key Points**

- The OSKAR model requires you to ask questions in such a way as to move the coachee's attention away from problems in favor of solutions.
- OSKAR is an acronym for Outcome, Scaling, Know-how & Resources, Affirm & Action, and Review.
- The 'Outcome' is the difference that the coachee (and those around them) wants to see as a result of the coaching.
- 'Scaling' determines to what extent the coachee believes the current situation is working.
- 'Know-how & Resources' enables the coachee to establish what factors are already contributing towards moving the situation closer to the desired outcome.
- 'Affirm & Action' helps to build the coachee's self-belief, as well as enhancing their relationship with their coach.
- The 'Review' stage involves reviewing progress and takes place at the beginning of the next coaching session.
- Solution-based coaching accepts that people have problems rather than them being the problem!

### 3 ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS TO COACHING

Whatever the nature of your organization, its culture and ethos will have an impact on your ability to perform as a coach. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Europe's largest HR development professional body, has conducted research into the organizational barriers to effective coaching. It provides you with insight into why some organizations are reluctant or unable to implement effective internal coaching.



The following list highlights the barriers that the research identified as preventing an organization from maximizing the benefits of coaching as a way to develop their personnel:

- The organizational culture
- Lack of understanding of the value of coaching
- Not seen as a priority for the business
- Resistance from senior management
- Low levels of skills and experience within the organization
- Lack of time and resources

You need to assess how extensive these barriers are in your own organization when deciding if coaching is the right form of learning. If the organization has the majority of these barriers you may find that attempting to use coaching will have a detrimental rather than motivational effect.

So before you start the coaching process you need to judge whether or not the organizational barriers are too strong for you to be successful. You can assess the extent of each barrier within your organization by asking yourself the following questions.

### **Is the organizational culture conducive to coaching?**

If you are working in an organization where the existing leadership method is that of telling individuals how things are to be done and where everything is driven by 'red tape' you will find that the organization conflicts with the principles of coaching conflict. This constitutes the single largest barrier to successful coaching.

Where an organization's leaders are unsupportive, often managing by dictating and using threats to gain short-term productivity, the overall culture makes it very difficult to integrate coaching principles into your team development efforts.

The benefits of coaching can only be realized if the organization's leadership are prepared to take a long-term view of staff development. This aspect of the culture will be reflected in the resources allocated to training and development, as well as the nature of remuneration and promotion policies.

### **Is the value of coaching understood?**

In many organizations the senior management do not appreciate or understand what coaching can achieve. They are therefore unable to perceive that it can be a cost-effective way in which to develop their personnel.

The management are unable to recognize the different levels at which coaching can achieve improvements and productivity – for example, the role of the executive coach compared with the role of the line manager as a coach.

The overall perception of coaching can also be that it brings no 'real' benefits to the organization. It is often viewed as a time-wasting activity and therefore the senior team do not actively listen to individuals who attempt to implement coaching activities for their teams.

**What level of priority does the organization assign to coaching?**

Many organizations pay lip service to coaching, assigning it a low priority. This can be because they see it as only one of the tools a manager can use in their overall learning and development strategy. This belief ensures that coaching is positioned as part of a wider culture change process rather than an isolated development activity.

**Is there a resistance to coaching?**

Resistance to coaching often arises from a belief within the organization that coaching is only for those who are poor performers. It can also arise from the behaviors shown by senior management. Where employees see that senior management are reluctant to use internal coaches, and that they encourage an attitude of assigning a low priority to coaching activities, they will be resistant to undertake coaching themselves.



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**What levels of skills and experience exist internally?**

The level of coaching expertise and skill amongst managers varies considerably. For coaching to be successful the organization must establish the style or use of a model that becomes an embedded aspect of the organization's management. This model should also provide a means whereby established processes and procedures can be questioned in a structured way by encouraging the coachee's own ideas and thinking.

An essential aspect for success is the recognition of coaching as one the core leadership skills your organization wants to promote in its managers. This will take time to create and needs someone to own the coaching process. Their role is to manage, resource, promote, maintain, and communicate with a pool of coaches.

**What resources are available?**

Organizations need to view coaches within their organization as they do any other valued resource. The senior management have to provide sufficient and appropriate funds to ensure that their coaches can perform the role well and achieve the desired results.

**What time pressures exist?**

Part of the resourcing process has to be providing managers with the opportunity to free up their time to allow enough to perform the role of coach for their team or others in the organization. The coach must be willing and able to commit the necessary time to coach an individual. Those who say 'I don't have enough time' are not showing the right attitude to this process.

In situations where there is little or no flexibility in adjusting managers' high workloads so that they can perform the role of a coach, the organization will not be able to realize the benefits of coaching.

The fundamental belief within an organization must be that coaching opportunities occur with every interaction. If the ethos in an organization is that coaching can only be formal and structured then a lot of opportunities will be missed.

If you decide to introduce coaching as part of your own management style then you should think about doing it gradually. This avoids it being seen by your team as a new fad or as something that you have just attended a course on.

The first steps you could take include:

- Practicing active listening
- Developing effective question skills:
  - To replace giving instructions
  - To encourage participation in meetings and discussions
- When giving feedback allow time to ask for the team members' own perceptions

You cannot eradicate all of the barriers to coaching in your organization but by viewing each conversation or discussion you have as an opportunity to improve people's skills, you can maximize the personal development within your team.

#### **Key Points**

- The culture and ethos of your organization will have an impact on your ability to perform as a coach.
- Successful coaching requires an organizational culture that places a high value on staff development and understands how coaching works.
- If senior management do not use coaching themselves, then this can discourage it from being used at lower levels in the organization.
- Be careful how you introduce coaching to your team as it might be seen as a fad rather than a long-term initiative.

## 4 SUMMARY

Coaching can improve productivity, morale, and job satisfaction and make team members less dependent on you to solve their problems for them. The essential competencies and skills required by a successful coach are: active listening, asking questions, goal setting, giving feedback, building rapport, demonstrating empathy, and using intuition.

In addition to these skills, there are a number of coaching models that you can use, including GROW, TGROW, and OSKAR. A model is simply a framework for navigating a route through the coaching session, as well as providing a means of getting the session back on track if necessary.

Management coaching has its roots in sports coaching, and the principles behind ‘The Inner Game’ developed by tennis coach Tim Gallwey form the basis of many management coaching models. These principles include: focusing on the present, concentrating on an ‘action’ rather than a task, and the coachee using their own knowledge and experience to improve their performance.

The GROW model is easily understood and straightforward to apply. It is an acronym of Goal, Reality, Obstacles, and Way forward. The ‘Goal’ is the endpoint that the coachee wants to achieve. It must be SMART so that the individual knows when it is attained. The ‘Reality’ requires the current issues and the challenges to be stated before an assessment of how far the coachee is away from their goal can be made. The ‘Obstacles’ stopping the coachee attaining their goal need to be identified so that the coachee can come up with different ‘options,’ or ways to deal with them. The ‘Way forward’ involves defining the necessary action steps required to achieve the goal.

The TGROW model was developed by Myles Downey, who felt that the addition of the item ‘Topic’ would make it more relevant to management coaching. This item enables both the coach and the coachee to understand the ‘context’ of the issue to be addressed.

OSKAR is an acronym for Outcome, Scaling, Know-how & Resources, Affirm & Action, and Review, and involves the coach asking questions in such a way as to move the coachee's attention away from problems in favor of solutions. The 'Outcome' is the difference that the coachee (and those around them) wants to see as a result of the coaching. 'Scaling' determines to what extent the coachee believes the current situation is working. 'Know-how & Resources' enables the coachee to establish what factors are already contributing to getting the situation closer to the desired outcome. 'Affirm & Action' helps to build the coachee's self-belief, as well as enhancing their relationship with their coach. OSKAR represents a solution-based approach to coaching that accepts that people have problems rather than them being the problem!

To be a good coach you need to have an understanding of coaching principles. These are explained in our eBook 'Coaching Principles,' which describes the skills, attitudes, and behaviors you will need for running a successful coaching session. It also discusses the use of external coaches and the issues that confront managers who act as coaches to their own team.

The culture and ethos of your own organization will have an impact on your ability to perform as a coach. Some organizations may lack an understanding of the value of coaching, not see it as a priority, or have a low level of coaching skills and experience available. These are issues that you need to consider when deciding if coaching is the best way to develop your staff.



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