

# **Coaching for Performance Excellence**

## **Coaches Guide**

**V1.0**

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## The Link between Competence and Confidence

Have you ever been in a learning situation where the leader knew the task so intimately that he couldn't bring the material down to a level that you could understand? How frustrating was that?

**Begin at the beginning** – A cardinal rule in education is to begin at the beginning. Adults don't mind reviewing what they already know.

**Go from known to unknown** – In fact, it helps them make the connection to what they don't know. Begin at the beginning and go from the known to the unknown.

The next step is to clearly communicate the tasks involved in the process. Don't leave anything out. Take them through the process one step at a time. Do it with them. Show them how, then let them practice with you. Let them ask questions as they try out the new skills.

As they practice in a safe environment, with you there to answer questions and help, they're developing confidence in knowing they'll be able to perform the task independently.

As employees develop competence in performing the task, they also develop confidence in their ability. When both the confidence and the competence are present, they are ready to move to the next level of learning. Don't push them too soon. They must feel comfortable with the new skills before they're ready to move on. If they're not, they'll become terribly frustrated.

Adults, as learners, are perfectionists. They want to master each step before they're willing to go further. You must understand that and give them the time they need to practice to perfection.

They are also very concerned about losing face. New information is very hard on an adults self-esteem, much more so than with younger students.

- Be very patient
- Back up
- Repeat, repeat, repeat
- Be available for help

After people have practiced a new procedure or skill, they're ready to test themselves. Teachers find out how students are doing through homework assignments, test and observation. Depending on the situation, consider which approach will work for you.

In any event, you need to test for competency. You need some way of knowing the new skill or knowledge is being appropriately applied. If the trainee is doing well, acknowledge and reward. If not, fine tune.

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 **Exercise 1:**

**Define Competence:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Define Confidence:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

 **Exercise 2: The steps below concerning introducing new information to adult learners are scrambled. Arrange the steps in the proper order.**

- Go from the known to the unknown**
- Begin at the beginning**
- Test for competency**
- Practice**
- Clearly communicate the steps**

 **Exercise 3: Which statements below reflect what you should know about the adults in classes? Adult Learners:**

<b>Are very concerned about losing face in front of their co-workers</b>	
<b>Want to move quickly through the steps in learning new skills</b>	
<b>Need to see the relevancy in the new information to their jobs</b>	
<b>Are perfectionists</b>	
<b>Want to master each step before they are willing to move to the next step</b>	

**Good coaches employ the techniques of good educators. Building competence and confidence is a continuous cycle that grows larger and larger.**

**Good coaches have the privilege of participating in the growth and development of their staff. That's what makes your job worthwhile.**

## Four Coaching Styles

You've been learning about coaching. Coaching places new emphasis on the powerful force of the people in your office. It capitalizes on the individual's desire for self-fulfillment. It recognizes that people want to contribute, to feel good about themselves.

Coaches understand that people want to be an integral part of the organizations in which they work. It acknowledges that they are in the best position to make decisions about the work that affects them.

For the last several decades, leaders have been taught the three management styles you'll see below. These styles related not only to people, but also to processes and procedures. They included:

- **Autocratic:** the manager had a dictatorial, commanding style and made all the decisions.
- **Democratic:** the manager permitted discussion and considered other opinions.
- **Laissez-faire:** the manager had a relaxed style and did not provide much leadership.

## The Boss

No matter which style felt natural, the manager was boss. The manager made the ultimate decision and was singularly responsible for the outcome. Management styles were based on military command structures. Global competition was non-existent. With no competition from global markets, an abundance of works and the world's best technology, any style would work in a post-war marketplace in industrial nations.

 **Exercise:** Things have changed. Select the statements below that describe influences affecting businesses today.

Select all that apply:

<b>Global competition is a serious threat</b>	
<b>Workers are satisfied with the manager making all the decisions</b>	
<b>High turnover rates exist because workers can easily make career moves</b>	
<b>Skilled worker shortages mean retaining workers is a serious issues</b>	
<b>Technological advances are requiring higher skilled workers</b>	
<b>The economy is more information and service based and less product based</b>	

It is important today for managers to find ways to capitalize on the talents of their workforce. Most people don't respond well to someone directing their every move and then taking all the credit. People will work for a salary, but they won't contribute much if that contribution is not solicited or valued.

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On the other hand, people will practically work for nothing if their work is valued, if they feel they are making a difference, and if they are appreciated. That's where coaches come in.

People want to contribute, and businesses need more from their people. That seems like a good fit. What changes in management styles will bring out the best performance and the best satisfaction in people?

Management styles have been re-framed to reflect more people emphasis.

- **Relating**
- **Directing**
- **Visionary**
- **Inspiring**

In general, the relating style is people-oriented; the directing style is straightforward and controlling; the visionary style is creative and intuitive; and the inspiring style is supportive.

 **Exercise:** Sort out the styles and their characteristics. Match the left hand column with the right hand column

<b>A - relating style</b>	<b>Is insightful, motivates, compassionate, supportive</b>
<b>B - directing style</b>	<b>Is innovative and creative, relies on hunches, sees patterns</b>
<b>C - visionary style</b>	<b>Sees the 'big picture,' directs people, is results-oriented</b>
<b>D - inspiring style</b>	<b>Appreciates people, builds teams, trusts and respects</b>

It is said that a weakness is just a strength turned upside down. So take a look at the flip side. People demonstrating these characteristics might have "blind spots" of which they need to be aware. For example:

- **Relaters** are so involved with people that they may not focus on getting the job done, gathering necessary details or dealing with confrontation or problems.
- **Directors** can have trouble with grey areas, being compassionate, or considering all angles. They decide quickly and sometimes don't get all the information.
- **Visionaries** might be too optimistic, too trusting. They need to gather data and make informed decisions.
- **Inspirers** can get so far ahead of themselves that they lack details needed to focus on the task at hand.

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 **Exercise 1: Match the coaching styles on the left to their “blind spots” on the right.**

<b>C - relating style</b>	<b>Would rather plan for the future than deal with the present</b>
<b>A - visionary style</b>	<b>Sees things as right or wrong, not compassionate</b>
<b>D - inspiring style</b>	<b>Trouble dealing with confrontation or problems</b>
<b>B - directing style</b>	<b>Lacks details needed to focus on the task at hand</b>

 **Group Exercise: Break into groups and think of a customer service related example of benefits and “blind spots” for each coaching style.**

**Example: Directing style - manager provides employee with a list of defective items to fax to vendors for return authorization (benefit), but does not explain the process of determining what items qualify for chargeback and the employee is not equipped to complete the chargebacks without being provided with a list (blind spot).**

<b>Coaching Style</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>“Blind Spot”</b>
<b>Directing Style</b>		
<b>Visionary Style</b>		
<b>Relating Style</b>		
<b>Inspiring Style</b>		

**Being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of all four styles helps you integrate all of the qualities, as you need, to apply them in different coaching situations. Being adaptable to the needs of your staff is a strength.**

## **Adapt to the needs**

**The best coaches use all four styles and adapt them to the situation at hand. Coaching is, indeed, the most personal strategy for building competence.**

## Interviewing Techniques to get the truth

Good coaches realize they don't have all the answers. They know that the real experts are the people doing the job. Each person is intimately aware of the details of his own position. The manager, and the manager's decisions, may actually impede progress rather than sustaining or improving it.

**Who knows your job better than you do? How do people feel when a manager tells them what to do?**

 **Exercise:** Select all the descriptions below that show how workers usually feel when micro-managed.

As though they can't use their own intelligence	
As though what they're doing isn't good enough	
Pleased that the manager understands the problem	
Unwilling to provide solutions	
Interfered with	
Disempowered	

## Listening

The best advice-givers are usually the best listeners. They know how to ask questions to get the person to solve their own problems. All the advisor is really doing is guiding the person through her own thought process to eliminate emotions and discover a new perspective.

People can be very objective about another person's problem or situation. It's really difficult for them to do that for themselves, however. The answer is obvious to the person who is not experiencing the problem.

But if you're the person with the problem, it's much harder to "remove yourself" from the situation and see it as an observer. A good coach understands this and guides people to their own solutions. Rather than telling a person how to solve a problem, ask questions. There are two types of questions: open questions and closed questions. Closed questions have a one-word answer. Open questions ask people to respond more fully.

## What's your goal?

In asking questions, is your goal to gather bits of data or to provoke a more thoughtful response? Consider your goal as you ask the questions.

Closed questions are easier for you, but they sometimes cause people to feel interrogated and defensive. If your purpose is to draw someone out, use open questions.



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 **Exercise: Identify the questions below as either open or closed questions.**

- I noticed you were late this morning. What happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- You're late. Aren't you supposed to be here at 8:00? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is this going to happen again? \_\_\_\_\_
- What have you tried so far? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you think the problem is? \_\_\_\_\_

There are a few other considerations in asking good questions. "Rhetorical" questions, ones that you already know the answer to, can be insulting. "Feeling" questions help clarify a person's position and help get them to consider options. "Why" questions often make people feel defensive. Be a little cautious in how you work a "why" question.

Your goals in asking questions are to get people to come up with their own solutions, to see the problem objectively, and to explore options. As a good coach, you also want to show them that you value their opinions and support and respect them as individuals.

Consider the effectiveness of the questions below. Would like to be asked questions like these?

- What can I do to help?
- Can you tell me what you think will work to solve this?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- What's your thinking about this?
- What do you think might work?
- What have you considered as options?
- What outcome were you looking for?
- What have you tried so far?
- What else have you considered?
- How do you feel it's progressing?

 **Exercise: Come up with some of your own 'effective' questions.**

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 **Exercise:** What questions below would be effective in drawing a person out? Select all those you could use to help her discover her own solutions.

- What do you think might work better next time? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do you feel about trying it another way? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why did you do that? \_\_\_\_\_
- Did you really think that would work? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you tell me more about what happened? \_\_\_\_\_

**Asking effective questions empowers people to do their own thinking. Empowering people is precisely the goal of coaching. Effective questioning is a trademark of an excellent coach.**

 **Group Exercise:** Jane has not been regularly following up on customers requesting information. Several customers have called in to complain to the manager about the delay. Create a list of 'effective' questions for dealing with this scenario.

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## Counseling for Problem Solving

A funny thing happens when people give advice. The recipient's mind goes through a myriad of reasons not to take the advice, from excuses, to reasons your solution won't work, to not really looking for solutions. Giving advice is telling people how to solve their problem. Problem solving is something that has to be discovered and experienced. You might get away with sharing something that worked for you, but you can't tell them what will work for them.

### Counseling – What it's not!

Giving advice becomes even more complex in a work environment. Advice from the boss can be interpreted as a mandate, and mandates are under-the-surface job threats. Coaches need to be sensitive to the undercurrents present when they offer advice. With that in mind:

- Counseling is not giving advice
- Counseling is not fixing the problem
- Counseling is not expecting the person to change

Counseling in a coaching situation is an approach used when a team member signals a need for assistance. Sometimes the signal comes from another team member, or sometimes it comes from your own observation of performance or behaviour.

- Counseling is building rapport and trust
- Counseling is indicating
- Counseling is asking effective questions and listening actively

 **Exercise:** Select those items from the list below that are counseling techniques.

Select all that apply:

- solving problems
- changing the person
- asking questions
- offering support
- giving advice
- actively listening

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## Advice is OK sometimes

Now, about the advice issue. There actually are times when advice is appropriate. They are:

- When you are invited to give advice
- When you've asked permission to offer advice
- If you have excellent rapport and trust

It's actually best if all three of those requirements are present. You've been invited, asked permission and have excellent rapport and understanding of the situation. Also, be prepared not to have your advice heeded. If that's too tough on you, don't offer the advice in the first place.

## Don't Rescue

It's very hard not to jump in and solve problems for people, especially if you feel that it's somehow your job. Parents instinctively protect and rescue their children from difficulties, real or imagined. But what has the child learned?

Did you learn the most from the times when things went smoothly or from the challenges in life? Which circumstances gave you the skills to handle difficulties today? As a coach, or as a parent, you know that little problems are training for bigger problems. Your job is to be a guide, a mentor, a trusted teacher in this process of finding solutions. But staying out of the solution is much easier said than done.

 **Exercise:** Look at the following and see if you identify with any of the descriptions below:

- Impatience
- Co-dependence
- Denial
- No excuses

There are many techniques and insights for ensuring good counseling that have been discussed. But, the single goal of counseling is:

Choose only one answer

- to discover alternative solutions
- to demonstrate concern
- to ask effective questions and listen actively
- to build trust and rapport
- to help people solve their own problems

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## Reap the rewards!

**A coach's primary function is to develop and grow the people who work with you. Part of that is helping people find their own solutions through application and awareness of effective counseling techniques. It's a skill you can develop in yourself that will reap rewards in the successful empowerment of your people.**

**📞 Discussion: Share your own experiences, either where you've received quality counseling from a mentor or where you've been given unsolicited advice. How have you used those positive and negative experiences to determine your own method of counseling.**


## Counseling Techniques for Performance Improvement

### Happy people are productive people

A significant reason management styles have shifted toward coaching is the recognition that coaching techniques improve performance. People who get satisfaction from their work, who feel they are contributing members of the organization, and whose opinions and experience are valued will quite naturally be more productive. They have invested in their jobs and in the company.

 **Exercise:** See if you can recognize the benefits of a coaching environment. Select the items that are results of coaching.

- Creativity and innovation are encouraged
- Tasks are assigned solely by the manager
- Little or no input is invited from the staff
- The staff has greater control over decisions about work
- The content of the work is enhanced
- Skills and tasks that make up a job are expanded

 **Exercise:** List 3 additional benefits of using the counseling technique for performance improvement in a coaching environment (eg. employees are encouraged to try new problem solving strategies)

**Which environment would you rather work in? Coaches have new responsibilities that require new skills in developing people. This is a people job. In this section you will learn about the counseling techniques for goal-setting, encouraging, re-directing, and mentoring. The benefits of learning these skills are many:**

- Your people will grow in their jobs
- Your staff will learn new skills
- People work cooperatively to do what is needed
- Fewer levels of organization exist
- Individuals manage themselves and are accountable to the whole


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Even in a coaching environment, you'll have times when a team member will signal a need for assistance, or you might notice a difference in performance or behaviour. Coaching is primarily employed when things are going well. But for those times when assistance is needed, counseling may be a coach's strategy for dealing with issues.

Coaching	Counseling
Coaching is a supportive process to help an employee who is doing well develop self-confidence, new skills, understand expectations and so forth.	Counseling is a process to help an employee who is not doing well develop self-esteem, get back on track, deal with changes or other difficulties.

## Coaching Environment

There will be predictable bumps along the way. But, all in all, it's a much nicer job than trying to manage all the details and trying to manage people who can only do what they're told. The old days of "it's not on my job description" don't work in a coaching environment. Not too many people will miss those days.

 **Exercise:** Review your understanding of the benefits of using counseling techniques for performance improvement by marking the items below that reflect a coaching environment. Check all that apply:

- The staff works cooperatively to accomplish the task at hand.
- People grow in their jobs.
- Each person has responsibility for only their job.
- Individuals manage themselves.
- People learn new skills.

It's not a perfect world. There will be situations that will require your guidance and patient understanding. That's a good reason to develop skills in counseling techniques to smooth the way for both you and your team members.

## Goal Setting


One of the key issues in counseling for performance improvement is appropriate goal setting. Coaching and counseling is a continuous process that is never really finished.

### Get a Plan

However, you do need a definite starting point, milestones to let you know where you are, and a plan for accomplishing the next goal.

### Let's Talk

Goal setting sessions are an opportunity for the manager and the employee to establish expectations. It's important to set goals collaboratively and to clarify expectations so both you and the employee understand exactly what the expectations are. A goal setting session may be all that is needed to get a person back on track.

 **Exercise:** Setting goals should be part of every performance evaluation. But since coaching is a continuous process, effective coaches don't wait until a particular date or for a formal excuse to assist a team member. Mark the items below that should be considered in setting goals.

Goals should be reached and agreed upon by both you and the employee	
Goals should clearly define expectations	
Goals should be measurable	
Goals should identify job-specific outcomes	
Goals should align with corporate values and principles	
If the session is formal, such as a review or reprimand, goals should be written down	

### Goals

There are times when you want a commitment form someone who is a proven performer and you know that you don't need a formal process to redirect this person. In fact, it would be seen as heavy-handed. In other words, every intermediary goal between formal appraisals doesn't need to be written down. But written or not, there are some things to keep in mind in establishing effective goals.



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As you are considering goals, you and your employee need to make them as clear as possible. A method you can use is to employ the SMART model.


**S - Specific**

**M - Measurable**


**A - Attainable**

**R - Realistic**

**T - Timely**

 **Exercise 1: Michael agrees that his performance is slipping. Performance is measurable in terms of production. In discussing the possible causes, it becomes apparent to both Michael and his coach that the problem is a recent change in policy that Michael is having trouble dealing with. Keeping in mind the SMART model - - specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely - - identify the goals that would meet the criteria. You may have more than one solution to Michael's situation.**

- Pair Michael with a person who is very familiar with the new policy and can show Michael how it is applied in the next week.**
- Take an extensive training program in customer service.**
- Learn more about the policy.**
- Take a training class in the specific policy and how to deal with certain situations in the next week.**

 **Exercise 2: Martha has said to her coach that she has a goal of "improving her supervisory skills by the next performance evaluation." That's a nice goal, but one fraught with problems. In considering the SMART model, the missing elements in Martha's goal are:**

- attainable**
- realistic**
- timely**
- specific**
- measurable**

 **Group discussion: Think of another situation where the SMART model can be utilized to assist in reaching a goal. Apply.**

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## A Higher Standard

The idea behind goals is to assist in clarification and direction so the person knows clearly what is expected and how to get there. It's a means, as Peter Drucker said, "the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard."

## Encouraging

One of the jobs of a coach is to encourage people to believe they can succeed. Even star performers need to be encouraged. In fact, if you ignore them, you might lose them.

Employees need to find satisfaction in how well they're doing their jobs. They need you to tell them they're doing well. When is encouraging appropriate? Encouraging is appropriate when:

- You sense an employee is becoming discouraged
- You have a new employee
- You want to keep a good performer on track
- Employees need growth, training or development in a certain area
- You have employees with untapped potential

## Mentoring

Another form of encouraging is mentoring. Mentoring is a close relationship that lasts over time, much as a master tutors an apprentice. It's having a special interest in a person and taking high performers to the next level.

 **Exercise:** Take a moment to consider what motivates employees. Mark the three items below that you think employees would say are their top three motivators.

- job security
- job advancement
- feeling included
- help on personal problems
- financial compensation
- appreciation

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## It's not about the money!

When managers were asked to rate what they thought were the most important items to employees, they rated job security, financial rewards and job advancement as the top three. Here's how far off the managers were:

- Appreciation – staff rated as 1; managers, 8
- Feeling included – staff rated as 2; managers, 10
- Personal problems – staff rated as 3; managers, 9

There were only ten items on the list. What employees rates as 1, 2, and 3 were rated as 8, 9, and 10 by managers. That's a profound difference between what employees want and what managers think they want.

## It's about Fulfillment

It's not about money! Everyone wants to earn a good living. But people will remain in positions where they are earning less, sometimes far less, than they could be if they are getting satisfaction and fulfillment from their jobs.

A wise coach understands what their people want and provides plenty of encouragement. Positive feedback is a powerful tool that:

- Boosts confidence
- Heightens self-esteem
- Increases performance
- Enhances motivation

 **Exercise 1:** An important concept in this topic was understanding what employees felt was most important to them. Rate the items below as employees rated them.

- appreciation
- help on personal problems
- feeling included

 **Exercise 2:** Lynne is having trouble understanding an assignment. She has the training and the ability to perform the task. Mark one item below that is the best way for her coach to encourage her.

- listen, Lynne, you know how to do this. Go for it.
- Lynne, would you like me to assign someone else to this?
- Lynne, how would you feel about more training in this?
- Lynne, tell me what you've thought about. Take me through how you want to approach this.

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What people want is respect, flexibility to meet personal needs, encouragement for growth, information, having control over their own work, and involvement in decisions that affect them. In other words, they want to be treated like adults.

## Reap the Rewards

An excellent coach can get a lot more out of people simply by respecting and encouraging them. Everybody sometimes needs help, encouragement, and a good word. Reap these rewards that don't cost the organization a penny.

Sometimes you can't be both manager and a friend. Your job as a manager means working through difficult situations as well as pleasant ones. Employee resistance is one of the difficult ones. It shows up in a variety of forms.

- Complacency
- Lack of commitment
- High turnover rates
- Outward opposition
- Sabotage
- Inability to accept change
- Personalizing conflict
- Low trust levels
- Feeling victimized
- Absenteeism

 **Exercise:** It's critically important to develop skills in handling these situations. Resistance can become very destructive to both morale and performance. From the list below, mark the items that would indicate a successful coaching session when an employee is demonstrating symptoms of resistance.

- It is focused on solutions and opportunities
- It is structured and planned
- The coach is under control
- The coach completed his list of actions needing correction
- The session is a two-way communication
- It is respectful

## Working with Employee Resistance

In this section, you'll learn strategies for dealing with employee resistance. The topics explore:

- Coaching uncooperative people
- Coaching a conflicted team
- What to do when your efforts are not working

### Working through Resistance

Coaching uncooperative people is difficult. In addition to being uncomfortable, you may not be good at it. The purpose of this section is to help you develop skills in dealing with those situations that make you wish you weren't the boss today.

### Coaching Uncooperative People

Uncooperative people are uncooperative for a reason. Generally, if you can uncover the reason, you stand an excellent chance of coming up with a solution. Before leaping to conclusions, do a little research.

- Asking questions gives the person a chance to explain their position
- Check past performance
- It's helpful to get the view of a peer who has had experience with this person. IF you're the only one who has a problem with the person, maybe you need to change your approach

 **Exercise: Are you the problem?** As the workforce matures, people are less responsive to authoritarian management styles. A major contributor toward employee resistance is micro-management. Rate yourself on the items below with 1 being rarely and 5 being usually.

- \_\_\_ Do I issue orders with little or no explanation?
- \_\_\_ Do I expect obedience and loyalty because I'm the boss?
- \_\_\_ Do I refuse to listen to objection and concerns?
- \_\_\_ Do I hold employees responsible for tasks without empowering them with authority?

Once you're sure you have the facts straight and that you are not the problem, you can proceed with a coaching session.

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Conflicts can be resolved. You can be a help to your staff by collaborating with them and teaching them to be flexible. You must model the behaviour you want to see in your staff. You, too, must be flexible.

- In conflict, people usually emphasize their areas of disagreement. Flexibility is increased if you emphasize your areas of agreement also. “We agree on all these other points – can’t we work out this one area of disagreement?”
- Flexibility means you’ll be willing to listen. The employee is in the best position to describe the circumstances. Listening shows fairness and respect.
- Effective listening might mean you have to listen to someone letting off steam. It often defuses situations. Let him do it. You can take it.

## Focus on Improvement

Focus on the improvement needed. Don’t bring out your laundry list of complaints. Don’t dwell on past behaviour. Pick the one thing that really needs addressing and stick to it.

## Focus on the Issue

After the person has let off steam, agree on the behaviour that needs to be corrected or improved. Keep bringing the focus back to that one issue.

Tighten the reins a little bit for a period of time. Communicate clear expectations. Establish accountability and milestones. Ask him to check in with you to measure progress against the expectations.

## Work it out

Take responsibility. Don’t pass the buck by blaming the necessary corrective actions on someone higher up. Doing so weakens your position. You’ll undermine your own authority.

Reassure the person that this is a problem that can be sorted out. You value his work, and you wouldn’t be working for improvements if that were not true.

**Exercise:** In preparing for a coaching session to improve performance or behaviour, you need to do your homework.

Which statements below reflect some of the things you should do prior to a coaching session with an uncooperative person?

- Write a list of all the issues you want to address
- Ask questions
- Be sure you’re not the problem
- Be sure you have the facts straight

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 **Exercise:** You've been learning about methods of improving behaviour or performance when dealing with uncooperative people. You also learned some things not to do. Identify the strategies below as either effective or ineffective by putting an E or In beside each statement.

- Focus on a list of complaints
- Focus on solutions
- Focus on the improvement needed
- Focus on the personality that needs changing
- Focus on only one critical issue

## A Better Employee

Remember, your goal is to correct behaviour and to teach the person how to be a better employee. You want him to come away from the conversation with a feeling that he has an action plan that will put him back on the right track – not to come away with open wounds.

Mastering skills in dealing with the tough issues will build a better staff, and your staff will appreciate your handling of these difficult situations.

## Coaching a Conflicting Team

It's not that you want conflict within a team, but it isn't always counterproductive. Conflict within a team can be a benefit if it is managed to increase team members' understanding of one another and to enhance creativity. As teams discuss solutions, more ideas come forward, increasing productivity within the team.

Conflict within a team generally falls into two categories: conflicts involving differences around tasks the team is working on; and conflicts involving differences around people and personalities.

Conflicts due to tasks – Task-oriented conflicts focus on conflicts around the substance of the work to be done by the team.

Conflicts due to people – People-oriented conflicts focus on personality conflicts, competitiveness, authority and leadership issues, turf wars, and so forth.

 **Exercise:** Listed below are situations involving people-related conflicts and task-related conflicts. For each of the statements place a P if you believe it to be people-related and a T if you think it is task-related.

- Sue wants more research. The team wants action.
- Tom never agrees with an idea presented by Jan.
- Another department's slowdown impacts on your team.
- Karen becomes emotional when her ideas aren't accepted.

# Coaches Guide

## Ground Rules

Often, project-related conflicts also become people-related conflicts. The role of the coach is to establish and maintain team ground rules of conduct. A coach who is able to keep the focus on the task, in task-related conflicts, can avoid a lot of misery for the whole team.

First, make sure there are ground rules. You can usually permit the team to establish the rules of order that they wish to follow and respect at the very first team meeting. Once established, it makes it easy for team members and the coach to point to the team's guidelines when things begin to go astray.

### Ground rules should include:

- Respecting one another – taking turns speaking, allowing every opinion to be heard
- Remaining calm – keeping a check on emotions
- Focusing on issues – staying on track, bringing the topic back to solutions
- Communicating clearly – being sure all opinions are understood and clarified

 **Exercise:** When it is necessary to mediate a conflict, a coach employs a five-step process. From the list below, identify the steps in mediating conflict.

Check all that apply.

- Listen to both sides of the issue and instruct them how to solve it.
- Use the situation as a learning experience.
- Identify the root cause of the conflict.
- Establish clear perspectives.
- Ask the parties for their solutions.
- Get agreement on the outcome.

## Grow to learn

Dealing with a conflicted team is a tricky process, to be sure. But an effective coach can guide a team in laying ground rules for success and respect, teach conflict resolution skills, and lead people to better working relationships. All in all, that's well worth the effort.



## Last-ditch Efforts: What to Do When It's Not Working

Formal discipline is a process that does not bring happiness but must bring action. It is the last resort, when all else has failed. It's heavy-handed, disruptive to the team, and not to be entered into lightly.

### The last resort

Before resorting to disciplinary action, such as suspension or termination, be sure all other options have been exhausted. This section will focus on these last-ditch efforts.

### Discipline Impacts the Staff/Employee

If you really do everything in your power to help an employee succeed, then you'll feel justified no matter which of the options below occurs.

- The employee will resign
- The employee will not live up to the expectations and will eventually have her contract terminated.
- The employee will live up to the expectations and successfully correct her behaviour or performance.

 **Exercise:** What are some of the steps that should be taken before taking disciplinary action? From the list below, select the items that would be part of steps leading up to discipline.

- documentation
- measurement
- counseling
- confrontation

### Problem-solve First - - Discipline Last

Discipline is a formal process with serious implications. Discipline can also put you in a position to defend yourself legally. This section guides you from less severe strategies through the disciplinary process. The areas covered include:

- Counseling methods to correct poor behaviour or performance.
- Steps in confrontation
- Documentation of both good and bad performance
- Performance measurement
- The steps in the disciplinary process

# Coaches Guide

Coaches love those times when the team is inspired, and their job is to cheer their successes. But you really earn your salary when things aren't so rosy. The first step in correcting behaviour is counseling. Behaviour that is not corrected is behaviour that is repeated. If you do nothing, you send a message to the entire staff that this is acceptable behaviour.

***Counseling***– Counseling is a pre-planned, informal discussion with the team member. It focuses on raising awareness that a problem exists and correcting behaviour.

***Confrontation***– Confrontation is an unplanned response to an urgent need to intervene in poor performance or behaviour.

Counseling is appropriate when coaching and encouraging haven't worked and the situation can no longer be ignored or tolerated. The behaviour is establishing a pattern that must be corrected. Listed below are the steps to follow when holding a counseling meeting with your problem employee.

- State what you think the problem is.
- Ask them to tell you their thoughts about the situation.
- Summarize what they have told you. get agreement from them that your interpretation of their thoughts is correct.
- State what needs to be done differently. Don't be vague, and don't over-explain.
- Get feedback. Be sure they have clearly understood.
- Collaborate on an action plan.
- Set a follow-up meeting to discuss the results.
- End with some encouragement.

## Confrontation

Confrontation is used only when the situation is urgent. An example may be when a manager witnesses an action that compromises company safety regulations, policies, or procedures. Confrontation should:

- Include observation, inquiry, and listening
- Acknowledge the effort and explain the concern
- Teach corrective action

# Coaches Guide

 **Exercise:** If a problem escalates, documentation will be critical because you may need to defend yourself legally in the future. Documentation should be in place for routine operations like performance reviews. Mark the items below that should be considered in documentation:

- Documentation should include your personal opinions
- Documentation should be consistent
- Documentation should be objective
- Document behaviour and performance. Don't document attitudes
- Documentation should be fair
- Documentation should include corrective actions and results, good or bad

Measurement of performance gives you the foundation for raises, promotions, and corrective action. Without measurable performance objectives, you open yourself up to all kinds of arguments. In the case of disciplinary action, the arguments may have legal implications.

## Performance Measurement

You must be able to demonstrate objectively the events leading up to disciplinary action. The evidence must speak for itself.

 **Exercise:** consider the following statements. Which are measurable and legally defensible and which are not.

Identify the statements as defensible with a D and those that are not defensible with a N.

- John never gets his work done.
- John has a bad attitude.
- John is always late.
- John was late a total of 214 minutes last month.
- John's production is 29 per cent lower than the standard.

If all else fails to bring compliance, you must be prepared to enter into the disciplinary process. If you have done your job well through all stages leading up to this step and back down now, you send a message that poor performance will be tolerated after all.

## Tread Lightly

But don't discipline to punish, bring into submission, or as a first step. Also be aware that in two of the three possible outcomes of a formal disciplinary process, you will lose the employee.

In formal disciplinary action, follow the organization's policy. Discipline must be applied consistently in all situations.

# Coaches Guide

 **Exercise:** Matthew is a coach with a problem employee. Ken has been demonstrating behaviour that team members feel is uncomfortable and disturbing. Answer the following questions.

1. When the problem behaviour began six months earlier, Ken was having trouble getting along with people, but the behaviour didn't seem to impact on team meetings or productivity. Matthew was aware of the problem through observations. What action should Matthew have taken at that time? From the list below, choose the correct answer.

- Matthew should have held a counseling session with Ken.
- No action was necessary at that time,
- Matthew should have confronted Ken.
- Matthew should have begun disciplinary action with Ken.

2. There is a difference between confronting and counseling. A situation that requires urgent and immediate action, as in safety regulations being violated, requires \_\_\_\_\_.

3. As the behaviour escalated, the situation began to interfere with team activities. Ken's behaviour kept people from attending meetings, work started to slip, and production suffered. Matthew discussed the matter several times with Ken, but the problem continued to worsen. From the list below, select steps that Matthew should take before initiating formal disciplinary action.

- Ensure that documentation clearly supports evidence of poor behaviour.
- Conduct further counseling sessions.
- Ensure that disciplinary action is objective and fact-based.
- Use physical punishment.
- Check company policies, Ken's contract, and the law of the land regarding disciplinary actions.

## It's a Tightrope

But sometimes, no matter what you do, an employee simply isn't going to make it. After you've been as proactive as possible with a non-performing employee, termination may be your only real choice. Making tough decisions, however painful, is part of your responsibility to the organization and to your other employees. The bottom line is: do your homework, and protect yourself, your staff and your company.

## Adapting to New Ways of Thinking

The outcome in changing management styles from boss to coach is an empowered staff who participates in decisions and grows in their jobs. Coaching enhances people's involvement in their jobs. It's a winning situation for both the employees and the organization.

Yet changes are hard on people, even good changes. Change requires people to be open to adapting to new ways of thinking. In this section, we'll explore methods to facilitate transition to a new management style.

To anticipate the difficulties your staff will encounter in making the adjustment to a team-based approach, it is useful to understand the cycle of change.

### Stages of Change

- Cycle begins with comfort
- Change is introduced
- Loss occurs
- Acceptance begins
- Comfort returns

### A tall order

Adapting to a new management style is asking people to change the way they think about their jobs. They are accustomed to being told what to do and to meeting expectations by pleasing the manager.

Now you're asking them to participate in decisions, to grow in their skills, and to change the way they think. It's a tall order.

Helping people adapt to new ways of thinking involves a lot of patience. Recognize that, as the manager, the change will be easier for you than for your staff. Here are some of the ways you can help your staff adjust.

**Be understanding** – Understand that commitment will be easier for you because you were involved in the decision. People accept change more easily if they are part of the decision.

**Give your staff time** – You are ahead of the staff in terms of a time-frame for the change cycle to come back around to the acceptance and comfort levels.

# Coaches Guide

**Giving people plenty of time to adapt to the change will help with getting commitment. Here are some other tips for introducing your new style:**

- **Initiate changes slowly**
- **Balance stability with change**
- **Explain why the change is necessary**

## **Listen**


**What is the most important change you'll have to make in order to empower your staff members? You have to learn to really hear what their concerns and opinions are.**

**It is important to sympathize and understand to help your staff through the loss and confusion. But you also have to help your employees learn how to solve their own problems. Resist the urge to jump in and solve problems for them. Part of your new role as a coach is giving them the power to figure it out on their own.**

**Work on listening instead of solving the problem. Ask yourself the following questions to gauge your listening skills:**

- **Do I allow someone to finish speaking before I respond?**
- **If I disagree, do I hold my emotions in check?**
- **Do I listen for hidden meanings and try to understand what the person is trying to say?**
- **Do I repeat what the person said to ensure clarity?**
- **Do I ask questions to promote further conversation?**
- **Do I give the person my undivided attention?**

**An effective coach knows that developing good listening skills is an important part of their job. Listening to concerns will help people move through transition. Listening, and not solving problems for people, will assist them in discovering their own solutions. Listening, and not directing, will facilitate gathering input toward the team's goals. Listening, and not interrupting, will help people develop their own communication skills.**

 **Exercise: As a manager, you have the ability to make transition either easier or harder for your employees. From the list below, identify methods to facilitate transition to a new management style.**

- initiate changes slowly**
- balance stability with change**
- develop excellent listening skills**
- explain why the change is necessary**
- understand that commitment will be easier for your employees than for you**
- give your staff time to commit to new possibilities**

# Coaches Guide

**Question: Which of the items below is the most important strategy in helping your employees adjust to your new management style? Mark only one answer.**

- go slowly in implementing changes
- develop excellent listening skills
- explain why the change is necessary
- balance stability with change
- communicate new expectations

**Understanding what to expect as your team members make this management change will go a long way toward making a successful transition. Helping your staff make the adjustments is an opportunity to test your new coaching skills.**