

Coaching & Relationship Building

Coaching refers to the day-to-day discussions between a supervisor and staff member, which typically relate to specific assignments and help the staff member learn from experience.

Most coaching is situational. Problems and exceptional performance should be addressed as they arise in the normal course of work. Reliance on scheduled sessions only, with limited coaching in the interim, is not an effective system.

Relationship-building is closely related to coaching. Whereas coaching pertains to specific performance issues, relationship-building encompasses a much broader set of interactions that serve to build camaraderie, open communication channels and break down organizational barriers. These interactions can be spontaneous (e.g. supervisors and staff going out to lunch) or involve ongoing programs (e.g. president's coffee breaks). Even though relationship-building activities do not typically focus on a specific individual performance issue, they frequently serve to raise a wide variety of productivity and effectiveness topics that can lead to performance improvement.

When coaching and relationship-building are combined with the more formal performance management methodologies (objective setting and performance assessment), they form a strong program that provides each staff member with help in reaching his or her maximum potential.

Typical coaching behaviors include:

- ❖ Useful practical methods of questioning and observation to keep aware of the work activities and project performance of individuals and work teams;
- ❖ Clarifying performance expectations and providing feedback and direction;
- ❖ Helping identify improvement opportunities and providing support for continuous improvement efforts;
- ❖ Supporting and recognizing work accomplishments;
- ❖ Removing barriers and constraints that inhibit individuals or teams from fulfilling their responsibilities and meeting assigned goals; and
- ❖ Teaching job skills, business know-how and behavioral approaches.

The following illustrates various types of coaching:

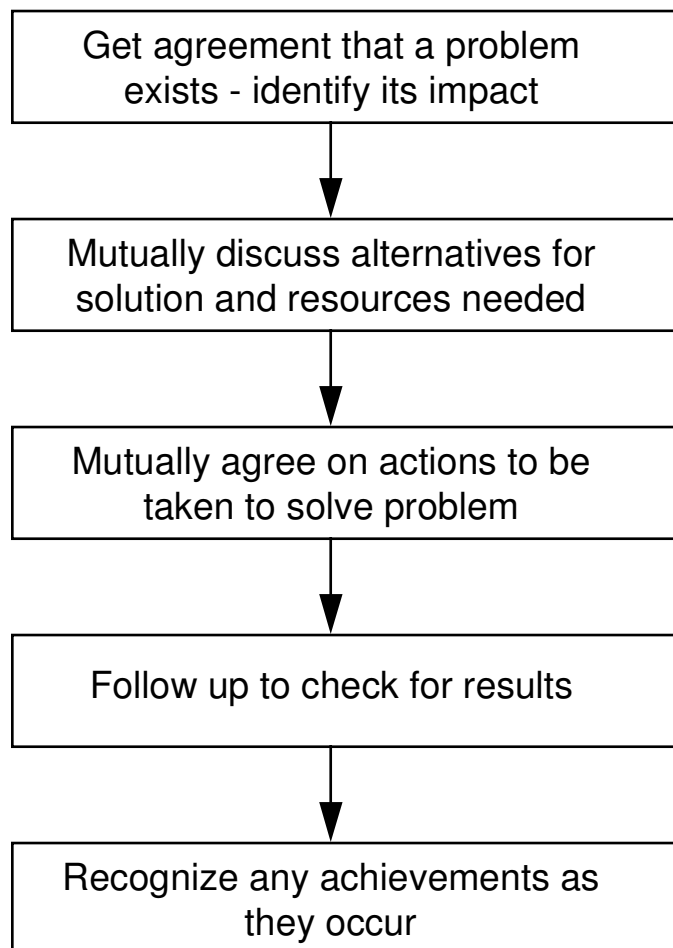
<i>Teaching</i>	Helping others learn how to do their jobs. Passing on your skills and experience to others. Instructing people in the reliable way of performing the required activities.
<i>Evaluating</i>	Assessing progress against targeted results. Assessing both the process and results. Assessing both teams and individuals.
<i>Confronting</i>	Interest and willingness to confront individuals and teams with improvement opportunities as required to ensure progress against goals.
<i>Directing</i>	Providing specific instructions and guidance to accomplish specific tasks and goals. Telling people what needs to be done and how to do it.
<i>Praising</i>	Providing positive feedback whenever an individual or team is observed doing things well. Feedback is provided in a timely fashion and is genuine.
<i>Motivating</i>	Keeping people interested and excited about what they are doing.
<i>Communicating</i>	Sharing information in a timely fashion and soliciting information from individuals and teams.
<i>Observing</i>	Observing what is happening in the organization as an indicator of areas to focus on for continuous improvement.
<i>Counseling</i>	Helping individuals overcome work-related and/or personal obstacles through direct one-on-one interactions.
<i>Listening</i>	Being fully attentive to an individual and actively listening for complete understanding of what is being said.
<i>Questioning</i>	Asking open-ended questions that allow the staff member to develop a solution.

Coaching for Performance Improvement

Addressing Performance Problems

- ❖ Effective coaches have learned a five-step process to address performance problems in a way that produces specific, positive action.
- ❖ When you meet one-on-one or with a team, each step in this procedure needs to be completed in order to create a clear direction and momentum for the subsequent steps. Any incomplete step seriously blocks the problem-resolution process.

Steps for Problem Resolution



Coaching for Performance Improvement

A Guide to Constructive Feedback

1. **Be specific.** Identify the facts of the observed behavior and events, not interpretations or inferences. State what happened, what the effect was and, if appropriate, what behavior needs to be changed.

Be clear about the magnitude of any problem: career development, minor concern, major issue, limited observation.

If you cannot give an example then leave out the comment.

2. **Focus on behavior, not personality.** We can change our behavior, not our personalities. Just because the behavior is a problem doesn't mean the individual is a "bad person." Assessments are about what we do, not who we are.

Avoid using absolutes – "always", "never", "every time." It is almost impossible to substantiate those types of claims.

Avoid using "you are..." Instead use "you did..."

3. **Accept responsibility for your role.** Be prepared to accept that you may have contributed to the problem you are discussing with the staff member. (Your directions or expectations might not have been clear. You might have left out some important information. You might have thought that the employee knew what you wanted without discussing it specifically. You might have used words that conveyed a different meaning to the employee.)

6. **Identify the impact of the behavior.**

7. **End your comments on a positive note** – either with a specific contribution the staff makes or a general statement about his or her overall value to Wittenberg.

It is also acceptable to end with a statement that includes action for the future.

What to Say.....There is often a gap between intent and effectiveness

1. Set the **stage** by taking the person to a private location.

“We need to talk.”

“I need to discuss something with you.”

“I’ve observed something I need to discuss with you.”

“Something happened recently that we need to discuss.”

2. State your **intent**.

“My intent is to give you some feedback.”

“My intent is to tell you about a behavior I observed of which you might not be aware.”

“My intent is to discuss your performance in a way that can be of value to you.”

3. State your **concern**.

“I am concerned that I might do this in a way that damages our relationship.”

“I am concerned that I might offend you.”

“I am concerned that I might not do this very well.”

4. State what you **observed** (specifically) and the **impact**.

For a behavior exhibited toward you:

“We were (doing x) and I was uncomfortable with...”

“When you do this, I feel...”

“When you...” Start with a statement that describes the behavior without judgment. State the facts as specifically as possible.

“I feel...” Tell the person how his or her behavior affects you. Use one or two words to describe the feeling.

“Because I...” Next say why you are affected that way. Describe the connection between the facts you observed and the feelings they provoke in you.

For a behavior toward another person or object:

“I recently observed you (doing x) and I see a problem with...”

“When you...” Start with a statement that describes the behavior without judgment. State the facts as specifically as possible.

“The impact is...” Tell the person the consequences of their behavior – toward another person or regarding the task he or she is performing. Be concise and specific.

“Because ...” Next identify the consequences of the action. Describe the connection between the facts you observed and the results they produced.

5. Pause for **discussion**. Let the other person respond.

How many times have you made a judgment about a person’s ability to do a task or perform a function or interact effectively with co-workers? How do we know we are accurate in our interpretation? By putting our observations on the table we can check our accuracy. If we have misinterpreted the actions we then have the opportunity to adjust our perceptions and, perhaps, address a different issue.

Be open to the possibility that the other person sees it differently. It may change your perspective. The other person may have some feedback for you.

“I was thinking about this differently.”

“I can see why you did that.”

6. State what you **want** to see next time (specifically).

“I would like...” Describe the change you want the other person to consider.

“Because...” and why you think the change will alleviate the problem.

7. Pause for **discussion**. Let the other person respond. Take this time to clarify your position and hear the other person's position.

“What do you think?” Listen to the other person's response. Be prepared to discuss options and agree on a solution.

My view
Your understanding of my view
Your view
My understanding of your view

8. Get a **commitment** for future behavior; you may need to make a commitment yourself.

“Let's agree on how you (we) will do this next time.”

9. **Thank you**

Always thank the person for engaging in the discussion.

10. Other considerations:

- Sit down if possible. Avoid one person sitting and the other standing. This conveys an atmosphere of superiority.
- Put your comments into context, e.g. this is a minor concern, large concern, limited observation, or this is for your future development.
- Ask the person to explain his or her intent and then discuss the gap between intent and effectiveness, as appropriate.
- State your feelings, concerns and observations as things to discuss, not as closed issues.
- Use an approach suitable to the person's needs and sensitivities, as you perceive them.
- Observe the person's reaction. Be prepared to stop and address the reaction.
- Attempt to resolve any disagreement or conflict.

- Reassess your position when appropriate. Be open to the possibility that you misinterpreted the behavior or the intent.
- Ask open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions start with how, what, when, where, who.

Closed-ended questions can only be answered by yes or no. They generally start with did you, do you, have you.