Developing People Through Collaborative Coaching

A guide to improve your knowledge, skills and practice in unlocking the potential in others

Growing your staff via effective coaching

“'I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think.”'
Socrates

*Facilitator’s Guide*
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Opening Ice Breaker: Coaching as Mentoring
Before class begins, divide participants into groups of three or four. Have them take turns answering the following questions, and encourage them to act as interviewers to draw out the answers:

- What do you know now that you wish you knew early in your career? What difference would it have made?
- How could a coach help you now?
- What lessons have you learned about working at DHS that you might pass on to someone else as his or her mentor?

Using the information above, lead a discussion about how coaches can help employees, and how these ideas can help build effective coaches.

Questions for discussion:
1. What does coaching mean to you?
2. Who was the best coach you ever had? Why?
3. What quality made that person a great coach?
4. How do you use that quality when leading your team?

Pre-Class Survey
Instruct participants complete this survey at their seats, located in participant workbook:

Does your supervisor:

1. Frequently ask for your opinion?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree

2. Listen to your suggestions?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree

3. Take your ideas seriously?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree

4. Value your opinion?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree

5. Check with you before making a decision that affects your work?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree

6. Seem as though he/she would defend you in a meeting of supervisors?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree

7. Explain goals clearly when giving you a new project?
   - [ ] Completely disagree
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Completely agree
8. Welcome your questions about an ongoing project?
   - Completely disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Completely agree

9. Give you latitude in deciding how to carry out a project?
   - Completely disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Completely agree

10. Save criticism for one-on-one sessions?
    - Completely disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Completely agree

**What is Coaching? Trust Walk**
Divide participants into pairs. Ask one person to volunteer to close their eyes so they can be guided on a sightless tour around the training facility. They can walk wherever they like, but emphasize that sighted people are responsible for the safety of their sightless partners. Sighted partners are allowed only to verbally guide their partners — touching is not allowed at all. They have five minutes to walk, after which time they switch their sightless/guide roles.

Have each pair identify three ways to build trust. Have them share these ways with their tables and complete the Questions for Discussions.

**Questions for Discussion:**
1. When you first started your walk, how much did you trust your partner to guide you safely? How strong was the urge to open your eyes?
2. What did your sighted partner do that increased your level of trust?
3. What did your sighted partner do that decreased your level of trust?
4. When you were guiding your sightless partner, to what extent did you consider how much they trusted you to guide them?
5. Did you purposely take any actions to increase their trust in you?
6. If you did, do you think your actions were effective? Why?

**Collaborative Coaching: Different Perspectives**
Divide the class into four groups and assign each team the task of answering questions that are asked about the SNAP Emergency Services process from their given perspective. Then have the groups report out their answers. If at all possible, make sure that employees are in groups that do not contain their role at DHS.

Group 1 will answer questions related to the **Agency**.
- How does Expedited Services support the mission and goals of DHS?
- How does Expedited Services impact the SNAP program?
- Why is Expedited Services necessary?

Group 2 will answer questions related to the **County Director**.
- How is my office doing on Expedited Services?
- What skills do my supervisors need to assist their staff with successfully meeting Emergency Services standards?
- What is my office’s motivation for doing work?
- Why is Expedited Services necessary?
Group 3 will answer questions related to the *Supervisor*.
- What skills or knowledge does my team need to successfully meet Emergency Services Standards?
- What is my motivation?
- Why is Expedited Services necessary?

Group 4 will answer questions related to the *Customer*.
- What am I here to receive?
- How does Expedited Services benefit me?
- What do I perceive as quality service?
- How does DHS show that it cares about Oklahomans?

Questions for discussion:
1. When coaching, which perspectives do you need to keep in mind?
2. Why are other people’s perspectives important?
3. What is important for managers to remember as they coach their employees?
4. How would a more collaborative style of coaching help bridge the gaps between the different perspectives in our agency?

**The Importance of Questions: Bad-to-Good Coaching Questions**

Divide participants into pairs and have them change the list of not-so-great questions into ones that can be used in an effective coaching session:

1. Why are you behind schedule?
2. What’s the problem with this project?
3. Did you make your sales goal?
4. When can I expect to have this report from you?
5. Why did you fail to complete this project?
6. Whose fault is it that we did not meet our timeliness goal this month?
7. Why can’t you all work together?
8. How far are you with this case? Can you finish it by 4 p.m. today?
9. Did you like this training?
10. How is everything going?

Review answers with participants and then answer the questions for discussion.

Questions for discussion:
1. What were some of the things that made the original list not so great? What did you do to correct them?
2. What is important to keep in mind when formulating a question?
3. How do questions play a role in Collaborative Coaching?

**Where do we want to go? (Precursor to TGROW Model)**

Have participants think about and write down three changes in their office that would dramatically improve customer service and productivity. In addition, they should note two other factors that are needed to make those changes.

Example:
1. Less wait time for clients in waiting room
   a. Clerical staff knowledge of county office practices.
   b. Programs staff seeing clients in timely manner.

Have participants share their answers and then complete the questions for discussion:

**Questions for discussion:**
1. How much control do you have over the likelihood that the desired changes will take place?
2. What is your role in ensuring these changes happen?
3. How could coaching play a role in making these changes?
4. How helpful would it be to have a vision statement that describes the future state of your county office?

**The TGROW Model of Coaching**

Have participants break up into groups of four or five, with at least two people agreeing to play the employee. Have each group read one scenario and answer the following questions. They should also come up with at least one question for each section designed to assist their staff member with developing goals and moving forward.

1. Identify the issue. (Topic)
2. What is the desired outcome? (Goals)
3. Discuss what is currently happening. (Reality)
4. What options can be offered? (Options)
5. What will you do to foster a change in behavior? (Way forward)

**Subject: Karen**
Karen has been a SNAP supervisor for almost three years. Overall, her performance is very good, and her team’s error and timeliness rates stay above the acceptable limit. By nature, she is a perfectionist and wants to approve only those cases that are perfect and error-free. In fact, Karen has become a bottleneck for her team. This lack of time management affects other aspects of her work such as assisting staff, returning phone calls in a timely manner, and completing other administrative work.

**Subject: Larry**
Larry has worked for the SNAP program for over 20 years, and he understands and adheres to DHS policies very well. However, Larry is having difficulty performing new duties associated with AFS’ new Collaborative Coaching initiative. He feels that his duties as a supervisor are fine as they are, and if his group is performing to standards, then there is no need to coach them.

**Subject: Alice**
Alice has worked in AFS for eight years. During this time, she has always volunteered for extra duties, received great feedback, and was promoted to supervisor. As the county director, you have received information that a county director is retiring in your region. Alice would be a perfect candidate, and it would provide a nice stepping-stone to prepare her for larger leadership roles in AFS. However, there are a few skills she needs to gain in the delegation and leadership arenas before she will truly be ready to apply for this position.
Subject: Dalton
Dalton is a supervisor that has bought into the concept of Collaborative Coaching and tries to coach his staff on a weekly basis. However, he has conflicts with a few members of his team and, as a consequence, he does not coach them as much as the others. You are aware of this, and Dalton excused this behavior by saying those employees are performing well and do not need as much assistance as the others. You agree with this, but still want all employees to be developed.

Subject: Carol
Carol is an excellent employee in your office who consistently exceeds expectations for timeliness and accuracy. Your office has recently developed new SOPs standards that very specifically state that all cases must be completed in the interview room. Her supervisor does a Gemba Walk and notices that Carol takes her casework back to her desk and finishes her work there. When asked why, she stated that she can complete the case faster, and moving to her desk frees up an interview room for someone else to use, which is needed due to the shortage of interview rooms at this particular office. Your supervisor has requested assistance in sorting out this issue with Carol and you are stepping in to help.

Questions for discussion:
1. Were all of the answers the same or different? Why?
2. What is the difference between Alice’s issue and all the others?
3. What are some questions we can begin asking in each of these scenarios to learn more information?

Agreeing on SMART Objectives
Have the participants break up into the same groups that were used for the TGROW Model of Coaching exercise. They should also use the same scenarios, roles and TGROW answers to inform the development of SMART Objectives for the subjects. Participants will set objectives by completing each section of the SMART acronym.

Specific: What is the exact outcome that is to be accomplished? The statement should contain both an action verb and an object.

Measurable: How will you verify that progress and/or success is achieved? Use quantifiable terms where possible.

Achievable: Does the employee possess the necessary skill and knowledge to reach the objective? Do they have sufficient motivation and the resources?

Relevant: Does this objective have real benefits for the organization? It could also be a developmental benefit for the employee to prepare her for a more advanced role.

Time Constrained: What are the dates for milestones, deadlines, etc.? If there is no deadline, a statement such as “at all times” or “in accordance with laid down procedures” should be used.

Full SMART Objective:
Questions for discussion:
1. At what point in the TGROW model are SMART objectives developed?
2. What was the most difficult part of developing the objective?
3. What are the next steps you would take to help the employee reach a goal?

Walking the Gemba: Origami Gemba
Divide participants into groups of three: one pair and an observer. Give one person in the pair a Frog instruction sheet and the other person a Boat instruction sheet.

Tell the groups that the person with the Frog sheet will be the Coach and instruct the Folder, who has received the boat sheet, on how to create the frog. The Observer will be given the Coaching Gemba worksheet. Physically split up the group and allow 15 minutes for the practice of origami. During this time, the Observers should complete the preparation section of the Gemba worksheet. Facilitators may assist the coaches and observers with the process so they get as proficient as possible.

Put the pairs back together and allow 10 minutes for Coaches to instruct the Folders on how to create a frog. The Coach should try to incorporate as much material from today’s training as possible into their instruction session. Instructions can be verbal only. The Coaches are not allowed to use any visual aids such as the instruction sheet, hand gestures, or touching the paper or Folder. During this time, allow the Observers to take notes but they are not allowed to talk or interact with the pair at all. Once the 10 minutes is over, allow time for role-playing. Have the Observer answer the following questions.

- What did you observe?
- What types of questions could you ask about the coaching session to gain understanding, build confidence, and encourage solution thinking?
- What could your next steps be?

Questions for discussion:
1. In order to effectively do a Gemba Walk on coaching, how important is it to understand what is being coached?
2. How did this exercise speak to the need for preparation prior to going on a Gemba Walk?
3. How could the Observers begin coaching the Coaches based on what they saw? What are some of the next steps the Observers can take?

Active Listening Self-Assessment (Precursor to Active Listening)
Instruct participants to complete this self-assessment at their seats and then rate themselves on how adept they are at the three aspects of active listening listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When another person is speaking to me, I...</th>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>MOST OF THE TIME</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make eye contact with the person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Think of different perspectives I have on the same topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rephrase the comments and ideas back to the other person.  
Try to anticipate what the person will say next.  
Pay attention to his or her facial expressions, hand gestures, posture and other physical cues.  
Think about issues not related to the conversation.  
Think about what I am going to say next.  
Interrupt to make a point or comment.  
Prepare a response to a prior comment.  
Smile, nod or give other physical cues in response.  
Ask follow-up or probing questions to gain clarity or get more information.  
Immediately react emotionally to the message.

The results of this assessment can help direct and focus your efforts to improve your listening skills. This assessment considers how adept you are at three aspects of active listening: focus, feedback and filtering.

- **Focus**: Being attentive to the speaker and the message he or she is trying to convey.

- **Feedback**: Completing the communication cycle by encouraging the speaker, asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing statements and summarizing key points.

- **Filtering**: Creating personal meaning from the speaker’s comments. Putting the speaker’s comments in context with your own experiences, knowledge and perceptions.

If you scored yourself more toward the “Always” column on questions 6, 7 and 9, or toward the “Never” column on questions 1 and 5, you may need to work on your focus when listening to others.

If you scored yourself more toward the “Always” column on question 8 or toward the “Never” column on questions 3, 10 and 11, you may need to work on how effectively you provide feedback when listening to others.

If you scored yourself more toward the “Always” column on questions 2, 4 and 12, you may need to work on how you filter information when listening to others.
Active Listening: Travel Agency
Divide the participants into pairs, one Customer and one Travel Agent. They are going to play a game called “travel agent” and it will take place in two rounds.

- The Customers are instructed to speak about their lifestyles and ideals for a vacation destination without naming any place. Conversations last about five minutes.
- The Travel Agents must listen closely, because after the conversation they will have two minutes to put together a vacation package including travel, a hotel and a few activities.
- The Customers then give feedback to the Travel Agents on their vacation ideas.
- For Round 2, the Customers and Travel Agents swap places and repeat this exercise.

Questions for discussion:
Travel Agents:
1. Did you find it easy or difficult to listen? Why?
2. What techniques did you employ to listen attentively and show that you are following the conversation?

Customers:
1. What techniques were most effective in showing that the Travel Agent cared?
2. Were you happy with the recommendations you received from the Travel Agent after explaining your situation?

Facilitator: Was there a pattern in misunderstandings and, if yes, what caused them?

The Art of Feedback: Shaping Up
Divide the group into pairs — Supervisors who give instructions and Employees who follow instructions. This exercise is played in two rounds. Participants sit with their backs to each other. All the Supervisors in this training game are given a figure on a paper, seen at the right.

Round 1:
The Employees are given an empty sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. The Supervisors are expected to communicate the figure to their Employees so that the Employees are able to draw an exact replica.

In the first round, a constraint is introduced. The Employees are told not to speak while playing this round of the training game. They can only listen and draw according to the instructions by Supervisors.

After everybody has finished playing the round, the Employees share their version of the figure with the Supervisors.

Round 2:
In this round, the Supervisors are given a second figure. This time the Employees are given the opportunity to speak and check with
Developing People Through Collaborative Coaching

the Supervisors about any instructions that they did not understand. After they have finished, the Employees show their figures.

After the pairs review the second work, do the questions for discussion.

Questions for discussion:
1. Which round was easier? Why?
2. How did the feedback improve from the first round to the second round? Why was it more helpful?
3. How was the second round’s feedback more FAST than the first round?
   - Frequent
   - Accurate
   - Specific
   - Timely

Guidelines for Effective Delegation
Instruct participants to divide into groups of five. One participant is the supervisor and the others are employees. For this exercise, participants are asked to make 15 airplanes in five minutes. The exercise is played in two rounds.

Round1:
Supervisors will leave the tables to go learn how to create paper airplanes. Once they’ve mastered this work, they then join their group. The supervisors then decide, on their own, the following items:
   - Roles
   - How tasks associated with creating a paper airplane are assigned, ensuring that workload is distributed evenly
   - How resources will be distributed

Once the team begins the work, the supervisor’s job is to oversee them, which includes clarifying work and coaching as needed.

Round 2:
The supervisor now works with the team to establish a plan for getting the work done. They will evaluate their process collaboratively by praising what went well and redirecting what could have been done better. During this time, the supervisor should coach the team, offer constructive feedback, and encourage solution thinking. The team works on the airplanes again, this time with their new roles and resource plans.

Questions for discussion:
1. Supervisors: Which was easier — the first round or second round?
2. How did Supervisors decide on your method of delegation? Was there a reason that certain tasks were assigned to certain people?
3. How did the group decide on the delegation plan?
4. Was the following covered?
   - Target
   - Clarity on how to make the airplanes
   - Did everyone feel responsible?
   - Did everyone understand how his or her role fit into the larger picture, or were people simply assigned specific tasks?
5. What are some tasks that can be delegated in your offices?
6. What are the elements of good delegation?

**Self-Assessment of Your Coaching Skills**
Once the class is over, participants will take this self-assessment with the knowledge they've received from the class. Participants will answer questions on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being “Completely Agree.”

1. I already possess the skills and knowledge I need to be an effective coach.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

2. I use delegation as a means of developing others’ skills.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

3. I set clear goals for staff as targets.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

4. I give specific and timely feedback.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

5. I feel I have resources available to me to assist with coaching my employees.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

6. I know how to prepare my employees for coaching.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

7. I observe my employees’ work and behavior.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

8. I tend to ask open-ended questions.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

9. I work with employees to reach agreement on desired goals and outcomes.  
   - Completely disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Neutral  
   - Agree  
   - Completely agree

10. I can separate observations from judgments or assumptions.  
    - Completely disagree  
    - Disagree  
    - Neutral  
    - Agree  
    - Completely agree

**Questions for discussion:**
1. What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
2. If you do need assistance with Collaborative Coaching, where can you turn?
3. What are some other resources you have available to you to help with Collaborative Coaching?
4. How can you get started?

**What is Coaching?**

Coaching is a cost-effective, efficient way of supporting employee development and growth. Unlike a training course, coaching is flexible in its timing and an integral part of the day, providing exactly what is wanted, where and when it is wanted. At its best, it is a partnership where both sides gain satisfaction. For this to work, both parties need to be motivated to participate in the coaching process by being open and trusting, as well as by setting the ground rules for coaching to take place.

A good definition of coaching is “the art or science of someone helping another reach higher effectiveness by creating a dialogue that leads to self-awareness and action.” Other views about coaching are listed below. How similar or different is your definition from those in this list?

“Coaching is not giving advice or giving solutions. It is about helping the other person find his or her own solution.”

“Coaching is a cyclical process of enhancing the other person’s awareness of ‘what is really going on,’ guiding them to choose responsibility for the actions they will take to achieve their personal goals and helping them to evaluate the consequences.”

“You can get the best efforts from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within them.”

“A very important factor in coaching is to define personal goals and intended actions required to achieve those goals”

“The effects of good coaching are reciprocal. Effective coaching helps managers and leaders to experience the satisfaction of seeing others grow and develop and perform at their best.”

“Coaching is gaining acceptance and recognition as an emerging profession because it works. While individual coaching continues to be important for personal and professional development, team coaching is increasingly utilized within organizations. Coaching with teams creates the opportunity for broader organizational impact and performance.”
Collaborative Coaching

Collaborative Coaching is a vehicle for the continuous growth, encouragement and development of AFS employees. It focuses on the relationship between the supervisor and employee, and fosters open dialogue and the exchange of information.

**Purposes of a coaching conversation**

- To focus attention on key issues affecting performance of employees
- To develop employee skills and prepare them for greater responsibility
- To focus on the detail and content of the conversation as it relates to the key issues
- To promote personal responsibility for the problems or resolve issues they identify as part of the coaching conversation
- To encourage supervisor-employee cooperation, to discover what obstacles stand in the way of success, and what both can do to help remove them
- To create a positive feedback loop between the supervisor and team member through listening and engaging
- To disseminate information at the unit, office, division and agency levels

Supervisors possess greater experience and program knowledge than their subordinates, which means that they are able see more potential solutions or alternatives to issues than employees often do. The urge to give people the correct answer might be strong, but most employees find more motivation to perform if they come to their own conclusion that development is necessary. In addition, one theory of business management suggests that employees behave the way they do because they pick the best alternatives from their pool in a given situation. Collaborative Coaching allows supervisors to provide the tools and situations to accelerate how quickly employees accumulate additional choices and aims to help the coached discover answers for themselves rather than accept those forced upon them.
Collaborative Coaching is not only about fixing what is wrong with performance, it is also about recognizing what folks do correctly and building on their strengths. One study found that managers recognize their employees less than one-fourth of the time that they make achievements, despite recognition and achievement being powerful motivators for employees to perform higher. Additionally, since Collaborative Coaching is about deeper relationships, supervisors learn more about employees' natural interests and inclinations, and can use this information to help employees further grow.

Collaborative Coaching can also act as a vehicle for distributing information and gaining feedback. As supervisors coach their employees at all levels, information will be able to travel in a top-down and bottom-up fashion. This will result in a decreased gap between the state office and fieldwork, as well as between those in leadership positions and those on the front lines. Having everyone on the same page will in turn allow AFS to strategically moving forward in one direction while always striving to provide the best customer service possible.

Construction of a coaching conversation

- Ask probing questions: “How much? When you say a lot, how many do you mean?” “When you say … can give me an example.”
- Do not be too critical when coaching individuals.
- Avoid questions that give the impression of scrutiny.
- Try to be aware of the level of comprehension of all persons involved, test assumptions, rationalizations, values, beliefs, etc.
- When a person is vague in detail, follow up with clarifying questions.
- Start broad then increase the focus to the specifics.
- Follow interests and reflect the words of the other person back to them. “You said that you feel unable to challenge the way things are done. Tell me a little more about why you feel this way.”

The following are the eight components that outline the essentials of Collaborative Coaching that is used in many of the approaches to coaching people to maximize performance. Each component involves knowing the right question to ask and how to ask it, which will be covered in later sections.

Eight Essentials of Collaborative Coaching

One: Build Relationships
Make time every day to build and strengthen relationships with staff. Showing a genuine interest in their work and in them as people establishes a foundation for collaborative coaching. Having good rapport with people is the essential starting point of a coaching conversation, and also allows supervisors to know how to encourage and motivate the individuals who report to them.

Two: Go See
Rather than waiting for staff to come to them, supervisors should go out and ask people how they are doing. Prevention rather than cure is far more productive in the long term. Do not wait for a performance evaluation review to undertake coaching. Coaching opportunities will present themselves much more frequently.

Three: Clarify Roles
Clarify whether the employee could use assistance or support to tackle the challenge in hand, or whether they just need to be heard.

**Four: Ask Questions**
Ask questions that help both the supervisor and employee gain a more accurate picture of the issue. Tease out facts from beliefs and look at the situation through the eyes of different stakeholders to get a more complete view of the problem. Share any additional facts or information that can help clarify the situation. Formal or informal feedback from others is a useful way of identifying the key issues. Solving the problem rather than the symptom can take more time, but can have lasting benefits.

**Five: Actively Listen**
Managers should ensure they are “fully present” in the conversation and give full attention to what the other person is saying by actively listening. Active listening is not just waiting for an opportunity to speak. Occasionally repeat back a summary of what has been said to ensure it was understood correctly. Try to refrain from jumping in with solutions or supplying personal anecdotes.

**Six: Identify Options Together**
Help the employee identify different options, and then help them evaluate each one. “Have you considered…?” rather than “If I were you I would…..” Keep ownership with the employee.

**Seven: Obtain Commitment**
Ask the employee to make a firm commitment to the next steps they will take. These steps may involve a total resolution of the problem, or in some cases they may only be initial actions leading to a subsequent decision on how to solve the problem or even redefine the problem.

**Eight: Follow Up**
Finish the conversation by indicating that there will be follow-up at a predetermined date and time. Then follow up with the employee and see how things have gone.

The eight essentials of coaching are examples of how the coaching process is essentially a reflective learning process. We are all busy “doing” every minute of every day and coaching represents the opportunity to stop and think before resuming business as usual. The role of the coach is to help this thinking process to move employees through the process of figuring out the problem, the solution, and then implementing the solution.

**The Importance of Questions**
Despite popular opinion, leadership is not about knowing all the answers. It is about knowing what questions to ask and carefully listening to those answers. Questioning, if done correctly, can inspire, motivate and empower an organization. It encourages teamwork, spurs innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, builds relationships, bolsters accountability, and helps align the different perspectives of an organization to create a shared focus. For these reasons
and more, one of the main aims of Collaborative Coaching is to develop a culture where asking questions is expected, safe and even desired.

Supervisors bear the responsibility of creating a questioning climate, which is an environment where employees feel safe asking and being asked questions and where questioning becomes as easy as breathing. This allows employees at all levels to learn and think critically and provides opportunities for individuals to offer new insights and ideas for improvements and solutions. Innovations happen when people see things differently. In addition, a questioning culture is not one where only leaders ask questions. Everyone is encouraged to question one another, which in turn helps to build solid teams, further increase employee motivation, and encourage employees to accept ownership of the solutions they have uncovered.

Creating a questioning culture is a large undertaking that moves the organizational mindset from telling to asking. However, it is not impossible, and these strategies can assist in this endeavor:

- Start at the top: Continuously search for opportunities to ask questions. This models good questioning behavior and will help erode the view that leaders’ roles are to provide information and have all the answers.
- Create an environment that enables people to challenge the status quo, take risks and ask more questions.
- Connect questioning to the organization’s values and processes.
- Build questioning into as many activities as possible, even if the information is potentially unwelcome.
- Report and appreciate questioners.
- Promote risk-taking and tolerate mistakes.
- Encourage dialogue at all levels in the organization.
- Allow people the freedom to adopt a questioning style of work on their own. Give employees as many opportunities to practice questioning as possible.

**Good questions do:**
- Focus attention on a particular matter
- Empower people to think and discover their own answers
- Build on previously asked questions
- Be open-ended
- Allow people to explore ideas and express what is important to them
- Encourage problem-solving

**Good questions do not:**
- Focus on why the person did not or cannot succeed
- Intend to assign blame
- Hint or search for a specific answer
- Be closed-ended
- Confuse the answerer
- Get asked as a set of multiple inquiries

Examples:
**Ask:** How have sales been going?
**Instead of:** Did you make your sales goal this month?

**Ask:** You said there are difficulties between you and a coworker; what do you think caused these difficulties?
**Instead of:** Why can’t you get along with your coworker?
**Ask:** Which of these objectives do you think will be the easiest to accomplish? Which will be the most difficult?

**Instead of:** What is the problem with this project?

In addition to asking questions, supervisors must be aware of their own mindset. It is important to come from a place of learning, rather than judging. This type of leader is less fixated on responsibility and more open to new possibilities and finding solutions. In addition, it is helpful to focus on what went well, what else could be done, and how it could be improved. Focusing on what might be rather than what is not is critical to individual and organization development and growth. When supervisors frame a questioning session and let employees know that they are questioning to learn and are upfront with the purpose of the conversation, it sets minds at ease and allows for true dialogue to begin.

Questions can have a variety of purposes, but they all boil down to providing information, fostering communication, building teams, and solving problems. Below are several categories of purposes that questions might have. Can you think of any more purposes questions can fulfill?

**Relationship-Building:**
- How can I help you?
- What would you do?
- What would someone else do?
- How do you feel about that?

**Learning and Career Development:**
- How do you learn best?
- How did you foster your own development?
- What were the most challenging and exciting career development opportunities that you have experienced?
- What made it challenging and exciting?

**Problem to Action:**
- Can you more fully describe your concerns?
- What are the consequences of this problem?
- What is a viable alternative?
- What are your goals?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages you see in this suggestion?

**Progress Update**
- Are you still on track to have this report completed by Friday?
- Do you have all the information you need?
- Would it be useful for us to go through some aspects of this project?
- Have you run into any obstacles or difficulties?
- Is the plan we created working for you?

**To Build Teams:**
- How has this problem affected us?
- How can we improve our communication and collaboration?
- How can we bring our different views together?
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- Does anyone have anything else to add? Are we missing any input?
- Does anyone have a different idea?
- How has this session/meeting gone?

Shape Strategy and Enable Change

- What does the future look like if we continue running as planned?
- How can we make sure we stay on track?
- What do we want people to focus on now?
- What limitations are we placing on thinking, planning or actions?
- How can we better serve our customers?

Ten Great Coaching Questions

Michael Marquardt — an international business advisor and author — states that, “Poor leaders rarely ask questions of themselves or others. Good leaders, on the other hand, ask many questions.” As we saw earlier, questions transform problems and possibility-talk into action as they move people from present to future. By asking people what they think, supervisors encourage employees to expand their own opportunities to develop ideas, to be listened to, and to test out actions. This leads to awareness and the development of new abilities. Below is a list of questions and leading statements that can assist in coaching and developing employees. Some may have been mentioned already, but they are important enough to repeat.

- “Do I understand . . . ?” This question takes responsibility for not yet having understood. No blame is attached to the speaker.

- “Help me to understand what is going on with you right now . . . .” Although this is a request, it is received as a question. In order to explain to the listener what is going on, the speaker must first understand it themselves. This question allows for a less emotional and more logical view of their situation.

- “If you did know, what might it be?” This is asked when the speaker says they do not know how to respond to a specific question. Often they cannot answer because they are blocking out or suppressing the answer. This question gives them permission to imagine what the answer is as if they are making it up, allowing the real answer to come out.

- “What do you need (from me) right now?” This question allows the speaker to connect with and express their true needs.

- “What would be a good question for me to ask right now?” This question works because it takes the coach to the most relevant areas of the situation. Also, it stimulates objectivity for the person.

- “What does this person/client need from me right now?” This is a question the coach asks of themselves in order to give themselves a direction.

- “And. . . ?” If you’re not sure which direction to go in, or if you feel there’s more the speaker needs to say.

- “Because. . . ?” Encourages the person to explore their rationale or assumptions.
“You want to leave this session at XX time having achieved exactly what?” Enables the person to focus on successful outcomes within their time frame. (A less effective version of this might be: “What would you like to achieve, if that’s possible, within our time constraints?”)

“What have you achieved that you might not have been aware of at the time?” Allows a person to start filtering for what they have done that has worked for them.

The TGROW Model of Coaching
As previously stated, the overall purpose of coaching is to develop people’s skills and abilities while boosting performance through conversation between the coach and the coached. One of the key roles of those in leadership positions is to align and maximize an individual’s efforts with the success of the team. The TGROW model serves to provide a structure for any coaching conversation, be it a personnel issue, process improvement effort, or the development of an employee. The model ends with action, but it is preceded by the stages of analysis and choice, and contains strategic questioning along the way. The benefits of using such a model are that it puts the other person at the center of learning and engages them at the onset. This model also helps consolidate learning, and applies it to other situations because it helps solve problems with the person rather than for the person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T – Topic</th>
<th>What are we going to talk about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G – Goals</td>
<td>What do you want to happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R – Reality</td>
<td>What is happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O – Options</td>
<td>What could be done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W – Way forward</td>
<td>What will you do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the GROW model of coaching J. Whitmore (2002)

Topic
- Tell me about?
- What would you like to think/talk about?
- Explain _______ in a few sentences.
- What are you trying to achieve in the longer term?
- What would you say are your essential “must achieves”?

Goal
- What is the specific aim of this discussion?
- How much personal control or influence do you have over this goal?
- What would a milestone look like?
- What do you want to achieve by doing this?
- Is that positive, challenging and attainable?
- How could you measure this as an outcome?
- How do you think coaching will help you reach your goal?
**Reality**

- What is happening now?
- Who is involved?
- When things go badly on this issue, what happens to you?
- What is the effect on others?
- What have you done so far?
- What effect did this have?
- What do you feel is holding you back?
- What is really going on here?
- Is this a symptom or a cause?
- What is going well for you? What is not going so well?
- What would happen if you didn’t take action on this matter?

**Options**

- What options do you have?
- What else could you do?
- What if….? (time, resources, influence)
- What are the costs and benefits of each option?
- What are the risks, if any, of doing this?
- What are the risks, if any, of doing nothing?

**Way Forward**

- Which option do you choose?
- To what extent does this meet your objectives?
- What are your criteria for success?
- What support do you need and from whom?
- What else could you do?
- Who needs to know your plans and how will you inform them?
- What precisely are you going to do — what steps?
- What could hinder you taking these steps?
- When will you get started on this goal?
- How often will you work on this goal?
Agreeing on SMART Objectives

The Goal portion of the TGROW model is an important initial stage of the coaching process. Having a SMART goal or objective to discuss provides a useful focal point in a coaching conversation. It clarifies the overall purpose of a work-based coaching conversation, which is to improve or maintain performance.

An objective is a written statement of intent that clearly describes what actions or tasks, with measurable end results, an individual, team or organization wants to achieve within a specified time period. There can be hard objectives or soft objectives. A hard objective is when a quantifiable output is to be achieved. An example of a hard objective is a 10 percent increase in student numbers in the accounting
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degree program. Conversely, it is difficult to attach a number to a soft objective. Descriptions are often the best way of setting soft objectives. You may also have objectives related to developing skills or knowledge. For example: John is to attend an advanced Excel training course by September to enable him to use macro-commands to speed up data analysis in the Finance Department.

What are the benefits of objectives?

- Give direction to an individual’s work.
- Ensure that it is clear what tasks an individual is expected to focus on.
- Make clear the standards to which individuals are expected to perform in their role.
- Clarify priorities and the relative importance of tasks and activities.
- Clarify the purpose of the role and its place and contribution in the team or department.
- Provide an opportunity to think systematically about all aspects of the job and performance.
- Provide a basis for discussing how people are doing.
- Provide an agenda for professional and personal development.

SMART Objectives

Specific
- Unambiguous and clear to those contributing to its attainment so misunderstandings are minimized
- Clearly written, leaving little room for doubt or ambiguity
- Normally stating an outcome and not simply an activity
- Specifying a single key result to be achieved
- Containing a verb and an object – i.e. what is to be accomplished/end result/value added by the activity
- Containing a standards component indicating expected level of activity or outcome

Measurable
- Capable of verification so that progress can be monitored
- Quantified in terms of numbers and/or standards wherever possible
- Where quantification is not possible, other success criteria could be devised
- Quantity and quality can impact one other

Achievable
- Challenging and interesting; one that lacks sufficient challenge may lead to boredom
- Exciting wherever possible, but realistic; an objective that is not achievable may cause de-motivation
- Take account of factors beyond the individual’s control
- Job holders should have necessary skill and knowledge to achieve objectives, or be able to acquire them quickly as part of personal development needs identified
- Consistent with available resources
- Serve as a motivational or a developmental tool for the individual

**Relevant**
- Have a real application and benefit within the organization
- Be within a job holder’s authority to deliver
- May be developmental to allow people to move to different roles

**Time-Constrained**
- Indicate target dates (start and end), milestones, timescales or deadlines
- Where a specific timescale is not applicable, a statement such as “at all times,” “in accordance with laid down procedures” etc. should be used.

*Objectives provide the focus for coaching conversations.*
*The SMARTer the objectives, the sharper the focus of the coaching conversation.*

**Sources of objectives**
- **Problems and their avoidance:** Problem-solving when something is missing, not being done, or needs to be developed; ongoing activities needed for “business as usual”
- **Possibilities and projects:** Innovation, opportunities on which to capitalize; new projects, initiatives, courses, modules etc. to develop
- **Processes:** Related to achieving specific measurable improvements in the outcomes of a process
- **Practices:** Where a different way of doing something needs to be found
- **Personal development:** Developing knowledge, skills and abilities for current or future roles

**Other characteristics of objectives**
- **Clarity versus brevity:** Work objectives can be short and sweet but this is not essential. Clarity, however, (to those involved) is essential.
- **Broad or narrow:** Work objectives can be broad or narrow in scope. For broader objectives (e.g. “upgrade and improve the capacity and resilience of the student portal”), the measurement criteria will need to be specified with particular care so that progress and performance can be evaluated. For example, install “x” by “y” time.
- **Situational and recurring:** Work objectives can address situational (e.g. one-off situations, i.e. organize a conference) or recurring work requirements (e.g. day-to-day activities, i.e. teaching on a particular module).
- **Results versus activity:** Work is a process with a result or outcome. Results and activity/action are not the same. Both results objectives and activity objectives can
be valid but they should not be confused. Both should reflect, in measurable terms, the results of value-added by the activity. Furthermore, people may perceive ends (end results) and means (activities to achieve end results) differently depending on their position in the organization. One is a measure of outcome: Have you achieved what you set out to achieve? The other is an example of an "in-process measure": Are you achieving what you set out to achieve? It is not enough, when setting objectives, simply to discuss WHAT must be achieved and HOW. The person must also understand the larger context: WHY the achievement is important and where it fits into the team and organizational context.

Walking the Gemba
In Lean Six Sigma, the term Gemba is used to describe visualizing and observing how work is done at the level of the worker. It is a Japanese word that means “the real place.” In an application sense, it means going into an office and watching a worker perform their daily duties in an effort to fully understand how a specific process works. It is often referred to as “walking the Gemba” or “doing a Gemba Walk” and is the place that matters most. It is the place where real value is created, which at AFS is where clients are served.

During the Gemba Walk, supervisors should assess the current state of the work being done and look for opportunities to coach staff on the strategies they need to obtain their goals. Sometimes, accomplishing the Gemba will entail a tremendous amount of walking, but all too often, it's merely standing around and watching. This process not only develops staff, but checks the health of the leadership system by looking at how they engage their people and processes.

Walking the Gemba is the “Reality” portion of the TGROW coaching model and helps supervisors gain an understanding of the current reality of a process or behavior. The Gemba Walk is more of a process of observation than interaction. This is because the focus is on how things are currently being done, not on how to fix a broken process or behavior. It's the best way to see, first-hand and unmediated, obstacles and opportunities for improvement. It is also a great way to get the information needed to help staff make the best possible decisions and create strategies that will help them reach their goals and objectives.

It is important to envision what is supposed to be happening or the desired state. If this process were going perfectly, how would it look? Try hard to visualize in your mind a smooth, totally value-added workflow. In fact, prior to embarking on a Gemba Walk, there are a few key questions you should be able to answer:

- What process are you observing today?
- Why are you observing this process?
- What do you expect to see?
- Are you familiar with this process?

Once the process reasons for the observations are understood, it is time to go to the Gemba. Carefully think about and select the time you will observe to let staff know this in advance. Once
there, pay attention to process inputs, equipment, individual tasks, as well as social interactions that play a role in the process.

**There are four essential elements to the Gemba Walk:**

**Show Respect:**
- Trust the employee’s ability and desire to get the work done.
- The goal of the Gemba Walk is employee development.
- Do not offer solutions during the Gemba Walk.
- You will both collaborate on a solution later.
- Rely on people.

**Go See:**
- This is an observation, not an interaction or intervention.
- What did you see?
- Is the process different than expected?
- Does the process achieve the purpose?
- Does the process help the employee successfully complete the work?
- Does the employee show a clear understanding of the tasks involved?

**Ask Why:**
- What is the purpose of the process or practice you are observing?
- Is there waste (e.g., rework or bottlenecks) in the process or practice?
- What and where are the opportunities for process improvement?
- If the practice is not achieving the purpose, why not?

**Think About Next Steps:**
- Have you seen enough to know what is currently happening?
- What might you need to Gemba next? (upstream or downstream)
- Do you have a complete picture of the process observed?
- Is there a gap between your expectations and what you observed?
- Collaborate on how to close the gap.

When potential issues or problems are noted, focus in on one of them. Supervisors should ask “Why does this condition exist?” or “Where does the problem originate?” Go there and see. Study some more. How is it that *this* process fails to support its customer? Do employees have a clear understanding of what is expected? How do they know they delivered what their customer required? Do they *think* their output is defect-free?

**Questions managers should ask themselves while walking the Gemba:**
- Why is this process other than how you visualized it?
- What disrupts the work?
- Where could mistakes be made?
- What keeps those mistakes from being made?
- Is there a mechanism to cue the employee to the correct way or alert them that a mistake has been made?
- Is there any backtracking, rework, or looping around?
- Is equipment where it is actually needed?
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- Do people have to look around for things?
- How do employees know what they should be doing?
- What is the source of information?
- Do employees have to hunt information down, or guess at what should be done?
- Is there a pace to the work?
- Is there some type of deadline or time standard?
- How does the person know whether things are on time or not?
- When do employees learn they are behind?
- If the person encounters some kind of problem, something unexpected, something needed but not there, what happens?
- Is there a support system to get this person back on-point? Or is he or she left to his or her own devices to figure it out?

Often it helps to look at one person doing a single task, find a single issue, and follow the workflow upstream until the root cause is found. Mistakes made at the beginning of a process are usually carried forward to the end. Supervisors can get a robust picture of what is really happening by investigating the tasks before the process currently being observed. Once the root cause is identified, leaders must be careful to not simply fix the issue. The Collaborative Coaching model provides a framework in which supervisors and employees develop solutions together.

Active Listening

Active listening is a communication technique used in coaching, training and conflict resolution that requires the listener to feed back what they hear to the speaker, by way of re-stating or paraphrasing what they have heard in their own words to confirm the understanding of both parties. The proper use of active listening results in getting people to open up, avoiding misunderstandings, resolving conflict, and building trust.

Steps for Active Listening

Step One
Carefully select the location of the coaching conversation (if possible):

- Choose a quiet room or area free from the distraction of other people and noise
- Arrange seating to avoid any physical barriers such as a desk, but don't sit too close
- Set aside any other work you are doing
- Arrange for telephone calls to be diverted
- Remove or ignore any other distractions, including the email inbox
- Turn off the computer screen
- Close the door

Step Two
Create an atmosphere conducive to conversation:

- Make sure the person knows you want to listen to them: look interested and maintain eye contact without staring
- Give the other person your full attention
- Address the person by the name they want to be called, usually the first name
➢ Be patient — allow the person time to say all they want to say
➢ Maintain a relaxed posture and encourage the speaker to feel relaxed
➢ Be encouraging by leaning forward, nodding, putting your head to one side, smiling whenever appropriate
➢ Empathize as necessary if something difficult or painful, or different from your own beliefs or values, is being discussed
➢ Try not to take any views personally or be defensive

Step Three
Practice helpful listening **behavior**:
➢ Make appropriate listening noises: e.g. “Mmmm,” “yes,” “I see”
➢ Pause before responding to indicate that you are digesting what has been said
➢ Keep an open mind — do not prejudge people, jump to conclusions, argue or interrupt
➢ Keep in mind that other people may have a different point of view
➢ Be aware of your own emotions; listen carefully even where you might disagree
➢ Suspend prejudice; don’t allow the fact you disagreed make you turn a deaf ear to what is being said
➢ Concentrate on what matters by trying to get at the core of the response
➢ Be sensitive to mood, facial expressions and body movements to understand the full meaning of what is being said
➢ Imagine you are planning to make a report to someone else following the meeting and would want all the details of what you have heard
➢ Seek more information by summarizing, asking questions, repeating or paraphrasing
➢ Summarize to check your understanding. “What I heard you say is…."

Taking notes, while not required, is definitely recommended. Listening only occupies around 1/4 of our available mental capacity, and note-taking helps to keep the other 3/4 engaged. More importantly, it provides a record of the conversation and emphasizes the importance that is placed on what is being said. Many of these helpful behaviors listed will be made easier by good and accurate note-taking, but it is a good idea to explain to the speaker exactly why notes are being taken.

**Additional Tips for Active Listening**
1. Nonverbal signals are important and you should learn to recognize them in order to get the full picture.
2. Tone of voice is often as important as what is said.
4. Recognize that your own emotions affect the signals you send.
5. Do not let your own values, attitudes and beliefs get in the way.
6. Concentrate and pay attention to details.
7. Try to see things from the other person’s point of view.
8. Listen for understanding.
9. Plan in advance to avoid distractions.
10. Establish the performance criteria before you begin to observe or listen to issues relating to performance.
The Art of Feedback
A recent survey of over 25,000 supervisors from around the world included the question “Why don’t employees do what they are supposed to do?” and over 99 percent stated that employees either do not know what they are supposed to do, or they don’t know how to do it. This might sound surprising to those supervisors who are currently working on performance issues back at the office. However, the issues that were repeatedly brought up were a lack of direction or a lack of feedback.

Having management or leadership responsibilities can be a little intimidating, particularly if this type of responsibility is new to a leader. Suddenly they are not responsible for only their own work, but now have responsibility for the work of others. Dealing with expanded responsibility effectively boils down to building positive relationships. An essential component of building effective relationships with others is to open up and maintain effective lines of communication.

Communication is a two-way street: transmission and reception. The art of feedback is the ability to transmit and receive in the most effective way in order to achieve the dual purpose of motivation and development. Although feedback is a very useful part of the performance evaluation process, it would be unwise to just think of feedback as part of the annual performance evaluation review. Feedback needs to be undertaken in a fairly regular and consistent manner to be really effective.

How do you give feedback effectively?
Feedback is a process that helps people reflect and focus on what they are achieving, why they need to achieve this and how they are going about achieving it.

Feedback may be defined as "information about past behavior and actions, delivered in the present, which may influence any future behavior and actions." This term can have negative connotations for some people. For example, think how it might feel if someone says “Do you mind if I give you some feedback?” This question would put most people on the defensive, ready to explain why things are the way they are.

Supervisors must ensure that feedback is not perceived negatively or as a pejorative exercise. Feedback that is concerned with the behaviors and actions of employees is also concerned with the behaviors and actions of the supervisor. The tone and atmosphere created in giving feedback will often determine how effective and positive it will be. Feedback will need to be both balanced and constructive if it is to really address the aims of being motivational and developmental.

Aim One: Motivational:

Every social psychologist since Maslow has stressed the importance of motivation and recognition for a job well done. Praise is a leading motivator for employees, but it is only part of the story. For instance, say there is an employee who worked very hard to submit a grant application but the agency was not awarded funding. Focusing solely on the outcomes could be very de-motivating for that employee. Conversely, it may be that a grant application was
successful but the work the person did in securing funding was not as efficient or as effective as it could have been. Would focusing on only the positive outcomes be motivational for the person, or should the supervisor be obliged to look at the activities as well? The point is that partial feedback — focusing on only the positive or the negative aspects of work — can be counterproductive. **Feedback needs to be comprehensive in order to be motivational.**

### Aim Two: Developmental

Everyone has the capacity to improve or do things differently. It may be that improvement is achieved by not doing certain things or doing less of them. Individuals constantly make choices based on what is happening around them. **Development is mostly about building on what is already being done well.** Identifying areas for personal change and growth can be very positive and motivational for an individual if it is done well. In addition, giving feedback for those things that are not going well does not have to be confrontational. Words, tone of voice, and the order that information is presented can all play a part in making the feedback positive or negative. The type of feedback that is aimed at motivation and development is:

- Based on observable or observed behavior or actions
- Specific to a given situation
- Balanced in identifying what has been successful what has been less successful

A good rule of thumb is: "When in doubt, check it out." One of the best ways to check it out is through the effective use of questioning skills. Clarifying questions, (**So what you mean is...?**) expansion questions, (**You say...tell me more?**) direction questions, (**Can we explore this aspect a little bit more?)** fact-finding questions, (**What makes you think this is the case?)** feeling-finding questions, (**And how did this make you feel?)** and open questions (**What, when, why, how?)** can be used freely during conversation to test for the impact of your feedback. To improve the accuracy and clarity of a message during a feedback conversation, use clarifying feedback statements such as the following:

"Let me be sure I understand what you have said."
"Let's see if I can review the key points we've discussed."
"So what you are saying is...."
"I think I hear you saying that your central concern is...."
"As I understand it, your major objectives for next year are...."

Clarifying feedback statements can also end with the following:

"Did I understand you properly?"
"Did I hear you correctly?"
"Was this in line with what you meant?"
" Were those your major concerns?"
"Can you add anything to my summary?"

**Characteristics of effective feedback**

Feedback should be **FAST:**
➢ **Frequent**: Don’t wait until the next formal performance evaluation meeting. Give feedback as a matter of routine.

➢ **Accurate**: Descriptive of observed or verifiable behavior and facts, *not* evaluative of the person based on assumptions, interpretations, generalizations and judgments.

➢ **Specific**: Related to a specific, observable or verifiable behavior, action, event or result.

➢ **Timely**: Close to the event.

Examples:

😊 “That was a very poor report. I wish you were more committed to doing a good job. Just try and do it better next time please.”

😊 “I thought you ran the meeting very effectively. I saw that you ensured that everyone’s contributions were focused and allowed others to become involved in the discussion. One thing you may wish to consider is to send papers out before the next meeting to give everyone a chance to familiarize themselves beforehand. What else might make future meetings even more productive than this one?”

If a supervisor cannot be present to observe an employee at work, there should processes in place through which they can learn how the person is doing. These processes should be open, fast and understood by everyone concerned. For example:

➢ Looking at the outputs of employee work

➢ Having routine one-on-one meetings with employees that include discussion about their performance against agreed objectives

➢ Periodically review and discuss the standards of performance for employees’ jobs, and clarify with them mutual expectations of someone operating at the level defined by their role or job description

➢ Ask employees to write or email periodic updates

➢ Obtain feedback from customers or users of the service provided — in writing where possible

➢ Call in or phone, or carry out interim reviews

➢ Use 360-degree feedback. Ask for confidential evaluations by peers and, where appropriate, direct reports. This process should, however, be applied fairly to everyone and clearly understood by everyone.

Please note that there is a difference between timely and rushed feedback. When providing feedback around an emotionally charged event, it is better to wait a day or two (but never more than a week) until emotions have subsided a little. If the feedback involves a difficult issue, find an appropriate time and place. Make an appointment and have a meeting, but do not do it in the corridor or other common area. Supervisors should also be prepared — know what they are going to say and how they think about how the recipient might react.

**Basic guidelines for giving feedback**

➢ Be clear *what* you want to say and *why* you need to say it.

➢ Give feedback with care: take account of the needs of the receiver.

➢ Give feedback with attention to your own body language, tone of voice, and choice of words.
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- Be timely: Feedback is most useful when the recipient is receptive to it and when it is close to the event.
- Be specific: Behavioral feedback should be based on specific, observable or verifiable data and behavior.
- Emphasize the positive before moving on to areas for improvement.
- Refer to behavior that can be changed and not personality. Use statements that begin with “You did” rather than “You are.”
- Be descriptive rather than evaluative. Discuss the impact on performance or its consequences.
- If judgments must be included, state clearly that these are matters of subjective evaluation, then describe the situation as you see it and allow the recipient make the evaluation.
- Avoid “general” words like “all,” “never,” “always” etc.
- Be very careful with advice. The aim of feedback is to help the person to understand the issue better and to identify actions to improve or maintain in the future.
- Ask the recipient for his/her input after you have described your observations.
- Obtain feedback on your feedback. Think about a few recent occasions on which you gave feedback to someone and then answer the following questions:
  - What prompted you to give feedback on that matter at that time?
  - What was the substance of the feedback?
  - Was the impact positive or negative on the other person?
  - Was there any concrete action as a result?

Through feedback, supervisors and employees can agree which areas of performance to focus on and which ones need less time. It is important to confirm all uncertain verbal, vocal, and observable cues through feedback. Good feedback skills create a virtuous circle that has a much wider impact than on the individual who is receiving the feedback. This increased sense of mutual understanding will lead to less interpersonal tension, increased trust and respect, and higher levels of performance at an individual and an organizational level. Feedback that is done incorrectly can result in a win-lose mentality whereas everyone wins when communications lines are clear and open. In short, the proper and effective use of feedback skills leads to improved communication, which in turn leads to positive working relationships.

Where there are performance issues, meetings should be scheduled at regular and frequent intervals to discuss performance and provide feedback. Use coaching conversations as a way of providing a clear way forward for the other person to adopt. This proactive approach will ensure that issues are addressed promptly and foster a problem-solving approach between supervisor and employee. An action or development-planning approach to detailing employees’ objectives, the agreed performance standards, and any development needed to meet the agreed standard also helps to guarantee mutual understanding.
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Guidelines for Effective Delegation

At its heart, management is a function of getting work done through others. As managers use their direct reports to accomplish tasks, they create opportunities for these individuals to enhance their knowledge and/or skill level. Delegation allows other individuals or groups to work on a project or task that offers motivation and rewards upon its successful completion. It also offers managers the opportunity to grow and develop individuals who can then be recognized as high-level contributors to the goals of the unit. Effective delegation can be accomplished by coaching employees to improve their skills and knowledge level.

Managers who delegate effectively have teams that are more capable and enthusiastic. Employees view themselves as competent and are willing to take on more projects, thereby freeing up the manager's time to work on those tasks that cannot be delegated or to concentrate on strategic issues. Delegation is a key performance management tool because it will help to improve the performance of employees while enhancing management and leadership skills.

As valuable a management skill as it is, too often delegation is either nonexistent or done half-heartedly or haphazardly. When delegation is done half-heartedly, employees become dissatisfied and de-motivated, and will not improve their skill or knowledge levels. Delegation requires investment in time for regular monitoring and feedback for employees as they learn new skills or functions associated with their new tasks. As such, delegation is a critical tool of collaborative coaching and developing employees.

Delegation guidelines

It is crucial to establish the right tone and environment for effective delegating. This can be done by following these guidelines:

- Be very clear about what is wanted, and about when and how results will be measured. Ambiguity will lead only to a disappointing experience.
- Encourage people to tell about their special interests at work and about the time they have available for new work or projects.
- Build a sense of shared responsibility for the team's overall goals. Those goals should not be the supervisor's goals alone.
Avoid dumping only tedious or difficult jobs on your staff. Instead, delegate tasks that spark interest and can be enjoyable.

Provide career opportunities for others by delegating functions that have may high visibility within in a particular area.

Delegate to people whose judgment and competence are trusted. This requires that supervisors know staff and their capabilities very well.

Recognize that delegation is a learning experience for staff, so offer training or coaching as needed.

Develop trust in less-skilled or under-experienced staff members by delegating highly structured assignments. Make sure to provide the support they need to increase their competence.

Whenever possible, delegate an entire project or area of work and not just a small piece; doing this will increase motivation and commitment.

Monitor progress and provide feedback.

Maintain open lines of communication, “Let me know if you run into problems.” Don’t interfere.

Making Delegation Successful
When supervisors decide which tasks, projects or responsibilities can be delegated, what are the next steps? Below are some specific steps that help ensure success.

1. **Analyze the Specific Task That Needs to Be Done**
   - What is the scope of the work?
   - How important or visible is the outcome?
   - When does it need to be done? Is it urgent or is there time to train someone?
   - What are the specific measurable goals?
   - What is the level of responsibility being delegated?
   - What resources (tools, budgets, people and other resources) are available?

2. **Identify the Person for the Job**
   - What skills and experience do you need?
   - Who of the staff that can meet those needs?
   - Is there time on the delegated task to use this as a developmental activity?
   - What training and/or support will the individual need to be successful?

Once there is a clear understanding of the task, the appropriate person must be selected. In order to take this next step, supervisors need to know their employees — their skills, experience and knowledge. What is not known can be found by interacting with the individual, speaking with past supervisors, or studying the latest performance evaluation review. The following list of information can help supervisors evaluate if staff that is the right match for the delegated activity:

- Areas of strength/weakness
- Capabilities
- Developmental needs
- Past work experience
- Career aspirations
- Fears and/or concerns

3. **Meet with the Employee and Explain What You Need Done**
   - Describe the task and the goals.
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- Specify why this person has been selected.
- Be specific about responsibilities and authority.
- Get the employee’s agreement that they will take this assignment. They need to be both confident and competent that they can achieve the task.

4. Implement the Delegation
- Allow the individual to run with the project — don’t interfere unnecessarily.
- Establish a follow-up plan.

5. Hold the Follow-Up or progress Meetings
- Be available for support.
- Discover problems early.
- Determine what is needed to ensure success.
- Praise what has been done well, and redirect what could have been done better.

Keep the following in mind:
- Delegation is an ongoing process, not an event.
- Make the entire delegation process as collaborative as possible
- Use coaching as a way of keeping this a two-way process in each of the five steps
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Tailor your monitoring to the individual
- Ask for regular progress reports (frequency depending on the individual). You may agree to use exception reports in order to not meeting unnecessarily, which can feel more like checking up on the person
- Provide timely and constructive feedback
- Encourage solution thinking
- Recognize that mistakes are part of learning. (How can you do it differently/more effectively next time?)
- Celebrate successes (even small ones)

As managers begin to delegate, they should remember that it is important to select the right person for the assignment. This means being prepared to work with that person on developing the new skills necessary for effective completion of the work. Once a task is delegated, supervisors can use coaching skills to ensure that work is still on track, as well as to ensure that any learning is used to develop the employee in a robust and effective way.

Resources


Useful websites

http://www.mentoringgroup.com/index.html

http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/Default.htm

http://www.associationforcoaching.com/home/index.htm

http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/lrnanddev/coachmntor/coaching.htm?IsSrchRes=1

http://www2.learndirect-business.com/business-courses/coaching

http://www.the-coaching-academy.com/

http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/Default.htm