

Coaching-2

# Hold Coaching Conversations

Your coaching superpower

What's the most effective way to build a strong, motivated team? Coaching!

**Through coaching, you help team members develop new skills and deeper levels of self-awareness.**

As a result, people grow, and your organization benefits by having ever-more-capable employees. Everyone wins!

**If coaching is so valuable, why don't managers use this superpower more often?** See if one of these statements describes you:

**Here are three ways you can use coaching to help team members make progress every day:**

- 1. Take advantage of** daily interactions on job tasks, project updates, and assignments to offer coaching.
- 2. Debrief** after a milestone or unexpected event.
- 3. Encourage people to seek feedback** from you on their goals, progress, and development.

# Seize the moment

Knowing *when* to coach is just as important as knowing *how* to coach. If you see someone struggling with a challenge, weighing an important decision, or striving to hit a goal, you may have spotted a “coachable moment.” At these times, your team member would benefit from reflection, insight, and feedback

Sometimes coaching isn’t appropriate, and instead you need to tell someone exactly what to do. In that case, **direct them** to take certain actions

So how do you know when to use each approach?

Use coaching	<div>When a team member...</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Takes on a stretch assignment</li><li>• Needs to decide among multiple possible outcomes</li><li>• Disagrees with a coworker or client</li></ul>
Use directing	<div>When a team member...</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires specific instruction</li><li>• Needs guidance on a technical process</li><li>• Must act or change behavior quickly</li></ul>

As you decide whether to coach or direct, **be aware of your tendencies.** You may naturally lean toward coaching, or you may be accustomed to telling others what to do.

# Coaching conversation essentials

Coaching isn't a fixed process. To be successful, you need to tailor your approach based on the needs of the person you're coaching.

**In addition to “coachable moments,” you can use formal conversations to support someone’s growth.** These require a bit more rigor, such as a defined action plan, documented observations, and scheduled check-ins to ensure the person you're coaching stays focused on their goals.

In all cases, though, you'll find it useful to follow three general steps for conducting an effective coaching conversation



1. CHECK FOR  
READINESS



2. HAVE THE  
CONVERSATION



3. AGREE ON  
NEXT STEPS

# Check for readiness

You've spotted an opportunity to coach and want to make the most of it. Maybe you want to guide a team member as they weigh options, work through a dispute, or navigate a challenge. Before you start a conversation, check that your coachee is ready.

Ask yourself, "Is my coachee likely to be receptive now?"

Ask your coachee, "Is now an okay time to go over [the event or task]?"

If your team member is distracted or defensive—or simply needs time to clear their head—it's likely your conversation won't produce the results you're hoping for.

If it's not, schedule a time to talk.

# Ready, set, coach

You're ready to have a coaching conversation. Get off to a good start by going into it with curiosity and an open mind

**Encourage  
Reflection**

**Listen**

**Ask**

**Share Your  
Thoughts**

**Encourage reflection** to help the person move beyond their initial reactions to deeper insight.

**Listen** by giving the person your full attention.

**Ask questions** to spark additional thinking.

**Share your thoughts** while avoiding dominating the discussion.

# Agree on next steps

Close the coaching conversation by agreeing on specific next steps

Resist the urge to tell a team member what *you* think should happen after the conversation ends.

**WHAT YOUR  
COACHEE WILL  
DO NEXT AND IN  
WHAT  
TIMEFRAME**

**WHETHER YOUR  
COACHEE NEEDS  
ANY RESOURCES  
FROM YOU**

**WHEN TO  
SCHEDULE A TIME  
TO FOLLOW UP  
TOGETHER**

Instead, encourage them to use insights gained in the conversation to take ownership of what needs to be done next and by when.

# Listen and Question Effectively

## Engagement, not autopilot

In a coaching conversation, once you've confirmed someone is ready to talk, your goal is to begin a dialogue in a nonjudgmental way—**with curiosity and an open mind.**

At different points in a conversation, good coaches:

- Encourage reflection
- Listen
- Inquire
- Offer input

Why?

Because these practices help you:

- Keep the focus on the person you're coaching
- Build rapport and trust
- Avoid giving too much direction or advice



# Reflect forward

**Reflection involves looking back to think deeply about something that happened.** Insights, new points of view, implications of certain choices—all of these come to light and lead to improvements moving forward.

As you begin a coaching conversation, help your team member reflect on a recent project or situation by asking:

**WHAT WENT  
WELL OR DIDN'T  
GO AS YOU  
EXPECTED?**

**HOW DO YOU  
FEEL ABOUT  
WHAT HAPPENED?**

**WHAT ELSE DO  
YOU NEED TO  
KNOW?**

**WHAT DID YOU  
LEARN THAT YOU  
CAN APPLY NEXT  
TIME?**

**Reflection can move someone who is stuck in a narrow view of a situation to see a broader perspective.**

# Listen actively and often

Here are ways to show that you're actively listening:

<b>Make eye contact</b>	Shows you're focused, interested, and not distracted
<b>Nod</b>	Demonstrates you're engaged
<b>Limit automatic verbal sounds, like "uh-huh"</b>	Allows the person time to fully complete their thought without feeling hurried
<b>Check for clarification</b>	Ensures you understand facts and details
<b>Pause for silence</b>	Allows the employee to suggest their own solution



Tip

Be honest if you can't listen with care and attention. Schedule a better time for the conversation—and keep the commitment.

The goal is to let the other person talk without interruption

# Inquiry—not inquisition

Coaching is a dialogue, and asking questions is an important way to spark additional thinking.

When you ask questions:

<b>Be open to possibilities</b>	Don't unconsciously encourage a certain answer. Allow the person you're coaching to respond freely.
<b>Ask neutral questions</b>	Avoid hinting at your perspective. Ask, "What are some options for next steps?" instead of "What do you think about taking a training class?"
<b>Pause to allow for a response</b>	Don't immediately jump in with a comment or another question.

# Three types of questions can help you deepen your understanding of a situation



## Open-ended

Open-ended questions don't have yes/no answers.

They generate lots of possible responses and prompt thoughtful analysis.

"What would you like to see happen?"

"What strikes you as important here?"

"What did you learn?"



## Closed-ended

Closed-ended questions generally elicit a yes/no answer or a statement of fact. They don't typically yield new insights or further discussion.

They work well when you want a short, direct answer to a specific question.

"Did you speak with marketing?"

"When will the sample be ready?"



## "Why"

Use "why" questions sparingly. They can make someone feel that you are questioning their choices and result in defensiveness.

Too many "why" questions can erode trust and reduce your effectiveness as a coach. Consider reframing "why" questions into open-ended questions that yield more information or insights.

"What were some reasons..."

"Tell me about..."