

COACHING ESSENTIALS

Andy Savva goes over top techniques to support your team's development

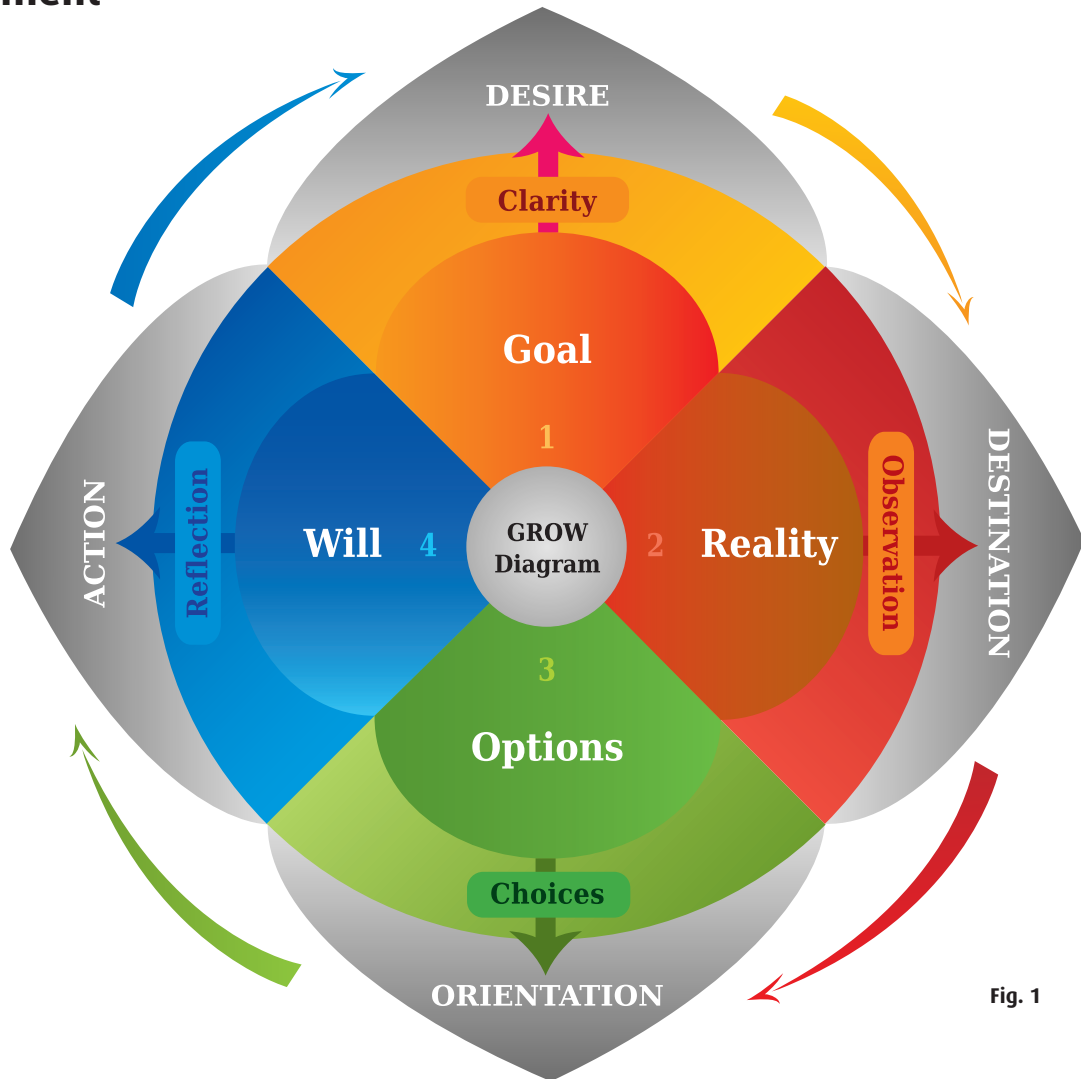


Fig. 1

There are four main types of support and development that can be provided to employees. Each has a different purpose, different benefits, and should be used for different situations and objectives. These are counselling, mentoring, coaching, and training.

Counselling is a form of consulting and often is part of a measurement outcome or employee evaluation. Counselling suggests therapeutic outcomes and focuses on the past. Coaching does not do this. Coaching may occur before counselling, instead of counselling, or in addition to counselling.



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People with an expertise conduct mentoring. This expertise enables them to advise new or inexperienced employees. Mentoring is a process that helps people with their career development. Mentors provide guidance to help people attain the kind of professional achievement they seek. Mentoring differs from coaching in that it is a long-term process and mentors have no responsibility to their mentees for personal and professional development. Mentors provide motivation, connections, and advice, but they do not directly enable mentees to improve their performance. Coaching is a conversation focused on helping other

people (the clients) move forward relative to their goals, hopes, and curiosities. Goals are accomplishments yet to be achieved; hopes and curiosities are the rough material of future goals. For coaching to be helpful, it needs to tie to something the client wants to accomplish. Many people confuse coaching with advice. When people give advice, it may not be welcome. Coaches focus on clients and the goals they want to achieve.

The aim of training is to develop the knowledge and skills of the learner. This is the only time it should be used. Training may also raise the levels of motivation, attitude, or commitment.

I want to use this article to focus on the understanding of coaching. The International Coach Federation defines the practice as:

"A professional partnership between a qualified coach and an individual or team that supports the achievement of extraordinary results, based on goals set by the individual or team. Through the process of coaching, individuals focus on the skills and actions needed to successfully produce their personally relevant results."

Over the years, coaching has become an increasingly popular tool for supporting employee development. Research from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development shows that the technique is very popular and an important skill for managers to have. Although coaching is now widespread among employers, there are continuing issues about how best to manage and deliver coaching arrangements in an organisational setting.

One key action in coaching is establishing trust and openness with employees. This may involve creating a comfortable environment to have conversations in; making agreements about how to handle sensitive or confidential topics and sticking to those agreements; clearly stating the purpose of coaching discussions; and enabling the client to take ownership of changes that he or she needs to make to improve performance. Another key action is asking powerful questions. A good coach listens more than he or she talks and uses

questions well to make the coaching relationship more productive.

When to Coach

Developing key workplace skills - Coaching is a quick and direct method of growing key skills of individuals in the workplace, our garage environments. When carried out effectively, coaching helps ensure that employees receive development as and when it is required, and this 'on-the-job' development helps ensure they have the skills to do the job.

Preparing for a key task or project - Where there is a key task or project that a person needs to undertake, it is useful to provide them with coaching to ensure they have a clear understanding of not only how to perform the task, but also the goals and actions required to get there. Coaching also provides an opportunity to review and monitor progress.

Having a difficult conversation with a colleague - Using a coaching approach can help avoid confrontation and will ensure your conversation is target driven rather than just a series of complaints.

Receiving unhelpful feedback - Where we receive negative feedback, it can be made to be much more constructive if we take a coaching approach. This means that the unhelpful feedback can be turned into something that is constructive and useful.

Preparing for an important meeting - Coaching will help ensure the important meeting is structured and has useful outcomes, giving the participants a clear understanding of the objectives and goals.

When there is a personality clash or conflict - Much like when you receive unhelpful feedback, it is useful to turn unstructured, negative discussions into more constructive and goal-oriented conversations.

Why Coach?

Aside from the question of when to coach, we should also consider why it is important that we do so. There are many good reasons and here are just a few.

- Improves working relationships
- Improves performance and productivity (up to 70%)*
- Encourages creative ideas
- Reduces stress in the job
- Helps achieve a better work/ life balance

- Can be used to assess skills required for future career development
- To drive the change process

* Source: 2014 ICF Global Coaching Client Study John Whitmore 'Coaching for Performance'

GROW Model

One of the most recognised techniques that is used in the coaching role is the GROW Model (see Fig.1)

1. Establish the goal

First, with your team member, you must define and agree the goal or outcome to be achieved. You should help your team member define a goal that is specific, measurable, and realistic

2. Examine current reality

Next, ask your team member to describe their current reality. This is a very important step; Too often, people try to solve a problem without fully considering their starting point, and often they are missing some of the information they need to solve the problem effectively

3. Explore the options

Once you and your team member have explored the current reality, it is time to explore what is possible - meaning, all the many possible options you have for solving the problem. Help your team member generate as many good options as possible and discuss these

4. Establish the will or way forward

By examining current reality and exploring the options, your team member will now have a good idea of how he or she can achieve their goal. That is great - but in itself, this may not be enough! So, your final step as coach is to get your team member to commit to specific action. In so doing, you will help the team member establish his or her will and motivation.

Ongoing

To conclude coaching, as well counselling, mentoring, and training should be an ongoing process, it should never stop, good luck and look forward in seeing the increasing benefits to both your employee and business.

