

8 Keys to Building Organization Wide Coaching Culture

- Ask the right questions**
- Build trust by starting from the top**
- Adopt a common language where teams self-coach**
- Training our employees**
- Build a coaching routine**
- Make Managers Accountable For Developing Employees**
- Be clear and strategic**
- Address potential obstacles to action plans**

Ask the right questions

The essential activities of coaching were originally described in the GROW model, a simple but powerful framework developed by Sir John Whitmore to guide coaches in structuring conversations. A coaching conversation typically centers upon some of these following elements:

- **Goals:** identifying and clarifying goals of the coaching conversation and longer- term goals;
- **Reality:** describing the reality surrounding each goal, including previous efforts, anticipated obstacles, and feedback;
- **Options:** exploring potential actions and alternatives for pursuing the goal, and the reality surrounding those actions; and
- **What** is to be done, **when**, **by whom**, and the **will** to do it: making the goal a priority, identifying the support needed, and committing to take concrete actions.

Sir John Whitmore, *Coaching For Performance* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey, 2002).

Build trust by starting from the top

Psychometrics are often used in context of knowing more ‘about a person’. “The results tell me that you will be better off in a sales role.” “The results tell me that you are better off as an individual contributor.” “Boxing” people up have a tendency to invite a defensive mindset. Some organisations make things worse by not releasing the results to the respondents – “The organisation paid for it anyway. Now I know all about you.” This uneven balance of power starts the coaching conversation on a wrong note.

Consider starting by having senior leaders to adopt a few coaching basics — listening, asking questions, encouraging others to reflect and develop insights before taking action. Then guide them to coach their most respected team members.

Adopt a common language where teams self-coach

The days of sitting in three-day courses designed to "fix" skill deficiencies are done. Time-consuming weekly one-on-one meetings to coach are done. Once a year coaching performance review are done. The new model for high performance is to implement hands-on, learn/do programs related to specific business outcomes, where teams receive on the job training and mentoring from an expert, and hold themselves accountable to perform at a high level.

Training our employees

A client asks me “What happens if I train my employees and they leave me?”

“What happens if you don’t train your employees and they decide to stay?” I answered.

If we are going to successfully integrate coaching into our workplace culture, we must train individuals at all levels of the organization in coaching practice. External consultants and experts working on time based projects provide value in setting up the framework and specific interventions, but to build a coaching culture, the expertise must reside within the organisation, to better ensure alignment at all levels.

Build a coaching routine

Coaching is a way of being, and as such, we can't simply integrate it. We just have to understand what it is and do it. It's not the same as adding carrots to your stew. So the key is to educate teams about what coaching is and then have them do it — coach each other.

One team at Amazon created a coaching culture by allocating 15 min of their time at every project kick off meeting by reviewing the team's profile and identifying potential area of conflicts (before they even occur!), and how they can leverage on their collective strengths to better achieve project goals.

Make Managers Accountable For Developing Employees

Create a coaching culture by tying this activity to the company's mission, and hold every manager accountable for coaching employees to help them master their jobs and learn new skills. Create a structured process with clear goals for coaching employees. Be sure to make time and resources available to guarantee success. Reward managers who meet or exceed these goals and re-evaluate those who don't.

Be clear and strategic

If we don't already have a clear definition of what coaching is, you need to have one so everyone in the organization is in sync with what it means, especially compared to mentoring, training, consulting, etc. Then, ensure coaching is not an "ad hoc" activity, but is truly integrated into your overall talent management strategy. How does it fit with all other aspects of our employee lifecycle?

Address potential obstacles to action plans

Ask what obstacles might prevent success in taking the action being discussed. To help *realistically predict* obstacles, ask, “If we are talking about this in two weeks, what might prevent you from taking the planned action?”

Obstacles may not be intellectually challenging, but dealing with them involves taking the time to anticipate, making a plan to deal with them, and taking actions consistent with the plan. Sometimes, it may feel unnecessary or even overly negative to ask about obstacles; however, providing space to recognize obstacles and plan appropriate actions is a key part of the coaching conversation. Frequently, goals are not achieved because of small things that could be easily addressed. Peer-coaching conversations in an informal setting can help identify the need to take these seemingly small actions.

About the author

Tan Weixi is a Partner at Exquisite Connection Pte Ltd, the exclusive distributor of CoreStrengths™ in Indonesia. A Certified Professional Trainer (IPMA, UK), and Certified Business Analysis Professional™ (IIBA, CAN), he designs and facilitates programs in the areas of business analysis, project management, critical thinking, team-building, leadership, and communications. A passionate student of the complexities that underpins human communications, he believes that equipping employees with soft skills is vital to the success of any organisation. Since starting his own consulting practice, he has helped participants from both private and public sectors in over 20 countries to achieve results through relationships. You can get in touch with him at tanweixi@exquisiteconnection.com