

Coaching Conversations

Now you know how to plan, initiate and conduct a coaching conversation – it's time to hone your skills.

At Michael Mauro, we can help you build meaningful relationships with your team, and empower them to achieve their full potential.

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Coaching Conversations



Coaching Conversations

Designed to support Managers or Leaders

This document is designed to support managers or leaders, helping them to plan, initiate and successfully conduct a coaching conversation. It will provide:

- ✓ Guidelines as to when and how coaching conversations should be conducted
- ✓ A conversation planner to support in clarifying key aspects of the intended conversation
- ✓ A pre-conversation checklist to support in setting the appropriate external and internal conditions for a productive coaching conversation
- ✓ A conversation guide for managers grounded in the GROW coaching model

How to Use This Document

This document is intended to:

- ✓ Act as an introduction and primer to coaching conversation
- ✓ Clarify how and when to utilise coaching conversations
- ✓ Provide practical tools to turn learning and theory into action

How Not to Use this Document

This document is not intended to:

- x Replace training or formal education on coaching practices more broadly
- x Be used for performance management discussions
- x Be used for mentoring, consulting or therapeutic conversations

Ongoing Support

For further support and any queries you might have about individual or team coaching and their place within the talent management cycle, please contact:

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Coaching Conversation Preparation Sheet

The ability to initiate and sustain a coaching conversation is a key leadership skill. Through coaching, experiences can be turned into opportunities for growth and learning. By supporting your employees through coaching, you can increase their sense of empowerment, collaboration, engagement and capability. This conversation preparation sheet is designed to support you in planning and implementing a coaching conversation.

When to use coaching:

Not all conversations are 'coaching conversations'. The core of coaching is exploratory and should allow your coachee to identify challenges and solutions independently. Ideally, your role as a coaching manager is to help your coachee or team member find solutions to their own problems. As such, if your desire is for immediate or corrective performance adjustments, you may find a more effective solution is to provide direct feedback or hold a performance conversation. Save coaching for situations where you might hear some of the following cues from your staff:

"I need some help"

"I'd like to get your thoughts on something"

"Can you help me think this through a little?"

"Can I pick your brain about X / talk through a situation with you?"

As you become more skilled in using coaching, you will be able to launch into these conversations with little to no preparation; however, as you continue your own learning journey, it may be helpful to schedule some dedicated time to discuss the challenge at hand to allow you time to prepare.



Coaching guidelines:

When you're attempting coaching, remain mindful that the role of a coach is distinct to a mentor, consultant, teacher or therapist. Your objective is to promote a safe and open space for your coachee to explore the barriers they're facing, and brainstorm potential solutions to these. To this end, Center for Creative Leadership provides three guidelines to help orient leaders' frame of mind throughout a coaching conversation and maximise their chances of success:



Listen Carefully

Don't assume what the conversation is about or what path it should take



Respond Mindfully

Coaching is about uncovering answers through inquiry, openness & exploration



Resist 'Fixing' Things

Shift from the norm of telling, problem-solving and giving advice

Preparing for the conversation

Consider the following questions in advance of a coaching conversation to ensure you have adequately thought through all aspects of the conversation.

What is the objective for the coaching conversation?

What outcome do I want to achieve?

What am I curious about?

What personal preferences and biases do I need to be aware of that may impact the conversation?

What might be their point of view?

What might be their challenges?

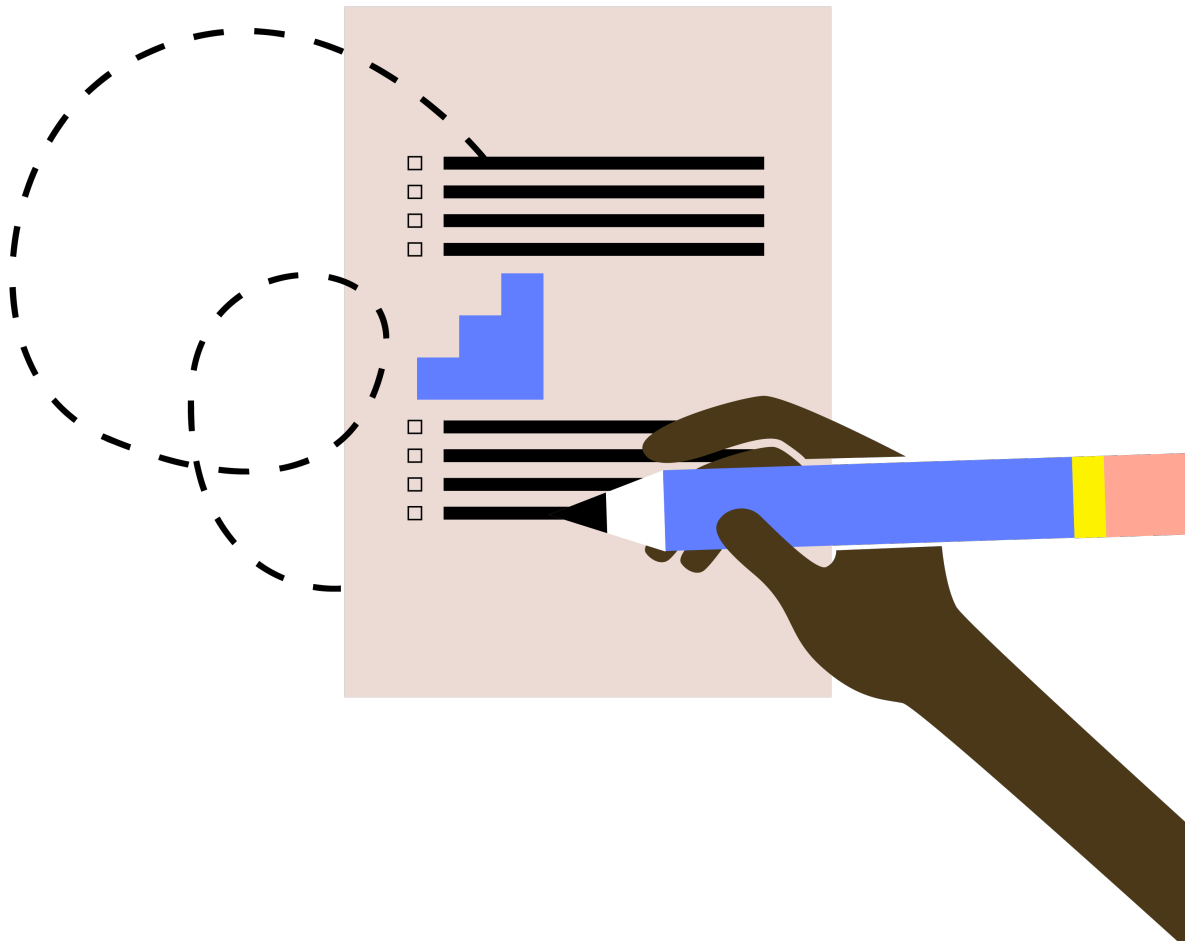
What is the worst that could happen? What then?

What reactions should I anticipate from the coachee and how will I respond?

Pre-Conversation checklist

Before the conversation, it is important to ensure you have created the ideal environment for a coaching conversation. Go through the below checklist and tick off each item prior to the coaching conversation. An effective coaching conversation will include all of the elements below and each missing item will diminish your likelihood of success:

- ☐ I'm having this conversation in a timely manner
- ☐ I'm mentally, emotionally and physically present
- ☐ I'm ready to focus on the employee and remove my biases
- ☐ I'm focused on their solutions
- ☐ I'm ready to be curious and ask open ended questions
- ☐ I'm prepared to listen (paraphrase, check perceptions, not interrupt)
- ☐ I'm mindful of body language and the tone of my voice
- ☐ I have set electronics (phone, laptop, etc) to silent or turned them off



Conversation Guide

The GROW model is a useful framework for coaches and leaders alike that contains all the core elements of an effective coaching conversation. GROW is an acronym for the key steps in the coaching process. By using a few powerful coaching questions, a leader or coach can quickly support their coachee to identify where they want to be, and how to get there. As such, the GROW approach promotes confidence, self-motivation which leads to greater accountability, satisfaction and an achievement of outcomes.

To help your coachee, use the below conversation planner to familiarise yourself with the purpose of each letter in the acronym, outline some questions you may want to ask and prepare yourself for the conversation. When ready, walk through the acronym by asking powerful questions associated with each letter.

Please note that most coaching conversations fail because they lack a clear enough goal or a strong call to action. Spend ample time, or even to return to goal-related questions if you notice that the employee's goal diverges, is ambiguous or otherwise lacks clarity. Equally, once you are ready to conclude your conversation, ensure the coachee has clearly defined and bought into their intended next steps to help drive accountability and action.

	Intended Purpose	Questions to Ask
G Goal	To identify the agreed upon end state, desired outcome or target to be achieved.	
R Reality	To explore the challenge and determine what factors may be contributing to the situation.	
O Options	To brainstorm the options that exist for achieving the stated goal or desired outcome.	
W Way Forward	To agree upon a path forward. To determine what support is needed to help in the goal's achievement.	

Powerful Question Catalogue

To help the conversation, identify the questions that would produce the most insight for your employee. We recommend identifying 3 – 4 questions and noting them in the boxes on page 8 before your meeting:

<p>G</p> <p>Goal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What problem are we trying to solve? • What is the goal for this conversation? • What would you like to focus on today? • What would you like to accomplish in our time together? • What challenge are you struggling with currently? • What is keeping you up at night? • What is important to you right now? • How can you word your goal more specifically? • How would you know you have achieved your goal? • What does success look like for you?
<p>R</p> <p>Reality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are you with your goal currently? • What have you tried to move towards your goal? • What are the biggest challenges to your goal as you see them? • What is working well? • What is the underlying issue? • What else could be contributing to the situation? • What are the obstacles, as you see them? • How are things going? • What is the impact of the situation on you / others? • What have you tried?
<p>O</p> <p>Options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is another way of looking at the situation? • What is one step you can take? What's another? • If you could only do one thing this week, what would it be? • In an ideal world, what would you do? • What have you done in situations like this before? How has that worked? • What are all of the things you could do? Which of these have you tried? • What is your gut telling you to do? • If your best friend / colleague / partner was in this situation what would you tell them to do? • If time / money weren't restrictions, what would you do? • What would you do if you were guaranteed to succeed?
<p>W</p> <p>Way Forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What step are you committing to? • What is your most powerful next step? • What support do you need? From whom? • What do we need to do next? • How confident do you feel about reaching your goal, on a scale of 1 – 10? • How else can I support your efforts going forward? • How will we know you've reached your goal? • What might stop you from achieving your next step? • How could you minimize obstacles? • Is there anything else that you need to consider before starting?

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