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For twenty seven years, the Monthly Mentor has been a value added service to encourage our employer and candidate clients in their Personal & Professional Development.



The Most Important Manager Competency: Coaching Skills Part 2 of 2

By Joe Hunt

In [Part 1](#), we explored the question of why managers fail to embrace the roll of coach.

In Part 2, we shift our focus to the strategies which can improve a leader’s ability to coach by facilitating coaching conversations.

There is no shortage of theories or models regarding effective coaching conversations. Through years of research and practice, I have been able to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. While a “one-size fits all” key to coaching does not exist, the following models represent some of the most effective and more universally applicable principles and processes.

The GROW Model

One of the original coaching frameworks is the GROW model, created by Graham Alexander, Alan Fine and Sir John Whitmore. This model can be applied to a variety of coaching situations. It guides coaches and coachees to identify goals, assess situations, and formulate actionable plans.



| | | |
|----------|--------------------|---|
| G | Goal | The Goal is where the client wants to be. It must be clearly defined so people know when they've achieved it. |
| R | Reality | The Current Reality is where the client is now. What are the issues and challenges? How far away is Goal achievement? |
| O | Obstacles | What Obstacles are stopping the client from reaching the Goal? |
| | Options | What Options will allow for successful progress through the obstacles? |
| W | Way Forward | How are the Options are converted into the Way Forward? What action steps will map the way to reach the Goal? |

FUEL Coaching Conversations

Zenger and Stinnett suggest using the FUEL model in their book, [*The Extraordinary Coach*](#):

- F = Frame the Conversation. Set the context by agreeing on the discussion's purpose, process and desired outcomes.
- U = Understand the Current State. Explore the current state from the coachee's point of view. Expand the coachee's awareness of the situation to determine the real coaching issue.
- E = Explore the Desired State. Articulate your vision of success in this scenario. Explore multiple alternative paths before prioritizing methods of achieving this vision.
- L = Lay Out a Success Plan. Identify the specific, time-bounded action steps to be taken to achieve the desired results. Determine milestones for follow-up and accountability.



Face the Coaching FACTS

Other experts assert that being direct is an important coaching component. While people enjoy receiving their managers' support, they also want to be challenged, note John Blakey and Ian Day in [*Challenging Coaching: Going Beyond Traditional Coaching to Face the FACTS.*](#)



Blakey and Day developed the FACTS coaching model based on frontline observations:

- **F = Feedback:** How can coaches provide challenging feedback that informs and inspires? How can we ensure that praise and recognition for a job well done are balanced with honest feedback on mistakes, learning and failures?
- **A = Accountability:** How does a coach hold people accountable for commitments without blame or shame? How can accountability be extended from personal commitments to alignment with the values, strategy and ethos of the wider organization?
- **C = Courageous Goals:** How does a coach move beyond incremental goal-setting models to those that engage the right-brain attributes of courage, excitement, inspiration and transformation? Which models and concepts help structure coaching conversations and provide a practical road map?
- **T = Tension:** When is tension constructive? How can coaches practice creating and holding tension without risking burnout in key performers? How can the tension in a conversation be calibrated and dynamically adjusted to ensure peak performance? When does tension go too far and damage the underlying relationships?
- **S = Systems Thinking:** How can a coach stay sensitive to “big-picture” issues like ethics, diversity and the environment without losing focus on bottom-line results? What can be learned from the world of systems thinking that enables the coach to be a positive agent of change for the wider organization? What is the role of intuition in guiding interventions that reach beyond the immediate coachee and touch on deeper organizational change?

The FACTS approach requires leaders to master core coaching skills (intent listening, asking vital questions). One must also achieve a firm foundation of trust and respect with their employees. The FACTS approach provides a launching pad for high performance and next-level change.

Powerful Questions

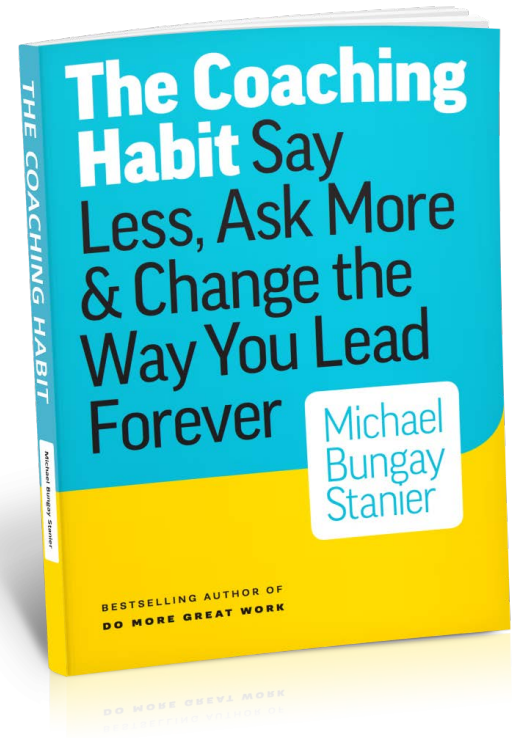
Managers who avoid coaching often struggle with starting a coaching conversation. In the absence of deep, hour-long coaching sessions, you can use key questions to realize change and growth.

Michael Bungay Stanier shares seven core questions to open coaching conversations in [*The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever*](#).

1. What's on your mind?
2. What else?
3. What's the real challenge here for you?
4. What do you want?
5. How can I help?
6. If you're saying "yes" to this, to what are you saying "no"?
7. What was most useful for you?

Managers who effectively use their coaching skills will boost team performance and foster employee growth and development. Leaders can achieve stellar results when they overcome the fear of initiating coaching conversations.

With a basic coaching framework and the correct, simple yet powerful questions, you can engage in coaching conversations that are short, simple, provocative, and most importantly – productive.



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