

COACHING AND COUNSELING

PARTICIPANT COURSEBOOK

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For Preview Purposes Only

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About Coaching and Counseling

Coaching and counseling offer win-win partnerships in the workplace. For the employee being coached, the opportunity provides direction for growth as well as constructive feedback. For the coach, the relationship brings the reward of drawing on one's own experience to help another.

Coaching focuses on the developmental side of acquiring knowledge and skills to help employees perform their jobs more effectively. It isn't just an occasional conversation – it is a continuous process. But, unlike a mentoring relationship, which can go on indefinitely, a coaching relationship does have an ending. Coaching is one of the most effective ways to improve performance on the job.

The following pages of this coursebook provide information and exercises that will help participants hone their ability to become effective coaches. Other exercises are geared at helping participants identify aspects of their own performance that could benefit from coaching.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

Effective objective must be specific. Vague objective are hard to obtain because they don't inspire action. For instance, resolving to be a "better communicator" is abstract and harder to achieve than, say, resolving to take a writing class.

Objectives should be measurable because in order to stay on track, you need to see progress. The above objective of taking a writing class could be made measurable in the following way: "To successfully complete a writing class and to practice my writing for at least fifteen minutes each day."

To stay motivated to reach your objective, focus on the benefits of reaching your objective. Most change takes a degree of sacrifice and focusing on the long term will help you stay on track from day to day. If you feel your motivation lagging, visualize the successful outcome with yourself enjoying the benefits you worked hard to achieve.

Similarly you need a time frame for your objectives. Otherwise you are apt to lose focus or interest. Set milestones for yourself as well as a target deadline, so that you can chart your progress and stay motivated by your tangible accomplishments.

Fill out the table below for a professional objective you would like to set for yourself:

My objective is:	
I know I can obtain this objective because:	
I will measure my objective by:	
I feel this objective will improve my career performance because:	
I will achieve my objective by the following time schedule:	

Sharing Goals

Sharing goals with others is important to the overall success of achieving them. If your subordinates understand your goals, they are more able to align their actions to support that mission. If your peers understand your goals, they may be able to give you guidance and support. Your superiors can often help you reach your goals by giving you different opportunities to stretch toward that goal. They may also be able to make additional resources available.

This exercise will give you a chance to practice sharing a goal with different audiences. Choose one of the goals you have written for next year and share it with your group. Each member of the group should listen to you from a different perspective: subordinate, peer, or superior. Help your audience understand why it is important, what it means to the rest of the organization, and any areas of knowledge, skills, or motivation you or your unit may need to work on to achieve this goal.

GOAL:

Ask your group to restate your goal from memory, explaining what it meant to them. Listen carefully for any disagreement in meaning and then discuss those differences to pinpoint where the communication process went wrong. The goals of this exercise are to bring in different viewpoints, as well as to look for ways to clarify the meaning of a goal. You might find that your goals need to be explained differently for different audiences. Rewrite your goal, to enhance specificity, according to feedback received during this exercise.

Staying Motivated

Knowing what motivates you is extremely important to your success and is what will enable you to meet and exceed the goals you set for yourself. Thinking about what motivates us can be a very helpful step when setting goals and reaching them.

Upon completion of this session, you might want to share some of your motivators, as well as your de-motivators, with your direct manager/supervisor. For example, some people are very motivated by a word of praise or recognition. If your manager/supervisor knows that, he or she might be able to give you more of the feedback you seek. Likewise, it is of value for you to learn what motivates others so that you can be partners in their success.

What are some things that motivate you? At home? At work? What has motivated you in the past?

What are some things that de-motivate you? At home? At work? What has de-motivated you in the past?

Choose one of your new goals and think of at least three things that will help motivate you to reach that goal. List something that might become a barrier or a de-motivator for you in reaching that goal.

Keeping Others Motivated

Complete this exercise with a partner. Interview your partner to learn about what motivates and de-motivates him or her. Use the spaces below to take notes.

Interview Questions:

“Tell me about a time when you felt significantly motivated on the job. What was the situation? What factors were especially motivating for you?”

“Now tell me about a time when you felt significantly de-motivated on the job. What was the situation? What factors were especially de-motivating for you?”

Now individually determine what motivates and de-motivates your partner.

Motivating Factors	De-motivating Factors

Jot down some ideas for maximizing this individual’s motivation on the job. When you are through, share your ideas with your partner and ask for their feedback on your conclusions.

Listening without Judgment: Attending, Reflecting and Paraphrasing

The first three units focused on sending clear messages, but learning to be an effective listener is an equally important component of the communication process. Given our hectic schedules and the information overload we are often subjected to, it's no wonder that listening skills sometimes suffer. However, being aware of bad listening habits that may creep into our conversations can help us learn to absorb more of what we hear.

Practicing the following behaviors will help you stay tuned in to what someone is saying to you:

- ◆ Focus on understanding the speaker's meaning instead of preparing a response. Listen for the speaker's ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Listen to understand, not to respond.
- ◆ Watch a person's nonverbal behavior to assess how he or she is feeling. Also, be aware of your own nonverbal actions, for example, do you look receptive?
- ◆ Paraphrase what others say to test and communicate your understanding of the message.

Practicing Listening Skills

Now is your chance to practice improving the weaknesses you identified earlier. In pairs, take turns telling your partner about your job and background. Try to form partners with someone you do not know well. Include the following topics in your description:

- ◆ What does your job entail on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis?
- ◆ What is your background? Include education, former jobs, or responsibilities at your current job. Explain how you have progressed from one point to another.

Each partner should plan to talk for at least five minutes. You may want to jot down a few main points before you begin speaking, but your conversation should be informal and unrehearsed.

The focus of this exercise is on the partner that is listening. He or she should be conscious of bad listening habits and work to overcome them using the plan you created for your self earlier.

After the speaker has finished, briefly recap what he or she does on the job. Ask if you have accurately summarized his or her position. Then discuss what techniques helped you improve your listening in this exercise. Also discuss areas that were still difficult for you and what other techniques might be available.

Looking for Learning Opportunities

In the exercise below reflect on opportunities in your own career where you might benefit from coaching and counseling:

<p>Identify an area in your own career where you could benefit from coaching:</p>	
<p>Describe the different ways that improvement in this area could benefit you, your coworkers, your department, and your company in general:</p>	
<p>State a measurable goal you can meet in this area:</p>	
<p>Try to identify someone in the company who possesses as many of the following skills as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * is highly regarded and successful in the organization * works closely enough with employees to observe their behavior in a variety of situations with diverse individuals and at many organizational levels * respects individuals and is able to work with them in a supportive, non-judgmental way * has expertise in an area that employees want to improve in their own performance * understands the organization's culture and how employees' behavior is evaluated within that culture. 	
<p>Identify a milestone by which you can put a plan in place to start achieving your goal:</p>	

Identifying Coworkers Who Could Benefit from Coaching

<p>Identify an area where someone you work with could benefit from coaching. (Do not identify the person you have in mind by name):</p>	
<p>Describe the different ways that improvement in this area could benefit this employee, his or her coworkers, his or her department, and the company in general:</p>	
<p>Try to identify someone in the company who possesses as many of the following skills as possible (Note: that you may choose an area where you are an appropriate coach):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * is highly regarded and successful in the organization * works closely enough with employees to observe their behavior in a variety of situations with diverse individuals and at many organizational levels * respects individuals and is able to work with them in a supportive, non-judgmental way * has expertise in an area that employees want to improve in their own performance * understands the organization's culture and how employees' behavior is evaluated within that culture. 	<p style="text-align: center; opacity: 0.5; font-size: 2em; transform: rotate(-30deg);">Purposes Only</p>

Setting the Stage for the Coaching Meeting

There is a time and place for everything, and one of the most important parts of having a good meeting with someone is to ensure that the environment is right. This includes everything: time, location, invitation, and purpose of the meeting and the agenda.

Time. Choosing the right time is a key element in setting the right atmosphere. Twenty minutes before the end of the shift would not be an appropriate time to hold an end-of-the-year evaluation, but might be a great time to tell an employee that you think he / she did a good job. Also, it's best to avoid Monday's (the time when everyone is preparing for the week ahead) and Fridays (the time when everyone is preparing for the weekend). This will allow better focus on the topic at hand.

Location. Put conversations in the proper place. If it is a formal mid-year review, end-of-year review, in-depth coaching/development session, or conversation about negative performance, then it is best to be done in the privacy of an office or a conference room. If it is just a touch-base meeting, it might be okay in a lunchroom or other less-formal setting, but always be sensitive to private information. The only conversations that should happen in the halls are positive exchanges and invitations to a future meeting.

Invitation. The invitation is a critical part of setting the tone for the conversation. Give the person as much notice and information about the meeting as is appropriate. Ensure it is a good time for both of you without a lot of outside pressure or stress if at all possible.

Purpose and Agenda. It is crucial that you know what you want to achieve during this conversation. Whether it is a quick "good job" in the hall, or a formal end-of-year evaluation, think through the best positive outcomes. If you have specific concerns about the meeting, write them down. Then visualize how they could come out in a positive way.

For example, you might have an employee who is having difficulty working with another person from a different section. You are concerned that this situation might escalate, hinder productivity, or have a lasting impact on the employee's career if not addressed. You need to discuss this situation with your employee, but are concerned that he/she will become defensive.

Explain the Process

Keep the following guidelines in mind when drafting or giving directions:

1. **Take your time.** Choose a time when you are not in a hurry or distracted. Then speak slowly and allow time for questions.
2. **Give the big picture.** Explain what you are trying to achieve. This should include an end goal and milestones along the way. Provide examples or guidelines.
3. **Be organized.** Prepare in advance for any questions you are likely to get and group related steps together in a logical order.
4. **Be positive.** The brain processes positive statements faster than negative ones. Rather than saying "You can't . . .", state "You can only . . ."
5. **Tell them "why."** People understand and accept directions more readily if they understand why something needs to be done in a certain way. Include "why" statements along with "how" statements.
6. **Appreciate questions.** Every question you get now is one less problem you may run into later. Ask if there are any questions and praise those who ask good ones.

Giving complex or brand new directions is not unlike a mini training session. Most people benefit from practicing processes that are new to them. Consider using one or all of the techniques below to help ensure that your directions are better understood and accomplished:

- ♦ Ask listeners to recap the directions to make sure they understand them fully. (You may wish to explain to listeners that you are not testing them, but want to make sure that you were communicating clearly.)
- ♦ Give listeners an opportunity to demonstrate the process as a way of practicing and internalizing the directions. This can also serve as a test drive to ensure that you haven't left out any important steps.
- ♦ Pass it on. Have listeners communicate your directions to a third person. Teaching others is a great way to remember and make sense of what was learned.
- ♦ Schedule milestones for longer assignments to review progress and to catch errors early. Make sure you communicate clearly when these milestones should occur.

Giving Constructive Feedback

Giving honest and useful feedback is perhaps the most empowering thing you can do for your employees and coworkers; however, done unskillfully it can cause a defensive reaction. Here are several steps that minimize a negative reaction and maximize the odds that your feedback will be acted upon:

Set the Stage: If you're a manager, make sure your employees know and expect to get regular feedback on their performance. If they understand this is part of your management approach, they will be less likely to feel singled out when given feedback.

If you're giving unsolicited feedback to a coworker, preface your comments by stating that you are trying to be helpful. For instance a statement such as, "John, I've been thinking about your situation with the line upgrade, and I may have come up with a couple of things that could help" puts the comments that might follow in a constructive light.

Package Positive and Negative Feedback Together: The approach of giving the good with the bad is more than just a "softening up" tactic. It shows that you are fair and appreciative of good work. It may also help you to better assess the individual's strengths. Taking a few moments to think about what was done right as well as what needs improvement gives you a more complete perspective on the situation.

In order for this approach to be effective, the praise needs to be genuine and descriptive. It's not enough to say, "overall I think you're doing a good job, but..." For one thing it doesn't sound genuine because the praise is so general that it is almost meaningless. This kind of global statement may also give the individual a false sense that everything is fine, causing him or her to undervalue the criticism that follows. Taking the time to identify one or more specific aspects or instances where work was done well is far more helpful and memorable.

Giving negative feedback is trickier, but with practice you can learn to do it well. These guidelines can help you improve your complaints as well as your compliments:

- ♦ *Give specific examples.* Providing specific and recent examples helps clarify the issue. For instance if you simply tell someone, "Your work wasn't completed last month," you assume that he or she knows how to correct the problem when in fact there may be a misunderstanding or a training gap that goes unidentified.
- ♦ *Describe behavior—Not the Person.* Calling someone unreliable or using any other label is sure to provoke a defensive response. Describing the behavior instead of the person gives a less personal and a more accurate description.

- ♦ *Don't exaggerate.* To say, "You're never on time" is probably untrue. You're less likely to cause an argument if instead you say "last week you were late three out of five days."
- ♦ *Don't speak for others.* You may feel that it supports your position to state that others agree with you, but if those others are not present to speak for themselves, it is unfair to speak for them. This approach is also likely to make the person being criticized feel ganged up on.
- ♦ *Start with "I" statements.* Placing the emphasis on how you perceive the situation is more accurate and makes the feedback easier to accept. For instance, "I get distracted when you arrive after a meeting has already started" is less accusatory than, "You are often late for meetings."

Making Feedback Effective

Adding any appropriate details, revise the following feedback using the guidelines on the previous page:

Before:	Your performance on this task has been sub-par for weeks. The other team members and I feel that we have to make up for your laziness.
After:	
Before:	Your presentation was confusing and jumbled. Your lack of preparation was evident.
After:	
Before:	Your report is completely off target. Once again I've had to rewrite huge portions of your work.
After:	
Before:	You need to do a better job of setting expectations for your team. Your lack of clear communication caused them to miss their deadline.
After:	

Delivering Criticism

The following four guidelines are important steps toward giving effective criticism.

1) Describe why you are having the conversation:

EXAMPLE: *Pat, I'd like to talk with you about your presentation yesterday.*

2) In a non-accusatory manner, explain how you see the situation and elicit the other person's perceptions:

EXAMPLE: *I felt that stating clearer objectives for the meeting at the outset could have helped focus the group. I was wondering how you felt about the presentation?*

3) Show that you've heard what he or she has said and specify what you want to see happen:

EXAMPLE: *It's very common to speed through opening statements in a presentation because of nerves. Practicing can help you speak more deliberately and set a more engaging tone for the presentation.*

4) Tie the desired behavior to consequences (positive or negative):

EXAMPLE: *I know everyone is interested in hearing what you have to say. With some coaching, I think you could become a very effective facilitator, a skill we need more of around here.*

Delivering Criticism

In pairs, each partner should think about criticism that he or she has or will have to communicate to another person. If you do not have managerial experience, try to think of an instance when a coworker's performance has impacted you, such as instances of tardiness or lack of communication.

Both partners should think of an example that he or she wants to use and then draft appropriate language in the spaces below. Use the example on page 10 to guide you.

Describe why you're having the conversation:	
In a non-accusatory manner, explain how you see the situation and elicit the other person's perceptions:	

Initiate this conversation with your partner, pausing to listen to his or her perceptions of the situation. Your partner should play along and offer a hypothetical response to the situation you have described.

Then draft the rest of your conversation using the spaces below:

Show that you've heard what he or she has said and specify what you want to see happen:	
Tie the desired behavior to consequences (positive or negative):	

Now share the rest of your conversation with your partner. Afterwards ask him or her how your message might be made clearer. Also ask him or her to critique the tone of your message. Reflect on ways you might revise your language to enhance clarity, specificity, or respectfulness. Jot down any changes in the spaces below:

Describe why you're having the conversation:	
In a non-accusatory manner, explain how you see the situation and elicit the other person's perceptions:	
Show that you've heard what he or she has said and specify what you want to see happen:	
Tie the desired behavior to consequences (positive or negative):	

