

# **COACHING** **ESSENTIALS** **FOR MANAGERS**

**THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO IGNITE  
GREATNESS IN EACH EMPLOYEE**



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CHAPTER

1

# Coaching Fundamentals

**The first step on** your journey to becoming an extraordinary coach is to understand the basics involved in the process. In this chapter, I share some fundamentals that provide a foundation for everything that follows.

## COACHING DEFINITIONS

To make sure you are fully prepared to be an effective coach, it's important to understand the different phrases involved in this process. Let's start with definitions of some common terms before moving on.

First up is *workplace coaching*. Workplace coaching is a personalized process that inspires employees to take control of their own development in a way that improves their performance now and maximizes their potential for success in the future. It involves a unique relationship between a leader and a subordinate in which they collaborate to:

- Pinpoint personal challenges and opportunities for growth
- Explore possibilities and evaluate problem-solving options
- Develop goals and prioritize actions
- Maintain momentum toward achieving desired results



As you can tell from those collaborative tasks, “leader-coaches” aren’t just leaders who deliver meaningful performance reviews. They coach their employees and have a highly specific approach to genuinely develop their team members in a targeted, ongoing way. Throughout this book, both *leader* and *leader-coaches* will be used to refer to your ownership of this process as a coach.

To fully understand the concept of coaching, it might help to know what it's *not*. In other words, it is *not* the same thing as managing, training, or mentoring.

**Managing** requires staying focused on the facts. Things like team goals. Quarterly sales. Monthly expenses. Managers ask, “Is this person producing the results needed?”

**Training** is about skill-specific learning—helping employees acquire the skills they need to perform their jobs. Leaders who train their employees ask, “Does this person know how to effectively use the latest sales software?”

**Mentoring** involves high-level support and advice based on the wisdom of previous experience. Mentors ask, “Would this person benefit from hearing how someone else navigated a sticky situation at work?”

**Coaching** has a wider lane and a more strategic slant. While it likely includes some elements of managing, training, and mentoring rolled into it, the primary goal of coaching is to make other people more successful. A coach might ask, “Does this person know what's getting in the way of their progress?”

## COACHING OUTCOMES

When coaching is done well, it can generate extremely powerful outcomes, including:

- Transforming employees' capacity to produce
- Helping them identify and eliminate any professional roadblocks

- Guiding them to achieve their goals
- Linking their results directly to team and company objectives
- Preparing them for success at the next level
- Supporting their career aspirations

Coaches today approach their team members with a genuine desire to encourage them and help them succeed. As coaches, they make a deliberate shift into a selfless, supportive mindset. And here's the big differentiator: *They focus on the growth and well-being of their employees in a way that unlocks the potential of each individual. Instead of looking at "what needs to be corrected," they look at "what could be."*

The bottom line? Great coaching can have a transformative effect that expands the capacity for people to generate results like almost nothing else can—if it's done right.

## WHAT COACHING IS AND ISN'T

In order to grasp the importance and goals of coaching, let's take a look at what coaching is and what it isn't.

### What Coaching Is

- **Coaching is focused on both short-term and long-term goals.** Put another way, coaching combines today's immediacy for performance improvement with professional development designed to fuel broader career goals in the future.



- **Coaching is a relationship, not an event.** Instead of framing coaching as a calendar commitment every Tuesday, great leaders think of coaching as something that's ongoing and interactive. It's a continuous dialogue based on honesty and trust. When they agree to coach someone, leaders are entering into an extended relationship for sustained support.
- **Coaching can be formal or informal.** Yes, leaders need regularly scheduled, one-on-one meetings with the employees they coach, but the process can be informal, too. You can coach someone during lunch, in the hall after a conference, or even on the elevator right after a meeting. As coaches hone their skills, they can eventually weave coaching into everything they do and apply it in whatever setting they find themselves.

## What Coaching Isn't

- **Coaching isn't about providing all the answers.** Leaders who coach listen and ask questions. They guide employees to find answers on their own. For instance, *managers* might cut to the chase, saying something like: "Here's what you need to do. . . ." *Coaches* start conversations rather than issuing demands. They ask, "What if . . . ?" It's a different approach with a higher probability of igniting curiosity within employees and encouraging them to become strategic problem solvers.
- **Coaching isn't the right solution for every situation.** Coaching requires an investment of time, and there are

situations when that just doesn't make sense. Sometimes leaders need to make decisions, give orders, and propel a project forward. It takes some discernment to know when coaching is the right approach—and when it isn't.

## TWO TYPES OF COACHING

Now that we understand what coaching is and isn't, it's time to explore the two types of coaching needed to make the process well-rounded and ensure you maximize your impact: *Performance Coaching* and *Developmental Coaching*.

### Performance Coaching

Performance Coaching involves helping employees become more effective in their current jobs. This might include guiding them to close particular skill gaps or correcting behavior problems. Accountability also plays a key role in this type of coaching. These conversations could be used to clarify expectations and discuss consequences.

Perhaps you have a superstar employee who is suddenly coming in late and neglecting to turn in reports on time. What's really going on there? On the other hand, you might be dealing with a consistently low performer who hasn't responded to warnings or encouragement. What's behind the disconnect?

The other prime example of a Performance Coaching opportunity is the average-level worker who doesn't seem to be leveraging above-average potential. How can you tap into that potential and move this person into the superstar category?

## Performance Coaching

### Focus:



Help employees become more effective in their current jobs

### Includes working together to:



- Close particular skill gaps
- Correct behavior problems
- Hold coachee accountable
- Clarify expectations
- Discuss consequences

## Developmental Coaching

Developmental Coaching is more about helping employees prepare to meet their long-term career goals.

To make a developmental impact, coaches need to really get to know their employees—their strengths, challenges, and career aspirations. Leaders can help these employees define and clarify their goals and then work to ensure they gain the skills and experiences to prepare them for whatever is ahead.

For example, Developmental Coaching might include talking with employees about strategies for managing multiple high-priority projects or giving them opportunities to become more proficient at making presentations to executives. With this type of approach, coaches also

might offer to help employees refine some intangible skills that aren't necessarily integral to their current jobs but will be mandatory at the higher-level positions they desire. Perhaps the coach can address some behavior quirks that might be off-putting or engage in role-play to demonstrate how to navigate a politically charged conversation. Today people are resigning at an alarming rate, and the best thing you can do as a coach is to spend time supporting your employees' career aspirations.

It may seem counterintuitive to talk to your employees about their career aspirations, but consider the compelling statistics on Developmental Coaching. According to the Glint Employee Well-Being Report, employees who see good opportunities to learn and grow are 2.9 times more likely to be engaged.\* Coaching shows that you care about the professional ambitions of your team members and want to support their growth. The irony? Career coaching tends to lead to more engaged and productive employees who want to stay where they are.

In many cases, employees may be seeking new jobs simply because they aren't experiencing a sense of progress with their careers—a top factor in motivating people, according to Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, authors of *The Progress Principle*. Coaching for career development demonstrates to employees that you are actively partnering with them to advance within the organization. Nothing else says “progress” quite like that!

From that perspective, having career conversations with your coachees might be one of the best things you can do right now. Besides engendering loyalty, you could possibly keep them from getting caught up in the tsunami of “let's all quit now because it seems like the trendy thing to do.”

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\* “Discover the Secret Advantage for Learning and Employee Engagement,” Glint, 2021, <https://www.glintinc.com/blog/discover-the-secret-advantage-for-learning-and-employee-engagement/>.

So how can leaders approach the topic of Developmental Coaching with more confidence?

In general, redefine your concept of growth and progress. Let go of the notion that successful career coaching ends in a promotion, new position, or bigger paycheck. Everyone views growth in a different way, so take the time to find out what it means to each of the people you coach. Here are some questions you can use to gain insights about their perspectives on this topic:

- “Based on what you’ve learned about yourself in the past few years, what does it take to make your work feel meaningful for you? What do you need? Anything you don’t need?”
- “What kind of work makes you feel like you are operating in your ‘zone of genius’—that place where you are overwhelmingly excited to work on a project, your skills are aligned with what’s needed to reach the goal, and you are so engrossed in the process that you lose track of time?”
- “Are you interested in sharpening your skills or learning some new ones?”
- “Do you see yourself evolving in your current role over the next two years or making a more dramatic change?”
- “How important is it for you to increase your visibility within the team or the company?”
- “Are you interested in tackling new, unusual challenges that fuel your appetite for constant change and complexity?”
- “Do you find it appealing to take on projects with layers of complexity to test your resiliency?”

- “If you could paint a picture of what you’d love your career to look like in one year, what would we see on the canvas?”

Remember that we can get creative to find solutions that qualify as “growth” for our employees. That doesn’t necessarily mean they will pack up their offices and move to another floor or another company. It very well might translate into growth that allows them to take on more responsibility right where they are.

## Developmental Coaching

### Focus:



Help employees prepare to meet their long-term career goals

### Includes working together to:



- Understand strengths, challenges, and career aspirations
- Define and clarify goals
- Ensure necessary skills and experiences are acquired
- Refine intangible skills for higher-level positions as desired
- Support career aspirations



Now that you have a solid grasp of the coaching fundamentals, you’re ready to explore how they combine to create highly effective coaching sessions that can ignite greatness in your team members.

## ESSENTIAL TAKEAWAYS

At the end of each chapter, you'll find Essential Takeaways. These are the most important points you'll need to carry into your professional life to find lasting success: a return to the fundamentals is necessary for making sense of communication in our modern world. In this chapter, the Essential Takeaways are:

- Workplace coaching is a personalized process that inspires employees to take control of their own development in a way that improves their performance now and maximizes their potential for success in the future.
- “Leader-coaches” aren’t just leaders who deliver meaningful performance reviews. They coach their employees and have a highly specific approach to genuinely develop their team members in a targeted, ongoing way.
- Coaching will likely include some elements of managing, training, and mentoring rolled into it, but the primary goal of coaching is to make other people more successful.
- Coaches focus on the growth and well-being of their employees in a way that unlocks the potential of each individual. Instead of looking at what needs to be corrected, they look at what could be.
- *Performance Coaching* involves helping employees become more effective in their current jobs.
- *Developmental Coaching* is helping employees prepare to meet their long-term career goals.