Leader as Coach

A MANAGER ESSENTIALS GUIDE
Introduction

Strategies for developing the capabilities of staff are an important part of UniSA’s overall organisational development framework. Organisations can no longer expect to be competitive unless they are able to attract and retain high performing staff, inspire them and support them to learn continuously.

Coaching is a one-on-one process of professional support, guidance, challenge and development that has emerged over the years as an invaluable process in:

- facilitating learning
- enabling transfer of knowledge
- improving staff capability for the long term
- facilitating effective delegation of work
- optimising staff performance, and
- creating a productive workplace climate.

Being able to operate as a coach is increasingly becoming an integral aspect of a line manager/supervisor’s role.

This guide explores the elements and benefits of coaching. It provides tips on how to move to operating as a Manager-Coach, including highlighting the skills needed to make this transition. In doing so, it links to the range of Guides available to you as part of UniSA’s Tool Kit for Supervisors of Professional Staff. It also complements learning programs offered to staff as part of UniSA’s WorkSmart program.

I encourage you to provide us with any feedback you might have on the usefulness of this resource as well as to advise us of any other resources we might develop to assist you in operating in your role of ‘Manager as Coach’.

Note: In this Guide we have used the term leader to apply interchangeably with manager and supervisor. It has been designed as a resource for those in any leadership role.
What is Coaching?

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.”


Coaching provides the opportunity for an individual to work together with another person to:

- discover and clarify what the staff member wants to achieve and align with organisational goals
- elicit staff-generated solutions and strategies,
- enable a change in an individual’s perception and/or behaviour,
- build individual know-how, skills, confidence and effectiveness, and
- hold the staff member responsible and accountable.

In essence, it provides for immediate on-the-job learning as well as ‘just in time’ learning tailored to the individual and their particular situation.

What Coaching is Not

A coaching leader does not advise or provide solutions. Instead they facilitate a process whereby the coachee generates their own solutions and holds themselves accountable to them. Unlike counselling / therapy, which seeks to ‘heal’ a problem, coaching is performance and solutions focused. Whilst therapy is often rooted in the past, coaching focuses on creating a future based on conscious choices made in the present.
Finally, unlike mentoring, the coaching is not about imparting expert knowledge in a particular field. It is about guiding individuals in self-directed learning, with each person being the expert on his / her own domain.

- Coaching is a development process in which an individual is supported while achieving a specific personal or professional competence, result or goal.
- Coaching is a very focused conversation that primarily uses questions to get to the heart of things and facilitate change and transformation.

Coaching in the Leadership Continuum

There are times when a manager needs to be directive, and times when a mentoring approach is useful. Mentoring is more directive - its purpose is knowledge transfer from the mentor to the mentée, so key activities within the mentoring relationship include sharing expertise and offering advice. Coaching is more non-directive, with a focus on eliciting ideas and thoughts from the participant, hence, the focus on asking questions. They are both future focused, but coaching is focused on the other person driving the agenda.

Roles overlap and often appear in one interaction. Not all situations will lend themselves to coaching, however, coaching techniques can greatly assist engagement, clarity, empowerment and ownership in performance development situations.
The Benefits of Developing a Coaching Style

For the Organisation – A Coaching Culture

At UniSA, the goal of developing a coaching culture supports strategic development, empowerment and innovation across the University. A coaching culture develops leadership capability at all levels of the organisation. Leaders who are able to engage with their staff to develop their mastery, autonomy and connection with the outcomes of the university are key to developing this culture.

Today’s leaders are facing increasing complexity in their work environments, requiring more adaptive and collaborative ways of working. Leaders are expected to demonstrate high levels of self-awareness; be able to develop the capabilities of their staff; and, be able to effectively guide and motivate others towards identified goals.

Leaders need to have effective coaching skills to focus their staff on the desired performance required to achieve a clear end goal. A listening, learning coaching culture where the strengths of employees are optimised, two way feedback and learning is the norm, and commitment to goals is fostered provides the best chance of working with the increasing levels of complexity facing organisations today.

Research has shown that senior leaders who are effective at developing others are 1.5 times more likely to exceed their financial goals. Effective coaching and development from senior leaders can boost performance by up to 27%. Teams where a coaching leadership style is employed show significantly higher levels of engagement and there are positive impacts on the direct reports of the coachee (increase in discretionary effort and ‘promotability’).

*Corporate Leadership Council Learning & Development 2006*  
*Senior Leadership Survey*

Daniel Goleman refers to Six Leadership Styles *(refer Appendix 1)* in his article *Leadership that Get Results* (HBR March-April 2000). Whilst all styles can beneficial in specific situations, a coaching style is one of the leadership styles researchers identified as creating a positive culture and high performance in the team.

For the Leader

*“Growing people is enlightened self-interest rather than idealism that offers no added value”* - John Whitmore, 2002

Leaders ‘get things done through people’ so it makes sense to enhance staff capacity on the job through coaching. Staff who are *coached* to perform rather than *managed* to perform usually have more invested in the outcomes of their work and the achievement of team goals. Successfully applied, coaching enables managers to delegate work with more confidence as the staff
member’s capacity increases, freeing them up to work on more strategic initiatives.

Effective coaching can result in:
- enhanced performance, including increased ability to take initiative and find solutions to problems
- enhanced productivity due to increased motivation
- strengthened commitment to personal, professional and organisational goals
- increased retention of high performing staff
- greater levels of co-operation with change
- greater commitment to collaboration to achieve results.

For the Team Member

Staff receiving coaching experience the personal benefits of continually improving their skills and know-how. They increase their levels of self-confidence and job satisfaction and enhance personal growth as well as career development prospects. These factors can help to attract and retain high-performing staff.

We all recognise that when we come up with our own goals and our own solutions we are much more motivated to achieve them than if we have been told to do something.

Extrinsic motivation occurs when we are motivated to perform a behavior or engage in an activity in order to earn a reward or avoid a punishment. Examples include:
- Working towards a goal to please the boss
- Participating in a sport in order to win awards
- Paying your taxes to avoid getting audited

In each of these examples, the behaviour is motivated by a desire to gain a reward or avoid a negative outcome. Typically we might hear someone say “I should do…” or ‘I must do…”
Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a behaviour because it is personally rewarding; essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward. Examples of behaviours that are the result of intrinsic motivation include:

- Striving to complete a goal because you find the outcome personally rewarding
- Participating in a sport because you find the activity enjoyable
- Solving a word puzzle because you find the challenge fun and interesting

A person’s behaviour is motivated by an internal desire to participate in an activity for its own sake. Coaching engages the individual in co-creating their work. A leader’s skilful questioning can guide the individual to develop their capabilities through identifying the parameters of the task, the quality required, who else might need to be engaged in the task and the timeframes for completion.

**Desired Outcomes of Coaching**

**Awareness**

- Internal awareness of perception and feelings about a situation, e.g. discomfort, frustration, pride, sense of anticipation. A self-awareness of your own default behaviours and from that greater self-awareness comes the ability to adapt and self-correct.
- External awareness of issues, stakes, consequences and a systems view.

**Clarity**

Clarity about issues, outcomes and goals. Where am I at now? What am I trying to achieve? How does this fit with our overall direction? What options do I have available to me? What solution do I think would work best? What does a quality outcome look like?

**Ownership**

Ownership is about outcomes and process; having a sense of personal responsibility and motivation. It leads to improved decision-making, prioritisation and focus.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment is about having a clear path to reach goals. Individuals have a sense of anticipation and a sense of ability and resourcefulness. It leads to improved relationships and an improved ability to cope with stressful situations.
Honing your Coaching Skills

Coaching Meta-Skills

A meta-skill is the attitude that the coach brings to any skill or technique which operates at the level of being. In other words, it is the full embodiment of that skill in ways that make it who the coach is, rather than what they do.

It is important for the leader to be aware of their rank and role in the coaching engagement, and ensure they continually hone their practice in the following:

**Compassion** – the capacity to genuinely understand another person’s point of view without judging the merits of that point of view. Empathy in action

**Humility** – the capacity of letting go of the need to be the expert in a situation. It involves bringing a “beginners mind” to a coaching conversation

**Neutrality** – listening to your coachee with curiosity, whilst also being aware of your own thoughts, feelings and perspectives without reacting to either point of view. It involves seeing the relationships between the different polarities in the “issue” being discussed.

**Courage** – the capacity to approach a difficult situation and not shy away from potential conflict. Remaining strong and ‘holding the space’. Being quiet and centred sense of self amidst the chaos.

Coaching Skills

To be effective as a Manager-Coach, a range of capabilities is required. These include being able to:

- build positive trusting relationships with staff. Coaching depends on a positive relationship between the coaching leader and staff member being coached. The relationship needs to be based on trust - where the staff member knows he/she can come to you and brainstorm issues in a supportive environment and leave with encouragement and your support to take action on a chosen solution.

- provide quality feedback. You want to deliver feedback that builds motivation not fear or apathy

- be receptive to receiving feedback. Be open to reflecting on and potentially learning from what you hear

- practice empathic listening (Empathise, Acknowledge, Reflect, Summarise)

- enable dialogue through open or facilitative questioning
To ascertain the strengths you will bring to a coaching relationship with your staff, why not complete ‘A Self Assessment of your Coaching Attributes’. This self-assessment tool will give you insight into your innate strengths and your potential ‘blind spots’. Is this still available on your intranet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From Manager</th>
<th>To Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From trying to work out how to manage staff</td>
<td>To asking your staff how they are best managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From ‘You report to me’</td>
<td>To ‘Tell me how I can help you’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From telling staff how to behave</td>
<td>To communicating expectations and being an exemplary role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From controlling staff actions</td>
<td>To enabling them to take better actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From solving all the problems</td>
<td>To facilitating staff to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From tip toeing around staff issues</td>
<td>To building relationships where you can have frank and open dialogue about issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From telling staff what to do</td>
<td>To building initiative &amp; self-directed action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From delegating tasks that simply get the job done</td>
<td>To giving staff challenging assignments that stretch them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From building a compliant culture low in drive and initiative</td>
<td>To building a learning culture where the strengths of employees are optimised, two way feedback and learning is the norm, and commitment to goals is fostered</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Review the list above and reflect on the changes you may need to make to enable your move from being a manager to a coach.

Select one of the changes you have identified. What can you do differently at once to take the first move to operating more as a coach and less as a manager?

**Coaching in Action**

When applied, coaching is:

- **Holding a conversation and engaging in dialogue.** Coaching is not about telling the staff member what to do. Rather it is about encouraging them to reflect and learn. As adult learners, we generally like to create our own solutions rather than be told what to do.
• **Collaborative.** Coaching is about brainstorming issues together. Jointly identify possible solutions to problems.

• **Focused on achieving outcomes.** You want the staff member to leave your meeting with a course of action to take.

• **Solution Focused and future-oriented,** with consideration given to the past where appropriate. When we dwell on the past and a problem, the problem often ‘gets bigger’. If we focus on the way forward and a solution to the problem, the problem becomes more manageable and we have the energy to deal with it.

• **Challenging to the individual, in a positive way.** Ask open-ended questions of the staff member to encourage them to reflect on the issue or situation and think through the possible options. This is your opportunity to enable the staff member to see the situation differently, to embrace a different way of dealing with it, and potentially to change their approach or behaviour.

• **Focused on the staff member.** Your aim is to focus on their needs and learning requirements as well as facilitating ways for them to find the answers (rather than you providing the answers or directing). You want the staff member to take ownership of the problem and to take action to solve it. From this they learn and are more likely to develop capacity to find solutions to problems independently.

• **Dependent on high quality feedback.** Positive feedback builds self-confidence and makes people want to take more action. Review how implementation of the action plan went. Identify learnings. Celebrate successes.

• **Encouraging the individuals to achieve.** We learn better when we discover for ourselves. Enable your staff to ‘extend’ themselves and remember ‘blame’ has no place in coaching!
A Coaching Model

A popular and effective coaching approach is the GROW model developed by Sir John Whitmore.

The context for using the GROW model is **awareness** and **responsibility** and the skill of **effective questioning** is core to using the model effectively.

**Goals** – identify what is to be achieved

**Reality** – understand the issue or situation

**Options** – discuss options or choices available and think through the impact of each

**Way Forward** – (also known as Will or Wrap Up) agree on a course of action. What is to be done, when, and by whom and do you have the will to do it

Whilst the GROW model is very effective if you use it in the sequence of the mnemonic, you can also use it in other sequences. For example, you may not be able to help the individual set an effective goal, until they have explored the current reality, or a staff member may come to you with a number of options. You may need to explore these, before returning to the Goal or current Reality.

It is important to acknowledge that a coaching approach may not work in all cases. This will be the case, for example, if a staff member requires excessive personal direction, or if you as the manager lack the skills to guide the staff member appropriately. When a manager is responsible for a staff member who needs excessive direction, he/she needs to reflect on the potential causes of this to guide strategies for dealing with it. For example; it may be due to a lack of confidence, skills, motivation, clarity about work goals, or a ‘spill over’ from a previous leadership style that did not encourage self-management. When this occurs, it is useful to consider the motivational
issues carefully and then seek advice from managers or HR specialists on approaches that might be taken to address the issues identified.

You will find some sample questions for the Grow Model in Appendix 2 of this Guide.

Refer to the following UniSA Guides for more information on the above skills:

- The Art of Supervision: an action learning tool kit
- Quick Guide for Supervisors of Professional Staff
- Providing Quality Feedback: a good practice guide
- Mentoring @ UniSA: a good practice guide for staff
- Tips for Giving and Receiving Feedback

And look out for relevant workshops offered as part of the University’s professional development programs.

**Other Resources**


[www.performanceconsultants.com](http://www.performanceconsultants.com)

Scott, S (2002), Fierce Conversations, Berkley Publishing.

[www.fierceinc.com](http://www.fierceinc.com)

Grant A (2003), Solution Focused Coaching, Momentum.


Grant A and Greene, J (2005), Coach Yourself @Work, ABC Books.


Landsberg, M (1997), The Tao of Coaching: Boost Your Effectiveness at Work by inspiring and developing those around you, Profile Business.
## Appendix 1 – Leader as Coach
### Goleman’s Six Leadership Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Six Leadership Styles at a Glance</th>
<th>Coercive</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Affiliative</th>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>Pacesetting</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The leader’s modus operandi</strong></td>
<td>Demands immediate compliance</td>
<td>Mobilises people towards a vision</td>
<td>Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds</td>
<td>Forges consensus through participation</td>
<td>Sets high standards for performance</td>
<td>Develops people for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The style in a phrase</strong></td>
<td>“Do what I tell you.”</td>
<td>“Come with me.”</td>
<td>“People come first.”</td>
<td>“What do you think?”</td>
<td>“Do as I do, now.”</td>
<td>“Try this.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underlying emotional intelligence competencies</strong></td>
<td>Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control</td>
<td>Self-confidence, empathy, change catalyst</td>
<td>Empathy, building relationships, communication</td>
<td>Collaboration, team leadership, communication</td>
<td>Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative</td>
<td>Developing others, empathy, self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When the style works best</strong></td>
<td>In a crisis, to kick start a turnaround, or with problem employees</td>
<td>When changes require a new vision, or when a clear direction is needed</td>
<td>To heal rifts in a team or to motivate people during stressful circumstances</td>
<td>To build buy-in or consensus, or to get input from valuable employees</td>
<td>To get quick results from a highly motivated and competent team</td>
<td>To help an employee improve performance or develop long-term strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall impact on climate</strong></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Most strongly positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

GROW Model – Sample Questions

Goal
• What are the intermediate steps you can identify?
• How will you know that you have achieved that goal?
• What issue would you like to work on?
• What is the timeframe?
• What form of outcome are you seeking by the end of the session?

Current Reality
• Questions to help determine the current reality
• What is the present situation?
• Who is affected by this issue other than you?
• What actions have you taken so far?
• What obstacles need to be overcome?
• How much control do you personally have over the outcome?
• Who else has some control over it and how much?
• What resources do you already have? (Skill, time, enthusiasm, money, support etc)
• What resources will you need? Where will you get them from?

Options
• What would you do if there were no constraints?
• Which solutions would give the best result?
• What are all the different ways you could approach this issue?
• What are the alternatives?
• What else could you do?
• What would you do if you had more time, a larger budget, or if you were the boss?
• What would you recommend if you were an external consultant looking at your challenge?
• What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet, with a new team?
• What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these options in turn?
• Which of the solutions appeals to you most?

**Way Forward (Will / Wrap Up)**

• What will you do to obtain support?
• To what extent does this meet your objectives?
• When are you going to start and finish each action step?
• What will you do to eliminate the roadblocks to your actions?
• What could I do to support you?
• What commitment on a scale of one to ten do you have to taking the agreed actions?
• What could you do or alter to raise your commitment closer to ten?