

# Helping leaders become coaches

It's unrealistic to expect leaders to have all the answers; today's organisations are simply too complex to manage on that basis. It is why many are looking at developing a coaching model of leadership.

“Coaching is about connecting with people and creating cultures where they are inspired to develop themselves and come up with the answers on their own.”

## Getting started

Coaching conversations typically begin with an open-ended question. This creates space that your employee can fill. Show you are engaged and interested by making plenty of eye contact. People need to feel heard. It also helps capture other signals – body language, facial expressions, gestures. In the current climate, it will be helpful to tie conversations to goals and desired individual and organisational outcomes, however short-term. As such, be clear about what success looks like.

### A few simple tips:

- Drill down to explore elements of a person's story or situation focusing more on feelings, reactions, underlying causes, or motives
- Where necessary, challenge aspects of the story by introducing new ideas or offering a different perspective (the more time you spend exploring the situation and challenging thinking, the more likely the employee will come up with a solution on their own)
- Empathise with the person – this is an important step in the process of helping them build resilience and learn from setbacks
- Acknowledge an employee's struggles and feelings, where appropriate, as they will then be more likely to respond to your efforts to motivate
- Don't feel the need to take notes, it can be distracting and make the person feel as if they're being graded on performance. Keep sessions informal and conversational

### In brief:

Set clear expectations for results and let your people find their own best way to get the job done – you hired them for their unique attributes, after all

Give people as much responsibility as they can handle – people grow when they are stretched

Develop the habit of asking: “How can we...?”, instead of: “Why did you...?”

## Question bank

We've compiled a bank of open-ended questions to help get you started. Use these questions sparingly, depending on what you want to achieve. Remember, coaching is about drilling down and encouraging an open-ended, explorative conversation, rather than a directed Q&A.

### About the process...

- What are your thoughts around what coaching may be able to offer?
- What do you need from a coach?
- What would success look like for you?
- What would you like to be different as a result of this?
- How would you like to feel as a result of this?

### About your relationship...

- What would be useful for me to know today?
- What would you like to be different?
- What am I missing as a manager?
- Is there anything which you would do differently if you were in my position?
- What support do you need from me?

### About the individual

- What are you good at? What do you love doing?
- How often are you engaging in these activities?
- What motivates you?
- What saps your energy?
- What do you need in order to perform?
- What's the most important challenge that you currently face?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- What is your best contribution to the team?
- What could have made it better?
- What does success look like to you this year?

## Coaching for teams

Think about the language you use and try and frame your questions in everyday terms. A great exercise when coaching teams can start with these simple sentences:

*You get the best out of me when...*

*You get the worst out of me when...*

*You can count on me to...*

*What I need from you is...*

Get people to come prepared. And, using the tips above, encourage people to be real and honest and prepared to probe and explore each other's responses so everyone is properly 'heard'.

If you require further clarity on any of the above or feel like you would benefit from some coaching yourself, then please contact:

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