

# Performance Coaching - Introduction

One of the key roles for a supervisor/manager is to support their staff in achieving the performance goals and standards expected of them in their workplace. When employees regularly exceed the expectations or when they fall short of that mark, it is the responsibility of the manager to initiate either Development or Performance Coaching - that is, discussions aimed at either developing their potential further or helping an employee improve a specific work behaviour or skill.

There are a range of techniques and policies/procedures associated with development and performance coaching that managers should be aware of in undertaking discussions with people.

As the supervisor/manager, you should be working from a basis of:

- Inspiring and Encouraging people to reach their full potential
- Demonstrating Respect in all of your actions
- Leading a fair and reasonable process

Be authentic in your actions and conversation:

- Development and Performance coaching is best approached as a solution focussed exercise, in which you as the manager/supervisor actively involve employees in confirming issues and developing agreed solutions.
- It is important to keep an open mind in relation to the situation and to create a positive and supportive environment for the person.
- Having the "performance support building blocks" in place greatly assists performance counselling. Check the following:
  - Is there a Position Agreement for the person, is it current and accurate and is there a signed copy on the person's personnel file?
  - Has a Performance Agreement been developed with the person?
  - Are there any pre-agreed Key Performance Indicators, Values/Behaviours etc?
  - Has the person been made aware of workplace standards/expectations/policies/procedures? (eg Values and Behaviours, Code of Conduct, )
  - Are opportunities provided for regular contact and two-way feedback between the manager and the person?
- Coaching a person should be conducted in private and not when the supervisor/manager or person may be in an emotional state
- Developmental Coaching can be appropriate to progress or "develop their potential" beyond the requirements of their current position.
- Performance coaching can be appropriate either as an early intervention strategy when performance is not on track or as a part of forward planning and review with a person.

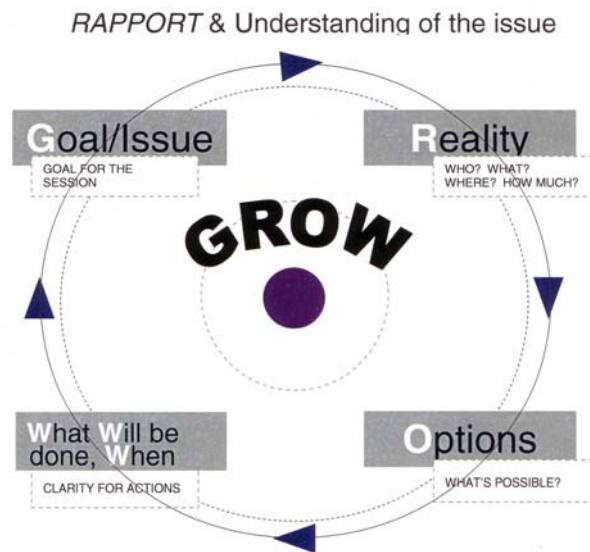
# Performance Coaching Conversation Checklist

## Benchmark # 1

### PREPARE for the performance coaching meeting

- Identify the performance or behaviour you've observed
- Consider those areas where the employee is doing well.
- Check the relevance of positions agreements, performance agreements
- Be people wise - keep an open mind; don't prejudge.
- Set a positive tone. Make note of the specific things the employee does well. Show Respect in all your actions (including his or her self esteem).
- Allow the employee time to prepare for the meeting.
- Create a positive, private atmosphere for both you and the employee.
- Set time aside; let the employee know his or her performance is important to you.
- Define your objectives. Define a range of acceptable performance/behaviour for the position. If appropriate, gather evidence to support where performance is failing short.

## The *GROW* Model



## Benchmark # 2

### IDENTIFYING the Performance Gaps

Restate the expected performance standards

Acknowledge those areas where performance is meeting or exceeding expectations

Give clear specific feedback about where performance may not be meeting expectations (eg. where are the gaps, what are the examples)

Focus on performance and/or behaviour not on personality.

Don't get distracted by red herrings or arguments not related to the issue.

### Conversations starters for Talking About Performance

I really like the way you handled .....However, there are some other issues that I wish to discuss with you today.

In your position as ..... I require you to .....This is necessary because... I have noticed recently that you ....

ABC expects us all to..... You are not meeting this expectation because you .....  
The..... is suffering as a result.

One area that needs work is..... because it has an impact on .....

I see a problem with ..... that could cause .....

The problem with ..... is that ..... which results in .....

What doesn't work so well is ..... because .....

### **Benchmark # 3**

#### **UNDERSTAND the Reality**

Assume the best.

Ask open-ended questions aimed at uncovering the reasons for the performance gaps.

#### **Conversation starters for Encouraging others to talk about the reasons for their performance**

What is happening for you that is creating this situation?

What are the problems that you are experiencing that are preventing you from .....

What do I need to know to understand what's happening for you?  
Are you aware .....

Your intentions are not clear to me. Can you help me out here?  
What did you mean by .... ?

#### **Responding to the reasons:**

What I hear you saying is... Is my understanding correct?

This is my understanding of what you are saying. What do I still need to know to understand your perspective?

Are you ready to hear how I see it?

### **Benchmark # 4**

#### **SEEK Agreement**

Encourage self-appraisal by the employee to identify the gaps.

Ask the employee to restate the issue in his or her own words.

Gain agreement on the performance goals.

#### **Conversation starters for Gaining Agreement**

Based on our conversations today what do you believe the issue is?

I think the issue is ..... How do you see it?

If I asked you to describe the problem from a business perspective, how would you explain it?

*(You have now integrated the GROW Coaching Model by: Setting the Goals, Understanding the Reality)*

### **Benchmark # 5**

#### **EXPLORE the Options**

Involve the employee in identifying the options to develop his or her potential.

Select the best option

#### **Conversation starters for Exploring the Options**

Let's look at what works and figure out what we can learn to deal with the issue

Let's look for solutions together.

My recommendation is ..... What do you think?

What do you intend to do about the problem?

What do you think I should do about the problem?

Here is another way of doing it. ....What do you think?

What do you suggest that we do to keep this from happening again?

What would it take to ..... (describe desired performance or behaviour)?

*(GROW Coaching Model - exploring the options)*

## **Benchmark # 6**

### **AGREE on a Plan**

In conjunction with the employee, identify what will be done and when.

Summarise the meeting

Set a review meeting for an agreed date/time.

Refer team members to internal or external professionals for assistance on a voluntary basis as appropriate (eg Employee Counsellors)

### **Selecting and Agreeing on an option**

Of the options/solutions we've discussed, what do you believe would work best?

Does this option solve the problem?

Do you believe that you can comply with this option?

Is there any way this option can be improved?

Is this an option that you will be able to commit to in writing?

Shall we document our agreed actions so that we are both clear on our follow up responsibilities?

## **Generic Conversation Starters**

### **PROVIDING RECOGNITION**

- I like the way you did....
- This work shows a lot of attention to detail....
- I see progress with...
- Your .... in the face of ... means a lot
- Thank you for your assistance with.....
- Congratulations on the.....

### **PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

- As you know, this is an opportunity for us to share information about your job, to clarify objectives and to see how things are going for you.
- Then we can discuss growth.
- I will put any calls on hold so we won't be interrupted.
- Let us compare notes on your top three goals and means to achieve them.
- Please give me examples.
- What will it take for you to meet your next quarter's goals.
- Improving Performance.

### **RESPONDING WITHOUT AGREEING**

- I see. Tell me more.
- This is a big issue for you.
- I might feel that way if I was in your shoes.
- That's an interesting perspective.
- I did not realise that you felt that way.
- I had not considered that perspective.
- Please continue.
- That may be.
- I appreciate your sharing your experiences. What else do I need to know?
- Help me to understand.
- Let me make sure I understand you clearly.

### **REFUSING REQUESTS**

- I understand that you are asking for ..... I am unable to fulfil your request because .... What I can do is .....
- I am delighted with the work you have been doing the few months you have been here. You haven't been here very long and the policy doesn't allow me to consider ..... Let's review this in .....  
I appreciate your need for more flexibility with your working hours. However, at this stage the business pressures will not permit me to release you. We have the following deadlines and without you I'm not sure we can meet these timeframes in your absence. I'm happy to release you on ..... If you can show me something I am overlooking I am happy to reconsider.