

Common Coaching Scenarios

As you coach your employees, you'll notice that your sessions begin to fall into some general categories: correcting performance problems, maximizing performance potential, and developing skills for career growth. The following summaries may help you to stay focused and better target your questions for greater coaching success.

Coaching scenario 1: Correcting performance problems

A leader named Cheryl was perplexed because one of her best employees, Alex, suddenly started arriving late for work on numerous occasions. Instead of immediately giving him a warning for the behavior, Cheryl recognized this was out of character for Alex and took the time to ask him a series of probing questions.

- What do you think is preventing you from arriving to work on time?
- What could you change to increase the probability of being at your desk at 8:00 a.m.?
- How can you commit to making that happen every day?
- What do you think would be a fair consequence if that doesn't happen?

Alex shared that he had some extenuating circumstances she didn't know about, but he also admitted it was time to end his love affair with the snooze button. After uncovering the root of the problem, Cheryl confirmed that she understood the issues involved and worked with Alex to set specific goals related to his punctuality. Cheryl would need to take corrective action if the problem continued, but she wanted to strengthen the trust she had developed with Alex over time and encourage him to make appropriate changes.

Coaching scenario 2: Maximizing performance potential

Thomas often acted as a coach for one of his trusted colleagues named Kendra. She was a bright woman who had taken on additional responsibilities in the last year and had notable success with a stretch assignment. However, in one of their coaching sessions, Kendra admitted that she was struggling with time management and needed some help. Thomas asked her a series of questions.

- How did you conclude that you are having a time management problem?
- What happens now when you feel overscheduled?
- What would it take to feel more in control of your calendar?
- Who could assist you in supporting this?

By answering those questions, Kendra realized that she needed to have a discussion with her immediate boss about prioritizing projects and clarifying deadlines. Thomas encouraged her to approach her boss and take ownership of the solution.

Coaching scenario 3: Developing skills for career growth

A senior executive named Jack began coaching one of the company's high-potential employees. Olivia was ambitious and driven, and Jack could tell through their conversations that she was ready to work at a higher

level. He wanted to help Olivia prepare for a leadership position in or out of her current department, and he used some specific coaching questions to spur the process:

- What aspects of your existing role are most satisfying?
- Which of your talents do you think are underutilized in your current position?
- What position do you think most aligns with both your preferences and talents?
- What competencies would be required for that job?
- What additional skills would you need to be qualified for that?
- How could you start building those skills now (training, education, online tools)?
- Do you know anyone who followed that career path and might be willing to give you their perspective?

Through these questions, Jack prompted Olivia to gain clarity on what it would take to move to the next level and define the developmental needs required to get there. He continued to support and encourage Olivia by sharing his experiences of career progression, and he offered to make some helpful introductions.

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