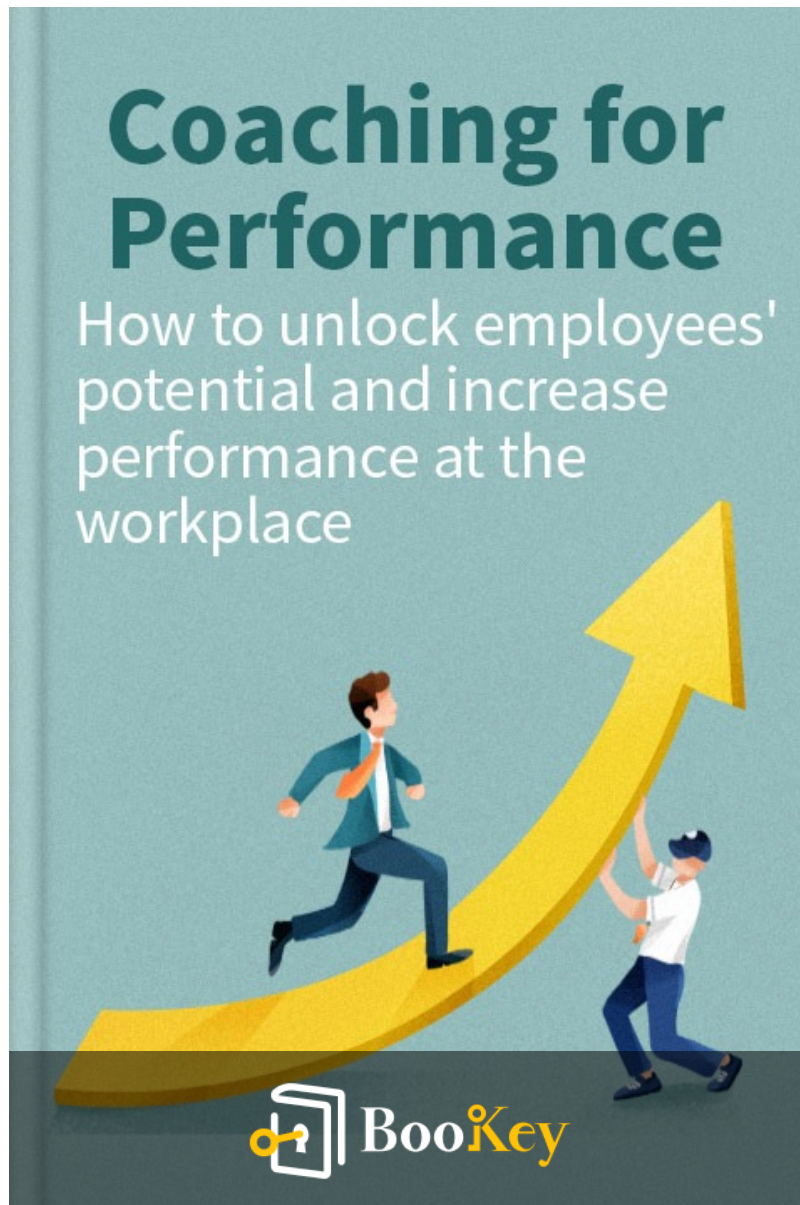


# Coaching for Performance PDF

John Whitmore



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# Coaching for Performance

How to unlock employees' potential and increase  
performance at the workplace

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## About the book

Coaching for Performance is a reference book that describes the principles and practices of developing people's potential and purpose through coaching and leadership. The book outlines coaching philosophies and teaches coaching skills using the GROW model (Goals, Reality, Options and Will) and cases from the workplace and sports. It's an excellent tool for leadership coaching in business, but even parents and school teachers will benefit from it.

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## About the author

John Whitmore was a pioneer in coaching, and a co-founder of Performance Consultants International (PCI) and the most commonly used coaching model in the world, GROW. He took the lead in introducing coaching practice to businesses at the start of the 1980s, and his contributions to coaching and leadership around the world have facilitated change and transformation in countless organizations. He defined the principles of performance coaching and also founded several coaching schools. For this work, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) awarded him with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013.

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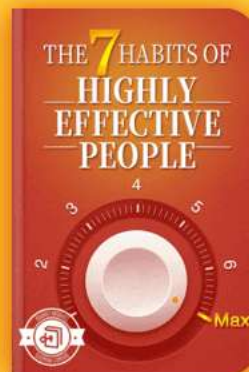


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# Chapter 1 : Overview

Hi, welcome to bookey. Today we'll unlock the book *Coaching for Performance: Growing Human Potential and Purpose - The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership*.

Most people would hire a professional tennis coach to learn to play tennis so they could receive the guidance they need. However, John Whitmore told us from his personal experience that a ski coach can actually help us make faster progress in tennis. In the 1970s he opened a tennis stadium with the Harvard educationalist and tennis expert Timothy Gallwey. Because so many people had signed up to learn tennis, they asked some ski coaches to make up for the shortage in tennis coaches. No one expected what happened next. The people coached by the ski coaches made greater progress than those trained by actual tennis coaches.

Based on this eye-opening discovery, this counterintuitive coaching practice was introduced to the business arena. As expected, it helped employees deliver unprecedented high performance. Today, Global 500 companies such as Google, Ford, Microsoft, and Intel practice employee coaching. You

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might wonder why such an unconventional practice yielded such great success. How did the coaching management model create better managers? Coaching for Performance Growing Human Potential and Purpose - The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership answers these questions.

Coaching for Performance tells us that, rather than simply imparting knowledge to coachees, a coach's most important job is to help coachees realize their own potential and maximize their value. This book provides a clear guidance on the theory of coaching and its practice, so we can use it as a reference from time to time. The book has been well received since its publication and is widely recognized as the coaching 'Bible'. According to Thorsten Klein, the Director of eBay Global Talent & Organization Development, this book is a must-read for leaders and organizational development practitioners who recognize that coaching is a performance activity that holistically impacts leaders, teams, and company culture. According to Patrick Murphy, the former President of Ryanair, the principles outlined in this book can give impetus to business changes, help improve employees' job satisfaction, and enhance business performance.





The author, John Whitmore, was a pioneer in coaching and a co-founder of both Performance Consultants International (PCI) and the most commonly used coaching model in the world, GROW. He took the lead in introducing coaching to businesses in the early 1980s, and his contributions to coaching and leadership throughout the world have facilitated change and transformation in many organizations. In 2013, he was awarded with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Coach Federation (ICF) for his contributions in the field.

Let's now discover how coaching can benefit us both at work and in our daily lives. This bookey will unlock Coaching for Performance in three parts:

Part One: 'Understanding' coaching;

Part Two: How a coach can unlock employ

Part Three: The main coaching management practices.

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## Chapter 2 : ‘Understanding’ coaching

Earlier, we learned about how the author and his partner had ski coaches coach people to play tennis due to a shortage of tennis coaches, which yielded a surprising result. The people coached by the ski coaches actually made greater progress than those trained by professional tennis coaches. Whitmore and Gallwey attributed the outcome to the ski coaches’ lack of knowledge of tennis. Since they couldn’t figure out whether a stroke was accurate or not, they could only ask coachees questions like: “What do you feel is wrong about that stroke?” or “Which part of it didn’t you use?” The coachees would then focus on what was wrong with their foot position and waist strength and try again. It was like when parents help their children learn to walk. Parents help their kids achieve their best performance through guidance and encouragement, not by teaching them step-by-step.

This made Whitmore and Gallwey aware that the key to coaching lies in helping coachees unlock their potential by reducing inner noise rather than by imparting knowledge. They then built a new coaching model based on this finding and introduced it to the business arena, which to this day has inspired managers and leaders everywhere, and helped



millions of people do their best at work. But before introducing this coaching model, let's examine the drawbacks of the traditional management model.

First, traditional businesses mainly use the command-and-control management approach. The manager gives direct commands or instructions that employees carry out. Businesses believe this method is convenient and efficient, and it gives bosses a sense that they have everything under control. But the author disagreed with this approach. Command-and-control can make employees feel depressed and lose initiative, and it discourages them to offer feedback to their managers, as such management approach makes them believe that their opinions won't be appreciated. However, employees are likely to complain, slack off, and even sabotage the business in private, and they tend to believe they are not liable for any of the problems at work.

The second drawback of the traditional management model is the side-effect of 'the carrot and stick' method that traditional businesses managers often use to motivate employees. When employees perform well, leaders take out 'the carrot' to encourage employees to keep up the good work. They say things like, "We'll promote you and give you a raise if you



do the project well.” But carrots only make people perform well for a certain period of time. If you treat people like donkeys, they’ll perform like donkeys. On the flip side, when employees underperform, leaders will take out ‘the stick’. Fear can be a strong impetus, but it also represses creativity and responsibility.

Finally, many companies know that their strongest competitive advantage is their human capital, so leaders have to explore and develop talents in addition to managing their business operations. However, good intentions are often defeated by bleak reality, and the pressures of time and cost often limit leaders’ talent development efforts. Leaders also face multiple stressors, from completing tasks on schedule and meeting annual performance indicators, to industry competition and other aspects of their daily work. In order to make sure their jobs don’t go wrong and avoid getting criticized by upper management, managers typically prioritize their jobs instead of talent development, which doesn’t yield immediate results. Hence, in case of relatively tricky tasks, many leaders would rather do the job themselves, even if the tasks are supposed to be assigned to their subordinates. Although this approach can save time in the short term, it increases subordinates’ dependence in the



long run and prevents leaders from focusing on important matters that only they can solve. As a result, the team and the business will perform far below their potential.

These are the few drawbacks of a traditional business management approach. Whitmore believed that coaching can help businesses get past these drawbacks and excel. Research has shown that coaching can create high performance, increase employees' work initiative and sense of responsibility, and unlock employees' potential. Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells us that our highest level of needs are self-esteem and self-actualization. As such, it follows that employees' initiative can be only stimulated when they have high self-esteem and recognize the value of their work and existence. Employees whose highest level of needs are met are sincerely willing to assume responsibility and eager to get the job perfectly done, as they are able to gain a sense of value and self-actualize.

A prerequisite for coaching management in businesses is trust in employees' potential and a culture of trust. According to the author, unless you believe people possess more potential than they are currently showing, you can't help them improve their performance. This book describes an





experiment in which teachers were told that a group of pupils were either scholarship candidates or had learning difficulties. The information the teachers received was not in accordance with reality, but their pupils' test result reflected the beliefs of their teachers, regardless of their previous performance.

The author also stressed that a coach should focus on future success instead of past performance. If a coach only gives his subordinates tasks within the limit of their capabilities, it will imperceptibly strengthen their awareness of their shortcomings and make it hard for them to improve. For instance, Fred is the subordinate of Rose, and Rose will only give Fred task A because Rose believes it's a job that Fred is capable of. In case of task B, Rose will find another man to finish it, since she believes it's beyond Fred's capability. The author believes Rose's practice is unintentionally limiting Fred's potential. As a good manager, she needs to temporarily forget about her limiting belief about Fred's abilities and believe in his potential instead.

External factors, such as the management styles mentioned earlier, will limit employees' potential, as will a lack of encouragement and opportunity. In addition, employees' fear



of failure, the absence of confidence, self-doubt and other internal factors also limit employees' potential. It requires managers to have the mindset of a coach's and to hold a more optimistic belief than 'people have limited capabilities.' Managers must communicate their trust in employees' capabilities in word and practice, shed their desire for control, and help employees rid themselves of reliance on managers.

We have just covered Part One on 'Understanding coaching'. Let's summarize it. The key to coaching lies in helping coachees unlock their own potential by reducing inner noise rather than by imparting professional knowledge. Coaching management in businesses can help leaders overcome the drawbacks of traditional command-and-control and 'carrot and stick' methods, and foster high performance by increasing employees' initiative and sense of responsibility. There's however a prerequisite for the implementation of coaching management in a business: a belief in employees' potential and a culture of trust. So, is there a specific and practical approach to help employees unlock their own potential? We will discuss this in the following section.



## Chapter 3 : How a coach can unlock employees' potential?

Whitmore advocated two key principles to fully unlock employees' potential, namely by building employees' awareness and increasing their sense of responsibility.

First, let's talk about employees' awareness. Awareness is important because you can only respond to things you are aware of. Whitmore also pointed out that our built-in natural learning capabilities will be activated when we are aware of things. So, what is awareness? Whitmore explained that awareness includes gathering and perceiving the relevant facts and information and recognizing when perception is distorted by emotion and desire.

Awareness varies from person to person. When people have high awareness, it's like they have a magnifying glass that allows them to see through things, clearly observe hidden truths and details, and recognize their misperceptions. They can quickly self-adjust and engage in self-improvement. People with low awareness are slower, and even if they work hard and spend a lot of time on something, their results are



still often unsatisfactory. So how can we build awareness, and thus improve organizational competence?

In the traditional management model, managers demonstrate or directly tell employees how exactly to do things, which initially can yield certain advantages. However, this approach won't help them unlock employees' potential, which requires the manager to pay attention to the subordinates' preferences and characteristics. Employees can only realize their potentials through self-adjustment, which starts with building their self-awareness. They need to know where their deficiencies and weaknesses lie.

Attention should be paid to building employees' awareness. For instance, someone who is a talented writer might stumble and make a lot of mistakes if he is asked to share his writing experience on stage. If you were his manager, you wouldn't just encourage him with words like. "Come on. you can do

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## Chapter 4 : The main coaching management practices

Whitmore believed that effective questions trump direct guidance or advice in building a person's self-awareness and sense of responsibility. But what kind of questions should a coach ask to stimulate a coachee's active thinking and invite detailed feedback? Let's return to tennis. Imagine when a coachee fails to return the ball during practice, and the coach repeatedly asks questions like "Are you watching the ball?" and "Why aren't you watching the ball?" How would the coachee respond? He may get defensive and say things like, "I am!" or "I was thinking about my grip." The coach may be asking the questions with the intention to improve the coachee's awareness and help them find problems, but these questions only triggers the coachee's resistance and negative emotions. So, what questions should the coach ask instead?

The coach must ask effective questions, which have the following characteristics. The first characteristic is that they are open-ended. Unlike closed questions that only require a simple "yes" or "no" answer, or don't require thinking at all, an open-ended question requires a descriptive answer. For



example, instead of asking a subordinate, “Did you do your customer follow-up yesterday?”, which is a closed question, a manager should ask “How’s your progress on the customer follow-up?” or “What’s holding you back, and how will you get the job done?” These questions will encourage the subordinate to review the entire follow-up process, which in turn will also increase his awareness and sense of responsibility.

The second characteristic of an effective question is a focus on detail. The more detailed the questions asked, the more focused and interested the coachees will be, and the more specific the answers they will give. For instance, if you ask an employee why he hasn’t prepared the company’s monthly expenditure report yet, he’ll just say that some departments haven’t provided the data. If you continue to ask which data is still missing, he’ll dig deeper and carefully check them out. The employee will get more specific information and reach a higher level of awareness during the checking process.

The third characteristic of an effective question is that it helps to identify blind spots, namely problems that coachees can’t see by themselves. For instance, if a tennis coachee always misses the right time to hit the ball in the ‘sweet



spot', but can't find the cause, the coach can help them identify their blind spots by asking questions like "which part of your stroke do you find most difficult to be accurately aware of?" In the attempt to answer such questions the coachee is very likely to bring a suppressed discomfort or flaw in the movement into awareness.

The fourth characteristic of an effective question is that it points out problems in a straightforward manner. Poor coaches who don't believe in their instructions like to use leading questions to manipulate the coachee into an obscure direction. This often compromises trust and the value of the coaching session. Besides refraining from asking leading questions, a good coach will also avoid questions that imply criticism, such as "Why on earth did you do that?"

Questions that include these four characteristics can guide coachees to actively express their true perceptions and opinions. Besides asking these effective questions, successful coaches are also good listeners. Active listening is an important skill that will encourage coachees to express themselves more. Imagine a situation where an employee discusses the progress of a certain job with her manager, and her manager keeps interrupting her when his own views and



opinions while giving examples of his success stories. The employee would suddenly realize her smallness and naivete and start to think that she should depend more on the brilliant manager instead of trusting her own abilities. But what should a good manager do instead? A good manager and coach should employ active listening by letting the employee express themselves fully while keeping eye contact and paying attention to both the literal and underlying meanings of her words. He should also pay attention to the voice, tone, body language, facial expression, and other information conveyed by the employee, put himself in her shoes, and make it clear to her that he's not judging and assessing, but is truly willing to listen. When a manager does this, the employee will no longer hold in her thoughts, which enables her to expand her mind and solve problems creatively. In addition, such active listening can also help the manager ask the next effective question better.

The next thing to figure out is the sequence of effective questions. In Whitmore's GROW model, the sequence of questioning is divided into four stages. The first stage G is for Goal setting. The second stage R is for Reality checking. The third stage O is Options expansion and selection, and the fourth stage W is Will confirmation. Let's get to know each



stage in order.

The first stage is goal setting. A coach should help a coachee figure out their goals by asking them, “What do you expect to learn during this coaching session?” There are two types of goals that both the coach and pupil should be aware of: end goals and performance goals. End goals are long-term goals that are not entirely within our control, such as becoming the market leader. Performance goals are measurable and totally controllable short-term goals. They are developed based on end goals, such as “sell 100 products in the next month.” Achieving a performance goal is a small step towards the end goal, and in the process, it also helps boost confidence. The end goal defines the direction and provides inspiration, while a performance goal defines the process and job content. An excellent performance goal is the key to realizing an end goal.

The second stage is reality checking, which includes checking both external and internal realities. In a business setting, external realities include organizational strategy, policy and processes, codes of conduct, as well as unwritten rules. When asking questions about external realities, the more objective the question is, the more realistic the





coachee's answer will be. Internal realities refer to people's feelings, perceptions and attitudes. We often look at things through our own lenses which are shaped by our previous experiences, inner prejudices, or other factors. These make us unable to see our internal realities objectively. Taking an outsider's perspective, a coach can ask questions to improve the pupil's awareness of their internal realities, eliminate any distorted perceptions, allowing the pupil to see the problem with an objective lens.

In the process of reality checking, a coach's questioning should elicit descriptive answers from the coachees, rather than judgmental answers. A judgmental answer based on a coachee's subjective judgment of himself may sound like, "Oops, it looks like I'm not cut out for statistical work." In contrast, a descriptive answer would sound like, "Oh, I missed inputting the daily expenses during my preparation of the statistical report," which identifies the reason, reduces distortion and self-criticism, and thus maintains objectivity. A coach can use "where", "how much", when and other similar words to encourage coachees to give descriptive answers.

Having gone through goal setting and reality checking, the



third stage is options expansion and selection, or figuring out how to solve problems. Instead of simply selecting the “right” option, coachees must create and list as many options as possible by means of brainstorming. A coach must encourage the coachee to brainstorm freely regardless of the feasibility of their ideas.

The biggest barriers that limit a coachee’s ideas of creative options are negative assumptions and mindsets. For example, she may think, “It’s an impossible mission. The client will never agree to it, and our rivals are better at this kind of project.” Under such circumstances, the coach should ask questions that elicit imagination and comparison, those that allow the pupil to present herself as the ‘hero’, such as, “What will you do if customer agrees?” “What would you do if you were the project leader?” The coach can stimulate the pupil to come up with more innovative ideas by asking such questions.

In the process of option expansion and selection, what if the coach identifies a better option which the pupil fail to recognize, should the coach tell her? Of course not. The coach could ask “What else?” to encourage her to dig deeper, or, “Would you like to hear some of my suggestions?” which



suggests that the coach's ideas are for the coachee's reference only. The choice is still hers. After expanding the list of options, the coach will then help the coachee pick the best one by asking her more questions. Sometimes they will need to choose two to three alternatives.

Without action, the three aforesaid stages are just empty talk. Now let's look at what should we do at the fourth stage, Will confirmation, where the focus of questioning shifts from discussion to decision-making. This stage can be divided into two steps. The first step is to set up responsibilities, which involve determining specific dates and actions required to accomplish the goal. The coach can ask questions such as, "What are you going to do? When are you going to do it? Who will you do it with? Are there any barriers? What kinds of supports do you need?" Then, the coach can also ask the coachee to score each item in the action plan on a scale of 1-to-10. The odds for the plan's success will be lower if the score is under 8. For each item that has a low score, the coach should work collaboratively with the coachee to improve the practicality of the item. Finally, the coach will also ask the coachee to commit to the plan.

The second step of the Will stage is follow-up and feedback.



Things don't always go according to plan, and a coach's role is in the follow-up and feedback step is to verify progress, provide assistance, and maintain consistency between the plan and the goal, and not to inject supervision and criticism. For instance, criticism such as, "This report is useless," will not only destroy an employee's self-esteem and confidence, but also impair his future performance. A manager could instead ask questions such as, "Which part of this report was a challenge to put together, and what would you do differently if you could do it again?" Such questions will stimulate the employee's thinking, help him sort out his ideas, and allow him to become more conscious and independent in carrying out his tasks.



# Chapter 5 : Summary & Review

You've just listened to the bookey for Coaching for Performance: Growing Human Potential and Purpose - The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership. Let's review what we have learned today.

In Part One on 'Understanding coaching', we learned that the key to coaching lies in helping coachees unlock their potential by reducing inner noise rather than by imparting professional knowledge. Coaching management in businesses can help leaders overcome the drawbacks of traditional command-and-control and 'carrot and stick' methods, and foster high performance by increasing employees' initiative and sense of responsibility. There's however a prerequisite for the implementation of coaching management in a business: a belief in employees' potential and a culture of trust.

In Part Two, we learned about how to unlock employees' potential. There are two principles to unlocking employees' potential: building their self awareness and increasing their sense of responsibility. Managers can help employees build their self-awareness through asking them questions, which

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will allow them to go on a journey of self-discovery. Only through such process can people make self-adjustment and keep improving. In order to increase employees' sense of responsibility, instead of giving orders, managers should allow their subordinates to independently assume a task.

In Part Three, we learned about the main coaching management practices, which include asking effective questions, active listening, and using the GROW model in the questioning sequence. A coach should ask effective questions that encourage the coachee to give specific answers. Effective questions have four characteristics. First, they are open-ended questions. Second, they focus on details. Third, they help reveal blind spots. Fourth, they don't attempt to manipulate the coachee or imply criticism. Then, in order to encourage coachees to share freely and to ask the next effective questions, a coach must employ active listening, which involves keeping eye contact and paying attention to both the literal and underlying meanings of words, the voice, tone, body language, facial expression, and other information conveyed by the coachee, while holding back on judgments. The GROW model represents the sequence of the whole coaching program, which consists of four stages. These are Goal setting, Reality checking, Option



expansion and selection, and Will confirmation.

Coaching management has broken the traditional top-down management model, and countless businesses have benefitted from using coaching to develop their employees, retain talents and achieve high performance. As individuals, we can also benefit by applying coaching practices in our daily life. You will be amazed by the unexpected gains coaching brings to your interpersonal relations and family life. So in your next conversation, instead of preaching, start with asking an effective question, and start unlocking the potentials around you!

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