# Principles of Developing, Managing and Leading Individuals and Teams to Achieve Success
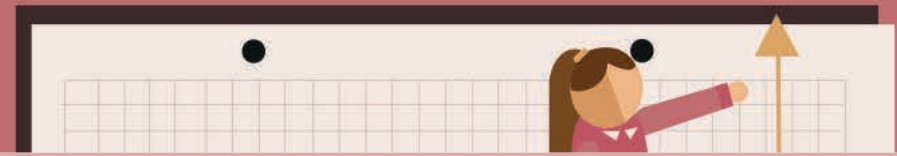
## Lesson 5

# Developing Team Members

Explore learning and development activities

The value of coaching and mentoring

Major models to support team development

Factors to consider when selecting suitable learning and development activities
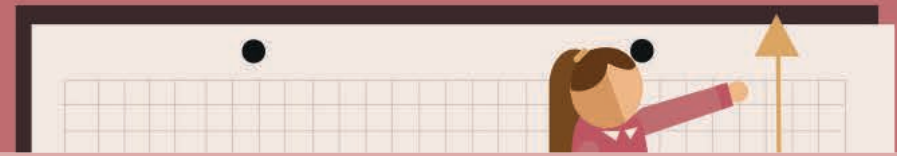
# Developing Skills and Abilities

If the team you manage doesn't contain people with the right skill sets to achieve its objectives, you have two options.

One is to recruit new team members who have the skills and abilities required. We looked at this in the last lesson.

The second option is to help existing team members develop the skills and abilities they need. Learning and development for teams and individuals is the focus of this lesson - and we'll start by looking at the range of learning and development activities you might consider for your team members.
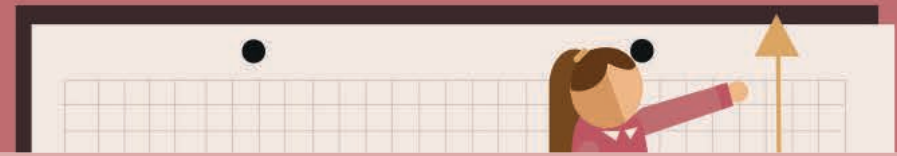
# Formal and Informal Methods

There are so many approaches to learning and development, that it can be helpful to divide them into categories. One way of doing this is to look at 'formal' and 'informal' methods.

Think of a time when you learned to do something new. Chances are, you're probably imagining some kind of formal method of learning - driving lessons, perhaps, or another kind of instructor-led course.
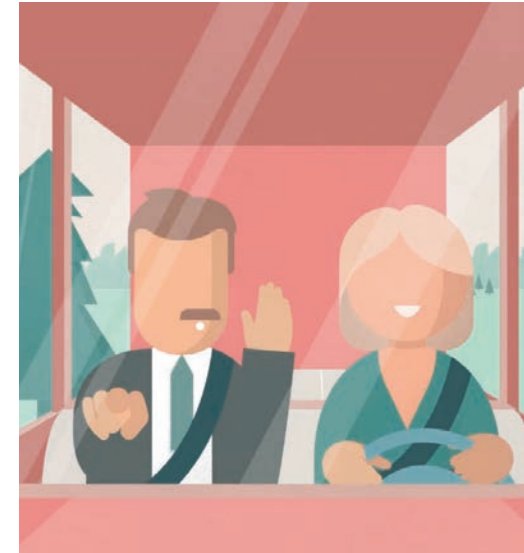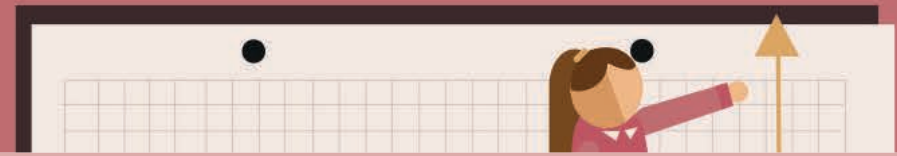
# Formal Methods

Formal learning activities like this are typically highly structured - that is, they have a clear beginning and end, a syllabus of work that should be completed and a way of assessing whether the training programme has been successful.

Most formal learning takes place 'off the job' - that is, you need to take time out of your usual day-to-day activities to complete it.

Traditional classroom-based courses, as well as most structured online courses, can be classified as 'formal' learning.
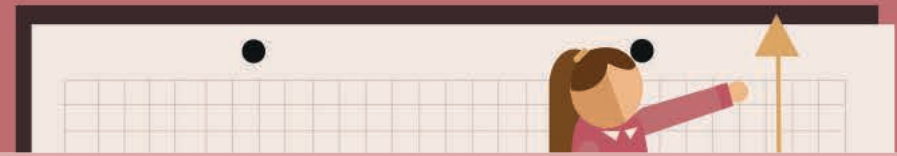
# Informal Methods

Informal methods of learning, on the other hand, are far less systematic - indeed, a lot of informal learning takes place without us even realising, and it can occur both on and off the job.

Education researchers Philip Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed define informal education as: "The lifelong process by which every person accumulates knowledge and skills from daily experiences and exposure to the environment - at home, at work and at play. Generally, informal education is unorganised and often unsystematic - yet it accounts for the bulk of a person's total lifetime learning."

Informal learning can come from travel, reading newspapers and books, listening to the radio and podcasts or watching TV.
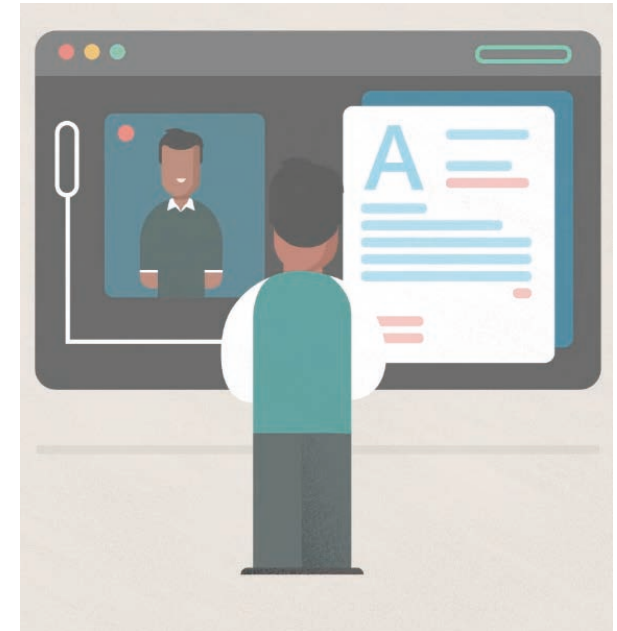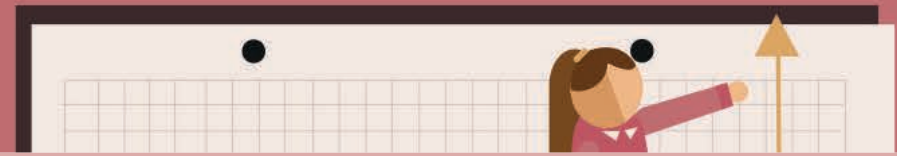
# Formal vs Informal Learning

Within a team setting, informal learning takes place all the time - team members are always picking up new knowledge and skills by observing each other and sharing their experiences.

However, formal learning methods are generally most suitable when you need to help team members develop particular skills and abilities.

If you need a member of your team to present the results of their work to senior management, for example, it might be best to arrange for them to complete a presentation skills training course - either in a classroom-type setting or online.
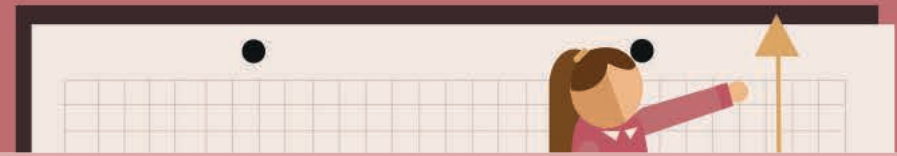
# Social and Collaborative Learning

Team settings also lend themselves to some learning and development activities that offer a blend of both formal and informal learning.

Social and collaborative learning, for example, involves members of a group joining together to share learning material with one another - typically using an online platform, such as social media. This method has elements of informal learning - as members find their own content and are free to dip in and out of it as they wish - but it relies on having a formal online structure in place to encourage this sharing and enable it to happen.
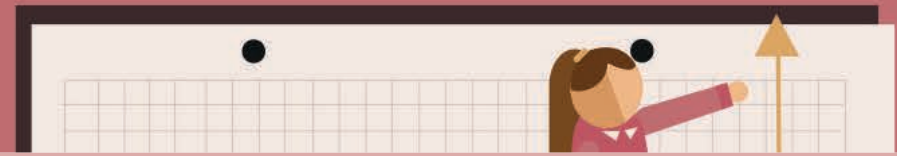
# Job Shadowing

Two other important learning and development activities also blend the formal and informal. They are:

- Job shadowing
- Secondments

In a job shadowing arrangement, it is quite common to ask new team members to shadow more experienced colleagues so they can learn the skills they need to work effectively as part of the team.

The learner is paired with a colleague who they observe as they go about their work - with the aim of learning some of the skills required to perform their role competently.
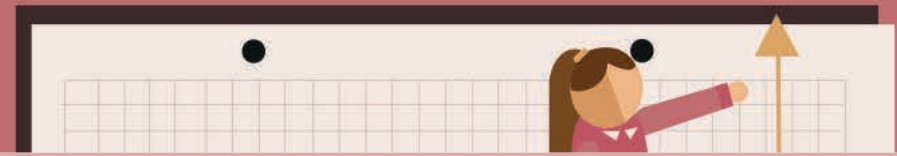
# Secondments

A 'secondment' takes the commitment one step further. Here, learners move into a different role on a temporary basis to gain exposure to the skills the job requires.

For example, a senior team member could be seconded to a team leader role in another department to help them prepare to take over the leadership of their own team at a later date.
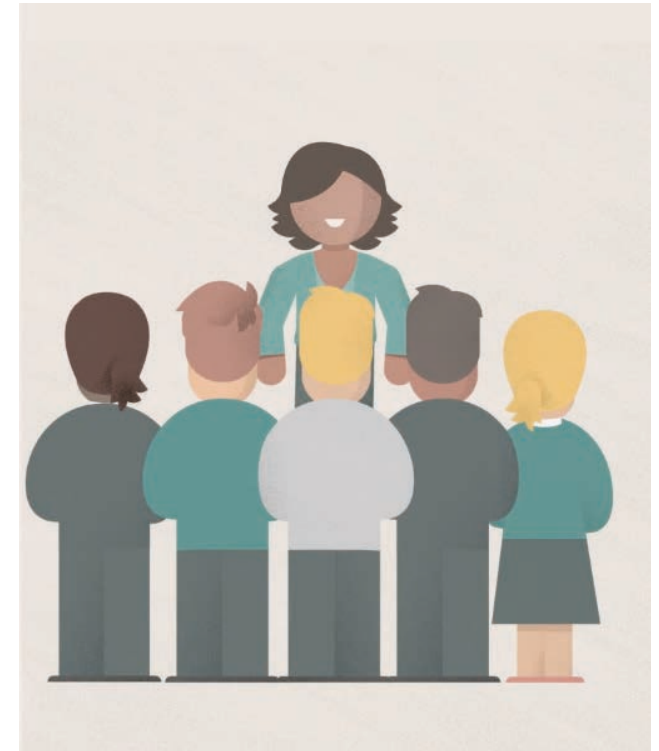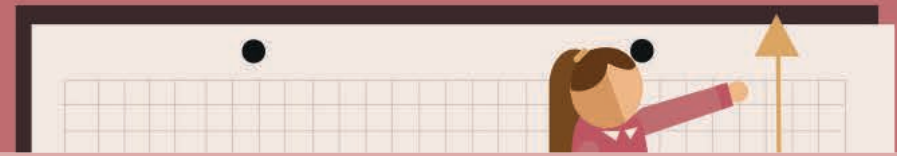
# Coaching

Coaching is a popular way of helping employees develop new skills and abilities.

Typically, coaching involves a professional coach from outside an organisation coming in to work with an individual employee. However, within a team setting, it's possible for a manager - or even other team members - to take on the role of coach and help their colleagues pick up the skills needed to work effectively as part of the team.

# Coaching (cont.)
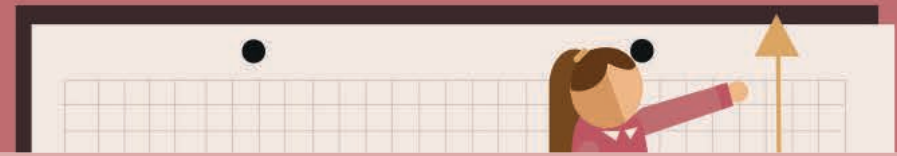
Coaching typically takes place on a one-to-one basis. The coach works with the learner to draw up a skills development plan, and regularly follows up with them to check on progress towards their goal.

The coach's role is one of 'facilitator' or 'guide' rather than instructor or teacher - their job is to prompt the learner to think for themselves and create their own path to improvement.
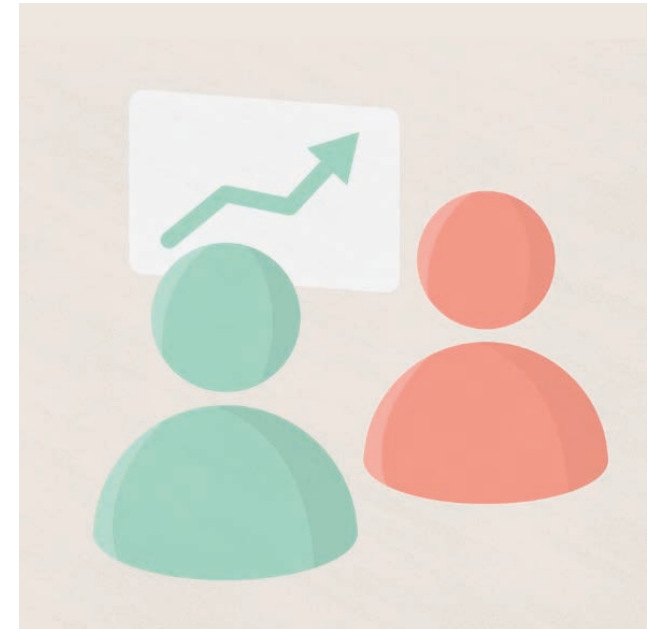
# The GROW Model

There are several established models that set out different approaches to the coaching process.

Perhaps the best known is the GROW model, developed by writer and consultant Sir John Whitmore in the 1980s. GROW is an acronym for the four stages of the coaching journey:
- Establish the Goal
- Examine the Reality
- Explore the Options
- Establish the Will

According to Whitmore, the coach's job is to lead their learner through this series of steps.
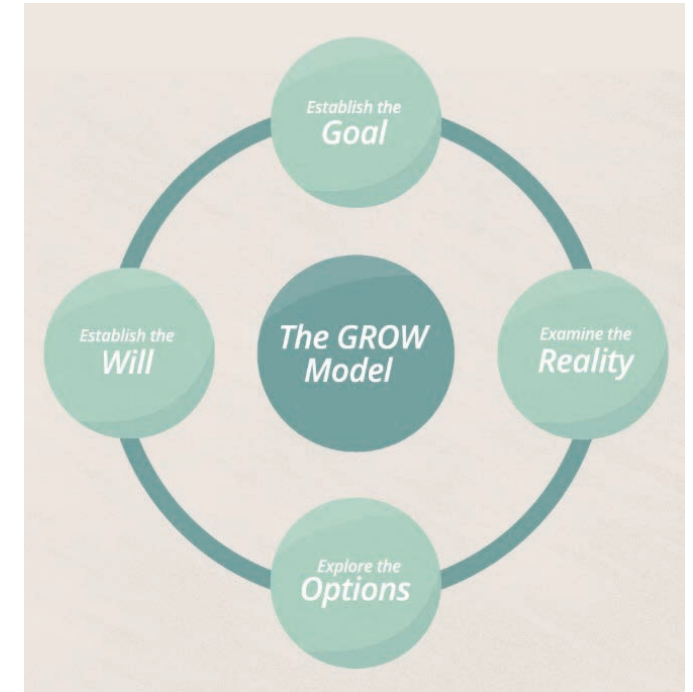
# Establish the Goal

First, the coach helps the learner identify a specific Goal they want to achieve.

This is not always as straightforward as it seems, as many people have vague ideas about the future. This is a good time for the coach to ask probing questions and, if the learner is in a new role or has just joined a new team, remind them what skill set their role requires.

For example, the coach might ask questions such as 'What are you looking to achieve?' and 'How will you feel when you get there?'

# Examine the Reality

Next, the coach prompts the learner to look at the Reality of where they are now. Together, they work to identify the skills and experience the learner currently has, and what potential this offers to help them achieve their goals.

At this stage, the coach may ask questions such as 'What qualities or resources do you have to help you?' and 'What obstacles might you need to overcome?'

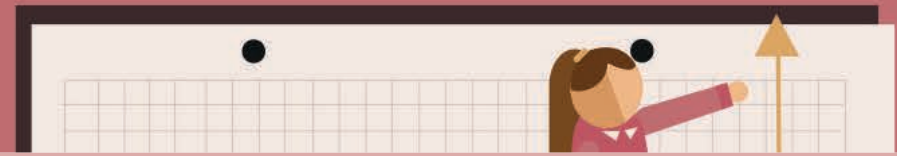# Explore the Options

In the third stage, the coach and learner brainstorm different learning and development Options to move the plan forward. The learner should be encouraged to suggest all possible options and to make a list of the pros and cons of each. From here, they can choose the best method for their needs.

Questions from the coach at this stage should be designed to get the learner to explore every possibility. For example, they might ask, 'How would you approach this if time wasn't a factor or if money was no object?' The aim is to get the learner to think creatively and gain an insight into what they really want to do.

# Establish the Will

Once the learner has chosen a development path, the process moves on to stage four - where the coach and learner agree on a plan of action and set some deadlines. Here, the coach will seek commitment from the learner by asking straightforward questions such as 'What will you do now?', 'When will you do it?' and 'How will you know when you've been successful?'

Whitmore called this the 'Will' stage, as it relies on the will of the learner to commit to the plan and see it through. It is sometimes also referred to as the 'Way forward' or 'Wrap up' stage.
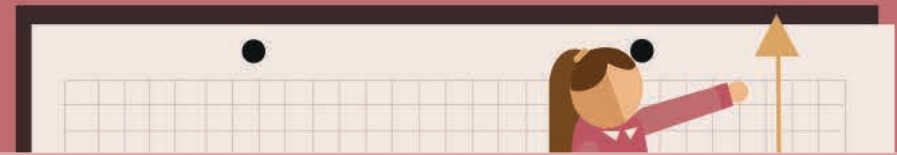
# The GROW Model - Example

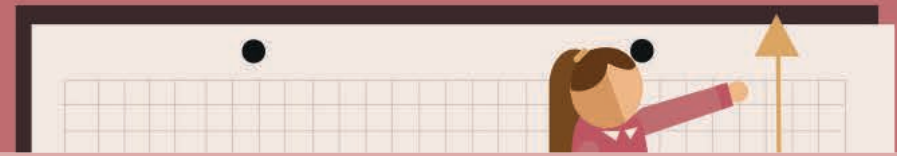Now, let's look at an example of how the GROW model might work in practice.

Sue has worked in the sales team at a car showroom for the last five years. She has always performed quite well, but at her latest performance review she tells her manager she would like to improve her sales figures. Her manager agrees to provide a specialist coach to help develop her skills and hopefully improve her results.
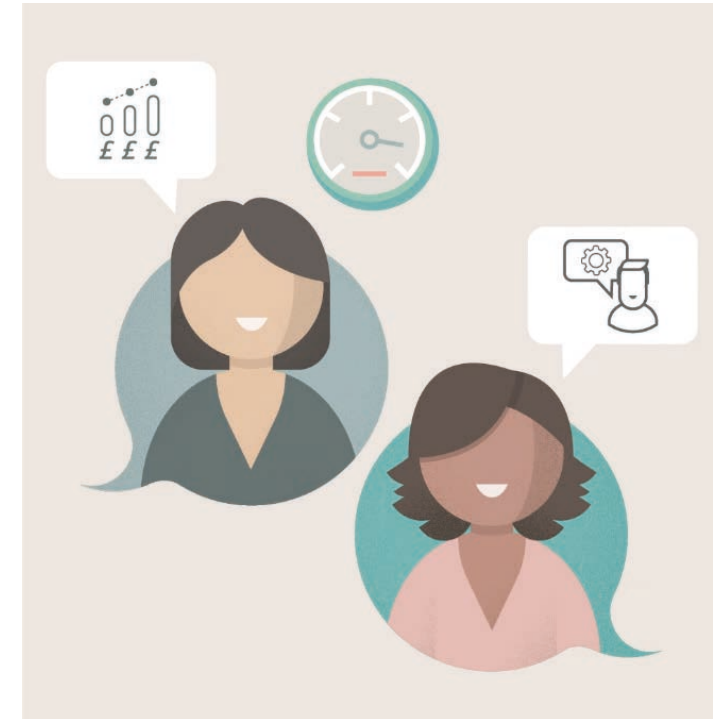
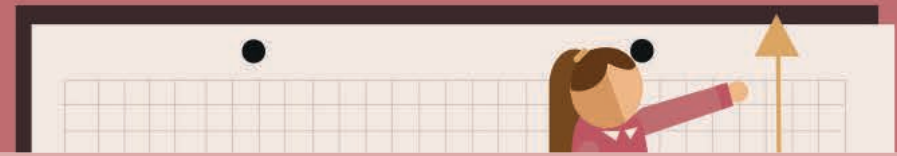# The GROW Model - Example (cont.)

At their first meeting, Sue and her coach sit down to establish her goal.

As they talk, it emerges that Sue is very good at talking to potential customers and getting them to take test drives, but she's not always good at finalising a sale. So Sue and her coach agree to set a specific goal of doubling her sales 'conversion rate' - from 10% to 20% of test drives.

# The GROW Model - Example (cont.)

Sue and her coach meet again the following week to discuss the reality of her situation. They discuss Sue's success in persuading customers to take a test drive and discover that she has the highest test drive rate of all the salespeople at the showroom.

Her coach says this will be an excellent foundation for developing the skills to secure more sales. Sue leaves the session feeling motivated and confident of achieving her objective.
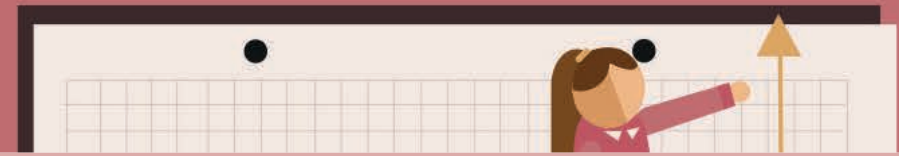
# The GROW Model - Example (cont.)

At their next session, Sue and her coach explore the options available to help her develop her skills. These include taking a formal online sales course, attending a sales workshop and shadowing a more experienced colleague. Together, they look at the pros and cons of each option.

When they meet the following week, Sue and her coach translate all of their previous discussions into an action plan - together, they work out exactly what Sue will do.
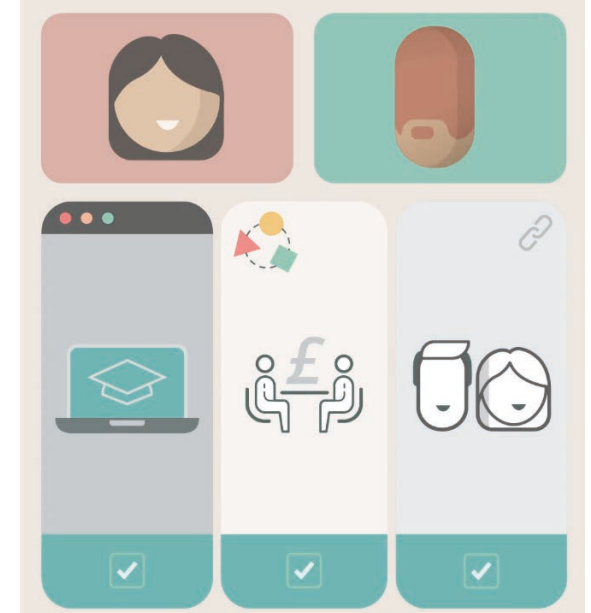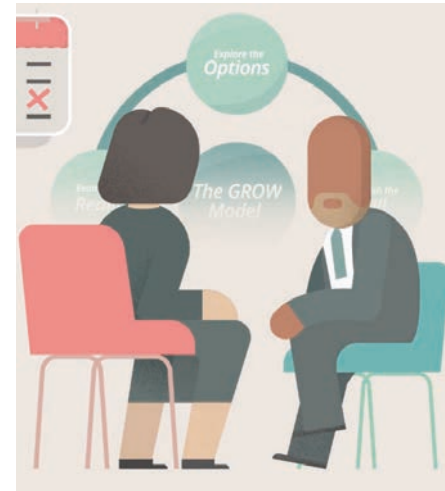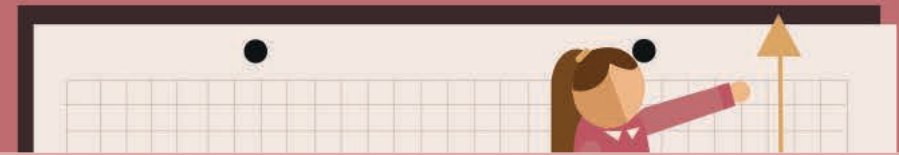
# The GROW Model - Example (cont.)

They decide Sue would be best served by attending the sales workshop, as it involves roleplay exercises that will allow Sue to try out different sales techniques. This will take around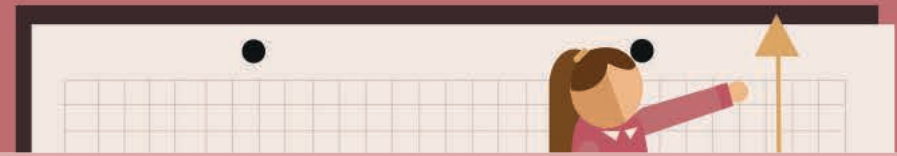 six weeks to complete and they agree to meet again at this point to review her progress and determine the next steps. This provides a deadline to ensure Sue remains committed to following through on the agreed course of action.

At their final meeting, they look at Sue's results and see that her conversion rate has improved from 10% to 15% - but she has not quite hit her 20% target. So they begin the GROW process again by agreeing another specific skill for Sue to develop.
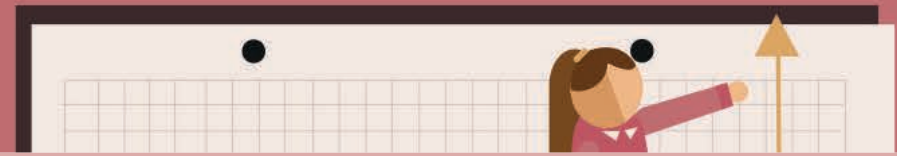
# Other Coaching Models

While the GROW model is perhaps the best known coaching model in use today, there are plenty of other options to consider. You may have come across models with a myriad of different acronyms, such as - ARROW, CLEAR, OUTCOME and ACHIEVE.

When approaching coaching as a development method, it's worth remembering that, whichever model you use, the foundation of good coaching boils down to a few key components.

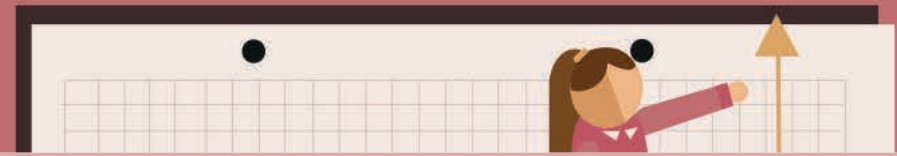A good coaching relationship should have an emphasis on:
• Working in partnership to define goals
• Exploring how the learner will reach these goals
• Developing and supporting the plan of action
• Reviewing and reflecting on the progress the learner has made

# Mentoring

Mentoring shares some similarities with coaching. It generally takes place in a one-to-one relationship - for example, where the mentor uses their experience and expertise to help the employee develop their skills. Indeed, the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' are sometimes used interchangeably.
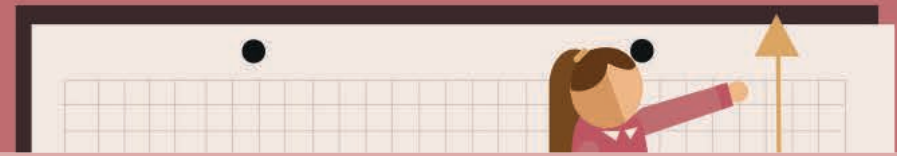
However, there are some important differences between the two concepts. Management author Christine Zust identifies key distinctions in terms of their time frame, focus, structure, expertise, agenda and outcome. Let's look at each of these in turn.

# Differences between Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching relationships tend to be quite short-term - lasting anything from a few weeks up to a year. Mentoring relationships are usually more long-term, lasting a year or two or even longer.

Coaching is usually performance-driven - it's intended to help employees learn the skills required to improve their performance in their role. Mentoring is more development driven - it takes a more holistic approach, looking not just at the employee's current job but also at their wider career development.

# Differences between Coaching and Mentoring (cont.)

Coaching tends to be quite structured, with frequent meetings between the coach and employee. Mentoring meetings, on the other hand, are more sporadic and only arranged when needed - usually at the employee's request.

Generally, a coach is hired for their expertise in a particular area of business - such as leadership, sales or presentation skills. Mentors tend to be selected because of their seniority and general experience, rather than their expertise in one area. Getting a coach is easier than finding a mentor - you can simply hire one, with or without the help of your company. A mentor is someone you'll need to seek out, and nurture a relationship with over time.
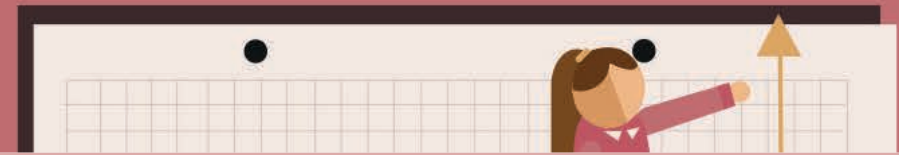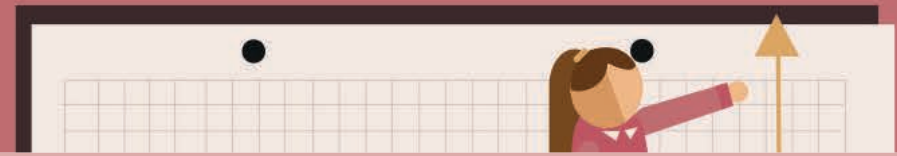
# Differences between Coaching and Mentoring (cont.)

In coaching, the coach and employee work together to set the agenda for their sessions. In mentoring, the employee sets the agenda.

Finally, the outcome of a coaching arrangement should be specific and measurable - the employee should be able to quantify the improvement in their skills. Outcomes from mentoring are usually less specific in terms of measurable results or changed behaviour - instead, the focus is on overall development.
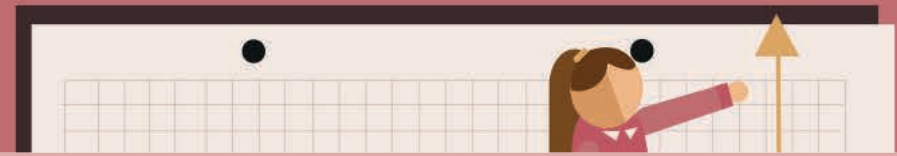
| | Coaching | Mentoring |
|---|---|---|
| Time frame | Weeks - Year | Year or more |
| Focus | Perfomance-driven | Development-driven |
| Structure | Structured, regular meetings | Sporadic meetings, initiated by employee |
| Expertise | Specific | General |
| Agenda | Set by coach and employee | Set by employee |
| Outcome | Specific and measurable | Overall career development |

# Employee Welfare and Development

A good mentor will take an interest in an employee's welfare and development. They can help people face and resolve difficult situations, help them to uncover and use their hidden abilities, and challenge them to take a new direction in their career or personal life.

The key to a good mentoring relationship is to help the employee develop a new vision of what is possible.
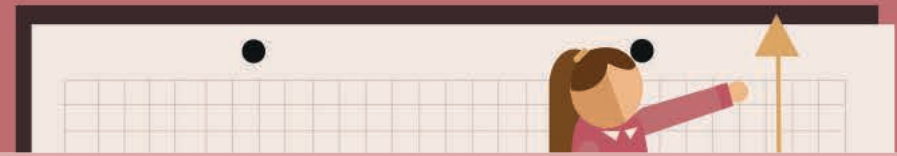
# The Three Stage Process Model

As with coaching, there are several models that can help structure an effective mentoring arrangement. One of these is the 'Three Stage Process Model', developed by management authors Geof Alred, Bob Garvey and Richard Smith.

The model emphasises that the main focus in a mentoring arrangement is on conversation between the mentor and the employee.
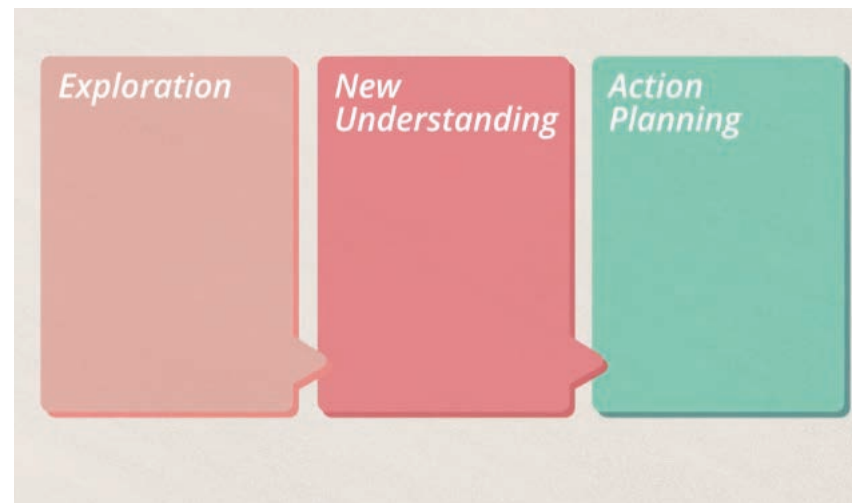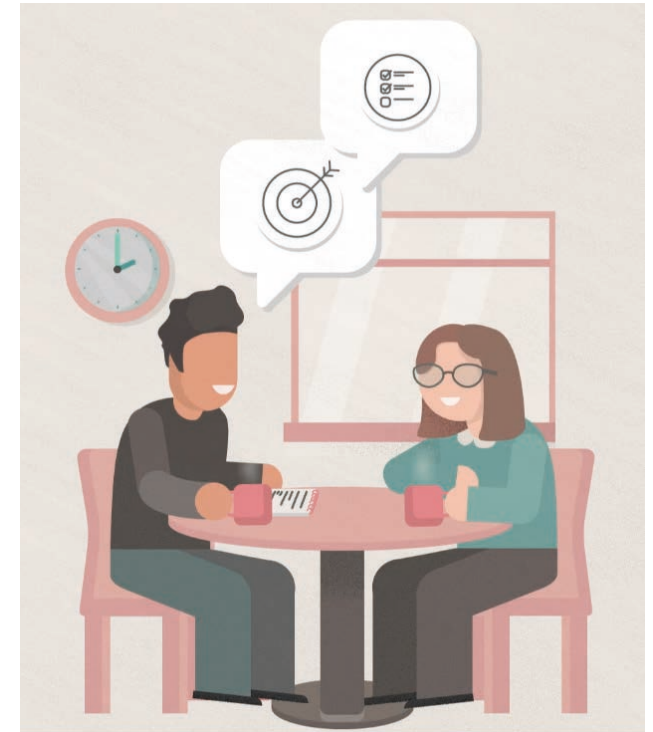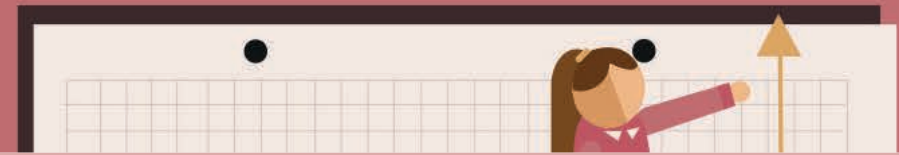
# The Three Stage Process Model (cont.)

It begins with an 'Exploration Stage', when the mentor and employee talk about what the employee would like to get out of the mentoring relationship.

The mentor generally starts the conversation with a very open question - perhaps simply 'What would you like to talk about?' - and then listens carefully to help support the exploration and clarify the objectives of the mentoring relationship. Crucially, the mentor should let the employee arrive at their own answers.

Depending on the issue being explored, this stage may last a few minutes or hours to several months or more.
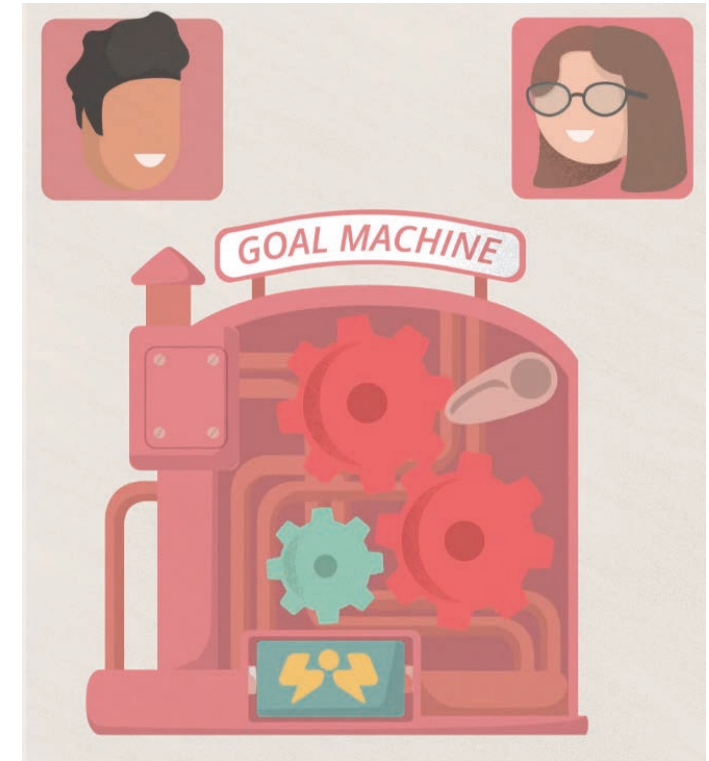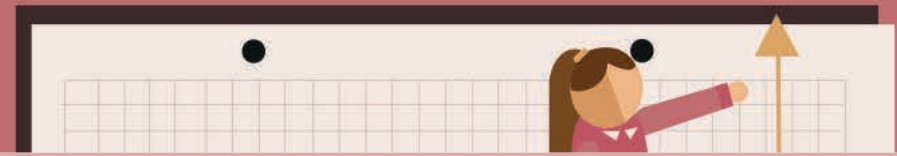
# The Three Stage Process Model (cont.)

This is followed by the 'New Understanding' stage.

This is a 'turning point' in the process, when the employee begins to see things about their work or life differently and realise that to achieve their goals they may need to change in some way. This can be an exciting time - the mentor's role here is to offer encouragement and help the employee realise the implications of their new developmental needs. The mentor may also share their own experiences to help the employee make sense of their situation.

As with the exploration stage, this second stage could take hours, days, months or years to complete. But it's important not to rush past this and onto the final stage - as Alred, Garvey and Smith point out: 'Action born out of poor understanding is always flawed'.
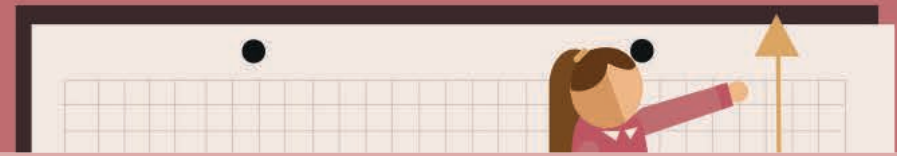
# The Three Stage Process Model (cont.)

Once the employee has reached a new understanding of their situation, the pair can move to stage three: 'Action Planning'.

If stages 1 and 2 have been done thoroughly, this stage is usually straightforward. The employee should be encouraged to develop an action plan to achieve their desired change. This may be as simple as completing a training course - or it may involve complex changes to their values and how they approach life. It's important to let the employee take charge of their solution - the mentor should only give advice and direction sparingly at this point.
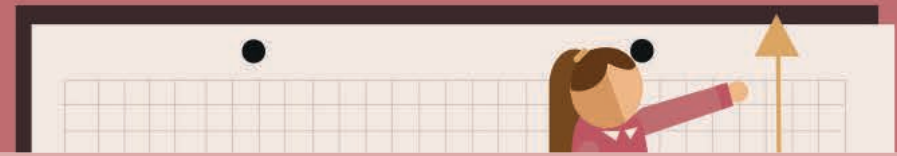
# Choosing Learning and Development Activities

With the wide array of learning and development activities available, it can be difficult to decide which one is best for you and your team's needs.

So how do you choose the 'right' method?

First of all, there are three practical issues that will affect your decision: time, cost and resources.
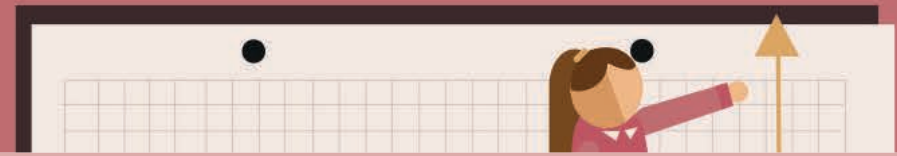
# Time, Costs and Resources

Time will almost always play a role in your choice. It's much easier to ask a team member to take an e-learning module in their lunch hour than commit to a two-year MBA programme, for example.

Cost is also a major factor. The development method you choose must be within your budget. Costs may include tuition, transport and other expenses, such as software.

You may also need access to specific material or people resources. Some types of training require special equipment, or may call for trained personnel.

Coaching, for example, is only possible if there are trained coaches available.
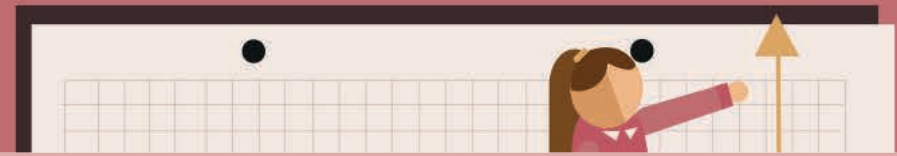
# Remote Teams

Remote teams present their own practical considerations.

It may be difficult to assemble all team members in one place, for example, if they work in different locations. This may rule out live group sessions - and you may instead have to arrange online training or work with team members individually.

Where teams work in shifts, you may also need to arrange training around their particular shift patterns.
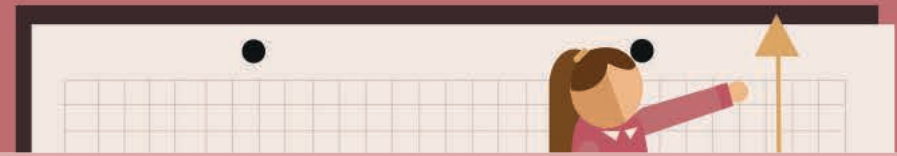
# Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles

Beyond these practical considerations, you should also take into account your team members' preferred learning styles.

Researchers Peter Honey and Alan Mumford developed a theory in the 1980s that people like to learn in different ways - they called these 'preferred learning styles'. They identified four styles:

- Activists
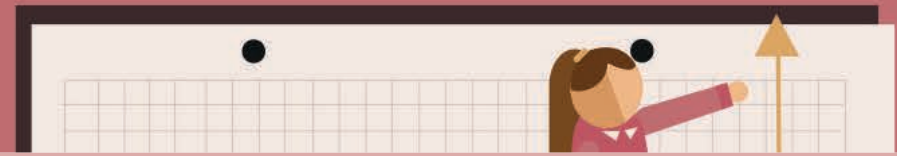- Reflectors
- Theorists
- Pragmatists

# Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles (cont.)

Activists like to learn by doing things. They throw themselves into tasks and activities, and welcome new experiences. They learn best when they're allowed to 'have a go' at something, without worrying too much about the outcome.

Reflectors like to observe situations, and consider all possible options before taking action. They need time to engage with an idea before they put it into practice.

Theorists love to analyse problems, and approach them in a logical, step-by-step way. They learn best when they're given the time to research the facts and assumptions behind what they're learning.

Finally, Pragmatists like to strike a balance between theory and practice. They're very keen to try out new things, but they like to research and develop a plan of action first.
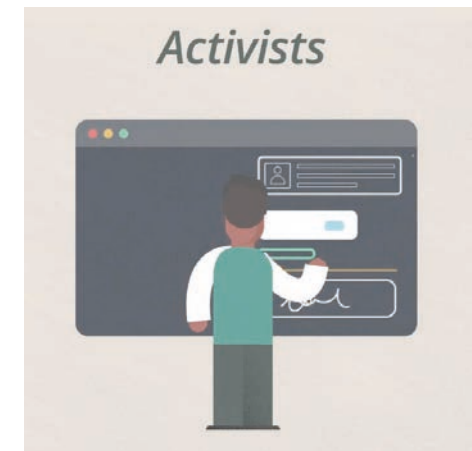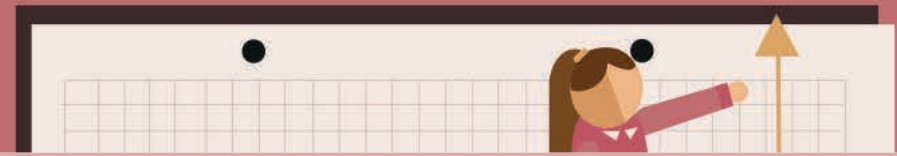
# Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles - Example

Let's see how this might work in practice, using the example of an employee learning a new piece of software.

An Activist wouldn't bother with the manual - they'd get stuck in straight away, experimenting with different functions until they understood them.

A Reflector would observe others working with the software, ask questions, and take notes. Only when they were confident they understood the principles would they try it out themselves.
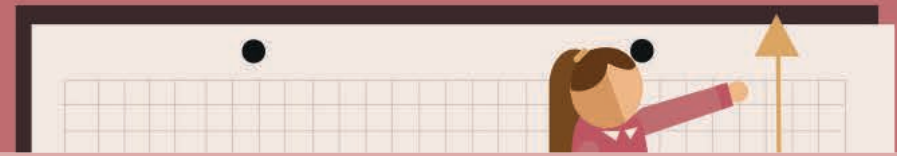


Activists



Reflector

# Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles - Example (cont.)

A Theorist would research the ideas behind the software, and use this to develop a step-by-step plan for their learning before proceeding.

A Pragmatist would use a manual to learn the basics, then apply what they learned, adding difficulty as they gradually built competence.
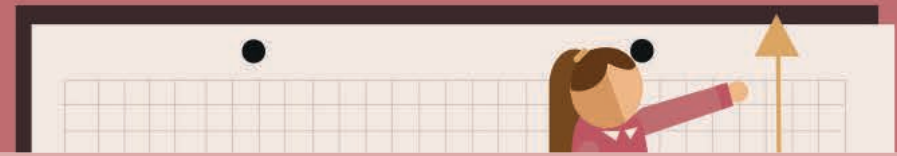

Theorist


Pragmatist
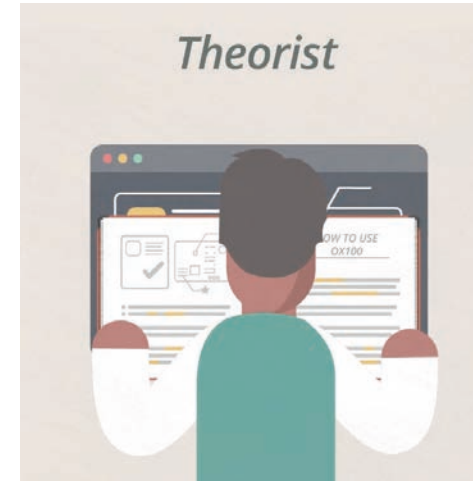
# Individual Learning Styles

None of these methods is objectively any better than the others - they are simply different ways to approach the same problem. However, Honey and Mumford argued that if circumstances allow, letting someone learn using their preferred approach can make their development more efficient.

As a team manager, you should take the time to consider how each of your team members prefers to learn and - if possible - ensure you give them development activities that match their learning style.
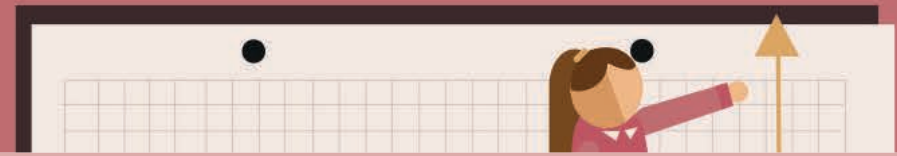
# A Tailored Approach

Let's say, for example, you need everyone in your team to improve their communication skills. Honey & Mumford's theory suggests that rather than putting them all on the same training course, it might be better to enrol any activists on a course involving role-plays and simulations, reflectors on a course based around interactive seminars, theorists on an e-learning course and pragmatists on a hands-on workshop.

In reality, such a tailored approach is quite a luxury, and the practical factors we looked at earlier - cost, time and resources - may not allow it. It's important to note that Honey and Mumford's theory does not stop people learning using any style. In fact, making people learn using a non-preferred style can help them to become better all-round learners.



Activists — Role-plays and simulations

Reflectors — Interactive seminars

Theorists — E-learning course

Pragmatists — Hands-on workshop
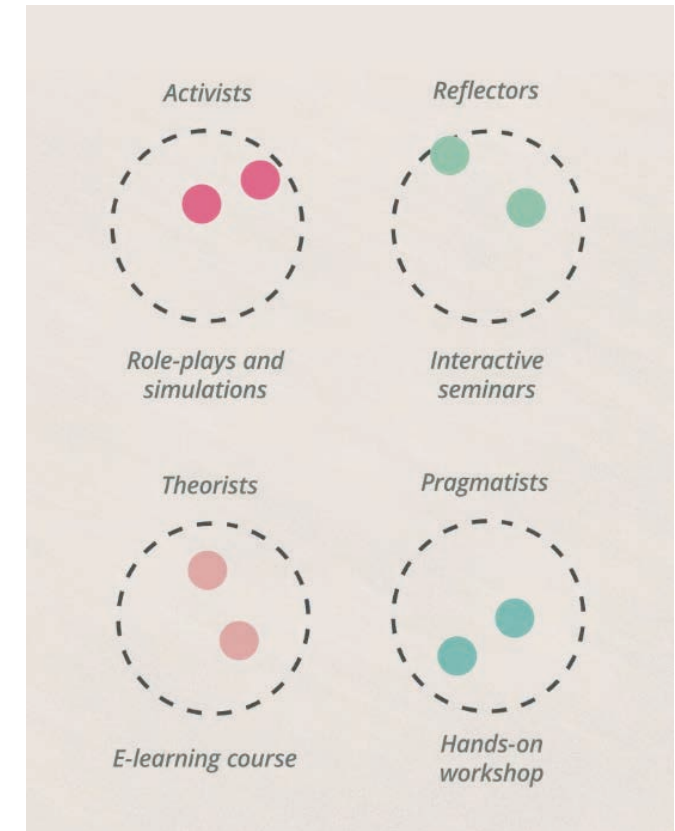
# Recap

In this lesson, you have learned about:

- Explore learning and development activities
- The value of coaching and mentoring
- Major models to support team development
- Factors to consider when selecting suitable learning and development activities