



University of
South Australia

Leader as Coach

A MANAGER ESSENTIALS GUIDE



Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
What Coaching is Not.....	4
The Benefits of Developing a Coaching Style	6
For the Organisation – A Coaching Culture	6
For the Leader	6
For the Team Member	7
Desired Outcomes of Coaching.....	8
Honing your Coaching Skills	9
Coaching Meta-Skills.....	9
Coaching Skills	9
Core Skills	10
Empathic Listening.....	10
Deep Facilitative Questioning.....	10
Coaching in Action	12
Coaching Models	13
Solution-Focused Coaching	14
Appendix 1 – Leader as Coach	16
Appendix 2	17
Appendix 3	19

Introduction

Coaching is a one-on-one process of professional support, guidance, challenge and development that has emerged over the years as an invaluable process in:

- facilitating learning and the transfer of knowledge
- improving staff capability for the long term
- encouraging engagement, problem solving and increased self-reliance and
- creating a productive workplace climate.

Being able to utilise coaching techniques in leadership and management roles is becoming increasingly important in nurturing a more empowered workforce and workplace culture; an essential contributor to the success of a University of *Enterprise*.

This guide explores the elements and benefits of coaching. It provides tips on how to move to operating as a leader-coach, including highlighting the skills needed to make this transition. In doing so, it links to the range of *Manager Essentials* guides and serves as a complement to informal and formal learning programs offered by the University.

We welcome any feedback you might have on the usefulness of this resource.

Note: In this Guide we have used the term leader to apply interchangeably with manager and supervisor. It has been designed as a resource for those in any leadership role.

What is Coaching?

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.”

Sir John Whitmore, 2002.

Coaching provides the opportunity for an individual to work together with another person to:

- discover and clarify what the staff member wants to achieve and align with organisational goals
- elicit staff-generated solutions and strategies,
- enable a change in an individual’s perception and/or behaviour,
- build individual know-how, skills, confidence and effectiveness, and
- hold the staff member responsible and accountable.

In essence, it provides for immediate on-the-job learning as well as ‘just in time’ learning tailored to the individual and their particular situation.

What Coaching is Not

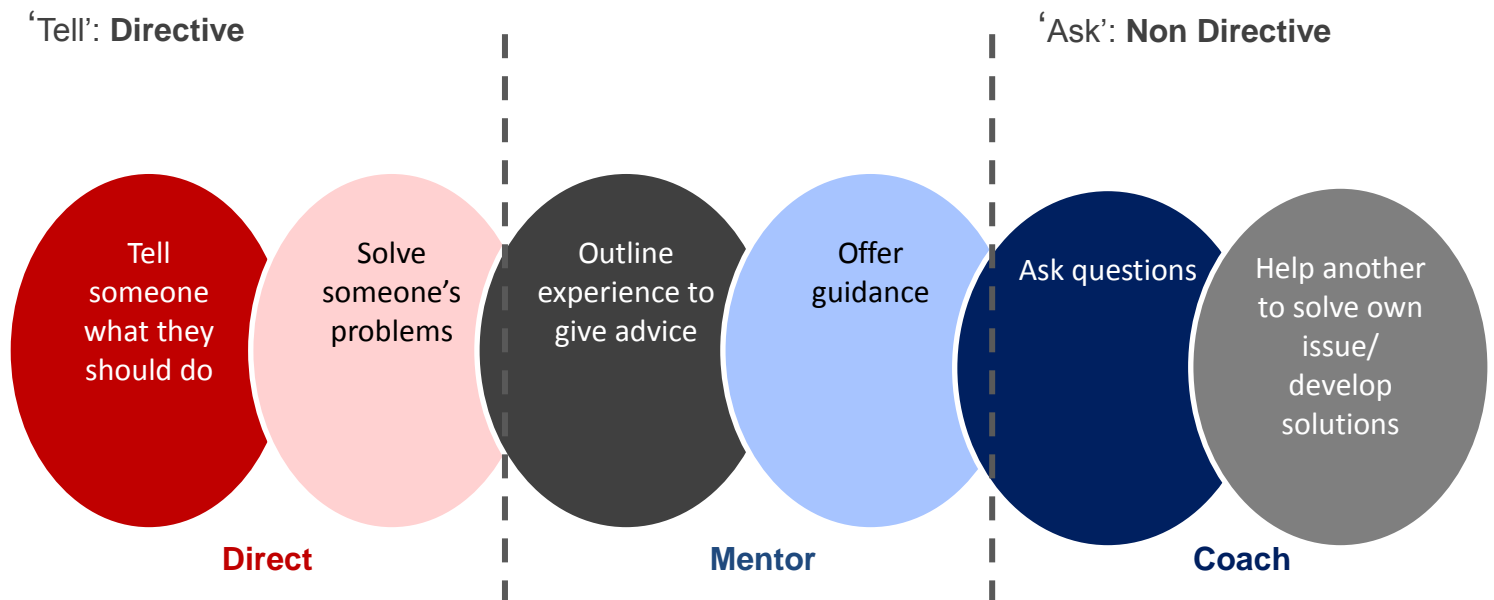


A coaching leader does not advise or provide solutions. Instead they facilitate a process whereby the coachee generates their own solutions and holds themselves accountable to them. Unlike counselling / therapy, which seeks to ‘heal’ a problem, coaching is performance and solutions focused. Whilst therapy is often rooted in the past, coaching focuses on creating a future based on conscious choices made in the present.

Finally, unlike mentoring, the coaching is not about imparting expert knowledge in a particular field. It is about guiding individuals in self-directed learning, with each person being the expert on his / her own domain.

- Coaching is a development process in which an individual is supported while achieving a specific personal or professional competence, result or goal.
- Coaching is a very focused conversation that primarily uses questions to get to the heart of things and facilitate change and transformation.
- Coaching is believing an individual has the solution within, providing long lasting decision making improvement through behaviour and outcome.

Coaching in the Leadership Continuum



There are times when a manager needs to be directive, (i.e. managing unacceptable behaviour) and times when a mentoring approach is useful (i.e. discussion succession planning). Mentoring is more directive - its purpose is knowledge transfer from the mentor to the mentée, so key activities within the mentoring relationship include sharing expertise and offering advice. Coaching is more non-directive, with a focus on eliciting ideas and thoughts from the participant, hence, the focus on asking questions. They are both future focused, but coaching is focused on the other person driving the agenda.

Roles overlap and often appear in one interaction. For example, you may be direct in managing unacceptable behaviour and then move to coaching to ask questions as to how the staff member may learn from the situation and grow from it. If you are mentoring a person around their career options and succession planning, you may move into coaching to explore what they consider their strengths to be and what they see as a future direction. Not all situations will lend themselves to coaching;

however, coaching techniques can greatly assist engagement, clarity, empowerment and ownership in performance development situations.

The Benefits of Developing a Coaching Style

For the Organisation – A Coaching Culture

At UniSA, the goal of developing a coaching culture supports strategic development, empowerment and innovation across the University. A coaching culture develops leadership capability at all levels of the organisation. Leaders who are able to engage with their staff to develop their mastery, autonomy and connection with the outcomes of the university are key to developing this culture.

Today's leaders are facing increasing complexity in their work environments, requiring more adaptive and collaborative ways of working. Leaders are expected to demonstrate high levels of self-awareness; be able to develop the capabilities of their staff; and, be able to effectively guide and motivate others towards identified goals.

Leaders need to have effective coaching skills to focus their staff on the desired performance required to achieve a clear end goal. A listening, learning coaching culture where the strengths of employees are optimised, two way feedback and learning is the norm, and commitment to goals is fostered provides the best chance of working with the increasing levels of complexity facing organisations today.

Research has shown that senior leaders who are effective at developing others are 1.5 times more likely to exceed their financial goals. Effective coaching and development from senior leaders can boost performance by up to 27%. Teams where a coaching leadership style is employed show significantly higher levels of engagement and there are positive impacts on the direct reports of the coachee (increase in discretionary effort and 'promotability')

Corporate Leadership Council Learning & Development 2006 Senior Leadership Survey

Daniel Goleman refers to Six Leadership Styles (refer Appendix 1) in his article Leadership that Get Results (HBR March-April 2000). Whilst all styles can be beneficial in specific situations, a coaching style is one of the leadership styles researchers identified as creating a positive culture and high performance in the team.

For the Leader

“Growing people is enlightened self-interest rather than idealism that offers no added value” - John Whitmore, 2002

Leaders 'get things done through people' so it makes sense to enhance staff capacity on the job through coaching. Staff that are *coached* to perform rather than *managed* to perform usually have more investment in the outcomes of their work and the

achievement of team goals. Successfully applied, coaching enables managers to delegate work with more confidence as the staff member's capacity increases, freeing them up to work on more strategic initiatives.

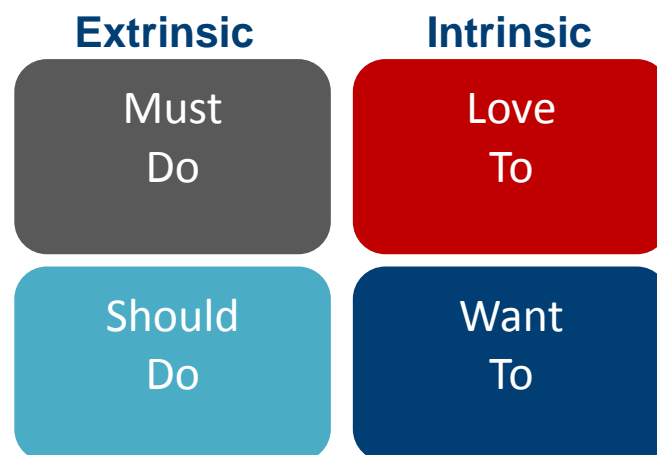
Effective coaching can result in:

- enhanced performance, including increased ability to take initiative and find solutions to problems
- enhanced productivity due to increased motivation
- strengthened commitment to personal, professional and organisational goals
- increased retention of high performing staff
- greater levels of co-operation with change
- greater commitment to collaboration to achieve results.

For the Team Member

Staff receiving coaching experience the personal benefits of continually improving their skills and know-how. They increase their levels of self-confidence and job satisfaction and enhance personal growth as well as career development prospects. These factors can help to attract and retain high-performing staff.

We all recognise that when we come up with our own goals and our own solutions we are much more motivated to achieve them than if we have been told to do something.



Extrinsic motivation occurs when we are motivated to perform a behavior or engage in an activity in order to earn a reward or avoid a punishment. Examples include:

- Working towards a goal to please the boss
- Participating in a sport in order to win awards
- Paying your taxes to avoid getting audited

In each of these examples, the behaviour is motivated by a desire to gain a reward or avoid a negative outcome. Typically we might hear someone say “I should do...” or ‘I must do...”

Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in a behaviour because it is personally rewarding; essentially, performing an activity for its own sake rather than the desire for some external reward. Examples of behaviours that are the result of intrinsic motivation include:

- Striving to complete a goal because you find the outcome personally rewarding
- Participating in a sport because you find the activity enjoyable
- Solving a word puzzle because you find the challenge fun and interesting

A person’s behaviour is motivated by an internal desire to participate in an activity for its own sake. Coaching engages the individual in co-creating their work. A leader’s skilful questioning can guide the individual to develop their capabilities through identifying the parameters of the task, the quality required, who else might need to be engaged in the task and the timeframes for completion.

Desired Outcomes of Coaching

Awareness

- Internal awareness of perception and feelings about a situation, e.g. discomfort, frustration, pride, sense of anticipation. A self-awareness of your own default behaviours. From that greater self- awareness comes the ability to adapt and self-correct.
- External awareness of issues, stakes, consequences and a systems view.

Clarity

Clarity about issues, outcomes and goals. Where am I at now? What am I trying to achieve? How does this fit with our overall direction? What options do I have available to me? What solution do I think would work best? What does a quality outcome look like?

Ownership

Ownership is about outcomes and process; having a sense of personal responsibility and motivation. It leads to improved decision-making, prioritisation and focus.

Empowerment

Empowerment is about having a clear path to reach goals. Individuals have a sense of anticipation and a sense of ability and resourcefulness. It leads to improved relationships and an improved ability to cope with stressful situations.

Honing your Coaching Skills

Coaching Meta-Skills

A meta-skill is the attitude that the coach brings to any skill or technique which operates at the level of being. In other words, it is the full embodiment of that skill in ways that make it who the coach is, rather than what they do.

It is important for the leader to be aware of their rank and role in the coaching engagement, and ensure they continually hone their practice in the following:

Compassion – the capacity to genuinely understand another person’s point of view without judging the merits of that point of view. Empathy in action

Humility – the capacity of letting go of the need to be the expert in a situation. It involves bringing a “beginners mind” to a coaching conversation

Neutrality – listening to your coachee with curiosity, whilst also being aware of your own thoughts, feelings and perspectives without reacting to either point of view. It involves seeing the relationships between the different polarities in the “issue” being discussed.

Courage – the capacity to approach a difficult situation and not shy away from potential conflict. Remaining strong and ‘holding the space’. Being quiet and having a centred sense of self amidst the chaos.

Coaching Skills

To be effective as a Manager-Coach, a range of capabilities is required. These include being able to:

- build positive trusting relationships with staff. Coaching depends on a positive relationship between the coaching leader and staff member being coached. The relationship needs to be based on trust - where the staff member knows he/she can come to you and brainstorm issues in a supportive environment and leave with encouragement and your support to take action on a chosen solution.
- provide quality feedback. You want to deliver feedback that builds motivation not fear or apathy
- be receptive to receiving feedback. Be open to reflecting on and potentially learning from what you hear
- practice empathic listening (**E**mpathise, **A**cknowledge, **R**eflect, **S**ummarise)
- enable dialogue through open or facilitative questioning

Core Skills

Of the list of coaching skills above, two in particular are critical skills to develop as a coaching leader.

Empathic Listening

As the term suggests, the coach demonstrates empathy for the speaker. When we listen between the lines we heighten our awareness and interpersonal sensitivity to the entire message a person may be trying to communicate. This style of listening seems to be most important in terms of strengthening or improving a positive interpersonal relationship between the parties involved. Empathic listening often requires the opposite frame of mind from that required for critical listening. Empathic listening implies a willingness not to judge, evaluate, or criticise but rather to be an accepting, permissive, and understanding listener. Becoming an empathic requires a focus on:

- A greater emphasis on listening than on talking.
- Responding to that which is personal rather than abstract.
- Clarifying what the other person has said about his own thoughts and feelings rather than asking questions or telling him what we believe he should be thinking, seeing, or feeling.
- Trying to get into the other person's inner frame of reference rather than listening and responding from our own frame of reference.

Deep Facilitative Questioning

Teamed with empathic listening, effective open questions are the core to effective coaching. Below are some simple open questions that may be used to explore during a coaching conversation.

Reflecting Questions

- What is behind that?
- What would it take for you to get to the bottom of that?
- If you could get the answer to one question, what would that question be?
- What internal / external pressures are you responding to?
- What's the right thing to do?
- What factors influence this decision?
- Where are you going? Where will this lead you?

Reframing/Perspective Change

- Think about this relative to (xyz), how important is it now?
- What is working well in this situation?
- What will this decision look like in ten years' time? What will seem more crucial then?
- What is the compelling reason to make this move? Why must this be done? What is the compelling reason not to make this move? Why must this not be done?

- Just as an exercise, let's try on the perspectives of the other players. How would this look through your team's eyes? Your internal stakeholders? external stakeholders? The media?
- Ok, let's run with that. What's the worst that could happen if you pursue this? Can you live with that outcome?

Clarification Questions

- What would happen next?
- Do you know what steps to take?
- Let me see if I am clear...Is this what you meant?
- What approaches have you tried?
- What worked? Didn't work?

From Manager	To Coach
From trying to work out how to manage staff	To asking your staff how they are best managed
From 'You report to me'	To 'Tell me how I can help you'
From telling staff how to behave	To communicating expectations and being an exemplary role model
From controlling staff actions	To enabling them to take better actions
From solving all the problems	To facilitating staff to solve problems
From tip toeing around staff issues	To building relationships where you can have frank and open dialogue about issues
From telling staff what to do	To building initiative & self-directed action
From delegating tasks that simply get the job done	To giving staff challenging assignments that stretch them
From building a compliant culture low in drive and initiative	To building a learning culture where the strengths of employees are optimised, two way feedback and learning is the norm, and commitment to goals is fostered

Review the list above and reflect on the changes you may need to make to enable your move from being a manager to a coach.

Select one of the changes you have identified. What can you do differently at once to take the first move to operating more as a coach and less as a manager?

Coaching in Action

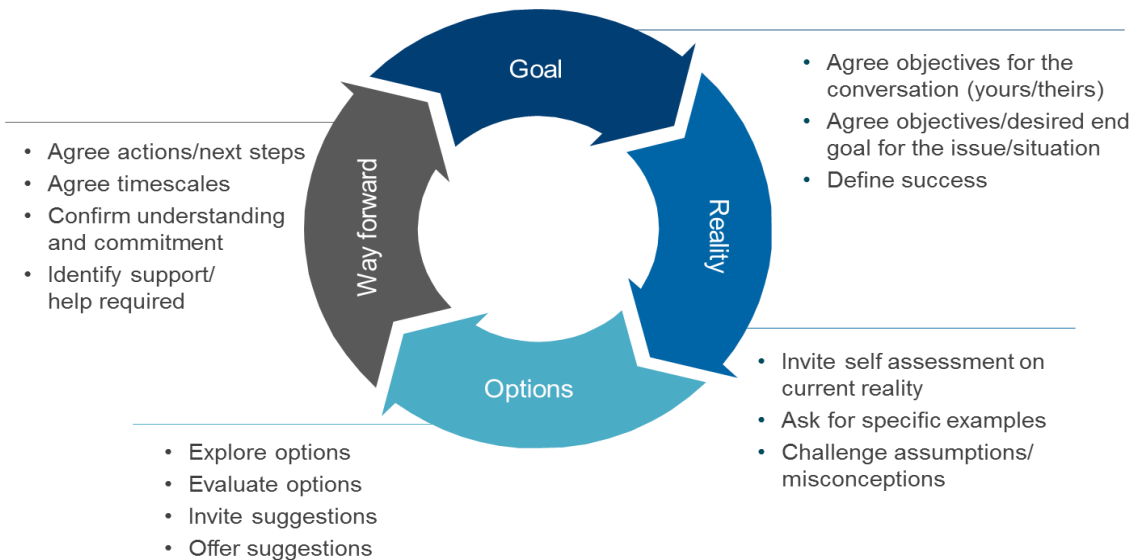
When applied, coaching is:

- **Holding a conversation and engaging in dialogue.** Coaching is not about telling the staff member what to do. Rather it is about encouraging them to reflect and learn. As adult learners, we generally like to create our own solutions rather than be told what to do.
- **Collaborative.** Coaching is about brainstorming issues together. Jointly identify possible solutions to problems.
- **Focused on achieving outcomes.** You want the staff member to leave your meeting with a course of action to take.
- **Solution Focused and future-oriented,** with consideration given to the past where appropriate. When we dwell on the past and a problem, the problem often 'gets bigger'. If we focus on the way forward and a solution to the problem, the problem becomes more manageable and we have the energy to deal with it.
- **Challenging to the individual, in a positive way.** Ask open-ended questions of the staff member to encourage them to reflect on the issue or situation and think through the possible options. This is your opportunity to enable the staff member to see the situation differently, to embrace a different way of dealing with it, and potentially to change their approach or behaviour.
- **Focused on the staff member.** Your aim is to focus on their needs and learning requirements as well as facilitating ways for them to find the answers (rather than you providing the answers or directing). You want the staff member to take ownership of the problem and to take action to solve it. From this they learn and are more likely to develop capacity to find solutions to problems independently.
- **Dependent on high quality feedback.** Positive feedback builds self-confidence and makes people want to take more action. Review how implementation of the action plan went. Identify learnings. Celebrate successes.
- **Encouraging the individuals to achieve.** We learn better when we discover for ourselves. Enable your staff to 'extend' themselves and remember 'blame' has no place in coaching!

As you build your skills coaching skills, you may want to utilise a helpful self-reflective tool at the conclusion of a coaching session to review how you went, and what went well and what you would do differently next time. **See Appendix 3.**

Coaching Models

A popular and effective coaching approach is the GROW model developed by Sir John Whitmore.



The context for using the GROW model is **awareness** and **responsibility** and the skill of **effective questioning** is core to using the model effectively.

Goals – identify what is to be achieved

Reality – understand the issue or situation

Options – discuss options or choices available and think through the impact of each

Way Forward – (also known as Will or Wrap Up) agree on a course of action. What is to be done, when, and by whom and do you have the will to do it

Whilst the GROW model is very effective if you use it in the sequence of the mnemonic, you can also use it in other sequences. For example, you may not be able to help the individual set an effective goal, until they have explored the current reality, or a staff member may come to you with a number of options. You may need to explore these, before returning to the Goal or current Reality.

It is important to acknowledge that a coaching approach may not work in all cases. This will be the case, for example, if a staff member requires excessive personal direction, or if you as the manager lack the skills to guide the staff member appropriately. When a manager is responsible for a staff member who needs excessive direction, he/she needs to reflect on the potential causes of this to guide strategies for dealing with it. For example; it may be due to a lack of confidence, skills, motivation, clarity about work goals, or a 'spill over' from a previous leadership style that did not encourage self-management. When this occurs, it is useful to consider the motivational issues carefully and then seek advice from managers or HR specialists on approaches that might be taken to address the issues identified.

You will find some sample questions for the Grow Model in Appendix 2 of this Guide.

Solution-Focused Coaching

Successful coaching works on finding solutions. Another model that is often combined with the GROW model is solution-focused coaching. It looks forward not backwards. It is a mindset; a shift in perspective. It moves the leader from a mindset of telling to a mindset of asking.

Solution-focused thinking is not about ignoring problems – it is about reframing them. We do it all the time anyway, but coaching sets out to make this explicit and deliberate.

- How can we change this?
- How can we do it better?
- How would you like it to be?

The solution-focused approach is about constructing possibilities – from exploring possibilities, to using scaling as a tool for understanding how to move a situation forward. Tools and questioning techniques can be found in Anthony Grant's book **Solution-Focused Coaching**.

Refer to the following UniSA Guides for more information on the above skills:

- [*The Art of Supervision: an action learning tool kit*](#)
- [*Quick Guide for Supervisors of Professional Staff*](#)
- [*Providing Quality Feedback: a good practice guide*](#)
- [*Mentoring @ UniSA: a good practice guide for staff*](#)

And look out for relevant workshops offered as part of the University's academic and professional development programs.

Other Resources

Whitmore, J, (2002), *Coaching For Performance: Growing Human Potential and Purpose*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

www.performanceconsultants.com

Grant A (2003), *Solution Focused Coaching*, Momentum.

Scott, S (2002), *Fierce Conversations*, Berkley Publishing.

www.fierceinc.com

Grant A (2003), *Solution Focused Coaching*, Momentum.

CCH, *Australian Master Human Resources Guide* (2006), 4th edition.

Goleman, D (1998), *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury.

Grant A and Greene, J (2005), *Coach Yourself @Work*, ABC Books.

www.psych.usyd.edu.au/coach

Landsberg, M (1997), *The Tao of Coaching: Boost Your Effectiveness at Work by inspiring and developing those around you*, Profile Business.

Appendix 1 – Leader as Coach

Goleman’s Six Leadership Styles

The Six Leadership Styles at a Glance						
	Coercive	Authoritative	Affiliative	Democratic	Pacesetting	Coaching
The leader’s modus operandi	Demands immediate compliance	Mobilises people towards a vision	Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds	Forges consensus through participation	Sets high standards for performance	Develops people for the future
The style in a phrase	“Do what I tell you.”	“Come with me.”	“People come first.”	“What do you think?”	“Do as I do, now.”	“Try this.”
Underlying emotional intelligence competencies	Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control	Self-confidence, empathy, change catalyst	Empathy, building relationships, communication	Collaboration, team leadership, communication	Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative	Developing others, empathy, self-awareness
When the style works best	In a crisis, to kick start a turnaround, or with problem employees	When changes require a new vision, or when a clear direction is needed	To heal rifts in a team or to motivate people during stressful circumstances	To build buy-in or consensus, or to get input from valuable employees	To get quick results from a highly motivated and competent team	To help an employee improve performance or develop long-term strengths
Overall impact on climate	Negative	Most strongly positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive

Appendix 2

GROW Model – Sample Questions

Goal

- What are the intermediate steps you can identify?
- How will you know that you have achieved that goal?
- What issue would you like to work on?
- What is the timeframe?
- What form of outcome are you seeking by the end of the session?

Current Reality

- Questions to help determine the current reality
- What is the present situation?
- Who is affected by this issue other than you?
- What actions have you taken so far?
- What obstacles need to be overcome?
- How much control do you personally have over the outcome?
- Who else has some control over it and how much?
- What resources do you already have? (Skill, time, enthusiasm, money, support etc)
- What resources will you need? Where will you get them from?

Options

- What would you do if there were no constraints?
- Which solutions would give the best result?
- What are all the different ways you could approach this issue?
- What are the alternatives?
- What else could you do?

- What would you do if you had more time, a larger budget, or if you were the boss?
- What would you recommend if you were an external consultant looking at your challenge?
- What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet, with a new team?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these options in turn?
- Which of the solutions appeals to you most?

Way Forward (Will / Wrap Up)

- What will you do to obtain support?
- To what extent does this meet your objectives?
- When are you going to start and finish each action step?
- What will you do to eliminate the roadblocks to your actions?
- What could I do to support you?
- What commitment on a scale of one to ten do you have to taking the agreed actions?
- What could you do or alter to raise your commitment closer to ten?

Appendix 3

Template: Self-Reflective Practice Notes

Technical self-reflection (i.e., what was the quality of my questions, appropriateness of my questions , which questions worked very well?)

What worked for you and the coachee?	What did not work for you and the coachee?
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Contextual self-reflection (what was the quality of the working relationship in the session?)

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Critical self-reflection (what was my intention for my coachee within the coaching session etc.)

My intention for this coaching session was: _____

My level of alignment with my intention for this coaching session was:

Very Good Good Average Poor Very Poor

Based on my level of alignment of my intention for this session, next session will focus on:

--

Personal self-reflection (what does the content of the session tell me about me?)

I learnt about myself that:

--

Based upon my personal learning from this session, my self-development opportunity is...

--