

# KEEPING A FUTURE FOCUS

Coaching Essentials

**COACHING CONVERSATIONS**





Over the past five years especially, we have seen a shift toward coaching as a powerful, future-focused development approach. It's not just about performance – coaching is becoming a proactive development experience for leaders of all levels.

**Krista Skidmore, 2018**

## ENSURING A FUTURE-FOCUSED OUTCOME

Having first ensured a comfortable and confidential place to hold the conversation, your role is to clarify what your team member would find helpful, then establish an agreed outcome to ensure the conversation is future-focused and has a positive goal. For example:

“What do you want to work on today?  
What do you want from this conversation?”

“What might be different if the situation were resolved?”

“What would it look and feel like if things were different?”

“What does success look (sound or feel) like?”

“Who else would notice you had been successful and what would they notice?”

“Who would be pleased that progress had been made on this?”

### Then check:

- How much time you have. If the topic is big, agree a smaller ‘chunk’ for this conversation
- You have clearly identified, agreed and contracted for the issue to be worked on (and it is their agenda not yours)
- You have a clear, shared understanding of what needs to change or be different (positively stated)
- You are both engaged with the coaching conversation, as evidenced by eye contact, a positive tone and stance, and other cues both verbal and non-verbal
- There is a sense that working on this issue will support the team member in getting somewhere they want to go

### You could say:

“So, we have 20 minutes now, and as I understand it, you want to make progress on ‘x’, and success would look like this... Have I understood that correctly?”

Together with these questions, you may wish to use the G.R.O.W. or O.S.C.A.R. coaching models. (See ‘Coaching at Work: Structuring the Conversation’ as a guide to help your team member develop a picture of success that is both vivid and specific)

Some people can easily describe what they want in detail whilst others instinctively hold a broader idea of success. During the conversation your role is to keep it on track, heading in the desired direction by asking:

“How would you describe where you are now with the issue, compared to when we started the conversation?”

Look out for signs that you might be off track such as the other person seeming disinterested, disengaged, showing a drop in energy when they talk, or apparently wanting to focus on another aspect of the issue.

### If it feels like they are not engaged, check by asking:

“I notice that you don’t seem to be very motivated about this, would that be the case?”

“If that isn’t what you want, what would be useful to talk about now in relation to this issue?”

“What is your commitment or confidence to sorting this issue?”

## TOP TIPS

- Ensure the issue is something that matters to them and be careful not to introduce your own goal or impose your solution
- Establish a clear, positively framed, goal early. Write it down so you can both see it
- The outcome can relate to something new or describe what would be different if the issue were fixed
- Don’t get lost in the story/description
- Check back to the original goal or refocus if appropriate
- If the initial goal is big, identify a smaller chunk and support the team member to find a tangible step on that element, as a first step in achieving the bigger goal
- Be alert to signals that the team member is disengaged, losing focus or energy
- Beware of your own temptations to stray from the topic

## REFERENCES

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