

An Overview of the Transformational Coaching Process

This chapter gives you a job description of the coach and a bird's-eye view of the process.

The 7 Key Elements of a Transformational Coach's Job Description

A job description for a coach would look something like this:

The coach must:

- Invest time to get to know people as people
- Understand people's roles, goals and challenges on the job to be helpful
- Set clear expectations (GRRATE)
- Observe people's work closely enough to have relevant and substantive feedback
- Provide timely, candid and specific feedback regarding what you observe and interpret as the impact on yourself, other people and performance

- Stimulate learning, growth and performance improvement by asking effective learning questions—offer suggestions as necessary
- Leave people feeling supported and empowered to contribute at increasingly higher levels

This job description represents a compilation of thousands of people's input regarding what truly effective coaches do. The model that follows is a systematic and comprehensive framework that will help you meet all the requirements of the job description.

The Three Phases of Transformational Coaching

Transformational Coaching is accomplished in three phases:

- **The Foundation Phase**, in which you create a coaching relationship (the climate where coaching occurs) and in which you prepare for a particular coaching session;
- **The Learning Loop**, in which you share your feedback, listen to your coachee, engage in dialogue to learn from the exchange; and
- **The Forwarding-the-Action Phase**, in which you create positive momentum and a commitment for change.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the process itself; Chapters 4, 5, and 6 describe each phase and step of the process in detail. In Chapters 7, 8, and 9 you will find specific guidance about what you might say during a coaching session and how you might say it.

Phase I: The Foundation Phase

Transformational Coaching requires a foundation of trust and shared expectations, laying important groundwork for what is to follow. The foundation phase consists of four steps:

- One: **Connect**. In this step, you establish the coaching relationship, whether with a direct report, a peer, or one's supervisor. It occurs in a series of interactions between you and your prospective coachee. Use this time to establish

rapport, clarify your expectations of each other, review the Transformational Coaching process, and make a commitment to using the coaching process in your work. It is also important to identify what job-related challenges each of you would like to address, especially with one's peers or supervisor.

- Two: **Set GRRATE Expectations.** After the ground rules and coaching roles have been established, the second step for coaching relationships between a supervisor and a direct report is being clear on responsibilities. This includes Goals, Roles, Resources, Accountabilites, Timeframe, and Empowerment. In peer coaching relationships, this step is



usually irrelevant because the areas for focus have been shared in step one. Peers could explore how each might support the other more effectively on shared work processes or special projects on which they directly interface. In a coaching relationship with one's supervisor, each might share developmental goals and relationship issues that could be worked on together in the coaching partnership.

- Three: **Observe.** Observe your coachee's performance, how he or she interacts with others, and your perceptions of the outcomes and results. Coaches need data on which to base their coaching. The challenge is to gather it with as little subjective distortion as possible to set up the conditions for optimal mutual learning.
- Four: **Prepare.** This is your internal and independent work as the coach. Become conscious of your thinking (the assumptions, beliefs, interpretations, and judgments) that may be influencing your perceptions. With this heightened awareness, collect your thoughts and develop the information and strategy for the coaching intervention. This self-awareness pays huge dividends in helping you to be objective and self-responsible in the exchange that follows.

The Foundation Phase is covered in detail in Chapter 4.

Phase II: The Learning Loop

This is of central importance to the Transformational Coaching process. Its purpose is to create mutual learning, and deepen insights and respect for one another. Although the other two phases of Transformational Coaching are more or less linear, the Learning Loop is purposefully circular, thus more "organic." Continue to iteratively use this part of the coaching process as long as needed to clearly communicate and "get on the same page." It consists of five steps:

- One: **Be Present, Request Permission, State Your Purpose and Your Positive Intentions.** Focus your conscious attention on the person and the situation at hand. Do a "permission check" with your coachee to ensure you are about to exchange coaching at a time and place that works for both parties, and establish the purpose and positive outcomes you intend to achieve during the coaching session. These actions set the tone for the coaching session, which might continue on the spot, or be scheduled for later.

- **Two: Share Perceptions of the Results Cycle.** The Results Cycle (described in more detail in Chapter 5, and found on the back side of the snap-out card in the back of the book) captures the essential elements of how we go about getting results. It suggests a "causal effect" as you rotate around what becomes a self-reinforcing cycle. Simply, our *beliefs* drive our *behaviors* which influence our *relationships* that lead to our *results*.

Any and all of these aspects are appropriate for the coaching conversation, and include: **Performance** (as quantified and expressed in dollars, time, quality, customer satisfaction, etc.); **Relationships** (between yourself and the coachee, or between the coachee and others and includes trust, rapport, respect, collaboration, sharing, etc.); **Behaviors** (style, habits, work practices, sense-of-urgency, etc. observed or reported to you by others).

Once the actual conversation has begun, lead the discussion by sharing your perceptions of the above factors in objective and non-judgmental terms. Since most of us have been conditioned to focus on what is wrong or could go wrong, it is important to balance your feedback on both what is working and what could be improved. We are helpful to the coachee if we are willing to share the connections we perceive exist between their behavior and the results, outcome, or impact (the ROI) upon their performance and working relationships.

- **Three: Ask Learning Questions to Explore Beliefs.** This aspect of The Results Cycle includes: assumptions, interpretations, values, and judgments that stand behind one's actions. People usually do things with a purpose in mind. Our primary job as a coach is to understand our coachee's purpose and perceptions. Once we better understand their perceptions of performance or a specific event, we are in a better position to figure out what we each might do differently.

*"I'll see it when
I believe it."*
Wayne Dyer

- Four: **Respectfully and Reflectively Listen.** Listen deeply to people's answers. Simple reflection or mirroring back to the coachee is a powerful process that supports you being fully present with your coachee and listening with both your mind and heart. This deeper listening demonstrates respect and builds trust and rapport, even though you may disagree with the ideas you hear.

If the dialogue process has been effective, you and the coachee feel listened to, respected, and "on the same page."

The Feedback Loop is covered in detail in Chapter 5.

Phase III: The Forwarding-the-Action Phase

In this phase, the coach moves the action forward in several ways. How this occurs depends on the situation and who you are dealing with. Regardless of whether you are working with a direct report who is on the verge of being fired or a star employee who is meeting all expectations and then some, or your peer or supervisor, you will forward-the-action by some combination of the following five steps.

The first three steps represent intervention options depending on the type of situation that is faced. Most successful coaching occurs at the first level, given there is a positive coaching history and relationship between the coach and the coachee. The second and third optional steps require more assertiveness on behalf of the coach and would be utilized if the first option yields unsatisfactory results over time. The first three progressive optional steps are:

- One: **Solicit and Suggest Options.** Since the best improvement ideas usually come from people who are actively engaged in doing a task, first ask the coachee for the options they see available to them. Being asked for input continues the feeling of a collaborative conversation, and, ultimately, leaves the coachee feeling empowered to act on idea(s) that may end up coming from them. If the coach has suggestions that have not been identified by the coachee, offer them up as well. As a coach, resist the

tendency to “show how smart you are” by solving the problem first. Be patient. Continue to ask questions. The coach can best focus on supporting the coachee developing their critical thinking skills, being actively engaged in the solution, and building competencies.

- **Two: Request Specific Changes.** Based on your ongoing perception of the coachee’s recent attitude, behavior, results, and the state of your relationship, you may need to escalate beyond offering suggestions. As coach, you be more assertive by specifying the nature of the change you want or need to see. Being specific by explicitly stating your needs can clarify expectations for both parties. These types of conversations may feel a little less collaborative, but are important in helping a coachee who is either struggling or resisting the previous approach of step one.
- **Three: Require Changes in Performance Levels and Clarify Consequences.** This option is a highly assertive and directive intervention. It is used when none of the other preceding interventions have been effective at creating a positive, sustained change. You may have begun an informal or formal progressive-discipline process, and need to state the behavior and performance level required for continued employment. It includes a timetable and full disclosure of the consequences of not meeting the requirements. If there is still hope for a “turn-around” this step is appropriately characterized as coaching. Only if hope is gone and the person is in the final stages of being terminated, does it cease to be authentic coaching.

Steps four and five can be included in nearly all coaching conversations.

- **Four: Clarify the Action Commitment and a Follow-up Plan.** Often, it helps the coachee gain focus if the coach asks them to state their understanding of their action commitment regarding what is going to happen and when. This is especially helpful if the conversation has explored various options and alternatives, and potential confusion exists on

either side. This is also a good step to complete for assignments or projects that either the coachee or coach has a large stake in the outcome. The follow-up plan simply addresses when and how the next progress check might occur. Given the fullness of people's job responsibilities these days, this accountability-setting step may be critical for the coachee's/project's success.

- **Five: Offer Support.** A powerful way to conclude a collaborative coaching session is for the coach to ask the question "How can I support you?" Without taking ownership of any "problem" or action steps that belong to the coachee, this signifies commitment on behalf of the coach. It is designed to uncover possible actions the coach can take to optimally support the coachee, which reinforces the feeling of a true partnership between both parties.

Chapter 6 covers the details of the Forwarding-the-Action Phase.

If this third and final part of the process model seems familiar, it is. Most managers and leaders have a tendency to focus on Forwarding-the-Action. "Make things happen NOW!" is classic Theory X in action—driving, pushing, and demanding results. It may be comfortable and familiar, yet this vital part of the coaching process often leads to unproductive stress, resistance, and resentment on behalf of all parties because little or no learning occurs. At best, Theory X achieves compliance.

The first two phases of the Transformational Coaching process are designed to create the relationship to support committed action that evolves through the collaborative, high trust dialogue. If people are not fully engaged at work, they are simply "going through the motions." Coaching that engages the heart leads to the release of discretionary energy, passion, and best efforts.

It is also important to note that the coaching process repeats itself. The content from one session becomes the context for the next session. It is a threaded dialogue through time that becomes more focused and empowering for both players who are co-creating the future in a collaborative partnership.

The Transformational Coaching process both guides the creation of the coaching relationship and guides each ongoing coaching conversation.

Let's look at this process in more detail.



*Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back—
Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary
truth that ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans:
that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves
too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise
have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising
in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and
material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have
come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it.*

Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.

Goethe