

Learn To Be A Manager Who Can Coach In 5 Steps

Ignite Their Potential with S.P.A.R.K

This is an extract from **Boost** – How to Turn Your Talents and Potential Into Lasting Success
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Introduction

Coaching is a tremendous tool for helping individuals and teams develop. You don't need to be a highly trained, fully accredited coach to be able to use a coaching methodology for great results. One of the best ways to make your own job easier is to learn to use a coaching method in your interactions with others.

The basic idea of coaching is that you help other people find solutions for themselves and commit to them. It's about their growth and fulfilling their own potential. It involves dealing with the present and finding options to move forward. What a great idea for you and them. You make your work harder by feeling that you have to persuade other people, but it is much easier to let people persuade, direct and motivate themselves.

If you are going to use this approach, you must have a fundamental belief in the capacity and potential of others to solve their own problems. You are not the font of all wisdom. You'll need to be skilful at structuring a conversation, at asking good questions and listening well.

STEP 1 S: SUCCESS

Focus on the outcome: It starts with helping someone to clearly identify what he or she is trying to achieve. Of course there is usually a challenge, task or problem in hand that needs to be dealt with in some way. The tendency is to focus first on the problem rather than the result you want. Once you know what the conversation is about instead of asking about the problem ask, 'What would be a good result?' or 'What is it you're trying to achieve?'

Think of the meetings you have been in when the problem or issue at hand is discussed at length, but few decisions are reached. It's much better to help them envision success. If you start to see the prospect of a successful outcome, what happens to your levels of energy and motivation? They go up. When you start feeling motivated and energised, what happens to your levels of creativity? They go up. So help other people to get into this state.

STEP 2 P: PROBLEM

Clarify the challenge or problem: Once the individual or the group is in a solution focused state, you can start to investigate the problem. Remember, the important thing is to focus on the present. No one can solve the past. So don't waste time discussing aspects of a problem or challenge that aren't relevant. If you spend too much time on the problem, there's a risk it becomes your problem not

theirs. This is the exact opposite of what should be occurring. Ask questions about what is actually happening now. Who is being affected? What is the effect? How many people? When? Be specific. Your goal is to help them focus on the current problems, the facts and the effects.

Remember. You are not asking these questions because you are trying to find the answer to the problem. Clarifying the facts is important because there can be a tendency to speak in generalisations about problems. 'Our marketing isn't working.' 'The website is rubbish.' 'The team meeting is a waste of time.' Very often the process of asking for facts helps the other person identify where the problem really lies and the possibilities of a solution begin to emerge.

STEP 3 A: ALTERNATIVES

Create options: This stage is about idea generation. How many possible ways of moving closer to their desired outcome can they think of? You can easily get stuck at this point because the individual will grind to a halt trying to think of the perfect solution to the problem. Most challenges and problems are not solved in one mighty bound. Neither is there only one perfect solution. There are a number of possible solutions.

Resist the temptation to provide the answer. Don't undo all that good work. The point of using this approach is to save you time by helping other people get into the habit of using their own capabilities and intellect to solve their own problems. Remind them about the result they said they wanted to achieve. Ask them what they could *possibly* do to make some progress toward the result they want. The word *possibly* is vital. It opens up the mind to a number of ideas and options. Don't be afraid of silence. Let them think.

STEP 4 R: REVIEW

Confirm the process: It's useful at this point to briefly review where you have come from and where you have got to in the conversation because the next stage is all about making a commitment. Repeating the outcome or the goal re-energises them before they contemplate their next steps. Restate the specific problem and the ideas they have created to move forward.

It's a good time to check that the conversation is making sense for them and to encourage them. If there are any obstacles that could get in their way, flush them out now. Sometimes someone will go through the whole conversation through to making a commitment without mentioning something that is holding him or her back. Get it out in the open now so you can encourage more ideas that will help them to overcome that issue.

STEP 5 K: KICK-START

Pledge to action: Now it is time to help them commit to what they are actually going to do. Out of all the options they have created, what are they going to do? What is their preferred way forward? Ask them what they are going to do, by when and with whom. Ask them how they will make the decision and the timeframe known to others because, people who make a public commitment are much more likely to follow through. At this point ask them whether they need any help from you or others to successfully deliver the result.