

Coaching and mentoring - conversation model role play

The purpose of this exercise is to use a constructive conversation model to coach a colleague.

At the end of the session you will have experienced how it works and be able to use it with members of your team. As a secondary outcome, you will have experienced someone acting as a coach to you - you may find this a really productive and worthwhile experience. Perhaps, even, a rare treat.

The sequence of questions looks deceptively simple, but draws on many years of work from experts, plus a whole lot of experience. It includes both logical elements and emotional elements: it allows both left and right brain thinking to be engaged and explored harmoniously.

Multi-dimensional conversations like these are more likely to produce results and be carried through to the future.

Working in pairs, take turns to be the coach and ask your partner the following questions in the following sequence. You'll have plenty of time, so there's no need to rush the conversation. This approach has the capacity to achieve powerful results so it's worth answering each question fully.

Coaches should use open, probing questions under each key question. Probe out responses before moving to the next question.

It may be a good idea to first agree on confidentiality. In this context, confidentiality means that the conversation will not be repeated word for word, and that what the coach finds will not be used to 'victimise' or otherwise make life difficult for the team member. However, in this context, confidentiality means that the coach can fully use the knowledge they have gained in a general sense to advise and further coach the other, and contribute to the management of the organisation.

The conversation will be far more natural and far more powerful if you can agree one fundamental ground rule: "no recriminations".

Questions

1. Thinking over what we've just covered in the session, can you give me an example of something which you would like to achieve in terms of changing your relationship with your workgroup in the next six months ?
2. How will you feel if you achieve that ?
3. How will you know that you have achieved it with your workgroup ?
4. Do you believe you can achieve it ?
5. How will you go about achieving it ?
6. What resources and support do you need to achieve it ?
7. What is the first step ?
8. When would you like me to check back with you on this ?

Adapted from Diltz Epstein "Tools for Dreamers" 1995, academic research, survey of the literature, and tools developed by Linda Julian for use with client law firms.

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