

8 ways to become a Great Coach

Enlightened business leaders worldwide are harnessing the power of coaching. Developing great coaching skills will help you, your employees and your organisation to become more resilient, creative and productive. Add compassion and mindfulness to the mix – conscious coaching – and you’ll have a potent recipe for success.

1. Start with yourself

Coaching is an “inside-out” practice. Start by questioning whether your own assumptions are really true. Ask yourself: “What have I done successfully before in similar circumstances to my current situation and what can I learn from that?” Also practise mindfulness techniques regularly. Being mindful helps you to develop compassion, for others and for yourself. This will enable you to be more present, resourceful and creative in your coaching conversations.

2. Ask, don’t tell

This should be your mantra as you work to develop a coaching leadership style – you don’t always have to be directive as a director. Being more collaborative and asking others what they think will boost their engagement, creativity and productivity. In coaching conversations, it means asking what the other person wants to talk about, how they’d like to explore that issue and what outcome they’d like to see.

3. Pose powerful questions

Thought-provoking questions are a hallmark of great coaching. They can help people to access hidden wisdom, see the bigger picture and “get unstuck”. Try these: “What would happen if nothing changed?” “What’s standing in your way?” “What do you really care about?” “If a miracle should happen after you go to sleep tonight and the issue at hand turns out exactly as you want when you wake up tomorrow, what would you see, hear and feel?”

4. Don’t fear emotions

Ask people how they’re feeling. Emotions are messengers: they mobilise energy and are crucial in decision-making. Many a culture-change programme has bombed because employees’ emotions weren’t heeded.

5. Listen deeply

There are six levels of listening: interrupting (which doesn't really count), waiting your turn, giving advice, attentive listening, active listening and deep listening. In coaching, the last of these means listening fully to non-verbal, as well as verbal, language – and to your own reactions. For example, you may suddenly feel anger when you're coaching and realise that this emotion isn't anything to do with you. Sharing this knowledge can help to shed light on hidden issues affecting the other person.

6. Clarify and reframe

Clarifying and reframing what others are saying can help them to feel understood and able to move forward. If they reveal that they're struggling to make themselves heard in meetings, for instance, you might reply: "It sounds as though you're finding it hard to be assertive..." Inviting others to reframe can help them gain clarity, see other options and view negative situations as learning opportunities.

7. Tune into the system

Ask yourself: "What would other people want and say?" Think not only about colleagues and people who report directly to you, but also about all the various stakeholders, including the organisation, future generations and even the environment if they could speak to you.

8. Promote accountability

If someone has committed to taking certain steps, follow this up with them to check progress and suggest that they find "buddies" in their networks to help them keep on track.

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