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Coaching Conversations

Do you have team members who regularly ring you asking what to do in a particular situation?

If so, are they.....

- A. Asking you to come up with the answer?
- B. Asking you for a different approach as their standard approach hasn't worked?
- C. Asking for your advice on which solution they've devised is more appropriate?

The temptation may be to just give them what you think is best. After all, you are the manager and you are meant to know. Right? Wrong! The key here is to turn their question into a coaching conversation where the individual will learn something today and you might just save yourself a similar call in future.

This simple coaching conversation is modelled on the work of Sir John Whitmore – the sequence is called GROW. It has many appealing attractions:

1. Improves the productivity and decision making capabilities of the team member
2. It places the coach in a guiding role, where support is offered and thinking is encouraged, even if the manager may not even know the answer
3. It tackles the issue and solution from multiple perspectives to provide a superior process and outcome
4. It gives the team member a sense of satisfaction that they played a role in coming up with the future action
5. It may reduce the volume of unnecessary calls allowing more time for richer interactions with your team

The G.R.O.W questioning sequence

GROW is a coaching conversation framework where your questions are designed to get the individual thinking for themselves, developing alternative solutions and taking responsibility for required actions (even when you're not there!)

G is for GOAL:

Examples of questions include...

- What are you trying to achieve? To what level? By When?
- What does success look like to you?
- Why are you trying to achieve it?
- Is this goal specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound?
- Do you feel motivated to go after this goal?

R is for REALITY

Examples of questions include...

- Where are we now?
- Where have we come from?
- How far away are we from achieving the goal (mentioned above)?
- Why? What has contributed to this?
- Who is involved from our company or from theirs?
- What are the key enablers or constraints from your perspective?

O is for OPTIONS

Examples of questions include...

- What are the options moving forwards?
- What would be the likely impact from each of the suggested options?
- What are the benefits and costs of each option?
- Which options represent low hanging fruit?
- Do you alone have to do all the work? What role could others play?

W is WILL TO ACT

Examples of questions include...

- What do we need to do to make this happen?
- How do you feel about now taking action?
- Who do we need to involve?
- What will be the obstacles?
- How will the obstacles be overcome?
- When will the goals be achieved?
- What other support will be required?

The above is an introduction to the GROW model. The quality of the outcome is directly linked to the quality of the questions and the ability of the coach to question and probe, giving the individual a chance to come up with the answers before adding their own observations and experience. It is a powerful tool that gives your team member a simple framework with which to think and solve problems for themselves. It might also represent a case of enlightened self-interest for the busy sales manager who cares about the development of their team members. Try it and let us know how you went!

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