



# Coaching and Developing

## Executive Summary

There are many benefits that can be derived from taking an active role in coaching and developing your team, such as increased engagement and loyalty, strong performance, an ability for staff to take on increasingly complex and demanding work, and ultimately achieve greater results.

Fundamentally, the best thing you can do to support the coaching and development of your employees is to have them take ownership of their development or the solutions to their challenges. Where possible, always look to put yourself in a position to provide **validation**, **feedback**, and **support** rather than solving for their problems or proactively guiding their development.

In general, there are two primary opportunities to provide coaching and development: In dedicated conversations, or informally when employees come to you for support.

### Dedicated conversations

These are pre-scheduled developmental or career growth conversations that either run as stand-alone meetings or as part of regular one-on-ones. Best practice for these conversations is to give the employee at least a week's notice (but ideally longer) beforehand so that they can do the necessary pre-work of putting together their development plans tied to their growth or development within a role, or their career development. Ideally, you will have them send you a copy of their development plan before the meeting so that you can also reflect on and identify any necessary feedback you would like to provide during the conversation. Best practice is for development plans to have specific goals articulated, action plans to achieve them, necessary supports identified, and target timelines for completion.

By employees coming up with their own development plan to meet their goals, this helps them become more accountable and empowers them to own their path moving forward. It also allows you to then be in a position to coach, provide feedback, course correct or add in any missing pieces.

Once any necessary revisions to the document have been made by the employee post-conversation, ensure a finalized copy is sent to you as the manager. You now have a living document that can be used as the basis for ongoing future development conversations.

### Employees coming to you for support

Employees often come to their managers for support when working through challenges or problems as part of their work. Sometimes it's occasional and other times it can be daily, especially for less capable or more junior staff. When this happens, it is common to want to provide an answer to employee questions and challenges but this approach is not optimal for coaching and developing your staff, and it can become quite taxing on you as the manager.

Best practice is to first ask the employee a series of questions:

- What have you done to solve for your situation so far?
- What solutions are you considering/what are your planned next steps?



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By putting it back on them, it forces them to think critically and over time helps them think more strategically and become more independent. If they cannot answer either of these questions, best practice is to have them go back and come up with answers before coming back to you for support.

Once they can answer these questions, you are then able to coach by providing validation, feedback, course correcting or sharing additional ideas for consideration.

### **Key reminders**

While putting the onus on the employee to solve for their challenges before seeking support or approval, and/or by having them drive their own development plans are the best approaches to coaching and supporting their development, these are not appropriate techniques in a few key situations:

- When the employee would have no access to pertinent information.
- When it's their first time going through something or they are learning.
- When the employee is new to role.
- Highly sensitive or impactful work that you would prefer to be more directly involved in or have control over.

When working with developmental plans, be open to making changes and adjustments throughout the course of the year as priorities may shift, along with changes in work environments that may impact the relevancy and ability to complete original goals.