

## Incorporating a Coaching Mindset as a Leader

### Actions, Benefits, Questions to Ask

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Thanks for attending the Effective Coaching Seminar at the OWL Leadership Summit. We hope you found the session to be informative, practical, and fun!

A coaching mindset, when put into practice, can deliver profound benefits in your personal life, in your work life, in the functioning of your teams, and in your business outcomes. According to renowned coach and bestselling author John Whitmore, “Coaching is unlocking people’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them learn, not teaching them.”<sup>1</sup> In the workplace, informal coaching requires a supportive environment with good relational rapport. The leader needs to be skillful with powerful questioning and active listening. If you lead people, working with a professional coach is a fantastic way to grow these competencies. The following resource is intended to help you ask better questions, improve your observational skills, and realize some of the benefits of leading with a coaching mindset. Enjoy!

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<sup>1</sup> John Whitmore, *Coaching For Performance: GROWing People, Performance and Purpose* (Nicholas Brealey Publications, 2004), 8

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### Top 10 Coaching Tip Countdown for Leaders

#### #10 When in doubt...reach out.

**Action:** Generously share your time, attention, and energy.

**Benefits:** Builds trust, Invites connection, Opens communication

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- How are you showing up today?
- What are your top two concerns today?
- What do you hope will go well today?
- What challenges are you facing today?

#### #9 Curiosity DID NOT kill the cat.

**Action:** Lead with curiosity rather than judgement.

**Benefits:** Deepens capacity for learning, Builds confidence, Builds trust

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- I wonder... how might this be seen as an opportunity rather than a failure?
- I'm curious... what benefit do you think this learning could bring?
- What would you do if you had no limits?

#### #8 Teamwork makes the dream work.

**Action:** Encourage cross-functional connections and inclusive problem solving.

**Benefits:** Invites connection, Increases collaboration, Deepens capacity for learning, Encourages innovative problem solving

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- Who might have knowledge that you need?
- Who could be impacted? and What is their perspective?
- What would collaboration look like in this circumstance?
- What other perspectives are needed to effectively plan the path forward?

#### #7 My way or the highway is so yesterday.

**Action:** Provide a values structure AND creative freedom. (Creativity thrives in structured freedom.)

**Benefits:** Increases alignment, Encourages innovative problem solving, Unleashes creativity, Increases job satisfaction

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- How are you thinking about incorporating our value of (name value) in your design?
- How will customers experience (name company) when they interact with this material?
- What steps can you take to tap into diverse perspectives?

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### #6 When digging for buried treasure, bring a shovel.

**Action:** Practice powerful questioning by rephrasing closed questions to be open-ended.

**Benefits:** Increases engagement, Deepens capacity for learning, Builds communication skills, Opens communication, Clarity

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- (yourself) How can I rephrase that question to be open ended?
- Replace 'is', 'why', and 'do' at the start of questions with 'what', 'when', and 'who'.
- Example: replace 'Do you want help with that?' with 'What would be helpful?', 'When would you know you need assistance?', 'Who could be a helpful resource?'

### #5 Mirror, mirror on the wall.

**Action:** Listen to understand, not to reply. Mirror words of the speaker.

**Benefits:** Clarity, Deepens understanding, Reduces acting on assumptions

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- It sounds like the new system isn't giving you the data you need. Did I get that right?
- I hear that this change is important to you...What is important about it?
- I'm not sure I understand. How could you describe that in a different way?

### #4 Hindsight is 20/20.

**Action:** Do a post-mortem on failed attempts. Reframe 'failure' as 'learning' to create room for second (or fifth) attempts.

**Benefits:** Reduces fear-based paralysis. Deepens capacity for learning. Encourages innovation

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- What did you already try? What was the outcome?
- What did you learn that could change the way we approach this next time?
- What steps could you take to produce a different result next time?
- What parts remain that could be built on?

### #3 Pass the ball not the buck.

**Action:** Give people the authority and support they need to seek success in their responsibilities.

**Benefits:** Empowers individuals to excel, Augments commitment, Unleashes creativity, Invites connection.

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- What resources could you tap into to make this work?
- What strategies could you use to bypass the roadblocks?
- What could I do to support you in this situation?
- How would you like me to check in with you?

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### #2 Bend but don't break.

**Action:** Highlight opportunities for growth and resilience.

**Benefits:** Builds trust, Builds confidence, Develops resilience, Empowers individuals to excel

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- What will it feel like to deliver good news when you find the right solution?
- I can see that you are disappointed with that outcome. What did you learn that we will benefit us moving forward?
- Who else can benefit from your discoveries? How will you share that with them?

### #1 Silence is golden.

**Action:** Get comfortable with silence. Notice what isn't said.

**Benefits:** Builds trust, Deepens capacity for learning, Opens communication

**Types of Questions to ask:**

- None! Silence is a wonderful if not awkward assistant.
- Wait for a reply—some personalities need time to think about a sufficient answer.
- Eventually make an observation if needed.
  - I can see you are thinking deeply about this.
  - I noticed your expression changed as you were thinking. What was going through your mind?

**Rapport • Open-Ended Questioning • Active Listening**