

# Getting Started In Coaching



Written by  
Peter Pearson



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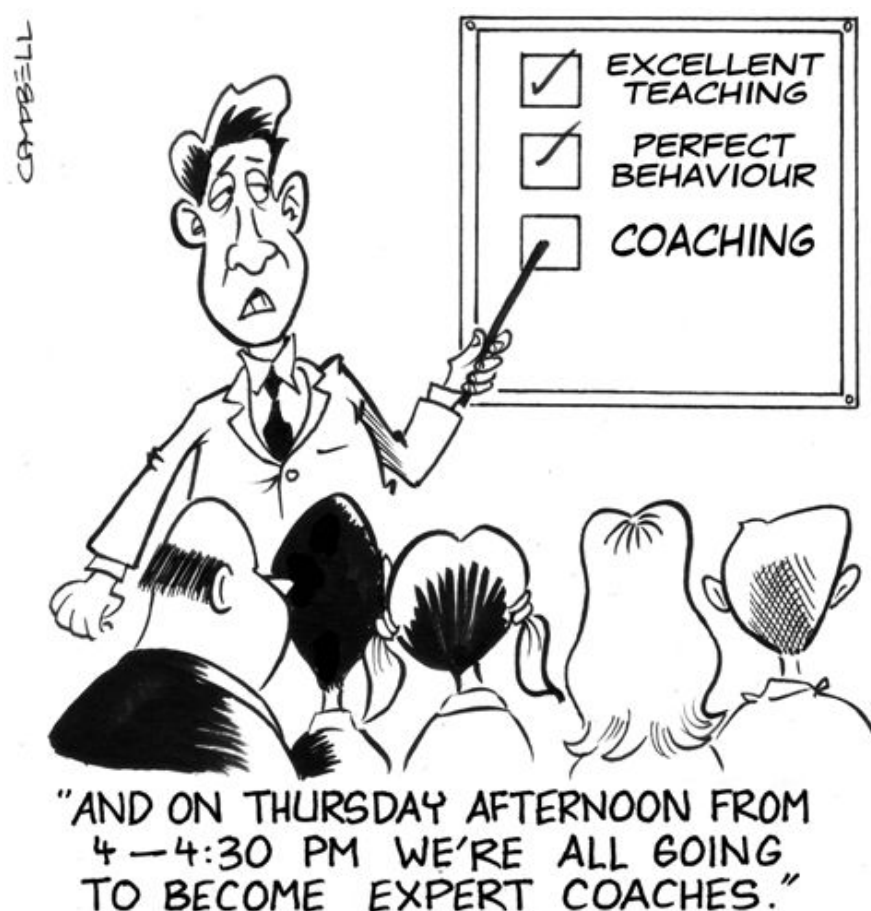
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# Coaching

Coaching is a classic example of an ‘important but not urgent’ task that is all too easy not to find time for, but when taken seriously can produce innumerable benefits long into the future. This little book explains why coaching is worthwhile, considers some of the challenges facing busy leaders in schools and provides some very practical help in getting started.

## Making Coaching Work for Schools

In the past 15 years I’ve had the privilege of working with thousands of teachers and Heads in leadership and coaching programmes. The gulf between schools and the world of professional coaching is wide and probably growing. Schools grow ever more pressurized, and are unable to allocate ‘1000s of hours’ to acquiring coaching skills (as advocated in one very good coaching book). I think it would be wrong to give up on the attempt to acquire the best coaching skills you can – which is why I’ve written this book.





Coaching is rigorous and difficult and at the same time fantastically rewarding and good value. And the good news is that most teachers have a range of interpersonal skills that predispose them to become effective coaches. Furthermore, the development of high quality coaching skills, in particular questioning skills, has a very positive spillover into the classroom. Coaches and teachers alike know the power of the well crafted question.

## Why Coaching pays – a pragmatic rationale

I once had an interesting day at an executive coaches conference. One of the coaches presenting there worked with heads of FTSE 100 companies. I was impressed that he charged a percentage of their annual salary – I believe it was 10%. It made me question for a while why I chose to work with teachers! Joking aside, it is significant how the boards of many of the top companies in the world invest serious money in improving the performance of their most senior staff. They clearly see the benefit in financial terms – it helps the bottom line, never mind the more intangible benefits of less stress, more happiness etc.

Culturally, this is quite a contrast with most schools where the Heads are very reluctant to invest anything in their own well being and performance, in the mistaken belief that it ‘cannot be afforded’. The hard reality is that an underperforming Head (whether by 5% or 25%) is an expensive luxury that no school should have to afford. If 2 one hour sessions a term can lead to a 5% improvement in a Head’s performance it is worth considering the monetary value of that to the school. Providing the cost of engaging an outside coach is less than that, it is worth paying.

## The Power of Coaching as a Leadership Style

*The New Leaders* by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee examines the question of leadership styles using research carried out by the Harvard Business School. To the surprise of some it identifies ‘Coaching’ as one of the six main leadership styles – moreover, one of the most effective styles for positive long term impact both on performance and organisational climate. Leaders who coach empower others to do more, so that more gets done and people feel more positive about themselves and the organisation. So, can you afford not to coach?

# What is the Best Way Forward?

For a school, buying in professional coaching for their senior staff could make good economic sense. The improvements in performance could exceed the costs. There are some excellent coaches who charge 'school friendly' prices. For Headteachers, the particular pressures of the job make it almost certainly a good idea to employ an outside coach.

Longer term, it is a far better investment to build up coaching skills within the organisation. The returns will be experienced year after year. So the search becomes to find the maximum growth in skill levels with the minimum investment of time and money. Since 2003 I have been working with schools and teachers with the aim of doing precisely that. I am aware that budgets are tight and time is limited. For this reason I always seek to raise the bar – pack in the knowledge and skills that will have the greatest benefit for day to day practice.

Although short and designed to include those new to coaching, this ebook is not simplistic. I deliberately cover some advanced ideas and practices. I would be very disappointed if you learned nothing new or found nothing of value. Do drop me a line at [peter.pearson@20q.co.uk](mailto:peter.pearson@20q.co.uk) to let me know how you get on!

# Getting the Practicalities right

## Remember why you are coaching

Very rarely, if ever, will a coaching culture grow up spontaneously. It needs significant intentional effort. Ideally senior people within the school will embrace the values of coaching, and believe that they are worthwhile and of benefit to the school. There needs to be a clear understanding of what coaching is and how it works. It helps of course if the Head is fully on board. With the right understanding there can be the motivation to make the practical changes necessary for coaching to work.



"DO BE ASSURED OF MY  
COMPLETE UNDIVIDED ATTEN..."

## Protected Time, Protected Space

The hardest battle for the aspiring coach is going to be internal – putting aside their natural egotism to become 100% focussed on the person in front of them. But we haven't a hope of winning this battle if we allow external distractions to seep in – yes, the obvious ones like emails, texts, tweets, phone calls, human interruptions. All of these need to be banished!

Create a space that is calm, that has comfortable seating of equal size (and usually at a bit of an angle), with phones on silent and a note on the door. Be fierce about protecting this space! It is your minimum commitment to your coachee and the process itself. It often works best to find a neutral space outside the immediate workplace.



# Why Trust and Rapport are Essential

People agree to being coached because they want to get better in their work in some way. This will mean at times facing fears, anxieties, doubts over their competence and abilities etc. The reality is that nearly everyone has an inner voice that is very self critical and can be a real block to achieving their full potential.

Do you want to share this stuff with your boss? No, me neither – unless the relationship has evolved into one of unusual respect and trust. It is never ideal for your coach to also be your line manager.

However, schools rarely have the luxury of the ideal. It could be that the only practical solution is for the line manager to act as coach, or that the coach is so senior that they have a supervisory role anyway. This can still work well, as long as the following issues are addressed.

## Protocols

Top of the list is nearly always confidentiality. The coachee needs the confidence to know that what is said in confidence will not be shared more widely. Where outcomes from a coaching session need to be shared, this is done transparently, for example by being written down just before the end of the coaching session. It may also need to be made explicit that doubts or insecurities shared during a session will not be used as evidence of, for example, an unsuitability to move on to a higher pay grade.

## Trust

All the protocols in the world cannot build up a genuine sense of trust. Trust takes a long time to be earned, but can be lost in seconds. Are you a person of your word – do you show day in and day out that your character is trustworthy? If the answer is not an unequivocal ‘yes’, then you can never be a successful coach. Trust can’t be faked, and evidence of untrustworthiness is picked up unconsciously – it is sensed before it is intellectually understood.

So what if you have a lapse and deliberately or otherwise let someone down? If you try to cover it up, or deny or lie about it, then you will have lost that person’s trust forever. But a genuine and heartfelt apology could be accepted. None of us are perfect.

# Rapport

Being trustworthy is not a skill that can be learned – it comes from the much deeper level of character. ‘Unpolished’ individuals, with easy to see flaws, can be more trustworthy because there is less suspicion that they are showing behaviour that has been learned on a course! What then of rapport?

Rapport is a natural state shown any time two people who get on well are together. It is easy to observe in any social situation! The actual behaviours involved will vary greatly and be affected by the age, gender, cultural background etc of the people in rapport – they could be loud or quiet, introverted or expansive. But what you will notice is a high degree of ‘matching’ or ‘mirroring’. The energy levels will match – if one person is loud and expansive, the other will be too. If you meet up with a good friend you will be naturally sensitive to their mood and will naturally adapt your behaviour accordingly.

Coaches usually are not working with their friends. Indeed, an experienced and effective coach will work with a wide range of individuals and personalities, and will need to establish rapport with every one of them if they are to be successful. So how do they do it?

Consciously or unconsciously, they are matching the energy level and body language of their coachee. If the coachee is loud and energetic, they will be too – not as an exact imitation (that would feel false) but in a way that feels right. If the coachee is quiet and depressed, they will match that too. Internally, the coach knows that, for the coming session, their own internal reality is unimportant. Whatever has been going on for them needs to be ‘parked’ so that they are fully aware of the person in front of them. It is the coachee’s reality that matters, so it seems right to adjust your state to get in tune with them.

# Pacing and Leading

But what if the coachee is in a bad way – depressed for example. How does it help to match such a state? Here the concept of ‘pacing and leading’ is useful. If you ‘mismatch’ – eg by being all cheerful and upbeat – the coachee is likely to feel ‘you just don’t get it – you have no idea of what is going on for me’. They are not likely to find your presence helpful. But if you ‘pace’ them, and establish rapport by adapting your energy level and posture to one that feels

right to them, they will sense that you are 'on their wavelength'. The rapport you have means there is at least some trust present.

Coaching is all about helping someone move into a better place – so you don't want to leave someone in a depressed space. Hopefully your careful listening and useful questions will help them see that the situation is not as bad as they feared – they are beginning to feel empowered again. And if you are truly in rapport with them you may find you are subtly leading them into a more energetic state. Your voices may become a little louder and more animated, your faces more expressive. It would not be obvious to an observer who is leading whom – it would seem as if you are changing together.

Pacing and leading can be used in a different direction – eg to calm down someone who is angry. First match their energy level to show that you 'get it' – you are sensitive to the anger they feel. But then as you allow them to express the anger and begin to get a more rounded perspective on their situation, you can gently lead their emotional state into a calmer place.

## Mismatching

By and large, it's good to be able to establish rapport with anyone. Many teachers already have excellent rapport skills – a great way to accelerate their growth as coaches. But can there be such a thing as too much rapport?

If you create too comfortable an environment it may mean that you find it hard to ask the challenging questions that could really help someone make positive changes in their life. Or it could be that people like talking to you so much your time is not your own, and you are getting behind on tasks and leaving work late. Or it could be that you are seeming to agree with or even approve of views or behaviours that actually conflict with your values. To prevent this happening it can be appropriate to *mismatch*.

Is the conversation going on too long? Change the way you sit, or even stand up. Someone says something you are not in agreement with? Change your voice tone or pace. Subtle bodily changes can be picked up and registered before the mind is aware of them. As an aspiring coach you seek to become proficient at all aspects of human communication.

# Coaching or Mentoring?

Do you mentor or do you coach? Certainly in schools there is much more mentoring than coaching going on. But what is the difference, and how can you get better at each?

## A spectrum of helping

The most helpful way to think of the relationship between the two is to see they are both along a 'spectrum of helping' from the very directive to the non-directive. If I want some technical information - 'how do I get my whiteboard to work?' - I probably just want to be shown exactly what to do. Likewise if there is a crisis it is best for someone to show clear leadership and tell everyone else what to do.



## Mentoring

The original Mentor appears in Homer's *Odyssey*. He was the older, trustworthy man asked by Odysseus to guide and look after his son Telemachus as he grew up (while Odysseus himself was away fighting with the Greeks in Troy). So the word 'mentor' usually suggests a more experienced person guiding a less experienced one. On our 'spectrum of helping' it comes somewhere in the middle:



# Coaching

So what of coaching? It gets confusing as coaching can also be directive, as some forms of sports coaching are ('grip the racket like this.. do as I do'). However most modern understandings derive from the 'Inner Game' approach of Timothy Gallway and co in the 1970s. They found that raising awareness of what was going on ('notice what happened when you hit that ball into the net...') created a much better mental state than when a directive approach was taken. There was less negative mental self talk, and it became easier to enter a 'flow' state.

Modern approaches to coaching derive from these roots. It really took off when it became clear that subject technical knowledge and expertise was not necessary – indeed, it was often unhelpful as the coach enjoyed the status of 'expert'. Thus a trained and experienced coach could work very effectively in fields in which they had little or no technical knowledge. (John Whitmore gives a clear account of this in *Coaching for Performance*).

Hence it is appropriate to place coaching at the right hand end of the spectrum:



Coaching involves a relationship of equals – in TA (Transactional analysis) language it is 'adult-adult' rather than 'parent-child'. The coachee takes full responsibility for the decisions they make: the coach's role is to help them think clearly and holistically to make the best possible decisions. The coach needs to take care not to ask leading questions or steer the coachee down any particular avenue of behaviour. Something that does not come naturally to most of us!

## So, should I mentor or should I coach?

It is important to be conscious of which is most appropriate. If you are working with someone in a leadership position it is important that you coach – leadership involves taking



responsibility and making decisions. But if you are supervising, say, a newly qualified teacher then it may well be better to mentor, at least at first. The new teacher needs to be shown the school's way of planning lessons and may need close guidance on aspects of behaviour management. But remember that mentoring is on a spectrum of helping. Over time, you'd look to coach more than mentor. Why not be open about this?

## Where should training focus?

We're naturally good at telling others what to do (especially teachers?). We've had our own model of reality in our heads since we can remember and we naturally assume it's the best way. So no one needs training in how to be directive. We're naturals!

But although a good coach can make it look natural or even easy, it's not. How do you structure the conversation without being directive? (I address this question in later chapters.) As the time you have for training is likely to be limited, it is important it is targeted where it makes the greatest difference – at the non-directive end of the spectrum. Good luck!

# The 4 Levels of Listening

## How good a listener are you?

For many busy people the answer is, 'Not as good as I'd like to be!' We have so much to do, we think there is a danger that other people will push us off course if we listen to everything they say – so we take in the bare minimum we need to know to keep functioning.

For the typical busy manager looking to develop coaching skills, this is an issue that needs to be addressed. To become an effective coach you have to become a good listener – there is no way round this! But how can you become a better listener? Here are a few pointers in the right direction.

Get the environment right. You've taken that on board, haven't you?



## Level 1 Listening

Level 1 is our natural egotistical state. We take in the bare minimum and wait until we can get a word in edgeways. This isn't really listening.

## Level 2 Listening

If level 1 is our natural egotistical state, then level 2 is reaching a level of objectivity. That means taking in every word that is said and ensuring you understand what the coachee means.

How to do this? Practising is a good start! Become more self-aware – notice when you are really paying attention and when you are not! This can be done at any time!

If what the coachee is saying is complicated then making summary statements can be really helpful, for them as well as for you. 'You've said there are 3 things bothering you, X, Y and Z – is that right?' This shows the coachee you are paying attention and helps them begin to gain an objective view of their own situation. 'Well, actually I know I have X in hand, but there is something else....'

Level 2 listening is a bare minimum to start coaching. It shows you are taking a genuine interest in the other person. Your mind is reasonably clear and you show this by taking in the facts of what they are saying. It is a good place to start – but of course it isn't sufficient in itself to be an effective coach.

## Level 3 Listening

You may well have come across this much repeated statistic, taken from Albert Mehrabian's 1967 research, that human communication is 7% verbal, 38% in voice tone and 55% non-verbal (body language). (In fact Mehrabian did *not* show that, but in some ways this is a useful myth in highlighting the importance of non-verbal communication.) We are emotional beings, and we communicate a lot through non-verbal means. The coach who remains at level 2, and is insensitive to what is being communicated non-verbally, is missing a significant part of what is being communicated (even if it is not actually 93%).

Like so much about becoming a better coach, it is well worth experiencing this in practice, so here's a simple exercise you can try.

## A Simple Exercise

This exercise works well for groups of 5, but can work for groups of between 3 and 10 people.

One person is designated speaker – they are to speak on a matter of interest to them for 3–5 minutes. The others in the group don't interrupt, can take notes and each have one focus of listening:

- listener 1 pays attention only to the facts of the situation (level 2 listening)
- listener 2 pays attention only to voice tone
- listener 3 pays attention only to body language
- listener 4 pays attention only the speaker's energy level

If there are more than 5 in your group, or as alternatives if you're getting advanced at this:

- listener 5 pays attention only to Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic modalities (if they've had these explained!)
- listener 6 pays attention only to the level of animation of the speaker's face (especially eyes and mouth)
- listener 7 pays attention only to the speaker's use of language patterns in the Coach's Phrasebook (available from 20Q separately)
- listener 8 pays attention only to the speaker's intention to take action
- listener 9 pays attention only to similes, metaphors and any other non-literal language

Each listener then briefly feeds back to the speaker what they noticed. Finally the speaker has the chance to respond to the feedback. What was most insightful? Do they think any listener was 'wrong' about what they picked up (i.e. did they project any of their own thoughts and feelings?)

In most cases the speaker will be surprised at just how much they were communicating non-verbally. Next, everyone swaps roles.

What kind of listening do you find most easy? What kind least so?

Level 3 listening can be characterised as 'whole body listening'. You are fully present and paying attention to the emotion as well as the facts, the music as well as the score. The coachee feels heard and is able to focus on what is really most important to them. The conditions are in place for good coaching to take place.

## **Level 4 or 'Generative' Listening**

Occasionally an angel passes through the room.

The coachee thinks and says things they did not know they thought or believed. The conditions are right – the coach's attentiveness, the trust that has been built up between coach and coachee – enables a deeper truth to emerge. The moment feels 'holy', even for those with no normal sense of faith or spirituality.

Level 4 cannot be conjured at will and the coach who tried to force such moments would probably make them less likely. But they can happen, and it is a reminder of the importance and seriousness of what can happen when coaching is given the respect it deserves.



# Getting Started with a Simple Model

If you google for 'coaching models' you will find there are many! If you already know and use a model that works well, that's great. I will briefly consider 3 that are worth knowing about, in increasing order of complexity.

## The 3 Circle Model

This has the benefit of being the world's simplest coaching model. It was used by the National College for the *Leading from the Middle* leadership programme between 2003 and 2009 and contains the 3 core areas that lie within all other coaching models.



Without coaching, we tend to jump from a little bit of 1 ('What's the problem?') to 3 - ('why not try X?') There is real value in doing the first stage properly - understanding how the problem arose, and in particular the coachee's role in it. Is this a one off or part of a recurring pattern? How is it seen by other people? How objective is the coachee being - what evidence do they have for their point of view?

After doing this well it is time not to jump into action, but to clarify what the 'solution state' is like. In positive terms, how would the coachee like things to be? What will they be thinking and doing differently when things have moved on?

Only when the solution state has been well defined is it time to consider the possible courses of action. Keep asking until the coachee has a choice of actions. In itself, this is empowering. Then they can evaluate which course is likely to be most successful and proportionate to the amount of effort involved. Make the action as specific as possible, tied to a particular time and place. This makes it much more 'real' and so more likely to happen.

# GROW

**GROW** is probably the most well known coaching model. Interestingly, the first two steps are in a different order to the 3 Circle model.

**G is for GOAL** – where the coachee is aiming. The more clearly defined, the better.

**R is for REALITY** – both of the current situation and of where the goal will be achieved. What actually is going on, and what is the coachee's part in it all?

**O is for OPTIONS** – This is making explicit what is only implicit in the 3 Circle model. Options are good!

**W is for the WHAT/WHERE/WHEN** – for the action chosen but more importantly, it stands for **WILL**. How committed is the coachee to doing what they say they will do? Find out with a 'scaling question': 'On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to have done this by next week/when we next meet in a fortnight?' If the coachee is not committed to the action, it's not going to happen.

Like all good models GROW is robust, simple and easy to remember and use. If you like it, use it! You can also find variations such as 'T-GROW' where T stands for the Topic that is to be discussed.

## Well Formed Outcomes

I'm aware how my own skill levels as a coach improved exponentially in the years when I trained as a practitioner, master practitioner and later trainer of NLP – 'neuro-linguistic programming'. NLP is actually a fairly loose mixture of models and applied psychological techniques and one model which I have found to be incredibly powerful in coaching is that of 'well formed outcomes'. In practice I use it as a kind of coaching model that comes especially into play at the 'solution' stage of the coaching conversation. I will explain more about how it works in practice in the next chapter: in my view it can enrich and bring extra dimensions to any coaching model.

In brief, a 'well formed outcome' is the difference between a vague good intention and a compelling, inspiring plan of action that is bound to take place. There are 5 criteria that need to be met, with strong psychological reasons behind each. A well formed outcome is

POSITIVE

OWNED

ECOLOGICAL

SPECIFIC

EVIDENCED

You will find minor variations in how well formed outcomes are explained in the NLP literature: what I have put here has worked well for me for many years and is in the order that makes most sense to me. I like poetry so POESE, an old fashioned word for poetry makes sense to me and is a quick and easy way for me to mentally check that all 5 criteria have been met.

A well formed outcome is **positively** expressed, with no negative language. The issue and the solution are both fully **owned** by the coachee. I run an "**ecology** check" to ensure there is unconscious and well as conscious mind assent to the course of action. It is so **specific** that there can be no confusion over what will happen where and when. Finally the coachee is clear as to the sensory based **evidence** they will see, hear and feel when the change has been made.

In the training I run participants are given a colourful wheel to help them remember and internalise these 5 criteria. I have worked with many people who may have spent many days 'learning to coach', but who haven't yet experienced the power of especially the first three criteria: cleaning up the language to make it solely positive, ensuring there is absolute clarity over ownership, and ensuring the unconscious mind is as excited at the course of action as the conscious mind is.

Although this book is about 'getting started in coaching' and does not assume any prior knowledge there is no harm in aiming high and seeking to become an excellent coach, is there? I will explain more about how to use well formed outcomes in practice in the next chapter.

# A Way to structure a Coaching Conversation

I first wrote this for participants on the government's NPQH programme (for prospective headteachers.) Many were aware of their tendency to *mentor* rather than *coach*. I hope you find it useful.

How can 'non-directive' coaching be both structured and rigorous? This sounds paradoxical, but the paradox is resolved by the realisation that while it is never appropriate for the coach to impose their ideas, model of the world or solutions upon the coachee, it is wholly appropriate for them to structure the conversation to give it a clear sense of direction. This is what helps move the coachee from being stuck/problem-focussed/confused to a state of clarity about what they want and what they are going to do to get there.

The following 7 steps work with just about any coaching model though they contain some elements missing from most models (eg 'establishing ownership' and the 'congruence check').

1. Clarify the current situation
2. Establish ownership
3. Find out what the coachee has already tried
4. Explore the solution state
5. Create a 'well-formed outcome'
6. Check out any possible negative consequences (safety check)
7. Commit to action

Let's explore each step in more detail.

## 1. Clarify the current situation

Ask a mixture of open-ended and closed questions to gather information about what's going on:

- *Tell me about...*
- *How long has this gone on for...?*
- *Do other people see the situation in the same way?*
- *How big a deal is this to you?*

[It is preferable to use neutral words like ‘situation’ or ‘challenge’ rather than words like ‘problem’ or ‘issue’ which could unconsciously reinforce a state of ‘stuckness’.]

If you sense quite a bit of emotion it may help to surface this:

- *And how is this making you feel?*
- *Am I sensing some frustration/anger/anxiety here?*

When you have gathered enough information to gain some understanding of what’s been going on, summarise back to the coachee what they have said, using their own words as far as possible, eg:

- *I think I’ve heard you say there are five things going on...[list them].. is this right?... which would you like to focus on now? [This could be the biggest challenge, the one causing most irritation or else the one with the best prospect of a ‘quick win’]*

This reflecting back/summarising is extremely valuable for the coachee to gain some objectivity over what’s going on, and for the coach to check out that they have correctly heard where the coachee’s main concern or area of interest lies.

It may be appropriate at this point to ask the coachee for a first statement of their goal ..’I want my second in department to pull his weight’ ‘I’d like to be more organised’ ‘I want to be less stressed’.

## 2. Establish ownership

In my experience in as many as 50% of cases the initial goal contains elements outside the coachee’s control, usually to do with other people or matters over which they have no influence. It is often useful to state this directly:



- You've said you'd like your second in charge to pull their weight, but as we know it is not possible to change other people directly ... are you wishing to explore how you have behaved with this person and whether by changing how you behave you could get a different result?
- What can you take ownership of in this situation?

The coachee can change how they think, what they do and what they say. They *cannot* change how other people think, behave or act. It is only worth hearing about other people's behaviours to the extent that it provides useful information about the situation and how it affects the coachee. After that point the focus needs to make a clear shift to what the coachee can think, do or say.

Be prepared to repeat this stage as many times as is necessary to get the coachee to focus on their own circle of control.



### 3. Find out what the coachee has already tried

Eg by asking:

- *What have you already tried? ..... what was the effect of that?*
- *Have you tried anything else?..... ...Anything else?*

Summarise back to the coachee:

- *So you've tried two approaches and .....*

This can help the coachee see the situation and their own behaviours more objectively, (from 'third position' in NLP-speak). This can help them prepare internally to consider what may be new and more effective ways of behaviour.

### 4. Explore the solution state

Here are a few really useful questions you could ask to help the coachee explore what the solution might be like:

- *Imagine things have worked out better than you could have thought ... what will you see, hear and feel?*
- *Imagine you wake up one morning and everything's changed ... as if by magic ... what will you notice is different? What will you see that's different ... hear ... and feel?*
- *If you could take a pill, which gave you all the resources you needed, what would you do ... how would things change?*
- *Can you think back to a time when you were faced with a challenge of a similar size to this one that you managed to overcome ... can you remember what caused things to shift? Would this work again this time or do you need something a little bit different?*
- *Taking as long as you need to think, out of all the people in the world, who it is that would handle this situation really well ... it could be someone you know or a figure from history or even from the world of fiction .... What is it that they would do or say that would make a difference?*

(Most of the time coaching questions are short and the coachee is talking more than the coach: occasionally though the coach will slow things down, and ask a longer question, with pauses, which gets the coachee into a space in which they can think new thoughts ..)

## 5. Create a well-formed outcome

Once the coachee is clear about what the solution looks (sounds, feels) like, it is time to turn it into a 'well-formed outcome'.

This is a course of action so compelling that the coachee is almost certain to carry it out.

It has the following criteria:

- It is wholly **Positive**, ie what the coachee does want rather than what they want to avoid. Only 'clean' positive language is used, eg I want to breath clean, healthy fresh air rather than I want to stop smoking which is unconsciously reinforcing the undesired behaviour. (You can only think about stopping smoking by thinking about smoking!)
- Definitely **Owned** by the coachee ie what they are going to think, do or say, not hope for someone else to do or say.
- They are definitely **Congruent** about, ie if you ask them if they really want to achieve their goal they say YES without any signs of doubting or hesitation. On the contrary, what they say will be accompanied by a sense of energy, often their eyes will shine brightly! If there is a lack of congruence it is helpful to reflect this back to the coachee Am I hearing some hesitation here ....? what would need to happen for you to be really sure about this?

Clients often try to please others by stating the goal they think they should be going for! Yet it's hard to be inspired by a second hand goal. Keep going until you get real congruence (In NLP-speak this stage is called the '**Ecology** check').

Finally the outcome or goal is expressed really **Specifically** and concretely, stating the exact time, place, actions, words that will take place:

- *So you're going to meet with X at 10 am on Tuesday in their office, shake them firmly by the hand and say 'ABC', you anticipate these possible responses .... to which you will respond by...*

Of course you will get the coachee to work all this out by asking the relevant questions!

It could well be helpful to ‘micro-coach’ or rehearse every last detail, eg get the coachee to say the words they will say, in the manner they will say them, with the coach giving feedback and checking back until the coachee is as clear and confident as they can be over what they are going to do and say.

Finally you ask for the sensory-based **Evidence** they will have when the positive change has been made. (‘I will see this... I will hear this.... I will feel this....’).

This step is really important and constitutes a key part of the ‘work’ of the coaching session. The coachee is laying down new neural pathways for the improved reality they are moving into. When their minds are seeing things differently and so thinking differently their expectations change. What before was “unthinkable” becomes normal and expected. As Henry T Ford is reputed to have said, ‘Whether you think you can, or think you can’t, you’re probably right.’ Everything that exists on the world was first thought of by someone. Changing thoughts changes actions which change the world.

## 6. Check out any possible negative consequences (Safety check)

If the coachee is at all worried at what they are going to do it can be helpful to explore all the possible down-sides of their course of action:

- *What is the worst that can happen .... what would be the consequences of this?*
- *Are there any possible downsides to this?*

Often the coachee’s worst fears will seem far less powerful by being spoken aloud. Occasionally though there could be some real consequences or even danger from a course of action and this needs to be explored carefully. Weighing everything up, do they still want to proceed?

## 7. Commit to Action

Coaching that doesn't lead to action is a waste of time and money, apart from the few cases where the 'action' is for the coachee to 'let go' of a situation that they have realised is not actually their issue!

Scaling questions are very useful for establishing the level of commitment to the actions agreed:

- *On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely are you have done this by Wednesday morning/the next time we meet?*

If the answer isn't a 9 or a 10 then it is worth checking out what could get in the way of successful action, and asking:

- *What would need to happen for this to become a 9 or 10 out of 10?*

Be rigorous about this. Your time is precious, as is your coachee's. Would you really accept a measly 5 or 6 out of 10 (which will probably NOT actually happen)? Of course you won't! If you are content with a "coaching session" in which any agreed actions are unlikely to happen, then you are colluding in a fake process that benefits no one. It is 100X better to agree on a small scale action which happens than a big vague one that doesn't.

Depending on the agreed protocols this could be the time for the coach and coachee to jot down a few notes detailing the actions agreed and the time and place of the next meeting.



# Take Action!

## Over to you!

This book has deliberately been kept short because you are probably a busy person who at the moment doesn't have time to read a long and thorough coaching book (like Jenny Rogers' *Coaching Skills, A Handbook*). Your time is precious which also means you understand that thoughts which do not lead into changed behaviours are not very valuable. Your practice is going to change in some ways, isn't it?! It's time to review where you are as a coach and commit to one or two changes that will make a difference.



## Coaching Self Review

This simple self-review will help you take stock of where you are as a coach. You will find it at the end of this ebook (PDF version) or online at [www.20q.co.uk/self-review](http://www.20q.co.uk/self-review)

## Action Plan

When you have completed the self-review it is time to do some Self Coaching (or if you can, talk this through with your own coach or a colleague who is also learning to coach). Look over the scores you've given yourself in the Self Review – are they fair and accurate? Where are the most significant gaps between where you are now and where you'd like to be in a year's time?

If the gaps are small, it's likely that only fine tuning is needed and you already know what you need to do. If the gaps are many and large, then it's time to focus. Where should you start? Thinking realistically, what is the best investment of your time and resources to help you make significant progress as a coach? In a year or six months' time you can review this and give yourself a new area of focus.

You will find the action plan at the end of this ebook (PDF version) or online at [www.20q.co.uk/action-plan](http://www.20q.co.uk/action-plan)

# About Peter Pearson and 20Q

Peter learned his coaching and facilitation skills whilst still a Headteacher in the late 1990s/early 2000s and since then has worked with thousands of teachers and Heads around the UK. For many years he was a lead facilitator for the National College of School Leadership and he played a leading role with the prestigious *Local Leaders of Education* programme, helping many of England's most successful Headteachers develop their coaching skills.

*Peter is a colleague upon whom I can always rely for an outstanding input on coaching. His ability to secure rapport with a client, his calm, reflective but challenging questioning and his acute listening skills have been greatly appreciated by those with whom he has worked.*

– Gillian Gee, National Programme Manager for Local Leaders of Education

20Q came into being in 2005 and offered a breakthrough in 360° Leadership Diagnostics. It is now a leading provider of Tools for CPD to Teaching Schools and training organisations in the UK and internationally. 20Q currently provides Leadership 360°s, Classroom 360°s, Personality Profiles, as well as 1:1 coaching and coaching skills training.

# Coaching Self Review

For each of the following 7 questions mark yourself out of 10, and then decide where you'd like to be in a year's time:

## 1. At the moment, how much opportunity do I have to develop others through coaching?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not at all

Limited

It's a significant part of my professional life

In a year's time, where I'd like this to be:

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## 2. When I work with individuals, what is the balance of mentoring and coaching?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Only mentoring

A mixture of mentoring and coaching

Mainly coaching

In a year's time, where I'd like this to be:

--

**3. How appropriate is the environment in which I coach/mentor (including the physical environment and factors like interruptions)?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Poor

Adequate

Good

**In a year's time, where I'd like this to be:**

**4. How successful am I in establishing trust and rapport with all the people I coach/mentor?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not very

Quite

Very

**In a year's time, where I'd like this to be:**

**5. Being honest, how good a listener am I (what is the balance of level 1, 2, 3 and 4 listening?)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Mainly level 1

Mainly level 2

Mainly level 3 with some 4

**In a year's time, where I'd like this to be:**

**6. How secure am I in using a simple model to structure my coaching sessions?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Don't use any model

Some use but I forget

Use model

**In a year's time, where  
I'd like this to be:**

--

**7. How successful am I in helping my coachees in creating compelling well formed outcomes that we are both confident lead to appropriate action?**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Not very

Quite

Very

**In a year's time, where  
I'd like this to be:**

--



# Action Plan for Coaches

It's now time to do some Self Coaching (or if you can, talk this through with your own coach or a colleague who is also learning to coach). Look over the scores you've given yourself in the Self Review – are they fair and accurate? Where are the most significant gaps between where you are now and where you'd like to be in a year's time?

If the gaps are small, it's likely that only fine tuning is needed and you already know what you need to do. If the gaps are many and large, then it's time to focus. Where should you start? Thinking realistically, what is the best investment of your time and resources to help you make significant progress as a coach? In a year or six months' time you can review this and give yourself a new area of focus.

**Name**

**Date**

**The 3 areas of  
Focus for me**

1

2

3

**The benefits that  
this will bring me  
and others**

What I will see, hear  
and feel when I have  
made these changes

See:

Hear:

Feel:

Specifically, what  
actions am I going to  
take, and when

Action	When

Action Plan Review Date

# Action Plan Review

**Date**

**The changes I made**

**The impact of  
these changes**

**My new area of  
growth as a coach**