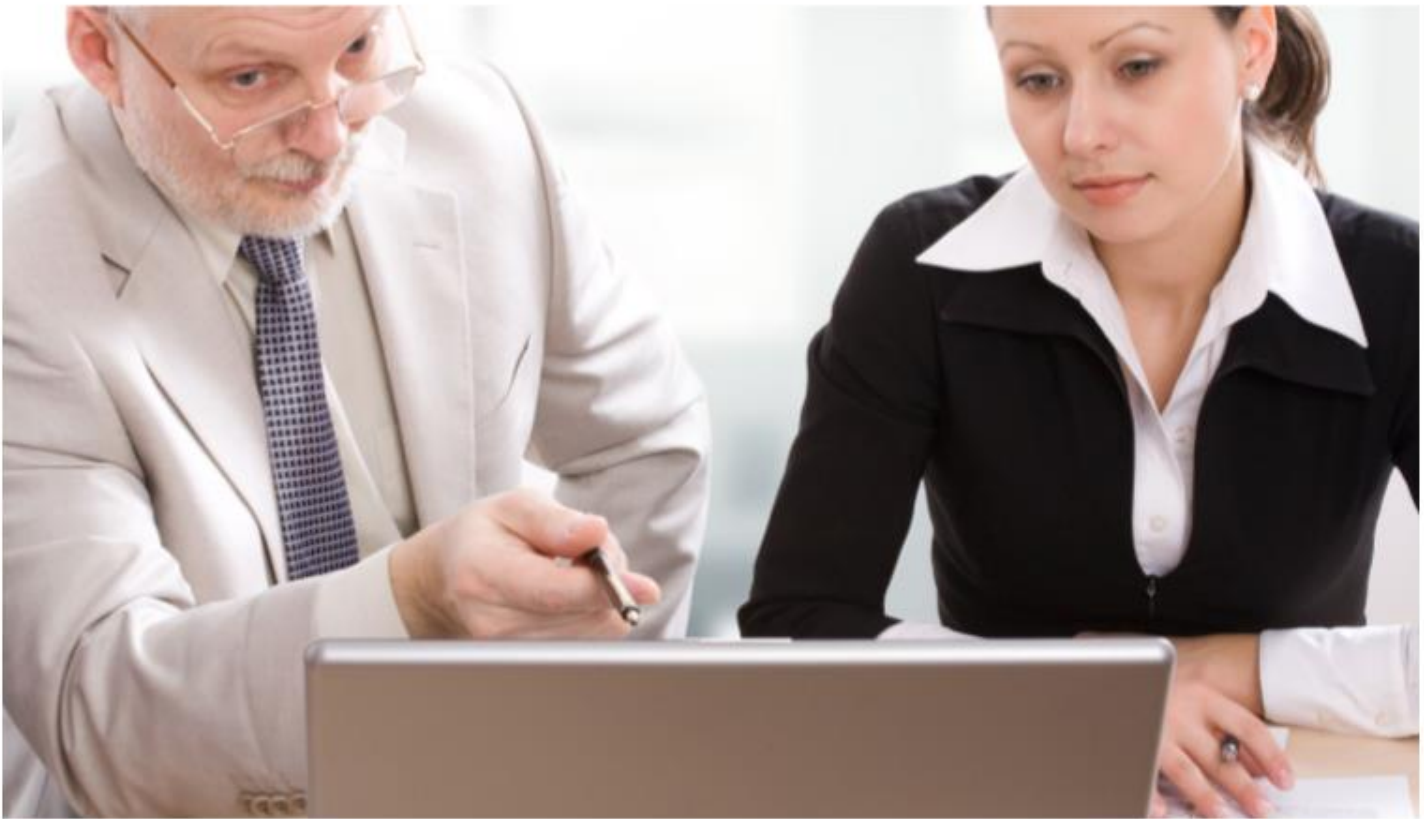


“I Don’t Need a Boss ... I Need a Coach!”



By Dr. Chance T. Eaton

The workforce is changing. According to recent Gallup research (2017), employees' wants and needs are shifting from transactional to transformational. For example, employees used to have greater concern for the *paycheck*, but today they are more concerned about having a *job with purpose*; they used to be satisfied with an *annual review*, but today they want *ongoing conversations and feedback*; they used to focus on *weaknesses*, but today they want to focus on *strengths*; they used to be motivated to have a *good job*, but today it is about having a *good life*.

Finally, employees used to be comfortable with the traditional organizational hierarchy and reporting to a boss; today they don't want a directive and authoritative boss – they want a **coach**. Coaching really is “the Boss 2.0”; its upgrades are centered on purpose, ongoing dialogue, strength-based development and holistic living. In the following article, I will differentiate coaching from other professional practices and dialogue approaches as well as provide a framework for effective coaching, called the GROW performance coaching model.

Is Mentoring the Same as Coaching?

Professionally, mentoring is often confused with coaching, teaching and consulting. Though mentoring may include aspects of these professions, it is unique in that it is more directive than coaching but

less structured than teaching or consulting. The following are brief descriptions of different professional approaches:

Therapists are trained in exploring holistic patterns and themes that relate to and expose psychological distress; treatment is provided over a long period of time.

Counselors are skilled in exploring clearly articulated life challenges and identifying coping skills; treatment is provided over a shorter period of time.

Coaches are likely not subject-matter experts but are skilled in structuring goal work and artistic in building a trusting relationship. Their success is determined by the employee or client's ability to successfully achieve their goals.

Mentors are experienced and seasoned industry veterans working with a protégé (mentee) to provide advice, guidance and career development.

Teachers act as highly specialized subject-matter experts and conduct one-way communication using what are usually researched practices.

Consultants are subject-matter experts that provide solutions to identified challenges, often without a full understanding of the organization's nuances.

It is normal for a trained performance coach to blend several of these approaches into their practice; the important point is to know where you are in the moment and where you belong in the moment and to not go where you aren't trained. I've seen untrained professional coaches unknowingly dip into the counseling role, unearthing personal issues that they aren't trained to deal with. This can result in greater problems and challenges for the employee or coachee. I have also seen untrained coaches actually teach and consult and call their process coaching when, in fact, all they have been doing is offering up their own solutions to the employee's challenges. There is nothing wrong with moving up and down this continuum, depending on what the situation is; but it is extremely important to know where you are in the moment and where you belong in the moment and to not go where you aren't trained.

Coaching Skills: The GROW Model

Since we are seeing a replacement of outdated management models in the workplace, it makes sense that current and future leaders learn the basics of coaching. One method I like to teach is called the GROW performance coaching model. It is a structured method for both goal setting and problem solving. First published in 1992 by John Whitmore, it is one of the most popular coaching models used today.

GROW stands for the following components: Goal, Reality, Obstacles & Options, and Will & Way Forward. The following is a deeper description of each component, along with an example.

Goal: The goal is the end point, the desired outcome, the expectation, the future destination – “what you want.” The best way to fully articulate a goal is to use an already popular goal framework called SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable Stretch, Realistic, Timeline/Milestones) goals. Sorry to throw another acronym and model at you, but this is one of the simplest ways of describing the goal process. In fact, I use the SMART goal framework with every employee and client I work with.

Coach: “So last week we agreed that one of your goals for 2017 would be the creation of an annual department report. Let's review that goal again.”

Employee: “Here is what I have drafted so far. What are your thoughts?”

Specific: Goals should explain exactly which specific actions/behaviors and results the employee will accomplish.

Example of Specific: Develop an annual department report to include meaningful metrics, team accomplishments, risk/opportunity assessment and planning and profitability reports.

Measurable: Goals should be measurable with data, observations or other verifiable information.

Example of Measurable: “Meets Expectations” is a completed annual department report by December 31; “Exceeds Expectations” is “Meets” plus includes five-year metric trending and peer comparisons.

Attainable Stretch: Goals should be attainable yet stretch one's potential so there is a feeling of challenge and psychological tension (eustress). They should create long-term economic value for the company and be significant enough that other team members can clearly articulate what you achieved during the goal period.

Example of Attainable Stretch: The annual department report would create long-term economic value for the company by providing other company employees and stakeholders with greater departmental transparency and recognition, thus allowing for more involvement from the company as a whole. Further, it will allow the department to gain greater perspective on its own value proposition.

Realistic: Goals should be realistic within the organization's resources (current and lacking), time (availability and effects on other job functions) and budget (financial implications).

Example of Realistic: The annual department report will not affect the organization's resources or budget, but it will take a significant amount of time to be developed by team members. The goal is estimated to be a total of 100 hours to develop the first report, which will have to be factored into work schedules.

Timeline/Milestones: Goals should have specific time targets (when it/they begin/end, major milestones and checkpoints along the way).

Example of Timeline/Milestones: January 10 to May 15 for metric research (investigate and identify meaningful metrics for the department); January 1 to January 15 for team accomplishment of log creation (develop accomplishment log to be provided to all team members); January 10 to November 1 for tracking team accomplishments (all employees will log major accomplishments); October 15 and 16 for risk/opportunity assessment (facilitate an off-site assessment and future action planning); November 15 for having the risk/opportunity action plan complete (summarize findings and action planning); July 15 to October 1 for annual report template creation (explore different reporting templates); November 15 for draft annual report compilation (collect all information and begin entering it into the template); December 31 for profitability reports (obtain year-end financials from accounting); January 1 for final annual report submission to CEO.

Reality: This represents the current reality, the state of things – “where you are now.” The reality provides a nice contrast to where a person wants to be.

Coach: “Your goal is well articulated. Can you share with me where you are today?”

Employee: “Everything is on schedule except for the metrics. I’m finding that there is a lot of potential data to collect, and this is putting me a bit behind schedule ... but everything else looks to be on track.”

Obstacles & Options: This explores why the reality is not lining up with the goal – “what is in your way and how you may overcome it.” There are typically issues and challenges that arise, and it is important to spend sufficient time exploring what the obstacles are and, more important, to explore how to go about finding the right solutions.

Coach: “Everything is on track except for the metrics. Tell me more about there being a lot of potential data to collect.”

Employee: “I have identified that there are at least 20 different data points I could collect, and that is way too much to report to the CEO. I need to get this down to four or five that are meaningful to our business.”

Coach: “I can see how four or five would be easier to report and interpret. Are there a few metrics that are jumping out at you right now and seem more significant? Are there possibilities for ratio metrics? That is a common way to interpret complex data.”

Employee: “You know, now that I think of it, there are two metrics that jump out, and I never really thought about ratio metrics. Let me think more about that. You know one thing I haven’t yet done is visit with other specialists in the company. Come to think of it, Stacey in Finance knows my side of the business very well. I wonder if I should go back and pick her brain.”

Will & Way Forward: The final ingredient of GROW coaching involves motivation and inspiration – “how you will get there.” This step is about remembering what the goal is all about to begin with, why it is important and establishing accountability to do what you said you would do.

Coach: “Speaking to Stacey sounds like a good idea. So tell me what your plans are for moving forward.”

Employee: “I’m going to visit with Stacey first.”

Coach: “When are you going to do that?”

Employee: “I’m going to email her right after we are done and share with her what I need. Maybe I’ll even take her out for a coffee to help get the creativity flowing.”

Coach: “That sounds excellent. Let’s meet up again in two weeks for a check-in, and I’m looking forward to seeing if you have identified your four to five metrics for your annual department report. Good job, too, with thinking of other resources. It’s funny how often we get stuck in our own head and forget to look out!”

Performance coaching is nothing more than helping an employee or coachee to think out loud in a structured format so they can reach their goals. The actual work is on the employee or the coachee; the performance coach is simply an objective, caring, inquiring resource to keep an employee on track and unleash their potential for success. Performance coaching can help your employees develop initiative, accountability, responsibility and self-confidence.

By helping an employee develop their own goals, explore the current reality, analyze obstacles and opportunities and, finally, uncover their intrinsic motivation to move forward, you are truly expressing what it means to coach. We need to remember that the workforce is changing and employees have spoken loud and clear. They don’t need a boss ... they need a coach.

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Dr. Chance Eaton has over a decade’s worth of experience working in the field of learning and organizational development. Due to his unique educational and work experiences in finance, psychology, leadership and management, education, noetic sciences and agriculture, Dr. Eaton provides his clients with relevant business solutions grounded in theory and research. To learn more about Dr. Eaton’s services, visit HBSolutionsInternational.com.

