



How well do you respond to other people telling you what to do?

If you're like most other people, my guess is not very well. Even if you ask them for their advice in the first place.

We seem to have this natural resistance to being told what to do, which is part of why feedback is such a challenge, and it's a major reason why coaching is so effective.

Before getting into the mechanics of feedback, learning how to coach and implement coaching skills is going to support you and your staff in the areas of growth, development, and performance management.

Like any term, coaching has a lot of definitions. This one comes from the International Coach Federation, which is the largest certifying body for coaches.

They say coaching is partnering with clients- you can substitute 'staff' here-in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their potential.

It aligns really nicely with what we're trying to do with feedback, which is to help support growth and to do it in a way that you're collaborating with your staff not just telling them what to do as their supervisor but working with them to help them foster that growth.

One of the major principles of coaching is a belief that people are creative, resourceful, and whole. In other fields, this is called a strength-based approach.

As a supervisor, it's a really effective way to work with your staff by finding out what their strengths are and doing everything you can to put them in a position to use those strengths.

Often we spend our time trying to fix what we think is wrong with our staff and that does not produce positive effects. Instead, focusing on where their strengths are and helping them strengthen them even more is going to be much more effective for their growth and their productivity.

Coaching is collaborative as your relationship with your staff should be.

It's an understanding that people are experts in their own lives.

Nobody is going to know someone better than they know themselves, so you can use that in your support of your staff. Tap into their expertise and help them to use that expertise to reach their own goals.

Now there are some things that coaching is accused of that are not true. The first of which is that it's not therapy. You are not a therapist. As a supervisor, it's



not your role to be a therapist for your staff and that's not what coaching is anyway.

It's also not a cure-all. It's a way to support your staff that's going to work in lots of situations with lots of different people, but certainly not with everyone always.

It's not just venting. It's not an aimless time. It's not touchy feely. There is a true and purposeful method of coaching. It's extremely goal-oriented and it's extremely action-oriented. It's not just an opportunity for your staff to vent.

It's not judgmental. One of the most challenging pieces of this for supervisors is it's not solving. When you choose to use coaching with your staff, what you're doing is empowering them to come up with their own solutions. It's not for you to swoop in as the supervisor and make the decision or solve the problem for them.

As a profession, coaching is relatively new. It came about in the early 1980s. The research on it so far has been really promising, especially when it comes to growth. ICF has found that training alone accounts for a 22% increase in that skill or knowledge, but when you combine that with coaching, it jumps all the way up to 88%.

When it comes to Millennials and subsequent generations, they know what coaching is and they want it. In fact Millennials have chosen coaching as the number one thing they're looking for from their supervisors.

They don't want traditional feedback where they are being told what to do. They want to be coached.

And for good reason. It has powerful results: strengthening relationships, fostering growth, empowering staff, and enhancing accountability. All of the things that we want and hope for our staff.

Many of the coaching skills that are common to the practice are skills you're probably using anyway. Let's flesh these out a little bit more in related resources.

Some of the most common skills are things like reflecting, paraphrasing, nonverbal cues- this is your body language and facial expressions, verbal cues, clarifying, empathy always and asking what we call powerful questions.

Powerful questions don't need to be complex. They just need to help your staff come up with some insight or to see things in a new way.

One of the most common and most powerful powerful questions you can ask in coaching is simply- what else?

It encourages people to think a little bit more deeply and to process a little bit more what the discussion is based



One of the questions you won't see come up in coaching is why. When we start questions with why we have this natural defensive reaction to it. Like somebody's questioning us.

That's something you can think about -how you phrase your questions, trying not to use that term why.

Here are some examples of questions you can use that have more of a coaching format versus coming in and solving or accusing or judging.

*How will that help you reach your goal?*

*What made you choose to do it that way?*

*What can you learn from this to help you go forward?*

*How might you do it differently next time?*

*What do you need from me?*

And one of my favorites to ask, especially when there seems to be some miscommunication-

*What am I missing? What do you see that I don't see?*

Hopefully you can see some patterns in these questions.

1) There's no why

2) they're intended to encourage and inspire your staff to think a little deeper and to come up with their own responses and solutions.

Which is when it works best. When they're working on developing a skill, developing themselves, when they're trying to solve a problem, or make a decision. You don't come in and swoop in to tell them what they should do. You create space for them to come up with those answers by themselves.

When it doesn't work is when you're in crisis. It might be literally a physical crisis or something's happening with the work that you do at your organization. You might not have the time or space to sit around and coach people through it. That might be an opportunity where you need to make an executive decision because there's just not time or space for it.

When you're introducing something brand new or something that's really technical, coaching might not be the best way to do that. You might want to use teaching instead or some type of modeling. It might not be appropriate to use coaching in these situations.

There are a lot of models to use in coaching. One of the most common is known as The



GROW model. It's a very natural way to work through making a decision. You may be using this model without the acronym attached to it, without realizing you're using it. Basically how it works is you start with the goal. What are they trying to accomplish?

You help them realize what the reality is. What's the timeline? What resources do they have? What obstacles are in the way?

Then you move on to what options they have in terms of coming to that decision or solving that problem and then ultimately you help them find a way to go forward.

What's their next step in going forward? This is a great model to use when you're coaching or just naturally when you're working through your own challenges.

*What am I trying to accomplish?*

*What's the reality?*

*What are my options?*

*And what are my next steps?*

That's a lot and it's a really quick way to explain coaching. But I wanted to start here before we get into the mechanics of feedback because we're going to be using these coaching principles and skills and strategies throughout.