

How Good Are Your Coaching Skills?

Find Out How to Get the Best From Your People

Frequent coaching can be beneficial for everyone involved. When you coach your team members effectively, you get to know them better, you help them reach their potential, and you develop your own coaching skills. You can also identify issues and challenges before they become major problems.

Many people view coaching as a corrective tool, but it's much more than that. It can be a highly effective way of helping your team members explore their goals and ambitions, and of encouraging positive change within your organization.

This quiz will help you understand and assess your coaching skills, and it provides advice and guidance that you can use to develop your people effectively.

Self-Assessment Questions

For each of the 15 statements below, pick the answer that best describes you from:

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree Nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be), and don't worry if some questions seem to score in the 'wrong direction'. When you are finished, use the mark sheet to work out your score. Then read the guidance that follows.

1. My team members can trust me.
2. I make sure that my coachee understands where he or she is in the coaching process.
3. It's important to get to know my coachee beyond the main subject of the coaching.
4. During coaching, it's important to maintain the hierarchical structure that exists in the workplace.
5. I start with open-ended questions before focusing on specifics.
6. I outline goals clearly and regularly during coaching.
7. It's important to consider my coachee's performance and skills at work, not his emotional state.
8. I like to ask permission before coaching.
9. I always say what I feel.
10. It's more important to ask questions than to listen to answers.
11. Coaching sessions are free and unstructured.
12. I like to ensure that coaching activities take place only within our sessions.
13. I summarize and repeat what my coachee says during a coaching session.
14. I do not share any personal details, as coaching should be strictly professional.
15. I put plenty of focus on internal and external motivation factors.

Score Interpretation

Score	Comment
15-35	You most likely struggle to effect positive change within your team. You may not have developed the rapport necessary to build trust and intimacy with your coachee, or the communication skills to know which questions to ask and how to analyze the answers. Don't worry, there are plenty of tools and tips that you can use to make progress quickly!
36-55	Your coaching skills are good, but there's some room for improvement. Have a look through your answers to identify where you could do better - you may need to focus on one particular area, or make small improvements overall. Perhaps you should aim to listen more closely to the answers your coachee gives, develop your motivation techniques, or build on your interpersonal skills. There is plenty of guidance for you in each of these areas.
56-75	Well done, your coaching skills are probably highly effective! You're likely making a real difference to your team members' development, and people feel comfortable coming to you for guidance. You are personable, emotionally intelligent, and highly organized, with effective goal-setting skills and questioning techniques. However, it's important to continue developing and improving your coaching skills. Read our breakdown below, and identify areas where you can improve still further.

We've based our quiz questions on the six golden rules of coaching, which can be applied to most coaching situations. The six rules are:

1. Coaching is founded on confidentiality and trust.
2. Solutions lie within the coachee.
3. There is no judgment or fixed agenda, but there is an agreed goal.
4. Coaching is about the whole person.
5. The coach and coachee are equal partners.
6. Coaching looks to the future and next actions.

When you follow these rules, your coaching sessions will likely be effective and productive. Let's look at each one in more detail, and explore how it relates to the quiz and to your coaching skills.

Tip:

There are a number of useful coaching models that you can use with your team, including the GROW Model and the POSITIVE Model. Read the Coaching Your Team resources within our Team Management section for more information.

Coaching Is Founded on Confidentiality and Trust

(Questions 1, 9)

Your coaching sessions will only succeed if your coachee can be completely open with you, and if she feels comfortable enough to discuss every aspect of her challenge or goal. She must be able to trust you, so that she is willing to share confidential personal information. Building trust creates rapport and promotes risk taking, which is critical during the coaching process, because it encourages your coachee to try something new or different.

According to former Harvard Business School professor David Maister, you can break trust down into four characteristics: credibility, reliability, intimacy, and care. So, work hard to develop these in your coaching sessions. You can do this by being completely honest and transparent with your coachee, treating him with respect, and making sure that you avoid micromanaging him.

Tact is also important in coaching, as it allows you to be honest, maintain trust, and be sensitive to your coachee's emotions. It also encourages an open and honest relationship. So, make sure that you're sensitive and receptive to how your coachee feels, choose your words carefully, pay attention to your body language, and avoid reacting emotionally to what she says.

Solutions Lie Within the Coachee

(Questions 5, 10, 13)

Many coaching models put the coachee at the center of the process. In other words, you should help him discover the answers for himself by providing the necessary tools. The most important of these are your questions - they encourage him to uncover his goals and find the best way to achieve them.

With practice and experience, you'll begin to understand what the "right" questions are. As a simple rule, you should start by asking your coachee open questions, and then ask more specific and probing ones once she raises an issue or concern. Read our article on questioning techniques to find out how you can use open and closed questions to get the responses you need to help her.

While the questions you ask are vital, it's just as important to listen to your coachee's answers. By doing this, you show him that you're interested in what he has to say. Use active listening to improve your listening skills, and make sure you take notice of how he answers, not just what he says. Is there a lot of emotion attached to his words? If so, what emotion? Pay careful attention to his body language, and make sure that his speech and actions match.

You can also help your coachee relax and show that you understand her words by summarizing and repeating what she says. Use empathic listening and mindful listening to take active listening to a new level, and to help you identify the root cause of her problems, rather than just the symptoms.

Tip:

Generally, people will be much more committed to changing their behavior if they come up with solutions themselves. However, if your coachee is someone you manage, you likely have expertise and insight to share, and it would be wrong not to share it. Just try to do this in a way that allows your coachee to reach the right conclusion.

No Judgment or Fixed Agenda, But Have an Agreed Goal

(Questions 2, 3, 11)

For a coaching session to be effective, you should encourage relaxed conversations and refrain from passing judgment. Avoid following a set pattern, but make sure that your sessions are clear and focused.

Work hard to build rapport with your coachee, so that you can reduce fear and encourage him to relax. Rapport will likely grow naturally from one session to the next, but you should still aim to improve it throughout the process.

An aimless conversation during a coaching session, although enjoyable, may not benefit the coachee or help her achieve her desired outcome. So, make sure that you have a general outline of the goals and objectives for each session, so that you have a solid framework that conversation can flourish within.

Your coachee needs to understand where he is in the coaching process, so that he's aware of his progress and knows his next steps.

Coaching Is About the Whole Person

(Questions 7, 14)

Coaching will likely cover your coachee's professional issues, such as which aspects of her job she'd like to improve, skills that she wants to develop, or ambitions that she holds. However, remember that she's more than just a "human resource." Make sure that you view her as a complete person with specific experiences, frames of reference, emotions, and patterns of behavior.

As part of the process of building trust and rapport, it's helpful to share some personal information with your coachee. For example, reveal something about yourself, such as your goals and aspirations, or some insights into your personal life. Your coachee is unlikely to share his feelings unless he's comfortable around you.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the most important skill you can develop when coaching someone. This is the ability to understand and deal with your own emotions, and those of the people around you. Individuals with a high degree of EI know what they're feeling, what their emotions mean, and how this can affect others. Take our quiz, "How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?," and read our article for more on improving your EI.

Coach and Coachee Are Equal Partners

(Questions 4, 8)

You and your coachee are equal partners during the coaching process, so you should disregard any hierarchical differences that may exist. Your coachee will define the actual issue, while you should use your skills to help her address it. Read our article on informal coaching for managers for more on coaching as an equal.

Coaching Looks to the Future and Next Actions

(Questions 6, 12, 15)

During the coaching process, you may have to analyze your coachee's past to find some answers. However, the most positive coaching sessions also look to the future and conclude with an agreed set of next steps or actions that he should take. This is a core part of the PRACTICE and POSITIVE models of coaching. You can then provide "homework" assignments that encourage structured thinking time between sessions.

It's helpful to check in regularly with your coachee, to make sure that she's happy with your sessions, and that you're covering what she wants to. Use the SMART goals you've set to outline her next steps, and to motivate her to stay on track and remain excited about her goals.

Motivated people enjoy their jobs and perform well, and coaching a motivated member of your team is much easier than trying to work with one who isn't interested. If your coachee is motivated, he'll likely be more positive, excited and aware that he's investing his time in something truly worthwhile. Read our article on team motivation for more on how to improve and maintain your team members' energy levels.

Key Points

According to the golden rules of coaching, there are six important factors that you can use to improve your skills and ensure that your coaching sessions are effective. These are:

1. Coaching is founded on confidentiality and trust.
2. Solutions lie within the coachee.
3. There is no judgment or fixed agenda, but there is an agreed goal.
4. Coaching is about the whole person.
5. The coach and coachee are equal partners.
6. Coaching looks to the future and next actions.

When you do this, you can develop your team members' skills and abilities, and boost their performance.

Use this quiz to help you find out how good your coaching skills are, identify the areas where you excel, and discover where you could improve. By doing this, you can work better with your coachees and develop your team members effectively.

How Good Are Your Coaching Skills?

1. My team members can trust me. *(Coaching Is Founded on Confidentiality and Trust)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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2. I make sure that my coachee understands where he or she is in the coaching process. *(No Judgment or Fixed Agenda, But Have an Agreed Goal)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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3. It's important to get to know my coachee beyond the main subject of the coaching. *(No Judgment or Fixed Agenda, But Have an Agreed Goal)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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4. During coaching, it's important to maintain the hierarchical structure that exists in the workplace. *(Coach and Coachee Are Equal Partners)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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5. I start with open-ended questions before focusing on specifics. *(Solutions Lie Within the Coachee)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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6. I outline goals clearly and regularly during coaching. *(Coaching Looks to the Future and Next Actions)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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7. It's important to consider my coachee's performance and skills at work, not his emotional state. *(Coaching Is About the Whole Person)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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8. I like to ask permission before coaching. *(Coach and Coachee Are Equal Partners)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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9. I always say what I feel. *(Coaching Is Founded on Confidentiality and Trust)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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10. It's more important to ask questions than to listen to answers. *(Solutions Lie Within the Coachee)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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11. Coaching sessions are free and unstructured. *(No Judgment or Fixed Agenda, But Have an Agreed Goal)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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12. I like to ensure that coaching activities take place only within our sessions. *(Coaching Looks to the Future and Next Actions)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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13. I summarize and repeat what my coachee says during a coaching session. *(Solutions Lie Within the Coachee)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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14. I do not share any personal details, as coaching should be strictly professional. *(Coaching Is About the Whole Person)*

Strongly Agree = 1	Agree = 2	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 4	Strongly Disagree = 5
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15. I put plenty of focus on internal and external motivation factors. *(Coaching Looks to the Future and Next Actions)*

Strongly Agree = 5	Agree = 4	Neither Agree Nor Disagree = 3	Disagree = 2	Strongly Disagree = 1
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