

# Key lessons

*“I never cease to be amazed at the power of the coaching process to draw out the skills or talent that was previously hidden within an individual, and which invariably finds a way to solve a problem previously thought unsolvable.” – John Russell, managing director, Harley-Davidson Europe Ltd.*

## Introduction

Coaching is a powerful way to facilitate learning and increase alignment, engagement and performance within a team. However, many managers feel like they don't have time for the slow work of helping others grow. Is it worth it? In the short term, it's certainly quicker to give instructions instead of coaching. But if you invest time in coaching, in the long term your team members will require less direction and you will feel more confident delegating to them. This will ultimately free up your time to focus on tasks only you can accomplish.

When should you coach and how should you start? It's often said that “there's never a bad time for good coaching.” In practice, there are three common situations when coaching makes sense:

### 1. Someone comes to you with an issue.

Coaching is often used reactively, when a peer or team member comes to you with a problem, issue or goal he or she would like your help with. Listen carefully and try to gently guide the discussion using the [GROW model](#) (more on that later).

### 2. Providing general development and growth.

This can be done at any time, either formally or informally. The formal approach is to schedule a one-on-one development discussion with the coachee. Work with them to select a challenge or goal they are currently working on, for example by asking, “*What are some of the challenges you're currently facing?*” or “*Which of your development goals are you currently working on?*” Once you both agree on an issue to focus on, you can guide the discussion using the GROW model.

Alternatively, you can provide informal coaching in small doses throughout the day by asking questions from the GROW model as they naturally fit into everyday workplace conversations. The best approach depends on your own preferences, the coachee's preferences, the company culture, and the kind of issue or goal that you are dealing with. Many managers use both formal and informal coaching.

### 3. Giving feedback for a specific issue.

In this case you can use the principles discussed in the [Giving Feedback](#) topic to guide the discussion, mixed together with open-ended questions following the GROW model.

Here are some key lessons to keep in mind while you go about developing your own coaching skills.

#### 1. Focus on goals rather than problems.

Look ahead at the future. What does your coachee want to accomplish? How will her life be better if she can solve her current challenge? Focus on those benefits rather than the pain of the current problem.

## **2. Ask questions instead of giving advice or instructions.**

Telling someone how to do something is very different from helping the person figure it out. You can guess which approach is more likely to be remembered!

## **3. Listen more than you talk.**

The coachee should be doing 90 percent of the talking. Your role is to actively listen, summarize what you're hearing and ask open-ended questions to stimulate the coachee's thinking.

## **4. Coaching can be used in almost any situation, even if you are not an expert.**

Never studied industrial mining before? You can probably still coach an industrial mining analyst through most of their tough problems if you are able to listen well and ask good questions.

Next: [Coaching, mentoring or training?](#)