

**Reflective Report on Coaching and Mentoring  
Experience in a Powder Coating Company: A  
First-Line Manager's Perspective**

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## **1. Introduction**

This reflective report presents a first-line manager's experience in a powder coating company, which required the skills of a coach and mentor. The report will identify the purpose of coaching and mentoring in an organisational context, analyse one specific coaching model, and reflect on the practice of a coaching and mentoring session with a subordinate. When the section of our team in which the coaches worked was shut down, he was taken on to another department, which we could not physically suit, so I did a course for him through an internal forklift truck (FLT) course. Reflection in professional development contributes to learning from experience (Zachary, 2011). Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, a commonly applied model, covers description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan, a structured form for reflection, is used in this report. Coaching is a developmental process that helps an individual perform well by learning (Whitmore, 2017), whereas mentoring involves long-term career growth through supportive relationships (Garvey and Stokes, 2021). Active listening, empathy, and the ability to give constructive feedback are attributes by which some effective coaches show their abilities (Wilson, 2007). This report is built on the GROW model, of which John Whitmore is the creator, which gives the building blocks for an objective structure for the coaching sessions (Brown and Grant, 2010).

## **2. Critical Evaluation of the Purpose of Coaching and Mentoring within a Workplace**

Industrial working dynamics and environment provide the best grounds for coaching and mentoring, thus enhancing employee performance, motivation and career progression (Grant, 2014). Coaching is often considered a short-term intervention that attempts to change specific skills and performance using the GROW model (Whitmore, 2017). Unlike mentoring, mentoring is a longer relationship, where an experienced individual provides an opportunity to professionally develop a less experienced colleague in career growth. There is a need for both practices when working in organisations so that employees can navigate and maximise their full potential.

The aim of coaching in the workplace is to enable the support for employees in which coaching sessions work as a tool to develop their skills, confidence and job satisfaction (Grant, 2014). Coaching fosters self-reflection, critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving, all needed for a professional's growth and organisational success. Like mentoring, mentoring provides guidance, support and knowledge transfer through which employees acquire the ability to adapt to a new role, develop leadership capabilities and achieve long-term career goals (Haddock-Millar and Tom, 2019). Based on my experience as a coach and a mentor, the aim was to assist the subordinate who experienced this challenge in a new department, with the closure of our section, through an internal forklift truck (FLT) training course to move him up the career ladder.

Although coaching and mentoring are similar, they are different in their approach, frequency and conclusion. Generally, coaching is performance-driven regarding immediate goals and isolated skill improvement, whereas mentoring is development-driven regarding long-term growth and integral development (Peters and Carr, 2013). The coaching sessions are structured and time-bound, using models like GROW to set and achieve specific objectives, whereas the relationship with the mentors is flexible and has no expiry time, so we can discuss anything and anything at any point in time (Zeus, 2000). However, both techniques hinge on key interpersonal skills, including active listening, empathy, effective communication, and trust building, and they can effectively be used only when you establish trust with someone.

Much research tells us that coaches and mentors have organisational benefits for individuals and the organisation (Western, 2012). Employees develop resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving skills through coaching, making them an agile and responsive workforce (Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016). Instead, mentoring boosts employee retention, leadership development, and succession planning, ensuring a stream of skilled and motivated people who can keep the organisation running (Haddock-Millar and Tom, 2019). As a first-line manager, coaching and mentoring helped my subordinate transition into a new role. It was a beneficial practice for my leadership ascent, providing dual benefits to the company environment.

### **3. Critical Analysis of a Specific Model of Coaching**

According to John Whitmore, one of the most used models as a framework for coaching in the workplace is the GROW model. While it is the acronym for Goal, Reality, Options and Will, the sequential stages of a coaching conversation are designed to help people achieve their objectives (Whitmore, 2017). It helps the coaches define goals, evaluate their current situation, discover possible ways out of such problems, and pick one way to move on. As an experienced first-line manager in a powder coating company, I use it in my role to support my sub in the midst of a new role through specific coaching intervention.

The GROW model's positives include simplicity, clarity and flexibility. It can be used to provide a clear structure for goal setting and problem-solving and is thus effective for performance coaching (Brown and Grant 2010). The model promotes active participation from the coaches, with ownership and accountability essential for the change to become sustainable (Whitmore, 2017). Furthermore, the GROW model's questioning and reflective thinking promote the coachee's self-awareness and decision-making skills necessary for professional growth (Garvey and Stokes, 2021). This model enabled the coaching of my subordinate in my coaching session to guide the

subordinate through career development opportunity identification, e.g., an internal forklift truck (FLT) training course, to meet his goals and the organisation's needs.

The GROW model, however, is not perfect. Grant (2014) argues, however, that its structured nature may limit creativity and depth of exploration in coaching conversations in the name of consistently 'doing it right.' Furthermore, the model does not give as much weight to the emotional and psychological aspects of the coachee's experience, which are equally important components in effective coaching (Garvey and Stokes, 2021). Although the GROW model enabled me to set clear goals and concrete action, they also needed additional tools to cope with my coachee's fear and caution toward moving to a new department in my experience as a coach.

In comparison to alternative coaching models such as OSCAR (Outcome, Situation, Choices, Actions, Review), the OSCAR model has a continuous review and feedback framework that makes it suitable for developmental coaching on an ongoing basis (van Nieuwerburgh, Knight and Campbell, 2018). It is similar to the CLEAR (Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Action, Review) model (Zhu et al., 2012), which also tells why contracting and active listening are very important in building trust and relationships in coach supervisory relations. As the GROW model gave a confident base to my coaching practice, it might be good to take elements from these alternative models to make the depth and efficacy of the next coaching interventions within my company.

#### 4. Reflection on Practical 1 – Coaching Session



*Figure 1: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Adeani et al., 2020)*

**Description:** In this reflection, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle approach reflects on my experience as a coach in a first-line manager position of a powder coating company while its department shut down. In the other department, the coaches were subordinates who were transferred because they were physically challenged, and as a result, the role itself was physically demanding. The key objective of this coaching session was to develop career guidance through an internal forklift truck (FLT) training course to enable him to adapt to organisational changes (Zachary, 2011).

**Feelings:** Initially, I felt the coachee's situation, but I also realised what support is required. I knew I was capable of offering advice, but first, I was worried about how effectively I could handle his question with the emotional baggage. In the process, I noted the coaches' anxiety and uncertainty about the future and came to the understanding that this was a good instance to keep composure and reassure the coaches (Wilson, 2007).

**Evaluation:** There were both positives and negatives in the coaching session. The GROW model was a key strength as it gave a structured approach to discussing the coachee's career options. My active listening and open-ended questioning helped to build trust and allowed the coaches to explain his concerns. While challenges were highlighted in the session, such as the coachee's resistance to exploring new career paths, my need to balance empathy with effective coaching

had to be achieved. To overcome these challenges, patience and adaptability were needed (Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016).

**Analysis:** The GROW model was found effective in structuring coaching sessions wherein coaches are guided in goal setting, assessing the current reality, exploring the available options and committing to take action (Whitmore, 2017). It structured the framework to ensure that the session remained focused and productive. Nevertheless, the coachee's emotional aspect of experience transcended the model, and I was called to extend beyond that inclusion. In weighing my thinking of this, I realised that although the GROW model can be very effective as a goal-oriented coaching tool, it may require additional empathetic approaches in emotionally charged situations (Garvey and Stokes, 2021).

**Conclusion:** This coaching experience allowed me to realise that the ideal combination is to integrate strict models with empathetic communication. This encouraged adaptability in coaching, particularly when addressing employees' practical and emotional challenges. It also highlighted how a coach's skills can be improved in the real world through practice and reflection.

**Action Plan:** I will advance my coaching practice by adding more reflective models to cope within the professional and emotional space. In my next sessions, I'll train further in coaching techniques and become more holistic in providing support to employees so that they receive the right assistance for their career development and well-being.

## **5. Reflection on Practical 2 – Mentoring Session**

**Description:** Gibbs' Reflective Cycle is used in this reflection to analyse my experience as a mentor in a powder coating company with a subordinate during the departmental shutdown. To keep an eye out for adaptation opportunities, the coach was transferred to a physically demanding role that was not well suited to his physique. Western (2012) reports that the mentoring session was used to give feedback on his transition and suggested doing internal forklift truck (FLT) training as a viable career choice.

**Feelings:** There was a heavy responsibility for practical and sympathetic support in my role to support the coaches because his physiological limitations increased his stress. I was confident in my mentoring abilities but knew that nothing would be easy when it came to addressing his concerns and motivating him to look at new opportunities. I realised this because the coachee's initial apprehension and uncertainty made me understand that empathy and patience are equally important in the initial session with a coach (Stokes, Fatien Diochon and Otter, 2021).

**Evaluation:** The conversations the coaches opened did allow people to establish a trusting relationship in the session and enabled him to be open and discuss his challenges. Active listening, clarifying questions, and constructive feedback helped me to set up a supportive dialogue. Yet a central problem was to strike the right balance between developing the coachee's limitations and pushing him to further progress. At a session where presenters discussed why feedback had to be done in a 'flexible' way, the topic of mentoring was raised and its flexibility upon feedback on sensitive issues, including sexual orientation, was adequately presented (Zeus, 2000).

**Analysis:** The mentoring process included creating strategies based on the needs of the coaches. In view of his physical capacities and career ambitions, a suggestion was made to train FLT in line with the best practice in a mentoring tradition of targeted individual work (Haddock-Millar and Tom, 2019). The first was helping the coaches to overcome his or her initial reluctance, which entailed encouraging and reassuring the coaches continuously. I thought of that and agreed with Peters and Carr that effective mentoring requires not only practical guidance but also emotional support when mentees cross over heavy career transitions.

**Conclusion:** In this mentoring, we were able to see firsthand the importance of personalised feedback, empathy, and adaptability to the employee's development. The article brought to the forefront the necessity for mentors to offer not only practical advice but also emotional support, especially in challenging situations. This session supports the idea of reciprocal benefits between the mentor and mentee; it is a learning process for both the mentor and the mentee (Zuber-Skerritt and Teare, 2013).

**Action Plan:** I seek to use more comprehensive and detailed feedback and to investigate the more advanced mentoring strategies to improve my future mentoring practice. Future training to strengthen my mentoring skills is in the works in order to be able to offer each employee the addition they may need. Furthermore, I will run reflective practice periodically in order to evaluate and modify my approach to mentoring as my set of skills changes in the fluidity of the workplace.

## **6. Conclusion**

The purpose of this reflective report is to critically reflect on my coaching and mentoring experience as a first-line manager within a powder coating company by supporting a subordinate through an internal forklift truck (FLT) training as a result of the department being shut down. As mentioned by Garvey and Stokes (2021), the key points here are related to the reason why coaching and mentoring can improve employee performance, motivation and career

development. GROW coaching model was critically analysed in terms of the structured technique of goal setting and problem-solving, and it recognises its limitedness in the area of emotional needs (Brown and Grant, 2010). There were many notable things in the report about the importance of effective communication, adaptability, and personalised support in coaching and mentoring. In analysing practical experiences, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, as the provision of a comprehensive framework, was used in professional development (Whitmore, 2017). In this experience, I gained an enriched dimension of the dynamic nature of coaching and mentoring and the need for it to be flexible and empathic since each employee has unique needs to deal with. This experience will inform my future practice as a coach and mentor by encouraging continuous reflection and continuous development. I will integrate the different coaching models and improve my feedback techniques and the support that I can give to employees so as to foster employee growth and organisational success. I will adopt reflective practice as a principle for continuous improvement, a facet of which is to be effective in my role as a coach and mentor in the workplace, as Zhu et al. (2012) claim that reflective practice is integral to the continual process of improvement.

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