



The OSCAR Coaching Model

 **worthlearning**

A practical guide to workplace
coaching

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What is the OSCAR model?

OSCAR is quite simply a framework on which to hang your coaching questions. It provides you with a simple structure that helps to keep the coaching process focused, structured and time effective.

This transition of learning from the training room to the workplace requires some help, and having a simple model at hand that can be quickly mastered is vital. By having such a model the technique can be quickly applied, practice can be gained and confidence built. By applying the learning quickly, the theory will be turned into practice and good habits can be created. There is no better way to establish a positive belief about a new technique than to get instant success using it for the first time. The opposite also applies. A negative belief will arise if the first time you use a new technique it proves difficult or even misfires.

The OSCAR Coaching Model has proved very effective in achieving instant success, helping thousands of managers to embed coaching techniques within their organisations. This instant success creates a positive belief cycle about coaching and thus, over time, their skills grow and great coaches emerge.



Why does it work?

- 1. It's simple**
- 2. It's easy to understand**
- 3. It's common sense**

Managers are using it already – without calling it OSCAR! What do we mean by that? Well, the job of a manager is to maximise the performance of their team. This requires the following steps...



OUTCOME

SITUATION

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

ACTION

REVIEW



Outcome

Managers have to plan for success. This involves thinking about what success would look like. This is sometimes referred to as vision – and it's not that easy to do! By consistently thinking in terms of outcomes this skill is nurtured and can grow. Managers with well-formed outcomes achieve much more than those without clear outcomes. How could you achieve success if you didn't even know what success looked like? The basic starting question of OSCAR is - what is my outcome?

We often ask the participants on our training programmes what has to come before a great answer. The response is always the same – a great question. Outcome questions can be modified to suit the particular preferences of the manager. For example, what do we need to achieve? Whatever language you use the basic question remains the same – what is the outcome?



Outcome

The outcome question is the most powerful question of all. It's the one that aligns all the effort that follows. If we get this wrong failure is instigated from the start. If you think of any great leader, this is the prime skill they possess. They are good at answering this question and inspiring others with their clarity of outcome. People will willingly follow a leader who knows where they are heading. A follower is someone who has decided that they 'like the look' of the outcome of the leader.

Managers, when at their best, already do this step of OSCAR. The model just makes it easier to focus – especially when under the stress of competing priorities and time pressures.



Situation

Managers need a grip on the situation. They need to know what's going on in their team. They need to know what's happening in the organisation and the marketplace within which the organisation competes. They need to know the facts.

Managers come face to face with difficult situations on a daily basis. The greater the clarity they have on the situation the quicker they can see around the hurdles and obstacles that are stopping them achieving their outcomes.

To fully understand the situation in their team they will have to listen to their team members, and understand the situation from the perspective of these individuals. Again, managers when at their best, already do this. OSCAR simply provides an easy-to-follow, repeatable structure that can be applied to any situation.



Choices & Consequences

Managers are decision makers. They make decisions by selecting the best possible choice from the list of choices available to them. The process of creating a list of choices is often referred to as ‘brainstorming’ – a process familiar to most managers already.

The process of deciding which choice is best consists of thinking about the consequences of each choice. The good consequences (pros) and the bad consequences (cons). The choice with the most pros and the least cons is probably the best choice.

Maturity can be defined as having the ability to anticipate the consequences of your choices – in advance of making them.

Of course, this step will be very problematic if there is no clearly defined outcome and no clearly defined situation. The best choice is the one that has the greatest likelihood of helping to achieve the outcome.



Choices & Consequences

Many managers are tasked with 'risk management'. Risk can be defined as anything that might stop the achievement of the outcome. In other words, managers have to consider what negative consequences might happen and make sure steps are put in place to eliminate that risk, or at least reduce its impact.

Again, managers when at their best, already do this. OSCAR simply provides a structure to examine options in an unbiased manner. This has the effect of removing blame and promoting creative problem solving.



Action

Managers need to be action planners. The action plan coordinates the teams efforts on a daily basis. Team members need to know what is expected of them, what they are expected to do and when they are expected to do it.

Successful teams are proactive. In today's competitive markets it is not possible to be passive and achieve success. Action is essential. An organisation that forgets this is doomed to fail.

But blind action is just as bad. Blind action leads to extreme effort in the wrong direction. You may be familiar with the collective exhaustion that happens when an organisation takes massive action to achieve something that no-one was very clear about in the first place?

In other words, action has to follow a process of establishing a clear outcome, a clear situation and having made the best possible choice to achieve that outcome.



Action

Many managers are familiar with action planning. Some even use a favourite system such as a Gantt Chart to visually display the action plan, with colours to denote progress (typically the traffic light system of red, amber and green).

Again, managers, when at their best, already do this. OSCAR simply provides the common sense structure that enables action planning to be specific, focused and prioritised towards achieving the desired results.



Review

Managers need to stop and notice what's going on. They need to review performance. Managers attend meetings (the term 'back to back' meetings is probably very familiar to you). All meetings are reviews. You meet to review whether or not you are on track to achieve your outcome. You meet to share what's happening right now, what the situation is and how this is affecting progress towards your outcome. You meet to make decisions, choices as to how you can increase the likelihood of achieving your outcome. You meet to review what actions have been taken, were they successful or not? What actions have not been taken, and why not? You meet to decide what corrective actions need to be taken to get back on track.

The review step need not be a meeting. It could quite simply be time to reflect and think. The review step of OSCAR is the step where the elements of OSCAR are refined and continually clarified. This step creates an ongoing process.



Review

Although the content of each review will be different, the process is always the same. In other words, we can become masters of the process and use the same process quickly and with finesse during any review.

Again, managers, when at their best, already do this. OSCAR is the framework that ensures that all actions are consistently reviewed and evaluated. This creates more ownership and responsibility within the team.



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OSCAR Example: Flying

During the last eight years, on a weekly basis, we have asked thousands of people if they can give us an example of any success they have seen others achieve, or any success they have achieved themselves that did not follow OSCAR. We are still waiting for an example (apart from random chance success – like winning the lottery!). We have come to believe that OSCAR is a natural process that all successful people follow.

We were given some examples that people thought did not follow OSCAR. In fact, when the examples were analysed they followed OSCAR very precisely! The first example was from a group of engineering managers at British Airways. They took our challenge very seriously and deduced that the act of flying from one destination to another was very successful (almost 100% successful despite the high profile exceptions) – but did not follow OSCAR. A great challenge. But let's see if this very successful activity follows OSCAR, or not. We decided to pick a journey from Cardiff Airport to Hawaii to test out the logic of OSCAR.



OSCAR Example: Flying

Outcome – To get to Hawaii safely and on time. The first thing to recognise here is that every single person on the plane is totally united and committed to the same outcome. There is no obscurity, no uncertainty. No-one on the plane thinks they are going to Majorca! What would your organisation look like if everyone in it was united in trying to achieve the same outcome?

Situation – Everyone is sitting in a 747 on the runway in Cardiff Airport. Everyone's names are known, their passport numbers, and even dietary preference. The plane is full of fuel, food and water. Everyone knows precisely where they are. There is no obscurity, no uncertainty. No-one on the plane thinks they are in Paris!

Choices and Consequences – Now that the pilot knows exactly what the outcome is (the destination) and knows exactly what the situation is (the starting point) a choice has to be made as to the route to be taken to get from the starting point to the destination. We know every choice has a consequence. A consequence can be positive or negative, have an upside or downside, or have pros and cons (consequences can be good or bad – or a mixture of both).



OSCAR Example: Flying

Let's look at the two choices that could be taken for this journey:

The first choice is to travel east. The pros are that it's a well travelled route. But the cons are that it is the longest route and you will definitely have to land to refuel. Landing and refueling is expensive (the greatest use of fuel is taking off) and the airports will charge landing fees. All these charges will need to be passed on to the passengers who will end up having a longer journey, less time at their destination and paying more money.

The second choice is to travel west. The pros are that it's a well travelled route. The trip can be done without stopping and is for that reason quicker and cheaper. There are not really any cons to this route choice.

By considering the above choices and their consequences a wise decision can be made. Based on the assessment of the choices and consequences, the best choice here seems to be west. This has the best probability of achieving the outcome. Nothing is guaranteed – but the best possibility of success is the next best thing to a guarantee.



OSCAR Example: Flying

Actions – Now the pilot and crew are fully agreed on the outcome, the situation and the choice of route, all the crew can spring into massive action. The pilot will press all the buttons required to take the 747 off the ground and proceed west at 35,000 feet.

If the choice of route had been east, an entirely different set of actions would have to happen. An interesting fact about flying is that a plane in the air is off course for most of the time (about 95% of the time). This is because of a number of reasons. Some of the reasons include huge cross winds at altitude, having to avoid certain airspace and having to avoid other planes! So it is extremely interesting that flying is basically 100% successful – but goes off course for nearly 100% of the time!! Why is flying so successful? Well, it's because there is a constant review of whether the actions are moving the plane toward the outcome or not. Reviewing the situation and taking corrective action is critical.



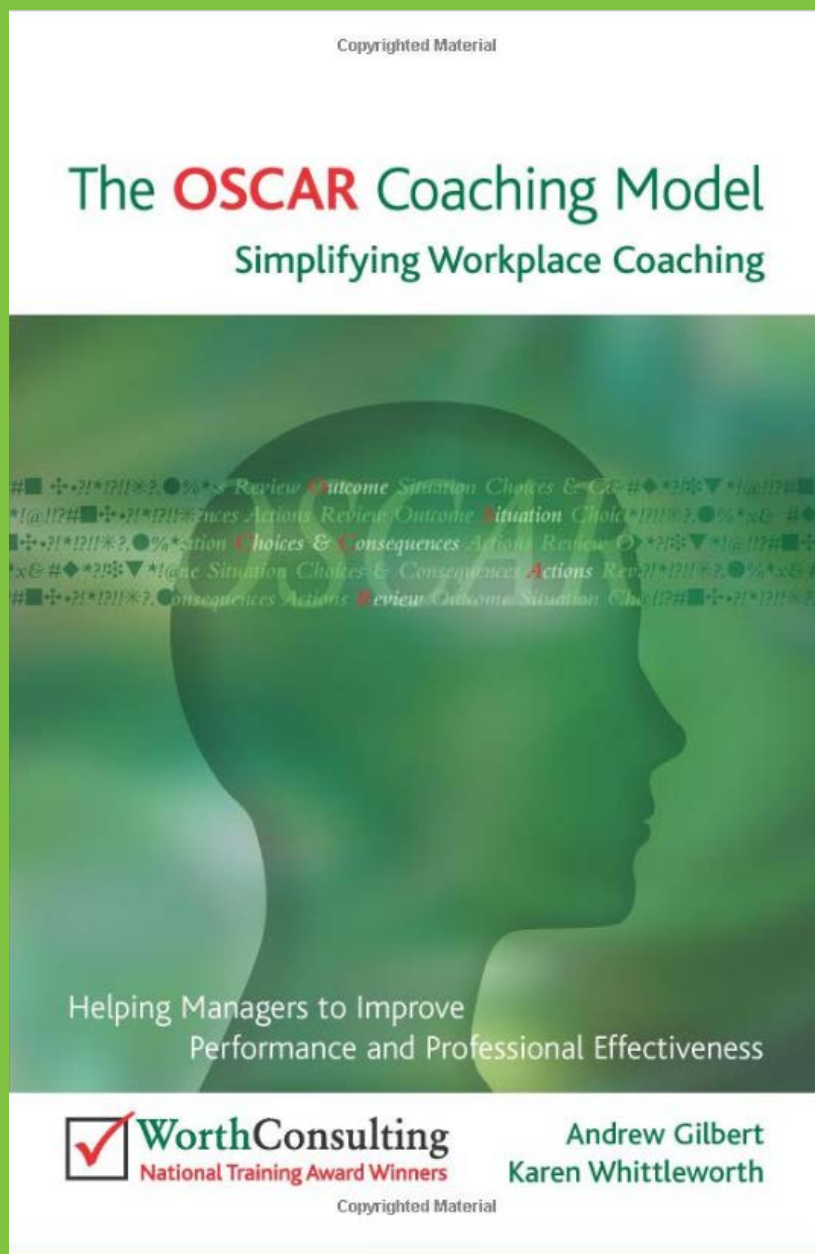
OSCAR Example: Flying

Review – In modern times the review process on a plane is done mainly by computers and satellite positioning. Tiny little corrections can be done without human involvement.

But in earlier times the review was by sight. The pilot would have to look at a compass and the ground to figure out if the plane was still on course. Imagine the pilot looking at the ground and seeing Paris. The pilot would realise that the plane had flown in completely the wrong direction and the outcome was getting further away. The pilot would then realise something had gone wrong and would take corrective action to get back on course.

You can see how the model has to be followed to succeed. Imagine the same example where OSCAR was not followed: No outcome? No situation? How could any choices be made? What consequences could happen? Would the pilot take off and take massive action without knowing where the plane was going to and where it was starting from?

For more on workplace coaching using the OSCAR Model get a copy of our book:



[Click here to go to the full book](#)



Effective coaching questions

Using the OSCAR model to ask effective coaching questions

Here's a brief set of questions to help you get started using the OSCAR Coaching Model:

Questions to ask when opening the coaching session

- What would you like to talk about today?
- What are the issues you'd like to focus on?

Outcome Questions

Short-term:

- What would you like to walk away with from today's session?

Long-term:

- What is your long term outcome around this issue?
- What would success look like/feel like to you?
- How will you know you've achieved it, what will be happening?



Effective coaching questions

Situation Questions

- What is the current situation?
- What do you see as the main issues right now?
- What impact is that having on yourself and others?

Choices & Consequences

Choices:

- What could you do to start to resolve the situation?
- What do you need to do/say to start to resolve the situation?
- What choices do you have?
- What's stopping you?

Consequences:

- What would be the consequences?
- Upsides and downsides?
- How far would that take you towards achieving your outcome?



Effective coaching questions

Actions

- What actions are you going to take?
- What will you do to move yourself forward?
- When will you take them?
- What support will you need?

Review

- How will you review your progress?
- What will you do to check whether your actions are moving you towards your outcome?
- How will you measure your success?
- How will you celebrate your success?
- When will you and I get together to review your progress?

Learn about the OSCAR Model and watch practical demonstrations of workplace coaching with our OSCAR Coaching DVD:

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DVD](#)



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About Worthlearning



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For more than a decade we have been working with organisations to help them build coaching cultures. At Worthlearning our mission is to equip learners with what they need to make a difference in their workplace. We do this by making best-quality learning experiences available and accessible for everyone.

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