

Coaching and Mentoring Skills for the Workplace

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Introduction

Today's fast-paced and ever-changing business environment has rendered the pursuit of continuous growth and development a critical priority for individuals and organisations alike (Fiksel, 2015; Aaker, 2020). Confronted with increasing demands, escalating complexities, and a highly competitive business landscape, it has become essential for organisations to ensure they possess a highly agile workforce equipped with both hard and soft skills in order to sustain their relevance, competitiveness, and overall successful business trajectory (Holbeche, 2015; Garrido-Moreno, Martín-Rojas and García-Morales, 2024).

In this context, coaching and mentoring have emerged as pivotal mechanisms for fostering employee development and organisational resilience (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009). Originating in the field of sports during the 1960s (Passmore, 2016), coaching has evolved to become a widely recognised approach in business and leadership development, which, as defined by Grant (1999), is a "collaborative, solution-focused, results-oriented, and systematic process in which the coach helps enhance the work performance, life experience, self-directed learning, and personal growth of the coachee". As further articulated by Cable and Graham (2018), coaching aims to cultivate self-awareness and facilitate goal-setting by prompting individuals to engage in critical reflection on their perspectives, mindsets, beliefs, and approaches, thereby fostering enduring personal and professional development.

Concurrently, mentoring, a similar yet distinct practice, refers to a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced individual and a less experienced counterpart, wherein the mentor offers guidance, support, and feedback to facilitate the mentee's career progression and personal development (Scandura and Williams, 2001; Day and Allen, 2004). Typically a long-term process, mentoring can be either formally structured within organisational programs or emerge organically based on mutual respect, trust, and the perceived value of the mentor's expertise (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). In this dynamic, the mentor often assumes the role of a role model, demonstrating the behaviours, attitudes, and competencies that the mentee aspires to develop whilst simultaneously helping the mentee build confidence and resilience in their own abilities and successfully realise their full potential (Meyer and Fourie, 2004; Haggard *et al.*, 2011)

As Bajraktarović (2021) asserts, as coaching and mentoring assume increasing significance in propelling individual and organisational growth, developing a comprehensive understanding of their dynamics and underlying principles is crucial for maximising their effectiveness in

optimising performance, fostering resilience, and supporting the successful attainment of long-term developmental and strategic goals. To this end, this report will have its focal point on coaching and mentoring, exploring their distinct yet interconnected roles, the benefits they provide, and the key skills required for their effective implementation. Moreover, the report will engage in an analysis of the GROW model, examining its applicability and impact in structuring and guiding coaching processes. Finally, utilising the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, a reflection on my personal experience as a coach and mentor will be undertaken, allowing for a critical evaluation of my practice and identifying areas for improvement in future sessions. Through its contents, the report will endeavour to deepen the understanding of the roles of coaching and mentoring amid today's dynamic professional environments, highlighting their integral contributions in driving individual growth and building adaptive and high-performing organisations.

Coaching and Mentoring: Commonalities and Differences

In their essence, coaching and mentoring intersect in their overarching goal of fostering individual growth and development (Lancer, 2016). Both practices are centred around enhancing performance, building self-confidence, and facilitating both personal and professional progress (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009). They share a common objective of assisting individuals in unlocking their potential, gaining fresh perspectives, and achieving their goals, ultimately contributing to their overall development and success (Connor and Pokora, 2017; Birknerová *et al.*, 2022). However, the two practices diverge in certain areas, which influence their structure, processes, and long-term impact (Cleary and Horsfall, 2015).

As noted by Passmore (2016), coaching is typically characterised by a more formalised arrangement, typically initiated through a contract or agreed-upon ground rules, and is generally more short-term in nature. Its framework is designed to address specific performance-related issues or skills gaps, with a focus on achieving measurable outcomes within a defined timeframe (Niemes, 2002). Meanwhile, mentoring is based on a more informal, less structured agreement, which fosters a partnership-like relationship that can extend indefinitely (Noe, Greenberger and Wang, 2002). As Garvey, Garvey and Stokes (2021) underscore, the longer-term nature of mentoring supports ongoing career development and personal growth, whereby the mentor provides guidance and expertise to nurture the mentee's ability to navigate professional challenges and opportunities.

Reflecting their differing approaches and objectives, the roles and responsibilities within coaching and mentoring relationships also exhibit variations. In coaching, the coach typically assumes a more directive role, utilising structured methodologies and frameworks to facilitate

the coachee's progression towards self-discovery and goal attainment. The coach engages in asking probing questions, providing targeted feedback, and assisting in the formulation and attainment of these goals, maintaining a neutral, non-judgmental stance that fosters reflection and self-awareness and empowers the coachee to develop autonomous problem-solving capabilities (Vidal-Salazar, Ferrón-Vílchez and Cordón-Pozo, 2012; Birknerová *et al.*, 2022).

In contrast, mentoring relationships typically foster a more holistic and supportive dynamic, with the mentor assuming roles such as guide, advisor, and confidant (Gibson, 2004). In this context, the mentor provides guidance that extends beyond immediate performance or task-oriented goals, offering wisdom based on their experience and providing broader career and personal development support (Clutterbuck, 1999). The mentor-mentee relationship is often characterised by greater closeness and a higher degree of personal engagement, grounded in mutual trust and respect, with this dynamic fostering a deeper connection that facilitates the provision of more nuanced guidance (Noe, Greenberger and Wang, 2002).

Coaching and Mentoring: Benefits

The benefits of coaching and mentoring span across multiple stakeholders within an organisation, positively influencing both individuals and broader organisational structures (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; MacLennan, 2017).

Through coaching, employees are empowered to improve their specific competencies and achieve targeted goals (Yu, 2007). Coaches help individuals set clear objectives, offering feedback and strategies to address performance gaps and maximise potential (Knowles, 2021). This process not only helps employees develop specific technical skills or leadership capabilities but also nurtures their confidence and problem-solving abilities. In this way, coaching promotes continuous professional development and helps employees adapt to evolving organisational needs (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Connor and Pokora, 2017).

Concurrently, mentoring fosters a more holistic approach to employee development, nurturing long-term career growth and personal enrichment. Mentors' guidance facilitates mentees in navigating complex career paths, offering advice rooted in experience while fostering a deeper understanding of the organisation's values, culture, and strategic goals (Schulz, 1995; Allen and Eby, 2007). It encourages broader personal and professional growth, addressing long-term aspirations and helping mentees establish a trajectory for their sustained progression towards self-growth (Burke, McKeen and McKenna, 1994). As Connor and Pokora (2017) underscore, through this process, mentees gain a clearer sense of direction and cultivate essential attributes such as emotional intelligence, resilience, and adaptability, thereby

enhancing their ability to navigate challenges and thrive in dynamic and complex organisational environments.

Together, coaching and mentoring create a comprehensive approach to employee development, complementing each other by addressing both short-term performance goals and long-term career aspirations. They drive enhanced organisational performance, advancing employee capabilities, imbuing them with greater confidence and augmenting their commitment to the organisation's mission and values (Connor and Pokora, 2017; Steeples, 2024).

Moreover, effective coaching and mentoring practices facilitate the establishment of a culture of collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility within the organisation, wherein employees are encouraged to engage openly, contribute ideas, and support each other's growth. This environment fosters a sense of belonging and collective ownership, empowering individuals to work together towards common goals (Connor and Pokora, 2017). As a result, employees are more motivated, committed, and invested in the success of the organisation, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of productivity and innovation (Al Hilali *et al.*, 2020).

As MacLennan (2017) highlights, by promoting continuous learning and development, coaching and mentoring encourage an ongoing process of self-improvement and adaptability, hence rendering both individuals and organisations better equipped to respond to evolving challenges and emerging opportunities. As such, these practices assume a critical role in forging a resilient workforce that is capable of navigating uncertainty, embracing change, and consistently sustaining high levels of performance to ultimately drive organisational competitiveness, growth and long-term success (Garvey, Stokes and Megginson, 2021).

Coaching and Mentoring: Essential Skills

As per, Wedman, and Garvin-Kester (1994), coaching and mentoring skills are not innate and do not come naturally to all. Rather, these skills must be intentionally developed and honed to ascertain one's capacity to effectively guide others. In this context, several skills mark the competence of an effective coach or mentor (Ali, Wahi and Yamat, 2018; van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). These include active listening, which enables a thorough understanding of the coachee's or mentee's perspective (Haneberg, 2016), effective questioning, which drives critical thinking and self-reflection (Luecke, 2004), and the ability to build rapport, all of which collectively contribute to the establishment of a trusting and supportive coaching relationship (Dent and Brent, 2015). In tandem, coaches and mentors also need to be empathetic, adeptly summarising and reflecting on key points to help others unlock limiting beliefs (Lattuca, 2022).

They should remain focused and non-judgemental, providing constructive feedback whilst ensuring confidentiality is maintained to protect the trust within the coaching or mentoring relationship (Renton, 2009; Bachkirova, Spence and Drake, 2016).

The GROW Model

Within the realm of coaching, several frameworks have been developed in pursuit of facilitating goal-setting, personal development, and performance enhancement (Mogonea, 2022). Among them, the GROW model stands out as one of the most widely adopted frameworks, whose applicability spans across various coaching contexts, from leadership development to personal growth and team performance enhancement (Grant, 2022).

The GROW acronym stands for Goal, Reality, Options, and Will (or Way Forward), reflecting the four key stages that mark the coaching process.

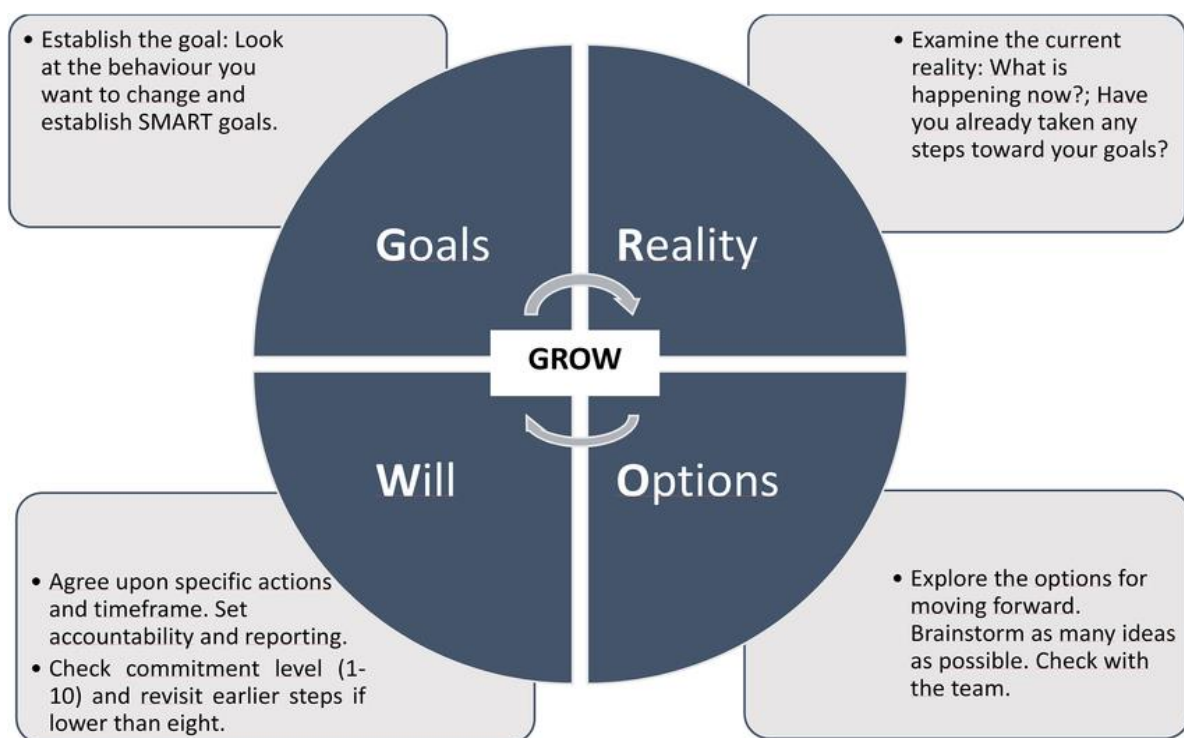


Figure 1. The GROW Model Framework (Costeira *et al.*, 2022)

Goal: In the initial stage of the GROW model, the emphasis is placed on the precise articulation of the coachee's objective (Leach, 2020). As Grant and O'Connor (2022) emphasise, it is crucial to ensure that the goal adheres to the SMART criteria—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, as this provides clarity, structure, and focus, promoting accountability and facilitating a more targeted approach to successful goal attainment.

Reality: Within the second stage of the GROW model, the focus shifts to assessing the current reality faced by the coachee as a means of developing a clear understanding of their starting point (Channell, 2021). This stage is marked by an exploration of the coachee's present circumstances, including both internal and external factors that may influence their progress (Rahman, 2023). The coach encourages the coachee to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, available resources, and potentially impeding obstacles, with this reflection serving as the foundation for the formulation of actionable strategies that can effectively bridge the gap between their current position and their desired outcomes (Panchal and Riddell, 2020).

Options: Upon acquiring a clear understanding of the coachee's current reality, the subsequent stage of the GROW model focuses on exploring the various options available to the coachee. In this phase, the coach guides the coachee in brainstorming and evaluating potential courses of action to move towards their goal, fostering a creative and open-minded approach (Watts and Corrie, 2022). The aim is to support the coachee in exploring a wide array of possibilities, encouraging them to consider diverse strategies and approaches, while refraining from imposing any judgments to ultimately empower them to independently make informed decisions (Passmore, 2020).

Will (or Way Forward): The final stage of the GROW model is aimed at consolidating the insights gained throughout the coaching process and translating them into actionable steps (Channell, 2021). During this phase, the coachee commits to specific actions that will lead them towards achieving their goal, establishing a clear plan of execution (Mogonea, 2022). In this process, the role of the coach is to support the coachee in setting realistic and attainable milestones, ensuring the plan is practical and aligned with the coachee's abilities and resources whilst also fostering a sense of accountability and commitment in adhering to the process (Leach, 2020).

According to Panchal and Riddell (2020), the GROW model's structured approach provides a clear and systematic framework for coaching, ensuring that both the coach and coachee remain focused on key goals and outcomes. Its step-by-step process, whereby each stage builds upon the previous one, helps maintain a logical progression toward actionable solutions, promoting clarity and focus throughout the coaching journey. As further articulated by Othman and Yee (2015), the model's straightforward nature renders it easy to understand and apply, thereby allowing for its effective implementation in diverse coaching contexts.

Still, despite its widespread use and structured framework, the GROW model has also been subject to criticism for certain limitations. For instance, according to Bishop (2015), the model

fails to comprehensively address the deeper, intrinsic factors that may influence coachees' engagement and commitment. To mitigate this limitation, Bishop (2015) proposes an adaptation to the original model, adding the stages of "Engage" and "Routinize" to better address the coachee's underlying motivations and enhance the long-term sustainability of the coaching outcomes.

Meanwhile, Brown and Grant (2010) contend that the GROW model, with its emphasis on individual goal-setting, may not fully account for the complexities and dynamics inherent in group settings, thereby limiting its applicability and effectiveness in such contexts. In pursuit of addressing this shortcoming, they propose an adapted version of the model, referred to as the GROUP model, which introduces an additional stage, "Understand others", designed to address the relational and communicative aspects of group dynamics by encouraging coaches and coachees to consider the viewpoints, motivations, and contributions of all members within a group.

Reflecting on Coaching and Mentoring through Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle constitutes a widely recognised framework for reflective practice, whose structured approach encourages individuals to critically analyse their experiences in order to derive actionable insights (Potter, 2015). As Quinton and Smallbone (2010) note, the five stages of the Gibbs model offer a structured approach to reflecting on past experiences, promoting self-enhancement by prompting individuals to critically assess their actions, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies for future enhancement. As such, the ensuing reflection will leverage the Gibbs model as a means of critically analysing my experiences as a coach and mentor.



Figure 2. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Sibson, 2008)

Description

As part of the learning process for the Coaching and Mentoring Skills for the Workplace module, I collaborated with another student to participate in two distinct sessions: one focusing on coaching and the other on mentoring. In these sessions, I first assumed the role of the coach and subsequently that of the mentor. This experience allowed me to apply theoretical concepts in a real-world setting, providing an opportunity to enhance and refine my coaching and mentoring skills.

Feelings

Reflecting on my emotional state before and during the sessions, I recognise a transition from initial apprehension to increased confidence. At the outset, I experienced a sense of nervousness, having concerns regarding my ability to effectively fulfil the responsibilities of the coaching and mentoring roles. I was uncertain about how well I could facilitate meaningful conversations, provide guidance, and support the coachee/mentee. However, as I engaged in thorough preparation for the sessions, my confidence gradually grew, ultimately enabling me to approach the sessions with a more assured mindset. The successful outcomes of the

sessions further reinforced my confidence and underscored the importance of persistence and resilience in overcoming challenges and uncertainties (Hind, Wilson and Lenssen, 2009).

Evaluation

Overall, my performance during the coaching and mentoring sessions was largely positive, with me having been able to effectively guide the coachee/mentee toward identifying and pursuing the accomplishment of their goals. In following a structured approach, I ensured that the sessions remained focused and goal-oriented, which, as Parsloe and Leedham (2009) emphasise, facilitates productive discussions and encourages the coachee/mentee to critically assess their progress. Moreover, my active listening and usage of relevant questions enabled the coachee/mentee to explore various options and strategies, promoting self-awareness and the formulation of actionable steps for achieving their objectives (David, 2016). Consequently, I successfully fostered a collaborative and supportive environment that empowered the coachee/mentee to take ownership of their learning and development, fostering a sense of autonomy and accountability throughout the coaching and mentoring process. The positive feedback I received from both the coachee/mentee and the module leader further affirmed the effectiveness of my approach and encouraged me to continue refining my current capabilities.

In this context, notably, despite my areas of strength, I also discern areas where I could further refine my approach. For instance, I recognise that my body language could have been more expressive to further reinforce my engagement and empathy. Although I focused on verbal cues and active listening, a more conscious effort to effectively use non-verbal communication could help establish a stronger rapport and make the coachee/mentee feel more supported throughout the session (Lancer, Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2016). In tandem with this, I could also improve my pacing, ensuring that there is ample time for the coachee/mentee to reflect on their thoughts and articulate their concerns without feeling rushed (Brondy and Searby, 2013). By incorporating these adjustments, I believe I can create a more conducive environment for both self-reflection and goal achievement.

Analysis

The two sessions I conducted as a coach and mentor assumed a highly valuable role in consolidating the theoretical knowledge gained throughout the module. The practical application of coaching and mentoring principles and techniques allowed me to deepen my understanding of the dynamics involved in facilitating the growth and development of others, as well as illuminated areas where I could pursue improvement to further bolster my effectiveness as a coach and mentor. Armed with this enhanced insight and having bolstered

my confidence and resilience as a result of the positive feedback received and challenges overcome, I am now better positioned to refine my coaching and mentoring capabilities and drive my personal and professional development.

Action Plan

In pursuit of advancing my coaching and mentoring skills and more effectively applying them in future practices, I will endeavour to build on my areas of strength while also addressing areas for improvement. To this end, I will follow the ensuing SMART-goal-based plan:

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Enhance non-verbal communication skills by more actively using gestures, facial expressions, and posture to convey empathy and engagement.	Seek feedback from coachees/mentees on non-verbal communication effectiveness during five sessions.	The feasibility of this goal is underpinned by its alignment with everyday coaching practices, requiring small yet impactful adjustments.	Non-verbal communication is crucial for building trust and rapport in coaching and mentoring relationships (Allen and Eby, 2007).	Achieve noticeable improvement within 6 weeks.
Improve session pacing to allow coachees/mentees sufficient time for reflection and expression.	Assess pacing effectiveness through feedback and self-reflection after four coaching/mentoring sessions.	This goal can be achieved through practical adjustments, such as using timers and actively monitoring session flow (Brondyk and Searby, 2013).	Proper pacing ensures coachees/mentees feel heard and supported (Clutterbuck, 1999).	Evaluate improvement within 8 weeks.
Deepen understanding of coaching and	Read and summarise at least eight academic	The achievability of this goal is	Broadening my theoretical knowledge will	Notice expanded knowledge

mentoring techniques through targeted reading and practical application.	articles or books on coaching and mentoring techniques.	supported by the availability of resources and my motivation to allocate the pertinent time and effort.	bolster the quality and effectiveness of my coaching and mentoring practices.	within 7 weeks.
Seek constructive feedback from module leaders, peers, or colleagues to identify additional areas for growth.	Collect feedback from at least six sources after engagement in five coaching or mentoring sessions.	The feasibility of this goal is grounded in its reliance on accessible feedback sources and structured communication.	Feedback supports continuous improvement and aligns with developmental goals (David, 2016).	Gather and review feedback over the span of the next 6 weeks.

Conclusion

Amid the contemporary landscape, coaching and mentoring stand as pivotal practices for fostering personal and professional growth, propelling both individuals and organisations toward achieving their strategic goals. This report has explored the distinct yet interconnected roles of coaching and mentoring, emphasising their benefits and the essential skills required for their successful implementation. Furthermore, the paper undertook an examination of the GROW model, providing insights into how this structured framework can effectively guide coaching processes, while also acknowledging its potential limitations. Finally, through the utilisation of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, the report offered a comprehensive reflection on my personal experiences as a coach and mentor, identifying areas of strength and avenues for further development and outlining strategies to enhance my practice in the future.

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Appendix

BMSW 6005	FEEDBACK	Date of Interview:	09.11.2024				
Coach	Yasminka	Coachee	Dimitrichka				
Coaching Model:	SMART /GROW/MMM/RAW		SMART				
The numerical rating system is based on the scale below.							
Scale:	5 – Yes	4 – Most of the time	3 – Some of the time	2 – Almost never	1 – No		
Explained the purpose of the session first.				Rating			
				5	4	3	2
<i>A range of different questionning techniques were used and questions were fairly structured and ell organised .</i>				☒	☐	☐	☐
Is the coach patient? Is He/She giving the coachee time to think through issues and arrive at a conclusion in the way THEY process information? <i>Active listening and full attention to details practiced, the coach was relatively calm and approachable and actively paying attention to details</i>				☒	☐	☐	☐
Is the coach focused on the coachee's agenda? <i>The Coach focus on the coachee's agenda - Time Management skills – 15 minutes were fully utilised with a summary of the conversation provided</i>				☒	☐	☐	☐
<i>The coach was professional and at any time acted as judgmental</i>				☒	☐	☐	☐
Is the coach acting as a problem solver, providing the solutions for the coachee? <i>The coach did not provide solutions but instead planned for a mentoring session without solving problems</i>				☒	☐	☐	☐
Has the SOLER technique been applied Applied				☒	☐	☐	☐
Additional Comments The session was outstanding and very well presented, thank you							