

Reflective Report on Coaching and Mentoring Sessions

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Table of Content

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Critical Evaluation of the Purpose of Coaching and Mentoring in the Workplace.....	3
3. Critical Analysis of a Coaching Model.....	5
4. Reflection on Practical 1 – Coaching Teodora.....	7
5. Reflection on Practical 2 – Mentoring Teodora.....	8
6. Conclusion.....	10
7. References.....	11

Introduction

In any workplace, helping employees grow and develop is essential for both the individual and the company. Two key ways to support this growth are coaching and mentoring, which help people gain confidence, build new skills, and move forward in their careers. This report reflects on my experience coaching and mentoring Teodora, an employee at Screwfix, who was eager to become a supervisor but wasn't sure how to get there.

To make this reflection structured and meaningful, I'll be using **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988)**. This model breaks the process down into six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

Before diving in, it's important to define coaching and mentoring. Coaching is a structured, goal-focused process where a coach helps someone find their own solutions through questioning and self-reflection (Whitmore, 2009). Mentoring, on the other hand, is a long-term, relationship-based approach where a more experienced person shares advice, knowledge, and career guidance (Clutterbuck, 2014).

While both aim to support personal growth, coaching tends to be short-term and structured, while mentoring is more open-ended and advice-driven (Passmore, 2010). A great coach should have skills like active listening, good questioning techniques, and the ability to give constructive feedback (Downey, 2014).

In this report, I'll be exploring the **SMART** coaching model, discussing the role of coaching and mentoring in the workplace, and reflecting on my own experiences with Teodora.

Critical Evaluation of the Purpose of Coaching and Mentoring in the Workplace

1. Career Development and Progression

One of the biggest reasons companies invest in coaching and mentoring is to help employees grow within the organization. Many employees, like Teodora, are eager to move up but may feel stuck or unsure about how to take the next step.

- Coaching helps employees focus on specific goals—for example, preparing for a promotion or developing leadership skills (Whitmore, 2009).
- Mentoring gives long-term career guidance, often from someone who has already walked the path the mentee wants to take (Clutterbuck, 2014).

For Teodora, coaching helped her pinpoint what she needed to work on immediately, like improving her confidence and leadership presence. Mentoring, on the other hand, helped her see the bigger picture, giving her a clearer idea of what being a supervisor really entails and how she could prepare for future challenges.

2. Developing Leadership Skills

Good leadership doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, self-awareness, and continuous learning. Both coaching and mentoring play a key role in shaping future leaders.

- Coaching encourages independent thinking by pushing employees to reflect, analyze, and come up with their own solutions rather than relying on others (Passmore, 2010).
- Mentoring provides real-world wisdom from experienced professionals, offering insight into handling leadership responsibilities, managing teams, and making strategic decisions (Goleman, 2017).

Teodora initially struggled with assertiveness, but through coaching, she learned how to set boundaries, communicate confidently, and make decisions effectively. Her mentor also shared personal experiences about leading a team, handling difficult employees, and staying motivated, which helped her see leadership in a more practical way.

3. Boosting Employee Confidence and Motivation

A lack of confidence can hold employees back from applying for promotions, speaking up in meetings, or taking on new challenges. Coaching and mentoring both help employees build confidence in different ways.

- Coaching helps individuals break down their fears into manageable steps, focusing on strengths and achievements (Downey, 2014).
- Mentoring creates a support system, making employees feel valued, supported, and more motivated to take on challenges (Clutterbuck, 2014).

Teodora, for example, doubted whether she was “supervisor material.” Through coaching, she realized she already had many of the necessary skills but needed to work on confidence and self-belief. Her mentor reinforced this by sharing stories of their own struggles and growth, showing Teodora that leadership is a learning process.

4. Improving Workplace Performance and Productivity

When employees feel supported, they perform better. Coaching and mentoring are powerful tools for improving workplace performance because they provide employees with practical strategies for success.

- Coaching helps employees identify weak spots and develop strategies to improve efficiency and effectiveness (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).
- Mentoring helps employees adapt to workplace culture, understand company expectations, and develop long-term career strategies.

For Teodora, coaching helped her fine-tune her time management and decision-making skills, while mentoring gave her insight into what it takes to succeed in a leadership role.

Coaching vs. Mentoring

While coaching and mentoring both aim to support employee growth, they do so in different ways.

☀️ Aspect	Coaching	Mentoring
🟢 Purpose	<i>Develop specific skills, improve performance</i>	Provide long-term career guidance
🔴 Time Frame	<i>Short-term, structured sessions</i>	Long-term, relationship based support
🔵 Approach	<i>Goal-oriented, focused on achieving specific outcomes</i>	Advice-driven, supports overall career development
🟠 Outcome	<i>Employees develop problem-solving skills and confidence</i>	Employees gain industry knowledge and leadership insights

For Teodora, coaching was essential in defining her immediate steps, while mentoring helped her shape her long-term vision and understand the challenges of leadership.

Why Coaching and Mentoring Matter More Than Ever

“Workplace mentoring not only helps employees acquire new skills but also boosts motivation and job satisfaction” (Allen et al., 2004).

In today’s competitive workplace, companies that invest in coaching and mentoring see higher employee engagement, stronger leadership pipelines, and improved job satisfaction (CIPD, 2021). A well-supported employee is more likely to stay motivated, take initiative, and contribute to the organization’s success.

For Teodora, coaching and mentoring made a huge difference in how she saw herself as a leader. Coaching gave her a structured plan to follow, while mentoring helped her believe in her own potential. Together, they provided the perfect balance of guidance, support, and motivation.

Critical Analysis of a Coaching Model

Coaching works best when there’s a clear structure to follow, and that’s where the SMART model comes in.

This model is widely used because it keeps coaching focused and results-driven (Doran, 1981).

Why SMART Works So Well

One of the biggest reasons SMART is so popular is because it turns big, overwhelming goals into smaller, manageable steps. It’s easy to get discouraged if a goal feels too big or too far away. SMART coaching removes the guesswork, helping employees focus on what they can control right now.

For Teodora, the goal of **"becoming a supervisor"** was too broad at first. By applying SMART, we broke it down into smaller goals, such as:

- ✅ **Specific:** Gain experience in managing daily store operations.
- ✅ **Measurable:** Take on at least two leadership responsibilities per week.
- ✅ **Achievable:** Start by leading team briefings and handling shift planning.
- ✅ **Relevant:** Builds the skills necessary for a supervisor role.
- ✅ **Time-bound:** Aim to be ready for promotion in six months.

This approach transformed her thinking. Instead of just hoping for a promotion, she now had clear, actionable steps to get there.

The Advantages of the SMART Model

1. Clarity and Direction

- Many employees feel stuck because they don't know where to start. SMART breaks a big goal into smaller steps, making it easier to follow.

2. Motivation Through Small Wins

- Seeing progress keeps people motivated. By setting measurable goals, employees get a sense of achievement along the way.

3. Reduces Overwhelm

- Big goals can feel intimidating, but SMART keeps things realistic. Employees focus on what they can do right now, instead of worrying about the bigger picture.

4. Keeps Coaching Structured

- Coaches sometimes struggle to keep conversations focused. SMART provides a clear roadmap, ensuring coaching stays practical and results-driven.

Challenges and Limitations of SMART

Of course, no model is perfect. Here are a few challenges that come with using SMART in coaching:

1. Can Be Too Rigid

- Some goals require flexibility and creativity. SMART's structured approach might not work well for more abstract goals, like improving confidence or leadership style.

2. Not Always Suitable for Long-Term Growth

- SMART is great for short-term goals, but it doesn't always account for long-term career growth. That's why mentoring often complements coaching—it provides a broader perspective.

3. Can Feel Like a Box-Ticking Exercise

- If not used properly, employees may feel like they're just checking off tasks rather than actually growing. The key is to ensure goals remain meaningful and motivating.

When Is SMART Coaching Most Useful?

SMART coaching is especially effective in goal-oriented workplaces, such as sales, retail, and customer service roles, where employees need to focus on specific performance improvements.

For Teodora, SMART was perfect because it gave her a clear game plan. Instead of waiting for a promotion to happen, she took proactive steps to develop the skills needed for leadership.

Reflection on Practical 1 – Coaching Teodora

For this reflection, I'll be using **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988)**. This model is great because it forces you to really think about an experience, not just recall it.

1. Description

I had a coaching session with Teodora, who works at Screwfix and wants to move into a supervisor role. She's been with the company for a while, but she hasn't had leadership experience and wasn't sure how to prove she was ready for a promotion.

We used the SMART coaching model to break down her goal into smaller, achievable steps. She was enthusiastic but unsure about whether she had what it took to be a supervisor. Through questioning and listening, I helped her see what skills she already had and where she needed to improve.

By the end of the session, she had a clear action plan:

- ✓ Take on more responsibilities at work.
- ✓ Start leading team briefings.
- ✓ Build confidence in decision-making.
- ✓ Get feedback from current supervisors.

2. Feelings

At first, I felt a little nervous because I wanted to make sure the session was useful for Teodora. I didn't want to just give her advice—I wanted her to find the answers herself.

As the session progressed, I became more comfortable, especially as Teodora started opening up. She was really engaged, and I could see her getting excited about the plan we were developing. It felt rewarding to see her shift from doubt to confidence.

3. Evaluation

The session with Teodora went well in several ways. I practiced active listening, as it helps the coachee feel heard and understood (Rogers, 2004). I also used powerful questioning instead of giving direct advice, prompting her to think critically about leadership challenges, handling conflicts, and defining what makes a great leader (Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2017). These questions helped her reflect on her strengths and areas for growth. Most importantly, by the end of our session, she had a clear, step-by-step plan instead of just vague ambitions, making her goals feel more achievable.

However, there were some areas for improvement. Time management was an issue—the session ran longer than expected because we got caught up in details. Next time, I'll set a clearer structure from the start. Additionally, while Teodora felt motivated, I noticed she still had doubts about her abilities. Incorporating more positive reinforcement throughout the session could have boosted her confidence further, making her feel even more capable of stepping into a leadership role.

4. Analysis

A big reason the session was successful was because Teodora was already motivated to improve. She just needed guidance and structure. The SMART model worked well because she likes clear steps rather than vague advice.

However, her self-doubt was a challenge. Even when she recognized her strengths, she still seemed unsure about stepping into leadership. This made me realize that coaching isn't just about goal-setting—it's also about mindset shifts. Next time, I'd incorporate confidence-building techniques to help with this.

5. Conclusion

This session showed me that coaching is a mix of strategy and psychology. It's not enough to set a goal—you also need to help the person believe in themselves.

I also learned:

- The power of open-ended questions – Teodora's best insights came from answering deep questions.
- The importance of structured time – I need to manage time better so we cover everything without rushing.
- Coaching is about empowering, not instructing – The best moments were when Teodora realized things on her own rather than me telling her.

6. Action Plan

Next time, I'll use more confidence-building techniques, like positive affirmations and reminders of Teodora's past successes. I'll also set a clearer time structure, outlining key points upfront to stay focused. Lastly, I'll incorporate self-reflection exercises, encouraging Teodora to take ownership of her growth and learning (Cox, 2013).

Reflection on Practical 2 – Mentoring Teodora

1. Description

This time, I wasn't coaching Teodora—I was mentoring her, which is a little different. Instead of focusing on goal-setting and structured action plans, this session was more about guidance, advice, and feedback.

For this mentoring session, I used the Johari Window model, which enhances self-awareness by helping mentees identify blind spots and develop a deeper understanding of how others perceive them (Luft & Ingham, 1955). The model splits knowledge into four areas:

 Johari Window Area	 Description
 Open Area	<i>What Teodora knows about herself and others know too.</i>
 Blind Spot	<i>What others see in Teodora, but she doesn't recognize herself.</i>
 Hidden Area	<i>What Teodora knows about herself but hasn't shared with others.</i>
 Unknown Area	<i>Things neither Teodora nor others have realized yet.</i>

I asked open-ended questions and provided constructive feedback to help Teodora recognize her strengths and areas for improvement. By the end, she had a better understanding of how others see her and some key takeaways for building her leadership skills.

2. Feelings

This session felt different from coaching. Coaching is more about helping someone find their own solutions, whereas mentoring allows for more direct feedback and advice.

I felt a little nervous at first because I didn't want my feedback to come across as too critical. Teodora was already unsure about her leadership potential, so I needed to make sure my feedback was supportive but honest.

As the session went on, I felt more confident, especially when I saw how receptive Teodora was to feedback. She was eager to learn and wanted to know how she could improve, which made the conversation flow naturally.

3. Evaluation

The mentoring session with Teodora had several positives. Using the Johari Window helped her gain new perspectives on herself, making the experience eye-opening. I also ensured balanced feedback, highlighting her strengths first before addressing areas for growth. Most importantly, she felt comfortable opening up, which helped build trust and made the session more meaningful. However, there were challenges—Teodora was initially hesitant about receiving feedback, especially on her blind spots, so I had to reassure her. Additionally, the session sometimes went off-track, as mentoring is more flexible than coaching. Next time, I'd use a clearer structure for better focus.

4. Analysis

Teodora's initial hesitation was completely normal. People often struggle with feedback, especially when it challenges their self-perception. The **Johari Window** was useful here because it helped frame the feedback positively—as a tool for growth rather than criticism.

Another key takeaway was that mentoring works best when trust is already built. Since I had already coached Teodora before, she felt comfortable discussing her strengths and challenges. If I had been mentoring someone new, I might have needed more time to establish rapport.

5. Conclusion

This session taught me that mentoring is just as much about listening as it is about giving advice. Even though Teodora was looking for feedback, it was important to let her process the information and come to her own conclusions.

I also learned:

- Feedback should be a conversation, not a lecture – Encouraging Teodora to reflect on my feedback made it more impactful.
- Self-awareness is key for growth – The Johari Window helped Teodora recognize both her strengths and areas for improvement.
- People react differently to feedback – Some might be eager for it, while others (like Teodora) need more reassurance before they feel comfortable hearing it.

6. Action Plan

“Constructive feedback is most effective when it is balanced, focusing on both strengths and areas for improvement” (Stone & Heen, 2014).

Next time, I'll focus on giving balanced feedback that's both encouraging and confidence-boosting, especially for those who doubt themselves. I'll also use more open-ended questions to help the mentee reflect on their progress in a way that feels empowering. These changes will make my coaching and mentoring more effective.

Conclusion

Looking back at both the coaching and mentoring sessions with Teodora, I've realized just how important these techniques are in helping people grow and develop their careers. Coaching and mentoring might seem similar on the surface, but experiencing both really highlighted their unique strengths.

Coaching is about unlocking potential – It's all about asking the right questions and guiding someone to find their own answers. In Teodora's case, using the SMART model helped her set clear goals and take actionable steps towards a supervisor role.

Mentoring is about offering guidance and perspective – Instead of focusing purely on goals, it's more about sharing insights, giving feedback, and helping someone see themselves more clearly. The Johari Window worked well for Teodora because it allowed her to understand how others see her and how she can grow into leadership.

Overall, coaching and mentoring are powerful tools in the workplace. Whether someone is looking to develop new skills, gain confidence, or take the next step in their career, these techniques can make a huge difference.

For Teodora, both sessions helped her gain clarity and direction. But for me, they also helped develop my own skills as a coach and mentor. This experience has definitely given me a new appreciation for the impact of coaching and mentoring, and I'll be taking these lessons forward in any future leadership or development roles.

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