

Reflective Report on Coaching and Mentoring Experience

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Introduction

This reflective report explores my experiences with coaching and mentoring, focusing on their applications, challenges, and lessons learned. By reflecting on specific scenarios, I aim to evaluate the effectiveness of these developmental approaches and their relevance to workplace contexts. The report employs **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle** (1988), a systematic model that encourages analysing experiences through description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action planning, ensuring a thorough understanding of outcomes and improvements.

Coaching and mentoring are complementary yet distinct practises. Coaching is defined as a goal oriented, short-term process aimed at addressing specific challenges or improving targeted skills (Whitmore, 2017). Mentoring, by contrast, involves a longer-term relationship, where a senior individual supports another's overall growth and career development (Kram, 1985). In this report, coaching focuses on guiding an unprepared employee who was rapidly promoted into a management role, while dealing with personal life struggles. This scenario required addressing performance issues, emotional stress, and leadership readiness.

Effective coaching requires attributes such as empathy, active listening, and the ability to build trust. Coaching often emphasizes immediate performance improvements, while mentoring focuses on broader, holistic development (Passmore, 2021). The mentoring session, focusing on communication and feedback, emphasized fostering trust, patience, and collaboration. Key frameworks, including the GROW model (Whitmore, 2017) and Pendleton's Rule for Feedback (1984), underpinned the analysis of these experiences.

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

Coaching and mentoring serve as strategic tools in the workplace to enhance employee performance, foster leadership development, and support career progression. Coaching focuses on helping individuals identify and achieve specific goals. According to Grant (2017), coaching empowers employees by fostering self-awareness, improving problem solving skills, and driving performance improvements. By addressing immediate challenges, coaching promotes skills acquisition, task efficiency, and confidence in decision-making.

Mentoring, on the other hand, emphasising long term professional and personal development. Kram (1985) states that mentoring facilitates the transfer of knowledge, skills and organisational culture, Which benefits both the mentee and the organization. Through mentoring, employees gain insights into career pathways, leadership competencies and workplace dynamics.

A critical distinction lies in the orientation of the two approaches. Coaching is often directive, addressing short term goals with measurable outcomes, while mentoring is non directive and relational, focusing on holistic growth (Passmore, 2021). However, both methods share a common goal of enhancing individual potential.

Purpose of Coaching

Coaching structured process aimed at improving performance, overcoming challenges and achieving specific goals. And workplace it is particularly valuable during role transitions, such as when employees take on leadership responsibilities or face significant organisational changes. The primary purposes of coaching include:

- performance management: coaching addresses specific skills gaps or performance issues, empowering employees to take ownership of their development (Grant, 2017) in this report's scenario, coaching was used to help an unprepared employee transition into a management role while managing personal stress. Coaching encourages the employee to prioritise leadership skills time management and emotional resilience.
- Leadership development: coaching is critical in developing future leaders, particularly for those thrust into leadership roles without prior preparation. According to Goleman (2000), coaching is one of the six essential leadership styles, characterised by its ability to nurture employees' potential and build leadership competencies. The process enables new managers to develop decision making skills, emotional intelligence, and strategies for team management
- stress and resilience support. Employees often face challenges that span both professional and personal domains. Coaching offers a non-judgmental space for individuals to reflect on these challenges and devise strategies to cope. This aligns with Whitmore's (2017) assertion that coaching empowers individuals to gain clarity and confidence, enabling them to address stressors effectively.

The purpose of mentoring

mentoring takes a broader, a long term approach, focusing on career growth, knowledge transfer, and fostering a supportive relationship. Kram (1985) highlights two primary functions of mentoring:

- career support: mentors provide guidance and career progression helping mentees navigate organisational hierarchies, and identify growth opportunities. This is especially important in industries where informal networks and organisational culture significantly influence career advancement.
- Psychosocial support: mentors act as role models, offering emotional and social support to mentees, which fosters a sense of belonging and confidence. This is especially important in industries where informal networks and organisational culture significantly influence career advancement.

The effectiveness of coaching and mentoring depends on aligning the approach with organisational goals and individual needs. For instance, coaching is suitable for employees facing specific challenges all those requiring immediate intervention. Mentoring, however, is better suited for long term career planning and personal development. Critics argue that mentoring relationships may lack structure, leading to inconsistent outcomes (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2012). Conversely, coaching, while structured, may focus too narrowly on short term objectives, overlooking broader developmental needs.

Thus, the complementary nature of coaching and mentoring ensures their combined application meet diverse workplace challenges. Fostering a culture of continuous improvement and learning organisations can leverage these approaches to sustain high levels of engagement and productivity.

Critical Analysis of the GROW Model

The GROW model, developed by Whitmire (2017), is widely recognised coaching framework that provides a structured approach to problem solving and goal achievement. Its acronym represents 4 stages: Goal, Reality, Options, and Will, forming a logical and sequential process for facilitating meaningful coaching conversations. The model is valued for its clarity and adaptability, making it suitable for a variety of professional and personal development contexts.

- Goal: the first stage focuses on defining the objectives the coachee wants to achieve. These goals should be SMART (specific, measurable, relevant, and time bound)
- Reality: this stage involves a detailed exploration of the coachee's current situation. It encourages self-awareness by examining the obstacles, challenges, and resources affecting their progress. In this case the coachee identified key challenges, such as lacking managerial experience, struggling with delegation and managing personal stressors. By grounding the conversation in the current

reality, the coachee gains a more accurate understanding of their strengths and limitations (Passmore, 2021).

- **Options:** the options stage promotes brainstorming potential solutions. The coach facilitates creative thinking asking open-ended questions like: “What else could you try?” or “What are some alternative ways to approach this issue?” In this scenario, the coachee identified options such as attending leadership training, seeking peer support, and scheduling time for self-care. The stage fosters empowerment by enabling the coachee to take ownership of their development.
- **Will:** the final stage focuses on commitment, where the coachee select the most viable options and create a concrete action plan. This stage ensures accountability by establishing clear steps, timelines, and follow up measures. For instance, the coachee committed to delegating one task per week to team members and scheduling regular one-on-one meetings to improve team communication.

Advantages of the GROW model

The GROW model offers several benefits:

- **simplicity and structure:** it's clear, step by step process provides a logical flow for coaching conversations, making it accessible for both novice and experienced coaches (Whitmore, 2017)
- **empowerment and ownership:** by focusing on the coachee input and ideas, the model fosters self motivation and accountability, encouraging the individual to take ownership of their progress.
- **Adaptability:** the model is versatile and can be applied across diverse contexts, from leadership development to managing personal challenges.

Limitations of the GROW model

Despite its strength, the GROW model has limitations:

- **Over simplicity for complex issues:** critics argue that it's linear structure may oversimplify complex coaching scenarios, particularly those involving deep emotional or psychological challenges (Grant, 2017). In this scenario, the coachee's personal struggles required additional emotional support that extended beyond the scope of the grow framework.
- **Dependence on coachee engagement:** the model assumes a high level of self-awareness and engagement from the coachee. If the coachee lacks clarity, confidence, or motivation, progress can stall. In such cases integrating additional tools like emotional intelligence assessments or psychological framework can provide deeper insights (Goleman, 2000)

Practical Application

In the workplace scenario involving the newly promoted manager, the grow model proved effective in clarifying objectives, identifying challenges and creating actionable steps. For example, the goal setting stage helped coachee articulate their leadership aspirations, while the options stage facilitated brainstorming practical strategies for task delegation and stress management

However, the model's limitations are evident when addressing the coachee's personal struggles. The linear approach did not fully account for the emotional complexities impacting their confidence and performance. In such cases, incorporating additional techniques, such as *Solution-Focused Coaching* or *Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching*, could complement the GROW model by addressing underlying emotional barriers.

Overall, the GROW model's emphasis on goal clarity and clear steps makes it a powerful tool for workplace coaching. Its simplicity and adaptability enable coaches to guide individuals effectively through diverse challenges. However, addressing more complex issues requires flexibility in the integration of complementary approaches to achieve a holistic and impactful coaching experience.

Reflection on Practical 1: Coaching Experience

Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988), This section reflects on my coaching experience with an employee who was promoted prematurely into a management role while managing significant personal struggles. The coaching session aimed to help the individual navigate their new responsibilities, build leadership capabilities and create a balance between personal and professional demands.

- **Description:** the session began with the coachee articulating their struggles, including managing their team effectively, feeling overwhelmed with tasks, and coping with the stress from personal challenges. Using the GROW model (Whitmore, 2017), I structured the session into 4 stages: goal, reality, options, and will. The coachee's goal was to develop key leadership skills, such as delegation and effective communication, while also identifying strategies for managing stress. Through guided questions, I encouraged the coachee to explore their current reality, brainstorm potential solutions, and commit to actionable steps
- **Feelings.** Initially, I felt confident in applying the GROW model, as it provided a clear framework to guide the conversation. However, I was also concerned about addressing the emotional aspects of the coachee's situation without straying too far from the coaching objectives. As the session progressed, I felt a mix of

empathy and uncertainty, particularly when the coachee expressed feelings of inadequacy. While I managed to maintain a supportive environment, I questioned whether I was fully equipped to balance their emotional needs with the session's practical focus.

- **Evaluation:** the session had several strengths. The GROW model provided structure, helping the coachee articulate their goals and identify actionable strategies. My use of open-ended questions fostered a sense of ownership and self-discovery, while active listening and empathetic responses helped build trust. For example, when the coachee mentioned struggling with delegation, I asked "What tasks could you entrust to your team members to free up your time?" This led to valuable insights about their reluctance to delegate through fear of losing control.

However, there were areas for improvement. I spent too much time in the reality stage, exploring the coachee's current situation, which limited the time available to brainstorm and solidify actionable steps during the options and will stages. Additionally, while I maintained a professional tone, I found it challenging to address the coachee's emotional struggles effectively. This highlighted the need for integrating emotional intelligence techniques into my coaching approach.

- **Analysis:** this experience underscored the importance of balancing structure with flexibility in coaching. While the GROW model provided a logical progression, its linear approach did not fully account for the coachee's emotional needs, which were closely connected to their professional challenges. Drawing on Goleman's (2000) work on emotional intelligence, I recognise the need to better validate the coachee's feelings and help them manage emotional stress alongside professional goals. Additionally, the session reinforced the value of preparation, particularly in formulating questions to transition smoothly between GROW stages.
- **Conclusion:** the session demonstrated the importance of empathy, adaptability, and effective questioning in coaching. Although the GROW model facilitated clear goal-setting and problem-solving, addressing the coachee's emotional struggles required a more nuanced approach. This reflection highlighted the need to enhance my coaching toolkit by incorporating emotional intelligence strategies and allocating time more effectively across GROW stages.
- **Action plan.** To improve future coaching sessions, I plan to:
 - Develop skills and emotional intelligence, such as recognising and validating emotions, by completing relevant training or workshops
 - practise time management techniques, such as setting timers for each stage of the GROW model, to ensure balanced discussions

- Enhance my questioning techniques by preparing a list of exploratory and transitional questions that facilitate deeper reflection and smoother progression through the coaching process
- explore additional coaching frameworks such as Solution-focused coaching, to compliment the GROW model and better address emotional complexities

Reflection on Practical 2: Coaching Mentoring

Using Gibbs' Reflective cycle (1988), this section reflects on my mentoring experience with an employee who had been prematurely promoted to management position. This session was a follow up to the coaching intervention, focusing on enhancing the employees communication and feedback skills critical for effective leadership. The mentoring approach provided ongoing developmental support, addressing both professional challenges identified in the coaching session and the employee's emotional growth as they settle into their new role.

- **Description:** the mentoring session aimed to help the employee refine their ability to provide constructive feedback and build stronger team relationships. As a new manager, they expressed concerns about their authority being respected and the fear of alienating team members when addressing performance issues. Following up on the coaching session's focus on leadership readiness and time management, this mentoring session emphasised practical skills and emotional resilience.

During the session, I introduced Pendleton's Rules for Feedback (1984), a framework that stresses balance, specificity, and collaboration and feedback delivery. We worked on breaking down real life situation where the employee needed to give constructive feedback, identifying areas where they could apply the principles of starting with positives, addressing issues constructively, and concluding with actionable suggestions and encouragement.

Additionally I revisited the goals set during the coaching session to assess progress and adjust strategies. The employee acknowledged improvements in their ability to delegate tasks and prioritise responsibilities, but identified feedback delivery as an ongoing challenge requiring targeted attention.

- **Feelings:** at the start of the session, I felt more confident that during the coaching session, as this was a continuation of our developmental work, and the employee had already begun showing progress. However, I also felt some apprehension about whether the mentoring approach would effectively address the deeper emotional barriers that limited their confidence in communicating

with their team. As the session progressed I was encouraged by the employee active participation, particularly their willingness to engage in role-playing and reflect on their feedback style.

- **Evaluation:** the session had several strengths first mentoring approach allowed for deeper, more relational focus, compared to the structured, goal oriented coaching session. By providing a supportive space for reflection and skill development, the employee felt more at ease in discussing their concerns. Second, the revising the goals set during the coaching session provided continuity and accountability, reinforcing the employee progress.
- **Analysis:** this experience reinforced the importance of tailoring mentoring to address both practical and emotional development. While Pendleton's Rules provided a clear structure for feedback delivery, the employee's lingering hesitations about asserting authority suggested a need for deeper emotional engagement. Emotional intelligence techniques, such as helping them mentee recognise and manage their emotions, could have complemented the mentoring process (Goleman, 2000). Additionally, mentoring provided an opportunity to model effective feedback techniques, demonstrating how to balance empathy with constructive criticism
- **Conclusion:** the mentoring session emphasised the value of trust and specificity in feedback delivery. While my approach for start engagement incorporating more practical elements would improve outcomes
- **action plan:** in future sessions I plan to include scenario based exercises to reinforce theoretical concepts. Additionally, I aim to provide mentees with tangible resources, as feedback templates, to support their application of skills.

Conclusion

this reflective report has examined my coaching and mentoring experiences, focusing on their purposes, practical applications, and lessons learned. Coaching was employed to support an unprepared employee transitioning into a management role while managing personal challenges. The GROW model facilitated goal setting and problem solving, although integrating emotional intelligence techniques could enhance its effectiveness in similar scenarios. Mentoring, in contrast, focused on improving communication and feedback delivery, leveraging structured frameworks like Pendleton's Rules

key insights included the importance of empathy, adaptability, and effective communication in both coaching and mentoring. Their reflections emphasised the need for balancing structure with flexibility, particularly when addressing complex challenges.

Moving forward, these experiences will inform my workplace practise by refining my ability integrate emotional and practical support. By combining coaching and mentoring strategically, I aim to foster a culture of growth and resilience empowering individuals overcome challenges and achieve their potential.

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