

The GROW Model

The GROW model is one of the most popular and widely used models of coaching. Developed by Sir John Whitmore, author of *Coaching for Performance*, the model is based on two central premises: that coaching should underlie all management practice, and that when individuals take responsibility for their behaviour and actions, their commitment increases, their performance improves and a culture of blame within the organisation is avoided. Here we take a look at the GROW model and how it can be used to structure a successful coaching conversation.



The model

Within the GROW model framework there are four key areas which the coach and coachee should explore in order: goal, reality, options and will/way forward. At each stage, the coach should ask relevant **open questions** (these generally can't be answered with a simple yes or no and usually start with 'how', 'what', or 'why'). These questions encourage the coachee to reflect deeply, achieve a better understanding of the situation in question, and start to identify some potential solutions.

Stage one: Goal

At this stage, the coach's questions are designed to help the coachee establish an appropriate objective. The coach might ask some or all of the following questions (they might also ask some additional open questions of their own based on the coachee's responses):

- What do you want to achieve?
- How do you want your career to progress?
- How do you feel this process will help you?
- What do you think it will take for this process to be a success?

Stage two: Reality

This stage of the coaching conversation is all about helping the coachee to understand their present situation and to think about their objective in the context of the real world. Questions from the coach might include:

- What resources might help you achieve your objective?
- What challenges or obstacles do expect to encounter?
- How will you overcome them?

Stage three: Options

Next, the coach helps the coachee explore the options that are available to them. Questions might include:

- How could you improve this situation?
- What options are available to you?
- What are the pros and cons of each option?

Stage four: Will/way forward

The final aspect of the GROW framework is for the coach to ask the coachee questions that will help them identify some action points and establish their willingness to put these actions into practice and move towards their goal. Questions might include:

- How do you intend to put your chosen options into action?
- What additional support might you need?
- How will achieving your objective make you feel?
- What does achieving your goal mean to you?

Summary

The GROW model provides a simple but effective framework for coaches to help coachees establish an objective, achieve a deeper understanding of the situation they face, explore the options that are available to them and identify an appropriate way forward. By asking open questions at each stage of the framework, the coach facilitates, rather than directs, the conversation and, in doing so, enables the coachee to arrive at their own conclusions.

While the GROW model can be extremely helpful in formal coaching conversations, leaders and managers can also adopt the principles of open questioning when coaching team members on an informal basis. The checklist and audio interview using the button at the top of this page provide further guidance on putting the GROW model into practice in both formal and informal situations.

[1] Sir John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance: GROWing People, Performance and Purpose* (Nicholas Brealey, 2002).