

## Ten Top Tips For Coaching Success – Part 2

### 6. Use short, open questions.

In everyday conversation we have a tendency to ask predominantly closed questions. This can be a hard habit to break but it can be done! Become more aware of how you engage in conversations and practise using many more open questions. A solicitor client of mine once said that when he started using more open questions to draw out information from his clients, he automatically served them better by giving advice based on a broader understanding of the situation. Remember to keep your questions short, open and non-judgemental. For example:

- “How badly do you want to achieve this?”
- “What action have you taken so far?”
- “What has stopped you from doing more?”
- “What concerns you most?”
- “If you could do anything, what would you do?”
- “What have you decided to do?”

### 7. Find opportunities to praise.

‘Targeted praise’ is encouraged in coaching. Consider the difference between, “You’ve hit the nail on the head; that’s the best idea you could have come up with!” versus “It’s brilliant that you’ve come up with so many ideas”. The former could be construed as judgemental i.e. the coachee has finally voiced the solution that you had in mind all along, while the latter is non-judgemental praise and doesn’t indicate that you have any pre-conceived solution in your own mind.

### 8. Take full advantage of the coachee being there in front of you.

Help them deal with their topic as thoroughly as possible during the actual conversation. This is much more helpful (and increases the likelihood of action being taken) than if you were to accept vague thoughts that subsequently need to be converted into a clear action plan in their own time and without your help. You’re adding much more value if you ask questions **during** the session such as:

- “How are you going to approach that?”
- “Who exactly do you need to speak to?”
- “When will you arrange the meeting?”
- “What’s the first action you’ll take once you leave this room?”

### 9. Get the coachee to write down their action plan and summarise it out loud to you.

The purpose of this is to strengthen the coachee’s commitment to implement their plan by increasing their ownership. Don’t be tempted to summarise it for them. Likewise, ensure

they are equally involved in the process by noting down their actions for their own record. In this case, the less you do for them the more responsibility they'll take! Just remember to give encouragement by expressing your confidence in them to achieve their plan and your interest in following up their progress with them at a later date. If you arrange regular 'Supervision' sessions, as do many of my Local Authority clients, these are perfect opportunities to review progress.

### **10. Focus on the relationship.**

Using a coaching model really helps to keep conversations on track, focused and constructive, however, rapport, trust, listening, empathy etc. are vital. A robotic application of a model does not work! Get to grips with whatever coaching model you use through lots of practice. This will build your confidence and allow you to concentrate further on the 'added extras' that make such a difference to the process and the outcome.

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