THE GROW COACHING MODEL

Introduction
This guide has been developed out of the My Development Initiative, and is designed to support employees and managers who are interested in understanding more about Coaching. The aim of this guide is to provide employees and managers with the information they require to both determine whether Coaching will suit their operational and development needs, and to undertake Coaching using this document as a guide.

The GROW Coaching model was devised by Sir John Whitmore and described in his book Coaching For Performance. It is one of the most common coaching models used in business and it offers a way of structuring coaching sessions to facilitate a balanced discussion:

- **GOAL** – defining what you want to achieve
- **REALITY** – exploring the current situation, relevant history and future trends
- **OPTIONS** – coming up with new ideas for reaching the goal
- **WHAT/WHEN/WHO** – deciding on a concrete plan of action

In practice, since most coaching is driven by questions, this means that different types of question are used at each stage:

- **GOAL** – questions to define the goal as clearly as possible and also to evoke an emotional response
  
  *Eg.*
  What do you want to achieve? What will be different when you achieve it? What’s important about this for you?
  
  - **REALITY** – questions to elicit specific details of the situation and context
  
  *Eg.*
  What is happening now? Who is involved? What is their outcome? What is likely to happen in future?
  
  - **OPTIONS** – open-ended questions to facilitate creative thinking
  
  *Eg.*
  What could you do? What ideas can you bring in from past successes? What haven’t you tried yet?
  
  - **WHAT/WHEN/WHO/HOW** – focused questions to get an agreement to specific actions and criteria for success
Eg.
What will you do? When will you do it? Who do you need to involve? How will you go about it? When should you see results?

The GROW Coaching model offers an excellent framework for structuring a coaching session. It is particularly useful for early career employees because it helps them to clarify and crystallise matters and it keep the session on track.

Coaching can begin at any of the four stages of the GROW model. A coachee might begin by telling you about something he/she wants to achieve (Goal), a current problem (Reality), a new idea for improving things (Options) or by outlining an action plan (What). As a coach, it’s usually a good idea to follow the coachee’s lead initially by asking a few questions to elicit more detail - then move onto the other steps.

Because coaching doesn’t always (or even usually) begin with GOALS, then move smoothly on to REALITY then OPTIONS then the WHAT/WHEN/WHO/HOW of an action plan, the GROW model is really more of a ‘guide’ rather than a rigid sequence of steps to be followed.

Coaches might try starting a coaching conversation by asking a GOAL-focused question (e.g. “So what do you want to achieve?”) as a way of setting the tone for the discussion. If the coachee replies with a description of a problem (REALITY), just listen and probe for a few details then as soon as possible return to GOALS, to keep the conversation focused.

On the other hand, if a coachee is full of ideas and enthusiasm (GOALS, OPTIONS), coaches can help them maintain that whilst asking questions about the REALITY and getting a commitment to specific action (WHAT/WHEN/WHO/HOW).

Coaching is about getting the balance between the 4 GROW stages and the GROW model requires the coach to be skilful in the art of using questioning to generate AWARENESS and RESPONSIBILITY for the coachee.

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