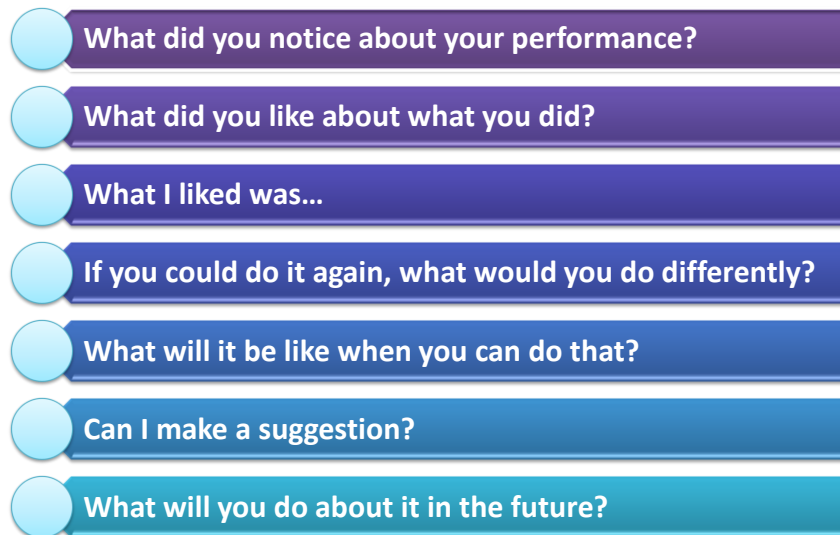




THE COACHING FEEDBACK MODEL



The Coaching Feedback Model is about asking people to give themselves the feedback instead of, or before, giving yours.

The Model is based on the framework of traditional coaching model GROW, which is described below. The questions above and below are a guide to the type of question which should be asked in any situation. You should make the model your own, tailoring the words and phrasing to suit your particular situation.

The keys to the model are:

- Ask for people's feedback on themselves before you give yours. In a situation such as a staff appraisal, people may come up with the feedback you intended to give all by themselves, which is more powerful for them and more comfortable for you.
- Ensure that you ask people to give themselves some positive feedback, so that they recognise their strengths. We tend to focus on what we are not doing well rather than what we are good at. When they hear feedback, people often only take on board the

negatives. If they have come up with their positive feedback themselves, they are more likely to integrate it.

- Ensure that you give authentic positive feedback where it is deserved.
- Give people the chance to tell you what they would do differently if they could do it again.

Use of the Goal and Reality questions helps people to get clear about an issue and raises their energy to deal with it.

Setting up expectations in advance is key to not having to give negative, or learning feedback at all.

Here is a more detailed framework of how the Coaching Feedback Model embraces the GROW model:



General Feedback Guidelines

Many managers have difficulty with feedback: common pitfalls are giving only negative feedback and no positive, or no feedback at all, or not setting out clear expectations in the first place.

We are mostly extremely sensitive to criticism and often our own worst critics; yet it is worth bearing in mind that feedback is usually offered as well-meaning gift. However inappropriate, it is likely to arise from generosity and a desire to help rather than malice. Whether positive or negative, we may think it is one of the following:

1. Undeserved
2. Of no use to us
3. Of great value to us

In all cases, the best response is a simple *'thank you'*. Giving feedback on feedback to justify one's own position can make both parties feel uncomfortable. It is of course acceptable to ask for more detail if you feel it will be useful to you.

Feedback is most effective when it is:

Specific

These statements are too vague to mean much to the recipient:

That was great
That didn't really work for me

These statements give the recipient useful pointers:

You were effective during the meeting when you made the analogy between our team and a pride of lions.
Your report gives some good facts and figures and I think it would benefit from being more succinct.

Personal

Present the feedback as coming from yourself personally, not as a judgement from the world in general. You are entitled to your own opinion but presenting yourself as an authority may be resented. In these statements the speaker is taking ownership of the opinions:

I think you did that well
What would have worked better for me is ...

Accentuating the positive

We tend to exaggerate the negative feedback we receive and sometimes do not take positive feedback on board at all. Make sure that some of the feedback you give is positive, although it must always be authentic, and that the receiver has actually taken it on board. Remember that people may go away having heard only the negative feedback and beating themselves up all the way. Building people's self belief is the essence of good coaching and gives them energy and confidence to change.

What I liked was...
Can I suggest something you might do differently?
You are always so good at ...

Invited

People will be more receptive to your feedback if they have asked for it. When you are asked, you must tell the truth, while always remembering to accentuate the positive.

Self directed

Coaching feedback means asking people to come up with their feedback themselves. Use reflecting and clarifying to affirm what they have said. Ask specific questions if you think they have left anything out, and be sure to congratulate them where they feel they have succeeded. If they focus too much on the negatives, ask them directly what they liked about what they did. After they have answered, they are likely to ask for your own opinion, which gives you an opportunity to give your feedback at a point when they are ready to listen to it.

These two statements, asked consecutively, encourage people to be kind to themselves. Looking at the positive first will build their confidence as they recognise their strengths. This in turn will help them to be honest about what they need to work on:

What did you like about what you did?

If you could do it again, what would you do differently?

See below for the framework of the Coaching Feedback Model.

Appropriate

Negative feedback is best given in private to the person concerned. There are times and places for giving positive feedback. These are the parameters:

1. As often as you can
2. Only when it is deserved
3. Immediately
4. In public if the recipient is not shy and if it will not belittle the contribution of other members of the team
5. Direct to the recipient
6. To the recipient's boss

Surveys show that people value satisfaction in their work even more than money. One of the best ways of raising employees' satisfaction is to tell them specifically the difference they have made and where they are good at their jobs, every day and as often as is appropriate.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ as often as deserved ♦ be authentic ♦ in public, with caution ♦ tell the boss 	ALL FEEDBACK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ immediately ♦ direct to the person ♦ be specific ♦ From I
LEARNING FEEDBACK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ only when helpful ♦ for learning not blame ♦ in private ♦ emphasise the positive 	RECEIVING FEEDBACK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ thank the giver ♦ take ownership ♦ no feedback on feedback



Set up expectations in advance

The GROW Model

The original coaching model is **GROW**, developed by the pioneer of coaching Sir John Whitmore and his team:



The sequence emphasises the solution focus of coaching and breaks down like this:

Goal

Identifying what we want to achieve puts us on the path to achieving it and focuses on the solution rather than the problem.

The **Goal** section of **GROW** is addressed at the beginning of each session and referred to again from time to time to keep the focus moving forward, especially if the coachee becomes stuck.

Some **Goal** questions are:

What would you like to achieve out of this session?
What would you like to have happen?
What elements would you like to see in place in xx months' time?
What do you really want?
How would you like it to be?
Can you say what you want in one sentence?
How would you like it to be in an ideal world?
How will you know when you have arrived there?

Reality

This is an exploration of where the coachee is right now. It is essential to spend time here so that the coachee can find out what needs to be brought out and looked at. Once the coachee has everything in view, he or she will perceive greater clarity and different perspectives, so that ideas will occur naturally on how to move forward.

Some useful questions here are:

How important is this to you?
If an ideal situation is 10, what number are you at now?
Where in your body do you experience the anxiety?
How do you feel about this?
What impact is this having on you?
What's on your shoulders?
What are you doing that's working towards your goal?
What are you doing that is getting in the way of your goal?

One of the key discoveries made by Tim Gallwey (who, through his sports coaching, developed the techniques upon which performance coaching was founded as described in Chapter 1) was that if he asked coachees to 'watch the ball' they tended to miss it. This is because such a question brings with it all the baggage of fear of failure, memory of having failed before and the uncomfortable subject of whether the player is good enough.

Gallwey found, however, that if he rephrased the question by asking the player to count how many times the ball spun as it went over the net, or how many centimetres above the net it cleared, the hit rate improved significantly. Neither of these measurements matters in terms of technique, but this type of question is simply a request for information and does not carry the 'baggage' mentioned above. This allowed the whole of

the player's concentration to be on the ball, which resulted in it being far more likely to be hit. In addition, Gallwey theorised that the second process taps into a player's non-rational mind and harnesses his or her intuition.

Our coaching **Reality** questions listed above are the equivalent of Gallwey's questions about the trajectory of the ball, but applied to someone's life or work. It does not make a great deal of difference which **Reality** questions you choose; by asking a number of them you are inviting coachees to look at their current situations from different angles and perspectives and it is this that will bring them new insight and awareness, which will in turn deliver clarity on how to move forward.

Thoroughly exploring the coachee's **Reality** is one of the keys to good coaching and it is the part that is usually missing from everyday conversation. We tend to start by describing what was happening in the past (which you will notice does not even feature in our **GROW** model) and go straight from there to what we will do. For example, from "He said this, so I said that," to "I'm going to resign". Notice that the speaker has taken all the anger inherent in the first statement through to the future. Asking **Reality** questions enables people to step back from their emotions, see the situation clearly, and decide how to move on from a new place of clarity instead.

It feels awkward at first to explore **Reality** and new coaches tend to fall back on questions about the past, asking for options or, unfortunately, offering solutions instead. Until the **Reality** questions become automatic, which they will in time, it pays to keep a list close to you while coaching to ensure you have asked enough before moving on to **Options**.

When do you know it is time to move on? The coachee will often do it for you, as new awareness starts to arise. **Reality** questions help people dig deeper into their own awareness, until they reach a bedrock of understanding and gain an insight they have not had before. They will show signs of energy, for instance, lightness in the voice, brighter eyes, a smile and more upright posture. That is the time to ask them about options, if they have not started offering some already.

Note that we are exploring the present, not what has happened in the past, and that we are focusing on what the situation means to the coachee more than on the facts. We are not asking questions to find out what has happened, but to find out what impact it is having on the coachee. When the coachee reaches a new insight or level of understanding, it pays to explore the new **Reality**, with the same types of questions, to embed new insights, and to revisit the **Goal**. Possibly a new **Goal** or direction will emerge. Then the '**Options**' and '**Will**' sequence start again.

When the coachee reaches a new insight, these **Reality** questions are useful:

What does that tell you about yourself?
What do you know now that you did not know before?
What is your insight about that?
What have you learned about yourself from that?
Where else could you use this in your life?

Options

When the coachee is ready, as described above, you can ask some **Options** questions:

What are your options?

What else?

What has worked in the past?

If there were something else, what would it be?

Is there anything else?

Notice that these questions are almost all open. Keep asking open questions until the coachee runs out of options. Once it seems that the list is complete, ask the closed question 'is there anything else?' to finalise the process.

If the coachee gets stuck, simply go back the **Reality** or **Goal** questions. Repeating back to the coachee the key words which they came up with during the **Reality** questions almost always opens up some new clarity, which will in turn enable some **Options** to surface.

It helps also to keep throwing the coachee's focus forward by referring the **Goal** statements they have made. Asking **Options** questions when the coachee is stuck is the least helpful thing you can do; it is the mental equivalent of Tim Gallwey asking people to 'watch the ball'; they would dearly love to hit it, but they can't see any way of improving their shot. This is because the question goes straight to the conscious mind, whereas exploring the **Reality** and the **Goal** addresses the issue obliquely and allows the subconscious mind to come into play.

There is also a left brain/right brain communication going on here; by asking coachees what they want to achieve, and what their dreams are, you are engaging the right side of the brain which deals with imagination and creativity. Throwing in a left brain question like '*What can you do about it?*' engages both sides of the brain in giving the answer, double the normal resources that we have when sitting around getting stumped by the question, '*What on earth do I do now?*'.

However, I can not stress enough how important it is to spend time in the **Reality** set of questions, and to return to them throughout the session. The dreams and the solutions delivered by the **Goal** and **Options** questions are often blocked by fear, anxiety and confusion which the coachee has not faced. The **Reality** section is where monsters are brought out from the shadows; then they can be dealt with, that is if they have not simply dissolved merely through having been identified.

Will

'**Will**' covers what action coachees will take. The first three sections of **GROW** create awareness; once everything is in view, coachees obtain more clarity and they are naturally motivated to take responsibility for changing what they can see:

Some **Will** questions might be:

What do you want to do about that?

Is that an action you can commit to?

What could you do to become more committed?

Could you do more?
Is that a stretch for you?
When will you do that?
How many?
How much?
How often?
Who will you talk to?
What else you could you do?

Many coachees come to coaching precisely because they do not know what it is they want to achieve. Modern life offers abundant options in terms of career, investment, where to live, who with and how to spend ones leisure time. It also carries with it some limitations such as holding down a job, paying the mortgage, getting the children into a decent school and surviving divorce or bereavement. The awareness delivered by the initial '**Reality**' questions helps coachees to focus their energy where it will be most beneficial during the **Options** and **Will** stages.

Note that the components of **GROW** do not necessarily follow that order; an effective coaching conversation moves about between the elements as required.

Quite frequently it is useful to spend more of the time in **Reality** because Reality questions create awareness. When people seem to be stuck, ask a Reality questions. When people seem to be wallowing in their problems, ask a Goal Question. Throwing the focus forward to the solution creates energy and shrinks the problem. A good way of remembering this is:

Goal = EnerGy
Reality = Clarity

Options is about brainstorming all possibilities, not just the ones that appeal to the coachee. If you ask an options question and the person cannot think of any, you need to ask some more Reality and Goal questions to free up some new insights.

Do not try to plan or be aware of which category your questions are in while you are asking them – all of your focus should be on what will benefit the coachee and move the coachee forward. Dissect what you have done after the conversation and, in time, you will find that you choose the most appropriate part of **GROW** quite naturally.

About the author:

International speaker, writer and broadcaster Carol Wilson is Managing Director of Performance Coach Training, on the Global Advisory Panel at the Association for Coaching, and former AC Head of Professional Standards & Excellence. A cross-cultural expert, she designs and delivers programmes to create coaching cultures for corporate and public sector organisations all over the world and was nominated for the AC Awards 'Influence in Coaching' and 'Impact in Coaching'.

www.performancecoachtraining.com
www.associationforcoaching.com
www.cleancoaching.com
+44(0)207 022 4923
carolwilson@performancecoachtraining.com