

## The Coach Approach

### Prompts and Questions for Extraordinary Leaders

If you want to improve individual and team effectiveness, ask good questions!

You can prompt employees to give you more information at any time in the conversation by asking them to “tell you more” about their current situation.

#### Tell me about:

- ❖ How the new project is coming along
- ❖ What is on your mind
- ❖ Tell me more about what you just said
- ❖ How I can best assist you today
- ❖ What I can do to help
- ❖ How we can work together most efficiently
- ❖ Your thoughts regarding... (your performance/the project/how we can do better next time)
- ❖ Any solutions or brainstorm ideas you are working on
- ❖ Your top source of stress
- ❖ Your biggest obstacle or challenge
- ❖ What you truly enjoy doing
- ❖ What you would change about your current job or position
- ❖ The stress in your life and how it is affecting you

### Extraordinary Leaders Ask POWERFUL Questions

If you find that your conversations with employees frequently go off course or become emotional, here are some suggestions to improve your interactions:

1. Define the purpose of the meeting
  - a. am I talking with this employee?
  - b. What information do I need from him/her?
  - c. What issues must be addressed during the conversation?
2. Prepare for the meeting by writing down the key points that you wish to address
3. Keep your emotions in check
4. Establish ground rules for the discussion:
  - a. No raised voices
  - b. No blame
  - c. Let the employee explain

- d. Begin and end the discussion from a place of mutual respect (and a belief that the employee’s intentions are good)
- e. Have a few questions ready for your discussion.
- f. Listen.

Your goal is to keep the conversation focused on the topic at hand so that every conversation results in some form of progress—whether it’s determining where the person (or project) is stuck or off course, clarifying timelines, or clarifying next steps.

**Quick tip:**

To promote forward action, ask “how” and “what” questions, rather than “why” questions.

**Determine Where the Employee stands on an issue**

- ❖ What do you think?
- ❖ What would you recommend to the group?
- ❖ If you had it your way, what would it be?
- ❖ What does that mean for you?
- ❖ Are you feeling ready to take a risk?
- ❖ Is now the time to get started?
- ❖ Would you be willing to rethink that?
- ❖ Are you open to another idea?
- ❖ May I share an insight?
- ❖ Will you try a slightly new approach?
- ❖ How are you feeling about your business/life/career/goals/challenges?

**Discover Strengths and Talents (These questions are useful when discussing an employee’s continued development and long-range career plans.)**

- ❖ What are you most proud of?
- ❖ What is your greatest strength? How are you putting it to use?
- ❖ What motivates you to succeed?
- ❖ How can you share that strength with the group?
- ❖ Are you ready to stretch yourself in that area further?

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**The following groups of questions should be used only if a high degree of trust exists between you and the employee.**

**Your goal as a leader is to give the employee space to acknowledge his/her concerns and to help him/her push through it. Extraordinary leaders build a reputation for challenging their direct reports while also supporting them in learning and growing. As you develop your coaching skills, the goal is to talk less and listen more. Meaningful growth happens when the employee has the space to work through a problem and come up with his/her own solution—with you as a guide. It increases employee engagement and makes your job easier as employees learn to take responsibility for their performance and effectiveness.**

### **Find out about fears and challenges**

- ❖ What is your most pressing concern right now?
- ❖ What has stopped you in the past?
- ❖ What is the biggest challenge you have?
- ❖ What are you wasting your time with?

### **Help people determine how they can eliminate problems**

- ❖ What have you learned from that?
- ❖ What is draining your energy that you need to get eliminate for good?
- ❖ What do you typically do to stop yourself or get in your own way?
- ❖ Have you ever been here before? If so, what have you done to help yourself?
- ❖ How can you reduce the stress on yourself?
- ❖ Who can you delegate that to?
- ❖ What do you need to clear out of your life now?

### **Encourage action**

- ❖ What steps (actions) can you take this week?
- ❖ What could you do to make the greatest impact?
- ❖ How might you stretch yourself?
- ❖ How could you improve upon that system/approach?
- ❖ How will you handle this?
- ❖ How have you approached this kind of situation in the past?
- ❖ If you could change any one thing now, what would it be?
- ❖ Are you ready to make it happen today?

### **Coaching for success**

- ❖ What is the biggest change you are willing to make starting now?
- ❖ What are you expecting from me?
- ❖ How can I best support you?
- ❖ What is the most empowering and helpful thing I can do or say to you right now?
- ❖ What do you want me to do or not do if you get behind on our goals?

**NEXT STEPS—**

1. Go through the questions and give thought to how they might inspire and support your own challenging situations.
2. Select one question for each member of your team that you think is the most pertinent.
3. Find an opportunity to pose the question to the employee and see what develops.
4. Keep working with these questions and feel free to add to them.