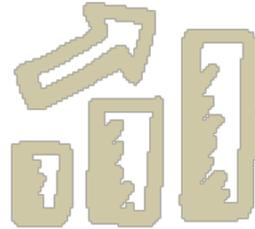

CFS GUIDE



COACH YOUR SALES TEAM TO SUCCESS

A Simple Model for
Providing Feedback & Coaching

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Introduction

As a sales manager, your key responsibility is to coach your team to success. But it can be hard to figure out how to provide that coaching – and if your salespeople aren't receptive to your coaching, it will fall on deaf ears.

Follow this simple model to coach your team.

Permission to Coach

Listen

Ask Their Thoughts

Your Goals

Back to Them & Their Goals

Ask Clarifying Questions

Coach

Key Takeaways

Permission to Coach

One of the most important parts of coaching can be the easiest to forget. If your salesperson isn't ready to be coached, you won't make an impact.

Find a nonthreatening way to engage your team member by addressing the topic at hand and confirming that it is an issue that matters to them, to you, or to both of you. If you agree that it does matter, ask them if they are open to suggestions, feedback, input, or coaching.

You're ready to move forward when you've confirmed that your employee is open to coaching.

You can sometimes skip this step if your salesperson proactively approaches you with a concern or is actively soliciting advice and/or coaching from you.

Sample Approaches

- "Rob, I overheard you during your meeting with a prospect earlier and had some observations. Are you open to coaching?"
- "Jane, I wanted to talk to you about negotiation. Is this an issue where you'd like to improve?" (if yes) "Can I provide you some feedback on observations I've made?"
- "Hey Matt, can I get some coaching when you have a minute about Jim's attitude toward my client? We don't seem to be aligned on our goals."
- "Shelly, are you open to some coaching about your progress?"

"The best teacher is the one who suggests rather than dogmatizes and inspires his listener with the wish to teach himself."

— Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Listen

It's tempting to jump right into coaching, but that's not the best approach. Even if your salesperson has given you permission to coach, it's important to approach the coaching session with a listening mindset.

When we talk about listening, it can be hard to know exactly what that means. We're not just talking about "closing your mouth and opening your ears," as your mother might have told you.



Effective listening involves both listening *to* and listening *for*.

Listening *to* your team member is just that – actively listening to what he or she is saying. This means you aren't planning what you will say next, providing feedback, or interrupting, but instead allowing them to talk. It can be helpful to take notes, as well as to check in and ensure that you understand what you heard.

Listening *for* is a little more complicated. This involves processing what he or she is saying, as well as what it means or what is being left unsaid.

When listening *for*, you can uncover additional opportunities to help your team member that aren't apparent. It's important to evenly balance between listening *to* and listening *for*.

“When people talk, listen completely.
Most people never listen.”

– Ernest Hemingway

Ask Their Thoughts

As you begin the coaching session, keeping listening in mind, ask your employee to share their thoughts.

This can often start with venting, as the employee shares his or her frustrations and concerns. Sometimes this helps to filter out unimportant thoughts and better focus the coaching session.

By hearing your team member's thoughts, you get an opportunity to learn their perspective and how serious they are about resolving the issue. You can thus evaluate how receptive they will be to your feedback.

Don't get into the details of the situation in this step; instead, focus on feelings.

Sample Questions

- "Sue, how do you feel that meeting went?"
- "Bill, what are your concerns about your product knowledge?"
- "Tracy, how do you feel about how your career is progressing?"
- "Mark, what makes you think that you and Lisa are not on the same page?"

“Listening is a positive act:
you have to put yourself out to do it.”

– *David Hockney*

Your Goals

It's important to make sure you communicate the results you are looking for. What are you looking to get out of this coaching session?

If the issue is related to behavior, identify a specific behavioral change you want the employee to make. If the challenge is related to skill or knowledge, what would you like them to learn?

In a more general sense, you may want to coach and mentor someone toward a promotion or a next step in their career.

This doesn't need to be a long part of the conversation, just enough to make sure they understand your desired outcome.

Sample Statements

- "Joe, I'd like to work with you to develop a successful strategy for running these meetings."
- "Sarah, I want to see you fully comfortable presenting our offering."
- "Mike, I'd like to help you grow into an account management role."
- "Maria, my goal is to foster teamwork, so I'm happy to help you and anyone else to work better together."

**"Setting goals is the first step
in turning the invisible into the visible."**

– Tony Robbins

Back to Them & Their Goals

You may have noticed that there is quite a bit of switching back and forth in your coaching conversation. After communicating your goals for the meeting, turn it right back around and ask your employee to share their goals.

It's very important that you understand why you're coaching someone, so it's relevant to his or her growth.

Make sure your employee understands that you are partnering with them to achieve their goals.



“People with goals succeed because they know where they're going.”

– *Earl Nightingale*

Ask Clarifying Questions

It's important to get a clear understanding about the situation before you begin coaching.

Asking a series of clarifying questions continues to focus on the specific concerns and gives you the information you need to provide the best advice.

Keep your questions specific, but ask them in an open-ended way. The more information you get, the more effectively you can coach.

Make sure you ask about both the facts of the situation and how your employee feels about it.

Sample Questions

- "Brad, what specifically has Patrick done or not done that's made it difficult for you to work together?"
- "Debra, can you describe how your cold calls have been going? Where are you struggling?"
- "Adam, tell me what you've noticed lately in your meetings. Where are you getting stuck?"
- "Becky, what trends have you noticed in your presentations?"

"Probably my best quality as a coach is that I ask a lot of challenging questions and let the person come up with the answer."

– Phil Dixon

Coach

Now is the time to apply all the information you've collected in the previous steps and actually start coaching!

When coaching, make sure you include the following three elements:

1. Give examples.
2. Tell stories.
3. Demonstrate empathy.

Start with the end in mind – what do you want the employee to learn or do? Guide them to discover this on their own.

One effective practice is to tell a story about yourself or someone else in a similar situation, then ask if the employee can see how they might apply the story to their situation. If so, ask them to describe their solution.

If not, provide a little more input, but make sure you don't give them your final conclusion. It's important that they take ownership of the solution.

“I never cease to be amazed at the power of the coaching process to draw out the skills or talent that was previously hidden within an individual, and which invariably finds a way to solve a problem previously thought unsolvable.”

– John Russell

Key Takeaways

As you finish your coaching session, summarize any key takeaways.

Agree on specific actions and timeframes, and schedule time to follow up with the employee to assess progress.

One strategy that can be especially effective is to ask the *employee* to summarize the next steps – this confirms that you are on the same page.



“Most ‘impossible’ goals can be met simply by breaking them down into bite size chunks, writing them down, believing them, and then going full speed ahead as if they were routine.”

– Don Lancaster

Conclusion

Coaching is a key responsibility of management, and we hope you find this simple model useful as you coach your sales team to success!

“What makes a good coach?
Complete dedication.”

– *George Halas*