

FEEDBACK, SELF-ASSESSMENT, AND GOAL-SETTING

By Jean Strosinski, PCC

Sixth article of six in the series: *Coaching for Performance*

Coaching is not only a tool to be used for raising awareness of issues, breaking down barriers to performance, skill enhancement, or team development. Coaching is often used for giving feedback and assessment of self and teams (Coaching for Performance, 1996).

John Whitmore (1996) discusses five levels of **feedback**:

- (1) Personalized criticism
- (2) Judgmental comment
- (3) Information generating no ownership
- (4) Value judgments with some performer ownership
- (5) Detailed, non-judgmental description

In the first three levels, another person is generating feedback, usually in the form of statements. The fourth level of feedback is value judgments provided by the performer in response to questions asked by another. It is the fifth level that provides the greater benefits to learning. Here, detailed and non-judgmental descriptions of the results are provided by the performer. The performer provides the feedback by rethinking the event, becoming involved, and evaluating personal work. Awareness kicks in, self-reliance evolves, and the performer can now begin to own responsibility for actions taken and results.

Learning and performance improvement requires feedback from ourselves and others. Feedback will explain both the results of the action and the action process itself, focusing on accuracy and providing a detailed description of results. Essentially, feedback relates to past events. We learn as much from actions taken that produce wrong results, as we learn from those producing right results.

Feedback from a coach requires an understanding of what a performer needs in order to perform a task well. A coach uses

effective questioning, statements, or actions to help identify that need. An effective coach supports the performer to plan, rethink, and refocus. Praise, also a form of feedback, is a tool used to develop self-reliance, when given in the spirit of generosity, genuineness and judiciousness. Ultimately, feedback from the performer, is the desired result. Anticipating a response to a coach's question allows for a refocus of action, causes a heightened awareness in the present and actions to take on a responsibility in planning performance. "Generating high quality relevant feedback, as far as possible from within rather than from experts is essential for continuous improvement, at work, in sport and in all aspects of life." (Whitmore, 1996)

Self-assessment, the self providing feedback to the self, helps to counter the negative effects of criticism, often a result of feedback. A self-assessment is the most productive form of assessment, where ratings on skills and qualities by others are better regarded as feedback. The act of self-assessing supports responsibility where it is needed most for effective action and improvement of performance.

An example from Whitmore (1996) illustrates this well. I begin with a list of my strengths required for the skills and qualities to perform my job well. To the right of this list I will rate myself under the headings of two columns. Under the first heading, "As I Am Now" I will assess each skill and quality as it represents the reality of how I perform today. Under the second heading, "Target," I will raise my self-awareness, and begin to identify a realistic, specific, measurable, positive and challenging goal. This is personal coaching focused on self-awareness and taking responsibility.

Goal-setting is often a natural outcome of self-assessments. It offers the performer a

place to list all the options, characteristics desired, ask the “how” and “will” questions and generate an action plan. In the example above, reframing the strengths to a higher rating in the “target” column for the desired skills and qualities is more creative and allows for greater success to achieve the goals of the performer.

In the workplace, goal-setting is often overlooked for the simplest of interactions. Coaching for performance starts with a goal for any session or meeting. These are the meetings that identify performance expectations, progress checks, quality checks, performance reviews, etc. It is important to remember that the performer can always have input as to what they want or must have from a session or meeting, whether they initiated the meeting or not. Prior to joining any meeting, a simple plan is to answer the following 3 questions – What must I say? What must I do or demonstrate? and What must I receive before this meeting ends?

Whitmore (1996) identifies two types of goals, the “End Goal” and the “Performance Goal.” The “End Goal” is the final objective, the inspiration, and is seldom within your absolute control. The “Performance Goal” is the specification on how you will achieve your end goal. The “End Goals” are supported by the “Performance Goals” and at the foundation of both is the process. The role of the coach - coach for ownership of “End” and “Performance” goals, create the value of choice and responsibility from the performer.

“Coaching offers personal control. A primary cause of stress in the work place is a lack of personal control.” (Whitmore, 1996) So....how will you manage your feedback, self-assessments and goal-setting to regain a personal control in your work place, your home, and your life?

The goal for this series of articles using Coaching For Performance by John Whitmore was to highlight the positive impact of coaching in the workplace. We all have the opportunity to coach our fellow workers, as well as ourselves. Are we up to the personal challenge of creating a workplace that shines with performers and performance that speaks to excellence?

Jean Strosinski is a personal and business coach and owner of Constructive Choices, Inc. Jean works with individuals and corporations to help them achieve high performance supported by constructive choices. Jean can be reached by phone at 505.286.4079 or email at jean@constructivechoices.com.