Coaching for Innovation: Tools and Techniques for Encouraging New Ideas in the Workplace
By Cristina Bianchi and Maureen Steele
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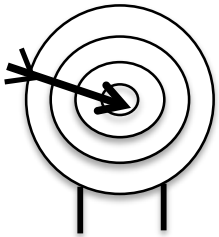
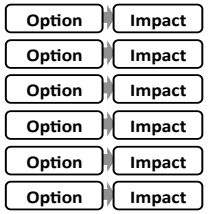
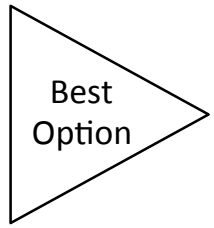
The 6-Step Model for Coaching during Feedback

					
STATE THE FACTS	**DEFINE (NEW) OUTCOME**	**ASK QUESTIONS**	**GENERATE MULTIPLE OPTIONS**	**EXPLORE AND EVALUATE THE OPTIONS**	**SELECT AND DECIDE**
Objectively and non-judgementally, describe Situation, Task, Action and the Result.	Discuss and mutually agree essential revisions to the previously achieved Result.	Ask for suggestions about what could be done differently in the future and which would lead to the defined Outcome.	Ask what else might work and lead to the defined Outcome; make your own suggestions.	Together, consider the impact of each option related to both the defined Outcome and those who might be affected.	Eliminate least acceptable options, narrow down choice to option with best chance of achieving the defined Outcome.

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Toolbox: Tips from Cristina and Maureen

Making the switch from the traditional way of giving feedback to a process that permits you to step into a coaching role and generate multiple options has many advantages. This can best be done by retaining the first phase of a traditional model for feedback, such as the STAR model, and then diverging to allow active participation in the process from both people to come out in a mutually acceptable place.

Using the 6–Step Model for Coaching during Feedback opens the way to generating more and different options and alternative courses of action. In effect, you use questions to nudge the person to whom you are giving feedback towards bigger thinking as a habit. Over time, this will lead them to know that they are expected to make a contribution and not just wait for others to tell them what to do.

STATE THE FACTS: objectively and non–judgementally, describe the Situation, the Task, the Action and the Result (impact).

DEFINE A (NEW) MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE OUTCOME: discuss and agree any essential revisions to the previously achieved Result.
Sample coaching questions:
"What would have been / be a better outcome?"
"What is it that you / we would like to achieve now?"

ASK QUESTIONS: with curiosity and genuine interest in the answers from the other person, and referring to the past Action (or Behaviours), ask for suggestions about what could be done differently in the future and which would lead to a different Result (Impact).
Sample coaching questions:
"With the benefit of hindsight, what could you have done differently?"
"If the same situation reoccurs, what could you do differently?"

GENERATE MULTIPLE OPTIONS: ask the person to whom you have been giving feedback what else might work and lead to the mutually accepted or agreed outcome; make your own suggestions.
Sample coaching questions:
"What else could you have done / could you do to achieve the desired result?"
"What else?"

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EXPLORE AND EVALUATE THE OPTIONS: together, consider the impact of each option both on the outcome and on all those who might be affected.
Sample coaching questions:
"How would that help us to achieve what we want to achieve?"
"If we do X, what is the impact?"

SELECT AND DECIDE: eliminate the least acceptable options and narrow down the choice to the option which offers the best chance of achieving the defined mutually acceptable outcome.
Sample coaching questions:
"Which options do you think would work best?"
"Which option will you go for?"

The key to successfully using the 6–Step Model for Coaching during Feedback lies in several things:

- **Respecting the sequence:** for example, at the risk of stating the obvious, it is important to define the outcome before generating the options and evaluating them.
- **Good questions:** the right questions at the right time in the process not only elicit the options but also enable the evaluation and selection of the best option. Questions like: "What else?" are particularly important to stretch the other person's thinking.
- **Focus on the matter at hand:** it is paramount that you are not distracted and stay within the topic. Resist the temptation to introduce unrelated matters into the discussion.
- **Pay attention to the relationship level:** in your tone of voice, body language and overall approach you should convey that you are in this together and that both will benefit from finding and achieving a mutually acceptable and perhaps more innovative outcome.
- **Offer reassurance:** bear in mind that people are generally not used to being asked for their own contribution and may at first be uncertain or hesitant about speaking up. Show understanding and encouragement.
- **Be persistent:** your early efforts at encouraging a positive contribution from the other person might not be immediately successful. Do not give up easily. Refocus their attention on the common purpose and the long–term benefits of achieving a mutually acceptable outcome. Both you and the people you work with will get used to this kind of feedback process the more you implement it.

By being willing and prepared to invite the other person's input with questions, you open up a dialogue aimed at the exploration and generation of options. This does not mean to say that you abandon your own suggestions for how things could be done differently. Indeed, you actively throw them into the mix but only after the other person has exhausted their own ideas. In this way, you avoid undue influence that may arise, particularly if you have a position of seniority. Moreover, your suggestions should be evaluated as equal options along with the other person's suggestions. You then jointly evaluate each possibility, deciding together which option to choose and to integrate in order to move forward.

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