

# Coaching: The Necessary Skills and Behaviors

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The coaching process is central to performance management. Coaching refers to the managerial activity that creates, by communication alone, the climate, environment and context that empowers individuals and teams to generate results. “To coach” means to convey a valued person from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be. The coach’s job is to do this through encouragement and knowledge, rather than punishment and threats.

Both coaching and management have a common goal- the achievement of something through the actions of others. Both depend on the quality of communication between supervisors (advisors) and employees.

## Skills and Behaviors

Successful coaches exhibit certain behaviors. In general, coaches:

- Support their employee’s needs
- Create choices
- Seek commitment
- Provide avenues of self-expression
- Achieve a critical balance between being supportive and caring and being clear and direct about what is expected.

Robert Benfari in “The Manager’s Role as Coach and Mentor” identified four areas in which coaches require considerable skill:

### 1. Observational Skills

The coach should be able to spot opportunities for an employee to expand his or her capabilities and improve performance. Once these opportunities are recognized, the coach should relate them to the employee.

### 2. Analytical Skills

Two types of analytical skills are called for: the ability to define opportunities for an employee to expand his or her capabilities and the ability to determine when coaching is required to improve performance.

### 3 Interviewing Skills

Coaches need to be able to ask the right questions and elicit the “right” responses. Skillful coaches use the following three methods.

- a. **Open-ended questions.** These encourage the rep to think about the problem, to think about things he or she may not have considered previously to achieve an insight or to draw a conclusion.
- b. **Closed questions.** These guide a discussion into a specific topic or area, or garner specific information when a discussion is too general.
- c. **Reflective questions.** These restate in question form some thing the employee has said. They are used to prevent any misunderstandings.

### 4. Feedback skills

How the supervisor presents his or her observations can cause the rep to become defensive, angry or intimidated, or open to discussion about how to improve a difficult situation.

## Non-Supporting Behaviors

Supervisors (advisors) exhibit non-supporting behavior when they are aggressive or exercise their power. They come across as being adversarial and hostile. Non-supporting behaviors include:

- Doubt, anger, accusations
- Threats, discipline, referral to higher levels of authority
- Demonstrations of frustration
- One-way communications
- Unwillingness to help

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