

The Coaching Approach to Performance Development:



A Practical Guide

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About This Guide

This guide was created by Coaching.com, drawing from the insights shared in our webinar *"Strategic Coaching Conversations: Transforming Performance Reviews into Growth Opportunities"* hosted by Rosette Cataldo, CRO of Coaching.com, featuring performance management expert Amy Leschke-Kahle. The webinar explored innovative approaches to rethinking traditional performance management and embracing development-focused conversations.

[You can rewatch the full webinar at this link.](#)



Introduction

Traditional performance management processes often evoke anxiety, stress, and dread—for both managers and employees. Yet the goal of helping people grow and contribute at their highest level remains essential for organizational success.

This guide presents an approach that separates performance measurement from performance development, emphasizing coaching conversations that drive genuine growth.

Shifting from Performance Management to Performance Development



The Problem with Traditional Performance Management

Traditional performance management typically focuses on:

- Rating and categorizing employees
- Looking backward at past performance
- Identifying gaps and weaknesses
- Creating standardized processes that feel impersonal
- Infrequent formal reviews that create high-stakes moments

As Amy Leschke-Kahle noted in our webinar, "Nobody wants their performance managed. We're all super smart grown-ups." The term "management" itself implies mediocrity rather than excellence.

The Two-Lane Approach

Instead of trying to make one process serve multiple purposes, consider separating your approach into two distinct "lanes":

Lane 1: Performance Measurement

- **Purpose:** Gather data to inform downstream talent decisions (compensation, promotions, etc.)
- **Approach:** Keep it simple and focused only on what's needed for decision-making
- **Timing:** As required by organizational processes
- **Communication:** Clear, transparent, and concise



Lane 2: Performance Development

- **Purpose:** Help people do more, better work and accelerate performance
- **Approach:** Coaching conversations that provide support, guidance, and direction
- **Timing:** Frequent, ongoing connections
- **Communication:** Personalized, strengths-focused, and forward-looking



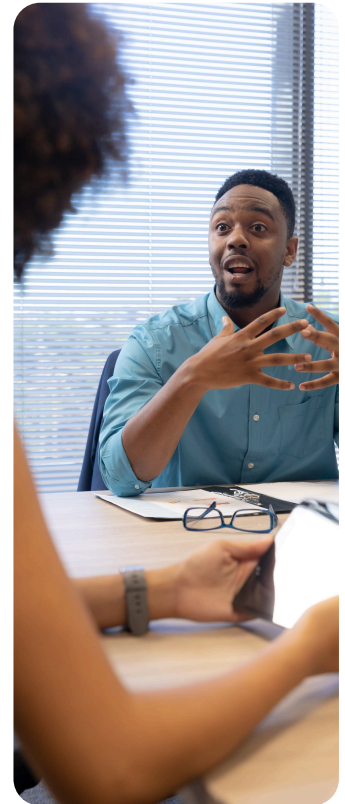
By separating these functions, you create space for genuine development without the anxiety that typically accompanies evaluation.

Creating a Coaching Conversation Framework

Moving Beyond "Feedback"

The word "feedback" often triggers defensiveness. When someone says, "I have feedback for you," most people instinctively prepare for criticism. Instead, Leschke-Kahle suggests reframing these interactions as providing:

- **Support:** "How can I help you succeed in this project?"
- **Guidance:** "Here's a perspective that might be useful..."
- **Direction:** "For this specific situation, we need to approach it this way..."



A Framework for Growth-Oriented Conversations

1. **Focus on strengths first:** "I've noticed you excel at..."
2. **Connect to impact:** "When you do that, it helps the team by..."
3. **Explore opportunities:** "Where would you like to apply these strengths next?"
4. **Address process improvements** (not personality traits): "For this specific process, what adjustments might help?"
5. **Co-create next steps:** "What support or resources would help you move forward?"

This approach acknowledges that most performance issues relate to process execution rather than personal attributes. It preserves dignity while still addressing areas for improvement.

Strengths-Based Development



The Power of Focusing on Strengths

As Leschke-Kahle emphasized in the webinar, "People are not broken." Every individual brings unique talents and abilities that, when properly channeled, create exceptional value.

A strengths-based approach:

- Increases engagement and energy
- Leads to faster development
- Creates authentic confidence
- Produces more sustainable results

Identifying and Leveraging Strengths

For Managers and Coaches:

- 1. Observe patterns of excellence:** When does this person seem most engaged and effective?
- 2. Ask revealing questions:**
 - "What parts of your work do you look forward to most?"
 - "When do you feel most in your element?"
 - "What accomplishments are you most proud of and why?"
- 3. Look for rapid learning:** Areas where someone picks up new skills quickly often indicate underlying strengths.
- 4. Note energizers:** What tasks seem to give them energy rather than drain them?

For Individuals:

- 1. Reflect on flow states:** When do you lose track of time because you're so engaged?
- 2. Consider compliments:** What do others consistently appreciate about your contributions?
- 3. Identify satisfying accomplishments:** What achievements have felt most meaningful and why?
- 4. Analyze successful partnerships:** With whom do you work most effectively and what does that reveal?



Moving from Identification to Application

Once strengths are identified, the key is finding opportunities to apply them more intentionally:

- 1. Expand:** How might this strength be used in new contexts?
- 2. Refine:** How can this strength be developed to an even higher level?
- 3. Complement:** How might this strength balance team dynamics?
- 4. Teach:** How can this strength be shared with others?

Measuring What Matters



Beyond Traditional ROI

As discussed in the webinar, trying to measure the financial ROI of coaching and development activities can be problematic. Instead, focus on measuring what truly matters:

1. The coachee's experience: Did they feel the coaching helped them achieve what they wanted to accomplish?
2. Sustained improvement: Was the person able to maintain growth over time?
3. Application: How has the person applied what they've learned in real work situations?

Simple Measurement Approach

Instead of complex metrics, consider a straightforward approach:

- 1. Pre-coaching baseline:** Brief assessment of current state in target areas
- 2. Post-coaching evaluation:** Measurement of growth immediately following coaching
- 3. Follow-up assessments:** Check-ins at 3, 6, or 9 months to measure sustained change

This creates a narrative of development that is both personally meaningful and organizationally valuable.

Making Coaching Accessible

Democratizing the Coaching Experience

Traditionally, coaching has been reserved for executives or "problem employees." A more effective approach makes coaching accessible throughout the organization:

- 1. Create a "Phone a Friend" system:** Identify people with coaching skills who can be resources for others
- 2. Implement coaching skills training:** Equip more people with basic coaching capabilities
- 3. Establish on-demand coaching:** Create easy access points for just-in-time coaching support
- 4. Use technology thoughtfully:** Leverage digital tools to connect people with coaching resources
- 5. Build a coaching culture:** Normalize asking for and offering coaching support

Coaching at Different Levels

Big C Coaching: Formal coaching engagements with trained professionals

- For significant transitions, leadership development, or specific growth goals
- Structured engagement with clear objectives
- May involve assessments and defined timeframes



Little 'c' coaching: Everyday coaching interactions

- Informal support in the flow of work
- Peer-to-peer coaching moments
- Manager-as-coach in regular interactions
- Team coaching during project work

Both approaches are valuable and complementary, creating a multi-layered system of support.

Conclusion

Transforming performance reviews into growth opportunities requires a fundamental shift in thinking and approach. By separating measurement from development, focusing on strengths, implementing frequent connections, and making coaching more accessible, organizations can create a culture where people truly thrive.

At Coaching.com, we believe in the power of coaching to transform individuals, teams, and organizations. Our platform enables the delivery of coaching at scale, with the tools and resources needed to implement the approaches outlined in this guide.

About



Coaching.com is the world's leading Coaching Enablement Platform™, empowering coaches and organizations to deliver, manage, and scale impactful coaching experiences. With cutting-edge technology and a global network of coaches, Coaching.com is transforming the coaching industry to activate human potential and drive organizational success.

To learn more about how Coaching.com can support your performance development initiatives, visit [coaching.com](https://www.coaching.com)