



# Becoming a Coach for Your Employees

Estimated Read Time: 5-10 minutes

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# Introduction

Becoming a true coach to your employees can have one of the most profound effects on your business of any action you can implement. Did you know that a recent [Gallup study](#) announced that only 15% of employees are actively engaged in their work? Let that sink in for a moment. That means that 85% of the American workforce is disconnected and uninterested in the thing that they spend ONE THIRD of their lives doing. This poses a huge problem for today's employers. How do you get your employees to be active, engaged, and take pride in their place of work?



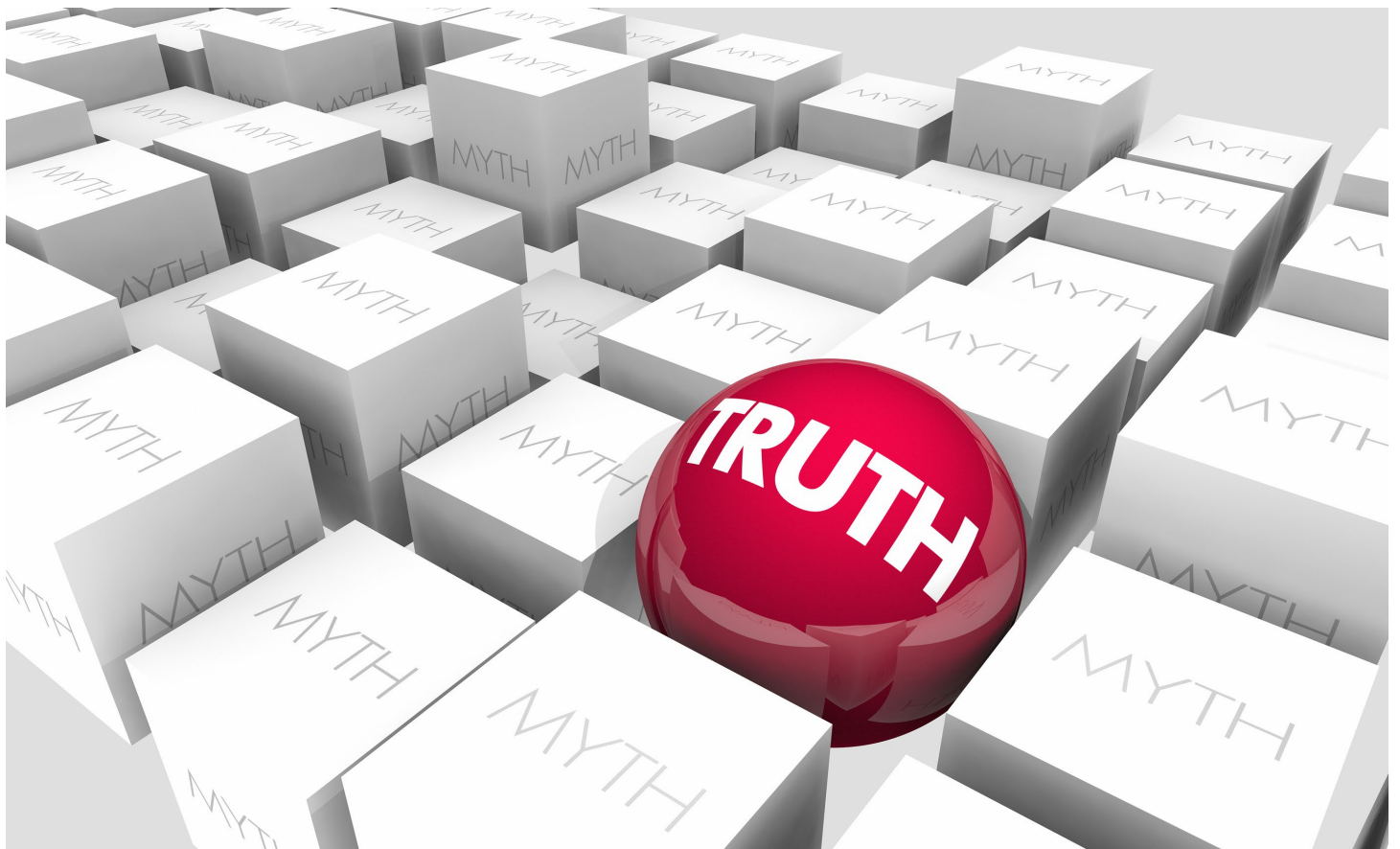
## Myths

I have studied the teachings of [Lisa Gates](#), who is an extraordinary leadership coach, and she likes to start by unraveling some myths about coaching and development. I think it is a crucial part of the process and, by doing so, relieves some of the anxiety of the whole process.

The first myth is that employers think of coaching as a sort of hand-holding process. What you must remember is that, when you are coaching an employee, you are not there to tell them what to do. You are there to provide guidance, not the solution.

The Second myth is one I hear employers say all too often. “I don’t have time.” Coaching sessions can take as little as 10 minutes. The first few meetings with an employee may be longer, as you dive into what their goals and hurdles are. Once the dialogue has begun and you are in a regular schedule, you’ll find that the employees need less and less time to get constructive results out of your meetings.

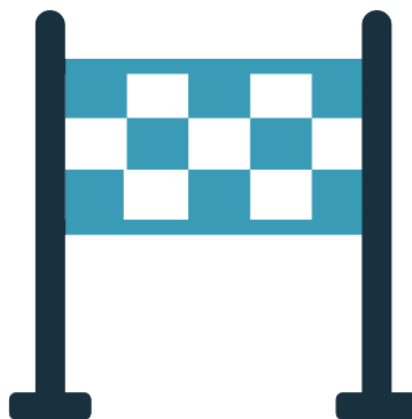
The final myth I’ll speak on is the fear that once an employer has grown an employee, that employee will move on to other opportunities. Like any myth, there is an ounce of truth in this. Some employees will move on to different opportunities that may fit their lives. You have to remember that by creating a culture of growth and development, you are adding so much value to your business as a place of employment. The reality is that most people want to feel valued, be challenged, and have autonomy at work. When those needs are met, an employee is much more likely to stay.



# Getting Started

To begin the coaching process, I recommend that you first ask yourself why you want to do this. Remember that answer. Write it down and reflect on it when you feel like you are frustrated, or that you are not gaining any ground.

The second thing you should do is, make a commitment to yourself and your employees. Commit to making your coaching an ongoing and ever-present process. Your employees need to trust you in order to make the process worthwhile. If you are unable to create trust with them, it is very unlikely that you will also be able to get them engaged in their work. Make sure you are holding up your end of the deal. You'll also want to coach the whole person. We are all complicated beings with lives outside of work. Our lives at home often affect our performance in our careers, and it is impossible to separate them entirely.



**STARTING LINE**



The next thing you'll want to do is to create a schedule. Get with your employees and find a time once a week that they can sit down with you and have a discussion free of distractions. An important thing to remember here is that you can't force employees into the coaching process. Some employees may not want to commit to a meeting. Yigal Adato is the brilliant mind behind [Pawn Leaders](#) – an organization that specializes in helping pawnbrokers grow their businesses and leadership skills. Yigal has a concept called the Pawn Pirate. Essentially a Pawn Pirate is an employee in a pawnshop that is unengaged, negative, and unwilling to grow or make positive change. Sometimes, if this person is allowed to continue their behavior, it is best to let them go before they sink the ship. Remember that the employees who are going to help your business grow, are the same ones who crave growth themselves.

## Now What?

So, you've got your employees ready for this new phase. You've scheduled times to meet with them, and everyone is excited. The next question, naturally, is what do I do in the meetings?

This is probably going to be the best news you'll hear about the coaching process. You barely have to do anything! Your responsibility in these meetings is to be a medium for your employees to voice their problems, and a guide to help them find the solution. You are, in essence, providing the topic that they are writing an article about.

Crucially, you must dedicate your meetings to always be confidential. As I've mentioned previously, trust is an integral part of this process. Anything that is said in the meetings must be kept private. Only the employee is able to divulge their personal matters.

Additionally, it is important for you to have a curious mindset in the meetings. Ask open ended questions. The goal here is to have the employee do most of the talking. Empower them to find the solution themselves.



# Showtime



It's the first meeting with an employee. How do you start?

You might ask the generic question, "Are you happy here?" To which you're likely to get a generic answer. Or, you could start with a more thought-provoking statement. Something like, "Hi \_\_\_\_! Thank you so much for having this meeting with me. I know that you are a very hardworking team member here, and I see a lot of potential in you. I want to make sure that you are feeling valued, productive, and successful with us. That being said, I'd like you to tell me about your goals, and what you'd like to accomplish here."

No matter how you start the meeting, make sure that it gives the employee the opportunity to talk about themselves. Remember, you need to coach the whole person. Let them talk about their aspirations in and outside of work.



During the meeting, make sure your focus is on the employee. Close the door, turn off your phone, and make sure to give them cues that you are actively listening to what they are saying. An easy cue to give them, is repeating what they're saying in the format of, "What I'm hearing you say is...". These cues go a long way to getting the other person to open up and speak more freely.

One of the best things you can do in this process is take notes. Be ready to jot down important points you cover in your meetings. While I'm sure you care very much about your employees, it is very difficult to remember everything you've covered with each individual one. Taking notes, and even sharing those notes with the employee, can help create trust in the meetings as well as show the employee that you are paying attention.

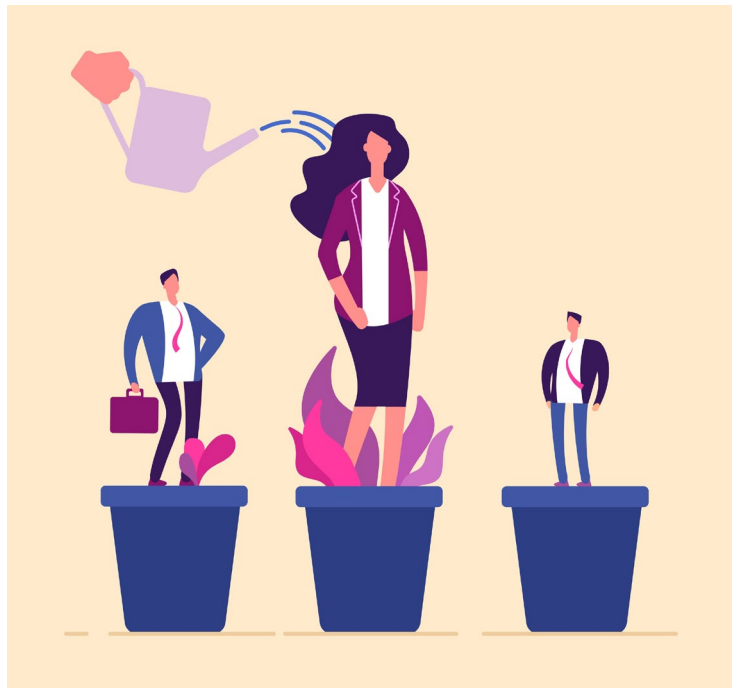


When meeting with employees, I find it very helpful to use the GROW model. In short:

- G – Goals
- R – Realities
- O – Options
- W – Way Forward

Goals are anything the employee wants to achieve. It can be small, like hitting a sales goal. It can also be a larger goal, such as a promotion. The important thing here is to have the employee state the goal in their own words. If the employee creates the goal themselves, they are much more likely to follow through.





Realities can be defined as anything that is happening in the employee's life. They can be challenges that they face outside of work, such as a long commute or schoolwork. Or they can be things happening in the business, such as a coworker they don't get along with, or difficulty performing certain tasks. Either way, it is important that the employee voices any obstacles that they feel can hinder their success. In this way, you can work together to find a solution.

Options are exactly what they sound like, options. They are any path that the employee can take to overcome obstacles on the way to reaching their goals.

Way forward is essentially creating concrete steps for your employee. List them out and create small tangible sub-goals they can achieve on their way to success.



## Get Them to Talk

If we want the employee to do most of the talking in these meetings, the question becomes, how do we make that happen? The solution is simple. Ask open-ended questions.

For instance, let's say you have just asked Sally what her goals are. She replies, "I want to get promoted to Branch Manager." Is that enough? Absolutely not! It is your job to push further in to get a more complete answer. You could reply, "Great! So, what does a first step to accomplishing that goal look like to you?" or "What are you doing to make that happen?"

So, what happens when your employee has an obstacle in the way of their goals? How can you turn a negative in to a positive, and create more constructive dialogue? Again, the answer is a question. An open-ended question to be exact.

Let's say you're talking to Sam, and he just told you that he is constantly at odds with another employee. According to Sam, the other employee is not pulling their weight, and constantly misses their goals. What would you say? My suggestion would be to ask Sam, "Why do you think the other employee is having trouble?" and, "If you were in their shoes, what would you need in order to become successful?"

Remember, you are not here to tell them what to do. This conversation is helping your employee discover ways that they can take a seemingly impossible situation and turn it in to a success. Using this method also helps your employees develop leadership skills and managerial tendencies. When employees develop these skills, they are likely to become more autonomous, which helps you delegate and even find those employees who are ready for more responsibility.

**Pro-Tip:** If you ever feel like you are about to give advice, or tell someone how to handle their problem, turn it into a question instead. "Would doing \_\_\_\_ help you reach the goal?"



## Wrapping Up

Now that you've learned how to create meaningful conversation with your employees, where do you go from here? This is, more or less, the same thing that will be running through your employee's mind at the end of a meeting.

If you've been thoughtful and asked the right questions, your employees will have already presented solutions to their problems. Now it is your job to hold them accountable in following through on those solutions. Make sure to ask them, "What is a realistic timeline for you to achieve this goal?". Having them set the deadline creates more dedication to meeting it.

## Conclusion

By researching ways you can be a better coach and mentor to your employees, you are already doing an incredible thing for your business. These meetings are not always going to be easy, but I want you to remember that you can't change what has already happened. With proper coaching, and a willingness to learn, you can affect the future.

