

The GROW Model for Coaching

OVERVIEW

The GROW Model was first developed in 1992 by Sir John Whitmore. It was initially called “Coaching for Performance – the GROW Model.” It provides a simple and clear coaching approach. As a sequential model, it walks the coach through four basic components to the coaching conversation. It is based on competencies supporting effective questioning and active listening. The GROW Model helps individuals deepen their learning and take action. The model itself is not coaching, but intended to be used in conjunction with coaching skills and behavior.

MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF THE GROW MODEL

In its traditional application, the GROW Model assumes that the coach is not an expert in the “client’s situation”. This means that the coach must act as a facilitator, helping the client select the best options, and not offering advice or direction.

The GROW Model for Coaching



THE FOUR STEPS

A good way of thinking about the GROW Model is to think about how you’d plan a journey. First, you decide where you are going (the goal), and establish where you currently are (your current reality). You then explore various routes (the options) to your destination. In the final step, establishing the will, you ensure that you’re committed to making the journey, and are prepared for the obstacles that you could meet on the way. Each component, or step, sets you up to answer a question to help guide your journey.

IDENTIFY THE GOAL	This helps to bring clarity to what is most important to the coachee.	<u>Sample Question:</u> What is important to you right now?
EXPLORE THE CURRENT REALITY	Takes stock of the current situation, or what is happening right now.	<u>Sample Question:</u> What skills/knowledge/attributes do you have?
GENERATE OPTIONS	Helps to identify various possibilities and opportunities to work towards the goal.	<u>Sample Question:</u> What could you do differently?
CONFIRM THE WAY FORWARD	Confirms the plan of action and an opportunity to move forward.	<u>Sample Question:</u> Which options work best for you?

How to Use the Tool

To structure a coaching or mentoring session using the GROW Model, take the following steps:

1. Establish the Goal

First, you and your team member need to look at the behavior that you want to change, and then structure this change as a goal that she wants to achieve.

Make sure that this is a SMART goal: one that is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

When doing this, it's useful to ask questions like:

- How will you know that your team member has achieved this goal? How will you know that the problem or issue is solved?
- Does this goal fit with her overall career objectives? And does it fit with the team's objectives?

2. Examine the Current Reality

Next, ask your team member to describe his/her current reality.

This is an important step: Too often, people try to solve a problem or reach a goal without fully considering their starting point, and often they're missing some information that they need in order to reach their goal effectively.

As your team member tells you about his/her current reality, the solution may start to emerge.

Useful coaching questions in this step include the following:

- What is happening now (what, who, when, and how often)? What is the effect or result of this?
- Have you already taken any steps towards your goal?
- Does this goal conflict with any other goals or objectives?

3. Explore the Options

Once you and your team member have explored the current reality, it's time to determine what is possible – meaning all of the possible options for reaching his/her objective.

Help your team member brainstorm as many good options as possible. Then, discuss these and help him/her decide on the best ones.

By all means, offer your own suggestions in this step. But let your team member offer suggestions first, and let him/her do most of the talking. It's important to guide him/her in the right direction, without actually making decisions for him/her.

Typical questions that you can use to explore options are as follows:

- What else could you do?
- What if this or that constraint were removed? How might that change things?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
- What factors or considerations will you use to weight the options?
- What do you need to stop doing in order to achieve this goal?
- What obstacles stand in your way?

4. Establish the Will

By examining the current reality and exploring the options, your team member will now have a good idea of how he/she can achieve his/her goal.

That's great – but in itself, this may not be enough. The final step is to get your team member to commit to specific actions in order to move forward towards his/her goal. In doing this, you will help him/her to establish his/her will and boost his/her motivation.

Useful questions to ask here include:

- So, what will you do now, and when? What else will you do?
- What could stop you moving forward? How will you overcome this?
- How can you keep yourself motivated?
- When do you need to review progress? Daily, weekly, monthly?

Finally, decide on a date when you'll both review his/her progress. This will provide some accountability, and allow him/her to change the approach if the original plan isn't working.

Tip #1: A great way to practice using the model is to address your own challenges and issues. By practicing on your own and getting yourself “unstuck,” you'll learn how to ask the most helpful questions. Then, write down some stock questions as prompts for future coaching sessions.

Tip #2: The two most important skills for a coach are the ability to **ask good questions** and the ability to **listen effectively**.

Don't ask closed questions that call for a yes or no answer (such as “Did that cause a problem?”). Instead, ask open ones, like “What effect did that have?” Be prepared with a list of questions for each stage of the GROW process.

Use **active listening skills** and let your “client” do most of the talking. Remember that silence provides valuable thinking time: you don't always have to fill silence with the next question.

Example

You're helping a team member, Julie, achieve her goals using the GROW Model.

Julie says that she would like a promotion to team leader within the next two years. This is a SMART goal – it's specific, measurable, attainable (as she already has one year of experience, and there are several team leader positions in her department), relevant (both to Julie's overall career aspirations and the team's mission), and time-bound.

You and Julie now look at her current reality. She's in an entry-level position, but she already has some of the skills needed to be team leader. You brainstorm the additional skills that she'll need in order to be successful in a team leader role: She needs more experience of managing other people, and experience dealing with overseas customers. She also needs to continue performing well in her role, so that she'll be considered for a promotion when one is available.

Two Ways to help GROW

Reflective Listening

What is it?

- Consciously attending to the person's vision, values, commitment and purpose. Reflecting the core essence of what is being said – and felt – in a way that adds greater value to the person and the conversation.

Why is it important?

- Brings awareness to the person by actively reflecting back their content, and helps create clarity from what they are trying to get across.
- Encourages ownership/responsibility by giving back to the person what they are putting out.

How can you do it?

- It starts with you – Are you present and available both in body and mind? Put aside the other distractions so you can be in the moment with the other individual.
- Create space – Allow for the person to share. This may mean sitting in silence.
- Notice the “non-verbal” – As you acknowledge what you are noticing, include your observation of what they may not be saying, but are conveying with their body or tone.
- Use their language – You may not be regurgitating back what they just said, but in delivering the essence of what you hear, including the language that they use is helpful.

- Check for accuracy - In order to gain clarity, being tentative and asking if you are correct can help move you forward.

Asking Powerful Questions

What are they?

- Heightens the person's awareness about choices and perspectives that either support or inhibit attaining their goals and life purpose. Powerful questions produce deeper learning and insights.

Why are they important?

- Through reframing, challenging, or reflecting, you can offer opportunity for increased awareness that may bring about new insights.
- Creates opportunity to consider their dilemma from another perspective.
- The act of asking a question puts the ownership back on the individual and encourages them to take responsibility, in turn leading to a sense of empowerment.

How do you ask them?

- Make them "non-leading" – if you do not have an investment in the outcome, this will be easier.
- Make them "open-ended" – You want more than yes/no answers to flesh out the situation.
- Asking questions that draw out description – questions that begin with "what", "how, and "when" can prompt responses that give more to the story and opportunity to grow.
- Go with your gut – use your intuition to notice something inside that is prompting you to challenge or ask a question about something in particular.
- Ask permission – Powerful questions can be rattling (while leading to insight) asking permission can soften the experience and keep you in relationship with the other person.

Examples of GROW Coaching Questions

Goal Reality Options Way Forward

Here are some examples of GROW coaching questions you might want to use during each stage of the GROW model. They certainly aren't intended as an exhaustive list and the questions you will ask during your coaching conversation will be determined by the dialogue you are having with your coachee at any one point in time. These GROW coaching questions do however serve as examples to help illustrate the different stages of GROW.

Goal

What do you want to achieve?

What is important to you right now?

What would you like to get from the next 30 minutes?

What areas do you want to work on?

Describe your perfect world.

What do you want to achieve as a result of this session?

What will make you feel this time has been well spent?

Reality

Where are you now in relation to your goal?

On a scale of 1-10, where are you?

What has contributed to your success so far?

What skills/knowledge/attributes do you have?

What progress have you made so far?

What is working well right now?

What is required of you?

Options

What are your options?

How have you attacked this/a similar situation before?

What could you do differently?

Who do you know who has encountered a similar situation?

Give me 5 options.

If anything was possible what would you do?

What else?

Way Forward

Which options work best for you?

What one small step are you going to take now?

What actions will you take?

When are you going to start?

Who will help you?

How will you know you have been successful?

How will you ensure that you do it?

On a scale of 1-10 how committed/motivated are you to doing it?

Further Reading:

Coaching for Performance, 4th Edition: GROWing Human Potential and Purpose People Skills for Professionals by Sir John Whitmore (Paperback – 12 Mar 2002)

Coaching Resources

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS...

What is holding you back?

What is getting in your way?

What will it be like for you to achieve this objective/goal?

Describe a time when you experienced great success in.... What did you do to achieve that success? What worked for you? What did you learn from that?

What are the skills, qualities and abilities required to...

How are your actions impacting others?

Are you getting the results you want?

What is your reputation in the organization (or with...) and how do you know?

Are you fully open to receiving feedback?

Whose voice do you need to listen to?

What do you do when you hear it?

What small change could make a big difference?

What are some first steps you can take toward your goal of...?

Who can help you...?

6 TYPES OF SOCRATIC QUESTIONS

- 1. Questions for clarification:**
 - Why do you say that?
 - How does this relate to our discussion?

- 2. Questions that probe assumptions:**
 - What could we assume instead?
 - How can you verify or disapprove that assumption?

- 3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence:**
 - What would be an example?
 - What is....analogous to?
 - What do you think causes to happen...? Why:?

- 4. Questions about Viewpoints and Perspectives:**
 - What would be an alternative?
 - What is another way to look at it?
 - Would you explain why it is necessary or beneficial, and who benefits?
 - What makes this the best option?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?
 - How are...and ...similar?
 - What is a counterargument for...?
 - "With all the bends in the pipe, from an industrial/practical standpoint, do you think diffusion will affect the conversion?"

- 5. Questions that probe implications and consequences:**
 - What generalizations can you make?
 - What are the consequences of that assumption?
 - What are you implying?
 - How does...affect...?
 - How does...tie in with what we learned before?
 - "How would our results be affected if neglected diffusion?"

- 6. Questions about the question:**
 - What was the point of this question?
 - Why do you think I asked this question?
 - What does...mean?
 - How does...apply to everyday life?
 - "Why do you think diffusion is important?"

20 Key Skills of a Coach

- ◆ **Listening** - There is more to listening than just hearing. Capturing the unsaid makes up the core of the listening skill.
- ◆ **Feedback** - Be ready to give some constructive feedback without sounding partisan or critical.
- ◆ **Observing** - Pay attention to whether your observations match what is being said and be prepared to share your observations when appropriate.
- ◆ **Analyzing** - As a coach you will come across information which you will have to analyze and from which you will have to draw conclusions.
- ◆ **Communication** - Understand your own communication style and be prepared to adapt your communication to ways in which your client will be able to hear what you are saying.
- ◆ **Timing** - Be aware of when your client needs to move to the next stage. You should also know when to ask what type of questions.
- ◆ **Assimilation** - Prepare for coaching sessions by integrating all your information.
- ◆ **Organizing** - If you are not organized, you are bound to get confused. Keep your entire information and work load in an orderly fashion. Document your thoughts and important information from the client so you can refresh and prepare for your next session.
- ◆ **Empathy** - Be kind and compassionate to your client's needs and problems.
- ◆ **Ethics** - Maintain confidentiality of your client's information. When a conflict becomes apparent, identify it and attempt to solve it. When a conflict of interest exists, acknowledge it and find a solution. If conditions arise that seem "un-coach-able" or unworkable, the coach is ethically committed to reveal his or her observations and opinion to the client.
- ◆ **Complimenting** - Feel free to compliment your client whenever necessary. It is encouraging and motivating.

- ◆ **Motivating** - Encourage your client by pointing out his/her successes and help him/her maintain focus on their vision.
- ◆ **Empowering** - Empower your client by allowing him/her to do the work, explore his/her own learning and take control of his/her vision, plans and results.
- ◆ **Intuition** - Be in touch with your "gut feelings" - clues to what you may need to observe, when to slow down, or when to ask certain questions.
- ◆ **Energetic** - Energy is contagious for motivating and inspiring.
- ◆ **Positivism** - It is critical that you be positive in your approach, attitude, tone and even writing. It is your positive outlook that spreads to your client.
- ◆ **Creative** - Have a plan. How can you help your client do what he/she wants to do?
- ◆ **Interested** - Be sincerely interested in your client and his/her success.
- ◆ **Self-Assured** - You should be confident enough in yourself to be able to make the coaching conversation "all about the client" ...It's not about you!
- ◆ **Thirst for knowledge** - There are new things happening every minute and you, as a Life Coach, have to be familiar with the changes around you. Update yourself with research and get familiar with new areas that you may encounter. This is so you can help your client with what he/she prefers to work on.

Adapted from www.MyLifeCoach.com

ADDRESSING RESISTANCE

Name the Resistance - In naming the resistance, make sure you are describing behavior as you see it. Keep your responses short and simple. Here are examples for addressing different styles of resistance.

Confluence You seem willing to go along with everything I recommend. If you had any reservations, what would they be? *Help them develop boundaries and heighten differences to become aware of and own their differences with others.*

Deflection It seems like whenever we begin to get focused on a topic, it shifts. Could we stay with one topic at a time? *Help them meet the situation directly.*

Desensitization I do not know how to read your silence. Could you share some of your thoughts or internal reactions? *Help to mobilize their energy, sensation and body language.*

Projection I hear you saying what others are not doing. Would you be willing to make some "I" statements and bring yourself into the picture? *Help them take responsibility for their own feelings, thoughts, actions.*

Retroflection You seem to be taking this entire burden on yourself. What was the role and responsibility of the others on the team? *Help them reverse their direction and look at the responsibility of others and not just themselves and reduce the need for control.*

Introjection You seem to take things in quickly. I would like to hear more about how you are making meaning out of what was just said. *Help them identify, own and accept experience and separate the "I" from "you, it or they" etc. and to accept consequences of not living up to others' expectations.*

If naming the client's resistance does not work, try identifying your feelings. If, for example, you are feeling frustrated, then let your client know that. If you are feeling like the client wants to end the session, say so. Whatever you are feeling, name it. Be aware of the fact that this can be a somewhat risky intervention. If the client asks you why you feel that way, begin the exploration into it. This might get you to a direct conversation related to the real issue. After naming the feelings, be quiet and let the

client respond. Do not feel that you must continue to talk to reduce the tension that might be in the room.

It is important not to take the client's behavior personally. A client's behavior is not necessarily a reflection on you. If you begin to focus on yourself, you have taken the attention off the client, where it belongs, and put it on yourself. Many times heightened resistance and defensiveness from the client mean that you have touched a nerve or pushed one of their buttons. You have touched something important and valuable. Be patient and continue to explore.

Also remember that many questions are statements in disguise. Try to get behind the question in order for the client to articulate the statement. It is not your job to answer all of those questions. Peter Block, author of *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used* says, one ground rule is to give two good faith responses to every question you are asked. He says the third time the same question is asked, interpret it as a form of resistance and do not respond to the content of the question. At this point, the only rational response is to make a statement that perhaps what the client is feeling is reluctance to commit to the problem or to the process.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH RESISTANCE

To fight resistance is to cause it to intensify. Fighting resistance puts us in a tug of war with the resistor then we feel we have to conquer it. This increases frustration on both our parts. Feelings often pass when they are expressed. Try this:

1. Ask the person to put directly into words what they are experiencing.
2. Ask them to be authentic.
3. Be authentic yourself..
4. Be patient.
5. Fully take the person in.
6. Go back to number two (2) and ask the client to tell you more about their concerns.

Get yourself in a hearing, appreciating mode. Encourage full expression of the client's concerns. Your goal is to help your client get clear on his/her reservations. That is the only way you can effectively respond and support them.

As you listen to the client, notice what is happening to you. Notice what is happening to them. Pay attention to what is being said, how it is being said and pay attention to body language - yours and the client's. Most studies show that the largest amount of communication that takes place is non-verbal.

- ⇒ 7% through words
- ⇒ 38% through voice, tone, rate of inflection, etc.
- ⇒ 55% through body language (facial expressions, body position, body movements, etc.)

Pay attention to the steps you take. Get clear on how you see the resistance. What form or level of resistance are you seeing as you pick up cues from the client?

7. Make an attempt to name the resistance (be non-judgmental and do not let your ego hook you into needing to be right.)
8. Wait! Give you client a chance to fully take you in and respond to your statement. Resist the temptation to fill the silence.



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Recommended Coaching videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=to73DYQkApQ>

A coach helps a coachee who is not comfortable with the relationship with her boss around getting feedback and feeling free to bounce ideas around. She is seeking more from her boss, similar to the relationship with a previous boss's style.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlbybdOx2Ew>

A colleague helps another colleague who is struggling with the relationship with a third colleague.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOpQ2taW4-0>

Two professional coaches do a demonstration of a coaching session using the GROW model in just 10 minutes. The coach demonstrates that coaching isn't always cut and dried in what questions to ask or how to get to the heart of the issue. It clearly demonstrates the structure around understanding the goal, what the current situation is, exploring options and committing to action.

You can also google “coaching demonstration video”, where I located these three examples of what a coaching session looks like and sounds like.



Feedback is a Gift!

Feedback is simply a description of what you saw, heard or read and the impact of that behavior on yourself and/or others.

1. **Get clear on why** you're giving it.
2. **Inquire - before and after.** "Would you like some feedback? and "Was I clear" or "Do you have any questions?"
3. **Use "I" statements.** "I have some feedback about your meeting this morning, would you like to hear it?"
4. **Make sure it's the right fit.** Make it specific vs. vague or loose-fitting. Three times you interrupted me vs. you always interrupt me.
5. **Non-judgmental feedback** doesn't ascribe motives, evaluate or criticize the other person. Say, "I noticed you hadn't prepared the budget input for this week's meeting", vs. "You're lazy and don't get your work done or you don't care about making the team look bad."
6. **Avoid blaming by using "I" statements.** Say, "I get angry when you..." as opposed to "You make me angry when you..."
7. What do you do when you get a gift? **You say thank you**, even before you may know what's in the box. Graciously accept feedback. Defensiveness communicates that you're not interested in their gift. Statements like, "That's not true" or "you're wrong" or "you don't understand why I did that" all spell defensive.
8. What do you do next with a gift? You open it, hold it up, look at it, turn it around - you explore the gift. **Exploring your feedback** means taking a long look and trying it on to see how it fits. Check out the feedback. Ask for more details. If you're still not seeing the fit - ask someone you value and trust.
9. What if the gift doesn't fit? **You can always find some way to appreciate the gift.** Say, "Thank you. I realize that probably wasn't easy for you to tell me." Remember, accepting feedback doesn't mean you have to agree with it.

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

SPECIFIC

vs.

GENERAL

You missed 2 meetings this month, one was...

You've been late too often lately.

DESCRIPTIVE

vs.

EVALUATIVE

You told Joan that her idea/point wasn't possible before she had time to explain her point.

You're cutting off Joan when she tries to talk.

"I" STATEMENTS STATEMENTS

vs.

MOTIVE

I hear the team telling you that you have not completed assignments as promised.

The team is ticked off with you Pat, because you don't seem to care about this project.

CHECK

vs.

PREACHING

UNDERSTANDING

What's your view of this?
How do you see it?

You should know by now...
How long will it take you to get it right?

GIFT OF FEEDBACK PRACTICE

(Specific, Timely, Behaviorally-Based, Nonjudgmental)

Re-write examples, turning them into positive statements.
Add specifics as appropriate.

Example:

I know what your problem is... you don't think this project is important.

Pat, today you said, "This project isn't worth your time or effort."

1. Employee to Manager: You're never here enough to realize all the problems we have. 1. _____

2. Employee to Employee: You're never here. I'm tired of having to cover for you. 2. _____

3. Manager to Employee: The way you dealt with that team member was unprofessional. 3. _____

4. Manager to Employee: This place is a mess! How can you work in such a disorganized area? 4. _____

5. Employee to Manager: You've got to take more control and get the team to respect you. 5. _____

6. Employee to Employee: Your reports are always late! You don't care about the hardship it creates. 6. _____

