

Building Your Coaching Skills

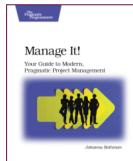
Building Your Coaching Skills

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Why Learn About Coaching?

- Software is interdependent work, constantly changing
 - The more skills you have to work with others, the more you'll succeed
 - The more flexibility you have in “helping” other people, the more valuable you are
- Coaching in the workplace can be different from typical sports-based coaching
 - Software projects are mostly intangible, so hearing things such as “do this” or “do that” lack context
- Caveat: I don't know how many activities we will finish

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Why Do You Want to Coach?

- Reasons I've heard from managers:
 - Build capacity in the group
 - Build relationships
 - Build trust
- Non-managers' reasons
 - Build relationships
 - Make it easier to work with others

Before You Coach...

- Are you ready to coach?
- Is coaching the best learning opportunity?
- Does the other person want coaching in this area?
- Does the other person want coaching from you?
- Are you open to other approaches?
- Are you ready to encourage rather than evaluate?
- Are you ready to end the coaching when it no longer fits for either of you?

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The Coachee's Perspective

- Agreement from both people that a coaching relationship is what you both want and need
- Coaching is a short-term approach to help people see possibilities
 - Coaching does not take the place of feedback
 - Coaching is in addition to feedback
 - Coaching helps people build their own capacity
- Feedback is information given in the present about an event in the (recent) past with the hope of influencing the future
- Mentoring is offering a helping ear and a sounding board
- Teaching is training

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Some Coaching Approaches

- Frame the problem
- Provide context
- Help coachee see the big picture
- Help coachee see the steps
- Generate more options
- Provide real-time feedback
- Ask questions
- Demonstrate
- Review
- Provide information
- Listen
- Catch people doing something right
- Catch people before they go too far down the wrong path
- Bring an expert
- Learn together
- Teach

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Coaching Offers Options

- Helps a person increase capability with your support
- Support is the operative word

Generate Options: Rule of Three

- Every problem has at least three viable solutions. If you can't think of three options, you don't understand the problem
 - Supplies choices
 - Breaks people out of logjam thinking
 - Review implications of each option
 - Options have consequences/results

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Once the Coachee Sees More Options

- Develop a SMART goal
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Attainable
 - Relevant
 - Time-boxed
- Make the goal something positive, not something a dead dog could do
- Develop an action plan
 - Small do-able steps

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Avoid Inflicting Help

- Exceptions
 - As a manager (or if it's part of your job to help a team succeed) you have to coach even if someone isn't asking for help
 - When safety is an issue
 - These may be feedback, and not coaching

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Meta-Coaching

- Remember when generating options:
 - It's the coachee's job to generate options
 - It's the coach's job to facilitate generating options
- Remember when reviewing action items:
 - Avoid “don't” language
 - Focus on what *to* do
- Consider both people's personalities, especially around energy and decision-making
 - Introvert/Extravert
 - Perceiving/Judging

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Coaching “Steps”

- Ask questions about the problem
 - Ask what success means
 - Consider the variety of coaching tools
 - Help person build an action plan
 - Monitor the plan
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- In the real world, you would check in with the other person to help monitor the changed behavior. We can't do that here today.

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Activity

- Everyone, take one card. Write a problem on a card that *you'd* like coaching about. If you have more than one problem, separate them or take more cards. Some possibilities I've seen in the past are:
 - When to refactor
 - Architecture decisions
 - How to rank requirements
 - Decision-making in a group
 - When to leave a job
- Put your card in front of you.

Activity

- Organize yourselves into groups of three: Coach, coachee, observer
 - Coachee, take one of your cards
 - Coach
 - Ask questions
 - Help your coachee develop alternatives
 - Discuss consequences/results
 - Develop a SMART goal
 - Develop an action plan
 - Observer: watch and listen; you may need to take notes
 - We'll debrief between sessions

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Debrief Questions

- These are the minimal questions I'd like you to answer:
 - From Observer: What did you see and hear from the coach, from the coachee?
 - From Coachee: What worked best for you?
 - From Coach: where were you surprised by the coachee? Frustrated?
 - Meta-question for your group: What else do you want to mention?

Qualities of Coaches

- Patient
- Able to help generate options
- Use active listening
- What about these qualities:
 - Technical expertise
 - Experience with the problem

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Activity

- Everyone, take one card. Write a problem on a card that you need to coach someone else on. One problem to a card. Some examples I've seen before:
 - Taking a manager/technical lead off the critical path
 - Someone's behavior is career-limiting
 - How to give someone else feedback
 - How to estimate
- Put your cards in front of you.

Activity: More Coaching

- Organize yourselves into groups of three: Coach, coachee, observer
 - Coachee, take one of your cards
 - Coach:
 - Ask questions
 - Help your coachee develop alternatives
 - Discuss consequences
 - Develop a SMART goal
 - Develop an action plan
 - Observer: watch and listen
 - We'll debrief between sessions

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Debrief Questions

- These are the minimal questions I'd like you to answer:
 - From Observer: What did you see and hear from the coach, from the coachee?
 - From Coachee: What worked best for you?
 - From Coach: where were you surprised by the coachee? Frustrated?
 - Meta-question for your group: What else do you want to mention?

Following Up Over Time

- As a coach, you'll follow up over time
 - To see that the behavior is changed
 - To help the coachee monitor progress on the action list
- Discussion: how long a period of time do you need to follow up with coachee post-coaching?

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Activity: Meta-Coaching

- Individually, write the answers to these questions:
 - What are your particular foibles when it comes to following up?
 - What options do you have?
 - How will you know you've succeeded?

Activity

- In groups of two
 - Review your answers to previous questions
 - Discuss how you'll monitor yourself
 - Ask for coaching if necessary
- We'll debrief together

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Final Debrief

- What stands out for you from these practices?
- What was challenging?
- Where did the work go smoothly?
- What does this say about the way we worked together?
- What's one thing that would make you more effective as a coach?

Summary

- Coaching is part of what we do when we work in collaborative teams
- Practice coaching for greater results

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