



Topics:

- Six steps framework
- Let the penny drop. Ask the right questions.
- Mentoring and Socrates.
- Perceptions and development.
- Come again? Mentoring and listening.
- Plan before you train.
- A voyage of self-discovery. Mentoring.
- Mirror, mirror on the wall. Reflection.
- Awareness precedes all learning.
- A voyage of self-discovery.



Six steps – A framework for developing people

This is a simple step-by-step process you can use to develop people and to manage their performance. It provides a framework for managing performance and clarifies your expectations in relation to job performance and on-going development.

Setting Context

- Why does the job exist? What is the context for this job? How does this job contribute to the organisation's goals? Which other areas or people are affected by the performance of this job?

Establishing Expectations

- Explain or negotiate the job responsibilities.
- Explain or agree the priorities of these job responsibilities.
- Explain or agree the key performance indicators (observable actions or results)
- Explain or agree challenging but achievable goals for the next period – 3 to 6 months.
- Agree key actions to achieve these goals.
- Agree how performance will be monitored - what will happen as a result of this assessment (outcomes).
- Agree the nature of the space – the freedom to act independently, the degree to which they can take risks, experiment, create, innovate.
- Agree the boundaries.
- Agree the support you will provide.

Monitoring and Evaluating

- Throughout the review period, regular informal assessments are made of performance including self-assessment.

Feedback and Coaching

- Throughout the review period, regular, informal feedback is provided on good performance and those aspects to be developed or improved.
- Coaching is provided to assist in development and improvement.

Formal Review

- At the end of the review period – there should be no surprises.
- Review the performance of responsibilities together.
- Review the achievement of goals.
- Redefine responsibilities and future goals.
- Devise action plans to achieve new goals.



- Discuss things that happened which were unexpected.
- Discuss insights and learnings for both parties from this process.
- Agree space, boundaries and support.

Decisions or Outcomes

- Initiate decisions or outcomes from this review.
- Continue with on-going monitoring, evaluating, feedback and coaching.

Everyone who does the best he can do is a hero.

Josh Billings, (Henry Wheeler Shaw), 1818 – 1885, American writer and auctioneer, *Josh Billings : His Book*.

Good is not good where better is expected.

Thomas Fuller, 1608 – 1661, Chaplain in extraordinary to Charles II, *Gnomologia*

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em.

William Shakespeare, 1564 – 1616, English dramatist and poet, *Twelfth Night*.

Some men are born mediocre, some men achieve mediocrity, and some men have mediocrity thrust upon them. With Major Major it had been all three.

Joseph Heller, American Novelist, *Catch 22*.



Perception is reality

The fundamental task of management has not changed in thousands of years. It is and always has been a matter of concentrating and channeling organisational energy along productive lines. And it taxes and vexes the best and brightest managers.

(Source: Harvard Business Review.)

The toughest part of a manager's job is managing the 'people' issues. Essentially, you are trying to develop and inform your people's perceptions. You are trying to manage people's reactions and the choices that they knowingly or unknowingly make. People's reactions and choices are largely governed by their perceptions. How they perceive your actions and what you say and how you say it determines their reaction to you.

Perceptions amongst people within workgroups will vary greatly on the hundreds of issues which affect performance. Differing perceptions within a workgroup are a prime cause of inefficiencies and wastes time, money and effort.

Thus a key focus for a manager is to align the perceptions of the people within the workgroup so that, as far as is possible, we have a shared perception of our goals, priorities and strategies and the best ways to achieve them. Now this is where life gets a bit tricky for you because people will place different interpretations on events and information based on their own needs and motives.

These are some guidelines a you can follow to develop and inform perceptions.

- Establish people's perceptions about the issue. Find out what their position is, how they see things.
- Explain your perceptions, your position, how you see things.
- Establish the basis for differing perceptions. What has formed their and your perceptions? What is the rationale behind your and their perceptions? On what information or interpretation is it based?
- Separate facts from assumptions or inferences or opinions.
- Challenge exaggerations, distortions and generalisations.
- Ask people to cite verifiable examples to back up their perceptions.
- Ask people to explain how they came to their view or to expand their view.
- Encourage everybody to explore others' points of view. Identify gaps in people's reasoning.
- Encourage others to provide different views. Ask do they have different information or different conclusions or both.
- Ask if people's perceptions are taking into account information which is different from that which you have considered.
- Ask people to state their assumptions about others' views.
- Ask what information or thinking might change our perceptions. Ask your people what they see as being limitations in your own perceptions.



- Express what you see as being limitations in their perceptions.
- Be prepared to change or alter your perceptions based on new ways of looking at things or on new information that you had not considered before or on new context or new interpretations. Ask your workgroup to do the same.

This discussion needs to take place in a climate free of any repercussions for people speaking their mind.

You, and your workgroup, may find this a mildly threatening exercise but it will also be very rewarding and satisfying. And it will lead to the channelling of the energy of your workgroup along productive lines.





A voyage of self discovery

People learn from their failures. Seldom do they learn from their success.

Harold Green, Chief Executive Officer, IT&T, Managing (Doubleday 1984)

The concept of mentoring is an accepted form of personal and professional development in the workplace. The purpose of mentoring is to assist the learner to learn and develop through insight, awareness and discoveries prompted by the discussion between the mentor and the learner.

Being a mentor is not the same as being a role model. A manager can be a role model without being a mentor. And vice versa.

Mentoring is characterised by the use of 'understanding' seeking questions which allow the learner (and the mentor) to arrive at their own understandings. It is a two-way process which provides learnings for both the mentor and the learner.

The mentor acts as a facilitator and a catalyst for learning rather than as a 'teacher'. The learner is responsible for her own learning. The mentor is responsible for supporting, facilitating and learning with the learner.

Key points about mentoring:

- The mentoring process can be applied in various contexts – an on-going developmental process; a workplace assignment as part of a training program; a special project or major task which has been delegated to the learner; a skill deficiency which has been identified; or when the learner has made a major mistake.
- Focus on the learner's understanding more than just the doing of the task.
- Seek to understand the causes of any problems before moving to resolution.
- Use paraphrasing as part of active listening.
- Avoid the "you should do" statements.
- Focus on getting the learner talking as opposed to you talking.
- Ask questions which show the learner that you are curious about the answer or solution.
- Focus on achieving understanding - not teaching.
- Focus on using 'understanding seeking' questions (see 'Let the Penny Drop')
- Show empathy by describing how you felt in a similar situation.
- Encourage them to describe the situation from the perspective of others.
- Adopt a neutral point of view.
- Re-direct a question if you get no response to the original question.
- Avoid accepting generalisations as answers to questions - ask for their specific experience and how that has formed their view.
- Tolerate mistakes - use them as opportunities to learn.

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- Seek common ground and/or use common interests to develop the relationship.
- Allow time for the learner to develop - move at their pace.
- Assess what the learner knows - don't assume they know.
- Conduct mentoring on their territory or in a neutral place.
- Avoid discounting their ideas - use them to springboard into other ways of thinking.
- Use hypothetical questions - "If.... What could you do?"
- Recognise the different realities of the learner - their perception may differ from yours.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and the learner.
- Allow the learner to arrive at solutions and decisions.
- Focus on improvement - what could the learner do new, different or better next time.
- Both mentor and learner should continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring process. Use these questions of each other:
 - What am I doing which you find unhelpful?
 - What am I doing which you find helpful?



Lead from behind

As long as a man stands in his own way, everything seems to be in his way.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882, American essayist and poet, *Considerations by the Way*

Socrates, the Greek philosopher who died in 339 BC, was declared to be the wisest man of his time in the world. He is described as philosophically representing, at the highest, values of questioning and discussion without bigotry or preformed conclusions, thus exposing feeble arguments and prejudices. (Guthrie, W.K.C. (1971). *Socrates*. Cambridge.)

The Socratic method of teaching and learning is employed in developing people through a mentoring process. Here are some more things to consider for a manager acting as a mentor.

- Establish ground rules regarding when to let the learner 'fail' and when the mentor will intervene to rescue the learner from some undesired consequence.
- Discuss what gains are expected by both parties.
- Record key issues and points for future reference after each meeting.
- Allocate effective preparation time for mentoring sessions.
- Demonstrate your commitment to the mentoring process by ensuring regular mentoring sessions - schedule meeting dates and times.
- When beginning a mentoring process, reach agreement on how the mentoring process works - agree the conditions that make mentoring effective.
- Acknowledge any shortfalls you may have in knowledge and experience of the mentoring process.
- Hold a 'preliminary' meeting to establish and agree the purpose, the outcomes, the process, the conditions, your role and their role.
- Conduct the mentoring sessions on their territory or on neutral territory.
- Explain that you are a partner in the learning process and that you expect both of you will obtain new insights and knowledge.
- Discuss how the learner will cope with any changes to their workload associated with the mentoring process.
- Allow the learner to learn by experiencing the consequences of their own actions.
- Use positive reinforcement - acknowledge right efforts as much as right results.
- Identify opportunities for both parties to learn - share your learnings with the learner, but don't let this become the focus of the session.
- Create a climate where the learner can experiment and discover without fear.
- Use role playing as a tool for learning.



- Employ plenty of silent moments to allow the learner time to reflect and arrive at their own conclusions.
- Allow and encourage the learner to become more skilled than you.
- Check for understanding of communication given and received.
- Recognise and work on correcting inappropriate behaviour and help them see better ways of thinking and doing.
- Take time out to review the effectiveness of the mentoring process from both points of view.
- Review agreed actions within agreed timeframes.
- Be prepared for spontaneous opportunities for mentoring – see it as a continuous process.
- Determine whether any extra training may be required.
- Let the learner decide and act on their decisions.
- Continue to display leadership by making decisions when required - do not abdicate decision-making responsibility when needed.





Let the penny drop

Before I was a genius I was a drudge.

Ignace Paderewski, 1860-1941, Polish concert pianist and statesman.

Mentoring is a subtle skill which allows the learner to create their own 'aha's'. The manager's main tactic as a mentor is to ask a range of questions to let the learner develop by arriving at their own realisations or learnings. These questions require the learner to express the level of understanding they have in relation to the situation. Or the level of awareness, or insight or learning they have currently attained.

These questions allow the learner to process their experience of the situation - to evaluate the experience, to use deeper thinking or higher level thinking. This in turn leads to new ways of thinking and doing and the development of new competencies.

Here is a sample of the types of questions a manager might ask of the learner when acting as the learner's mentor.

- What things happened during this project/task which you didn't expect?
- What was different about this project/task from other projects/tasks?
- What were your reasons for making that decision?
- What insights did you gain from this experience which you would use in a similar situation?
- What could happen if you were to do it that way?
- How else could you look at this situation?
- How could people react to you if you were to do that?
- What worked for you this time that didn't work for you before? How would you explain that?
- What things did you learn which you didn't expect to learn?
- How would you compare the difficulties in this project with the difficulties in the other projects?
- How did other people react differently to you? How would you explain that?
- What would you change about what you did if you had to do it again?
- How might other people react to what you propose? What could be their reasons for reacting that way?
- What are the implications of this experience on future situations?
- What do you think my reasons could be for suggesting an alternative to your proposal?
- Where are the opportunities for new ways of doing things in this project?
- What are the underlying forces that are driving this situation?



- What conditions have changed over this period of time?
- What things are not what they appear to be? How are they impacting on this problem or situation?
- How could the situation change if you were to remove this factor....?
- Who else might be stakeholders beyond the ones you have identified?
- What other consequences might be considered beyond the ones you have identified?
- What other factors might be causing this situation beyond the ones you have identified?
- How would you have to change to be more effective next time?
- What could your proposal convey about you, to other people?
- How would you have to think differently to deal with this problem differently?
- How might your current ways of thinking about this be limiting your actions?
- What meanings have you attached to this event?
- What are other meanings could apply and be true?
- How are the actions that you are taking serving you?
- What other actions could you take?
- What are your intentions in this situation?
- What other intentions could help you?





Come again?

Seek till you find, and you will not lose by the toil.

Aesop, c. 620-c. 560 B.C., Greek fabulist *The Field of Corn*

One of the key determinants of your effectiveness as a mentor is how well you listen. Here is a tool to use to check how well you are using the art of listening in your mentoring sessions and to develop your listening skills. Do this after you have completed a mentoring session.

These are some of the things which distract our minds while listening.

| Numbered for reference only - not in priority order. | Extent |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Preconceived ideas about the topic - established mindsets. | |
| Thinking about an unrelated thought triggered by the other person. | |
| Selective hearing - only hearing what reinforces your point of view. | |
| Thinking about something said that you didn't understand. | |
| Dislike of the topic or the other person. | |
| Tuning out because you don't value the opinion of the person. | |
| Assuming you know what the other person is going to say. | |
| Wanting to jump in and respond immediately. | |
| Taking offence at something that was said. | |
| Thinking about what you will say when the other person stops speaking. | |
| Fabricating a story in your mind to massage your ego. | |
| Reacting to a mannerism or something about the person's dress. | |
| Believing your way is right. | |
| Thinking the other person doesn't have the experience to understand the situation. | |
| Pre-occupied with other non-related thoughts. | |
| Thinking about some personality trait or physical feature of the speaker. | |

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| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| No interest in the topic. | |
| You've already made a decision and you don't want to be seen to back down. | |
| There's a power play and you have to win. | |
| It's your role to convince the other because you know what's best for them. | |
| You have switched off because the tone of the other person is patronising or condescending. | |
| You're conscious of other people listening to the conversation. | |
| Thinking about something said with which you disagree. | |
| Dealing with a personal problem which is weighing heavily on your mind. | |
| Thinking about what you can say to impress the other person. | |

1

2

3

4

5

no extent

great extent

25 - 50

Superior powers of concentration.

51 - 75

You don't miss much.

76 - 100

I don't remember you saying that.

101 - 125

Sorry?

List the 5 key things you need to focus on to improve your listening skills.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |



Listening is about mind control - your mind. Following are some things to say when your mind goes wandering:

- Sorry I just got distracted. Would you say that again please?
- Can we discuss this later? There's something on my mind at the moment.
- I'm confused about something you just said and it's on my mind. Can we discuss that before you go on?
- Hang on. Let me just finish this so that I can give you my undivided attention.
- Hold on. This is a lot of detail. I'll need to take notes. Go a little slower please.
- Sorry I seem to have missed the point. Could you go over it again please?
- I am having trouble following your argument. I seem to have missed something.
- I'm hearing a number of assumptions. Can we check out the facts?



Mirror, mirror on the wall

A wise man will make more opportunity than he finds.

Francis Bacon, 1561-1624, Lord Chancellor of England, *Of Ceremonies and Respects*

Be what you are. This is the first step toward becoming better than you are.

Julius Charles Hare and Augustus William Hare,

Guesses at Truth (1954)

According to the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* reflection is:

‘The process or faculty by which the mind has knowledge of itself and its workings.’

In the process of developing ourselves, first we must have the maturity to want to know what we are not and what we don’t do well.

Many people only reflect effectively when a crisis occurs in their lives. Things like serious illness, death, divorce, loss of a friendship, dismissal, our kids turn to drugs, our business fails and so on. Reflection is not something many of us do naturally.

If we can harness the art of reflection and use it as a learning tool we have a very powerful way of learning and committing those learnings to new behaviours. We can learn to reflect effectively by asking some very specific questions of ourselves.

These questions examine a range of aspects and issues that influence and strengthen our learnings and beliefs. It is an assessment of how we go about our daily life.

In the context of the way you lead, manage and develop people and in the context of any given situation or project, answer these questions:

- What things worked well for you?
- What things happened that you didn’t expect to happen?
- What things might happen in the future if you keep doing what you are doing?
- What things differentiated your current leadership behaviour from those you normally display?
- Why did you do things the way you did?
- What insights did you gain from this experience that you would use in a similar situation?
- How else may the same things be done?
- How did people react when you did it that way?
- Why did people react the way they did?
- How might people react if you were to do it another way?
- What worked for you this time that didn’t work for you before?
- What things did you learn about yourself?



- What things did you learn about others?
- Where are the opportunities for new ways of doing things?
- What are the underlying forces driving this situation?
- How would the situation change if you were to remove different influencing factors?
- What conditions have changed over the period of time you have been involved?
- What things are not what they appear to be?
- How would you have to change to be more effective next time?
- How would you think differently to deal with this situation differently?
- How might your current way of thinking about this situation be limiting your effectiveness?
- What are other beliefs that could be true about this situation?
- Who else might be stakeholders beyond the ones you have already identified?
- What observations led you to your current conclusions?
- What factors did you consider during your analysis of this situation?
- What would you do differently next time if you had to do it again?
- What would you do more of the next time if you had to do it again?

While these questions are similar to those found in 'Let the penny drop', the difference here is that the focus is on us and not someone else.



No pain, no gain

All men who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education.

Sir Walter Scott

There is a figure bandied around by bandiers of figures that relates to organisations of approximately 30 employees or more. They claim that 30% of the activities of the workforce are wasted. That is, that they add no value to the finished product or service.

Imagine the impact in your organisation of your workforce spending 30% of their time engaged in non-value adding activities - 30% of your salaries expenditure wasted.

What is causing this waste? Simply put - systems error and human error. That is, inefficient systems and procedures and incompetent people. What's the solution? In the latter case, there's only one answer – training and development and more training and development. **But not the type of training and development that doesn't change behaviour.** That's history. You, the manager/team leader, may have been part of the reason why training didn't seem to make much difference in the past. If you want training to be effective in your workplace, you need to take a proactive role.

Here are some things to do:

- Consider the current and future competency requirements of the people in your group or team. That is, what are the things that your people need to be able and willing to know and do now and over the next, say, two years. Make a list - it might have 30 - 50 competencies. Be specific, don't put things like 'communication skills'.
- Assess each person against each competency listed. Use a rating scale - 1 (low competence) through to 5 (high competence) or something that works for you.
- Involve team members and ask them to do a self-assessment using the same competencies list.
- Compare your assessment and their assessment and discuss any major differences.
- Identify the high priority training needs for the team collectively and for each individual.
- Identify training opportunities provided by internal and external training providers or discuss your training needs with your training personnel. Find out when decisions are made regarding training and training budgets.
- Prepare a training plan - what, where, when, for whom, by whom.
- Establish training priorities for staff. Discuss the plan with staff.
- Advise your manager of your training and budget requirements.
- Assess whether you can provide training opportunities using the existing skills within the team.
- Arrange mentors or coaches using your best performers to train others.



- Encourage staff to involve themselves in developing their co-workers.
- Recognise and acknowledge staff who seek out ways to develop their skills.
- Raise the profile and seriousness of training in your area by following the actions listed under 'Awareness Precedes All Learning'.

Explore their attitudes with them. Find out their beliefs about the training and the meanings they attach to these beliefs. Ask them what other beliefs and meanings could also be true. Ask them how their current attitudes serve them. Ask them are there other attitudes that could serve them better. (Yes. I know that this is the third time that you have come across this point. Think about why. To make you mad? No. To emphasise how important attitude is? You got it. Remember it is said that successful performance is 85% attitude and 15% skill.)





Awareness precedes all learning

Training frequently fails to pay off in behavioural changes on the job; Trainees go back to work and do it the way they've always done it instead of the way you taught them to do it.

Ruth Clark

Manager, Training and Information Services, California Edison Co.

Training, November, 1986.

The biggest problem with non - technical training and development is the transfer of learning from the training room to the workplace. People are sent off to a training experience, return to work and, for many of them, nothing much changes. Why is this so?

Is it the fault of the training or the trainers? Possibly - but probably not. The fault lays more in the work environment, not the training environment. Specifically, a major cause of this problem is the actions of line management or, more correctly, the lack of actions of line management.

If 'awareness does precede all learning' then before a person attends a training activity she or he must be aware and convinced of their skill deficiency. That is, they need concrete evidence or examples of things they do which are below standard. Or they need to be clear on exactly what is expected of them once they return from the training.

Most people in your organisation believe that they do a good job. Very few of your employees believe that they are inefficient, unproductive, incompetent or below standard. Yet every single person can nominate some **other** person whose performance needs to be improved.

A person's perception is their reality. If you don't change their mindset and make them aware of the new, different and better behaviours you expect from them as a result of training and development initiatives, you are contributing to a likely waste of time, effort and money.

Here are some of the reasons why people don't apply the training back on the job :

- No awareness of deficiencies. No acceptance that they have a need to learn anything. (This is good stuff, but I do all of this anyway. It's a good thing Harry is here though - he really needs this).
- No expectation created by their manager of what they will be required to do as a result of the training which is new, different and better.
- No clarification of the behaviour change they will be expected to demonstrate.
- No clarification of how their manager will act to support them in the application of new behaviours.
- No follow-up, monitoring or measurement by the manager of expected behaviour change.
- No discussion with the manager about what they learned from the training and how they will apply those learnings.
- No re-allocation of their work priorities to enable them time to implement new ways of doing things.

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- No re - allocation of their workload while they are away attending the training so that they don't return to a backlog of work which demands their attention.
- No mentoring provided by their manager to assist with their learnings and to encourage implementation in the workplace.
- No understanding of the reasons why they have been chosen to attend this training,
- No established work context for the training.
- They hold counter-productive or negative attitudes toward the training and nothing is done to adjust these attitudes to better attitudes.