

A Solution-Focused Coaching Model is a Valuable Tool for Leaders

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.



A solution-focused coaching model has become a useful employee development tool for leaders. Business leaders are aware that retaining quality talent in their workforce is a growing concern. To boost levels of employee retention, leaders are providing increasing levels of professional development. And leaders are finding that changing the role of the employee performance review can provide dividends when it comes to keeping employees working with them.

When the employee performance review is modified into a goal-based performance review, magic happens. Instead of looking backward, and focusing only on past performance, the assessment provides not only the look back at where we were, but a look forward to where the individual wants to grow. The solution-focused coaching model offers a comfortable way to design a professional development plan with guidelines for success. It fits well with a goal-based performance review process.

The solution-focused coaching model focuses on the individual's strengths to help the individual continue to grow and develop skills. There are five stages in this coaching process using the acronym, OSKAR.

- Outcome
- Scaling
- Know-How
- Affirm & Action
- Review

The OSKAR coaching model is a powerful framework to help leaders, when working with employees, focus on solutions rather than problems. Here is a brief description of the different stages (adapted from '[The Solutions Focus](#)' by Paul Z Jackson and Mark McKergow).

Outcome

When reviewing an individual's performance, include a dialog about what skill and abilities that this individual would like to achieve over the next review period. In other words, the results of this stage are to visualize in detail their desired outcome.

It's one thing to review the past performance of an individual, but after the review there needs to be concrete plans designed to continue a forward path of professional development. Such a path provides specific goals to be accomplished before the next review period and provide the targets to measure against.

Scaling

Once the individual has a clear picture of their desired outcome, then establish where they are already in relation to this. Identify according to a scaling indicator, where they are currently in relation to this outcome. For example, on a scale of 1 -10...to what extent have they made progress towards this goal? How comfortable are they in achieving this goal? How committed are they to taking action to achieve this outcome? Such scaling numbers give both you and the individual an idea of how realistic the achievement of this outcome will be.

Know How

In this stage, work with the individual to identify two-three competencies that the individual should build upon and strengthen. These competencies, along with past experiences provide valuable know-how to move toward the goal achievement. Ask the individual the following three questions to determine the most useful competency choices.

- "What skills/knowledge/attributes do you currently have that will help you?"
- "When have you done this/something similar before?"
- "What would others say are the skills and talents they value most from you?"

This stage is a critical time to evaluate the past successes of the individual and consider ways to use these successes to inform future decisions and future areas of growth. For example, the individual might excel in inspiring others, or thinking strategically, working with teams, organizing information, writing summary reports, or problem solving. Select those competencies that will deliver the best results for achieving those areas chosen for professional growth. By selecting only two or three competencies, ample focus time can be given, and the improvements can be more easily monitored.

Affirm & Action

Affirming refers to providing positive reinforcement of what you have heard from the individual and offering positive comments about the competencies chosen by the individual. An affirmation might be a comment such as, "it's evident from the experiences you have described that this is working well for you."

Action refers to the sequences of steps that you and the individual determine to move toward achieving the desired outcome.

Review

This final stage of the OSKAR coaching model is for reviewing progress against actions and is therefore most likely to take place at the beginning of the next coaching session. The emphasis is on reviewing the positives:

- What is better?
- What did you do that made change successful?
- What do you think will change next?

Leaders will find increased success developing more effective employee performance, with solution-focused coaching efforts. Too many times leaders focus on the problems they face rather than the solutions that can be achieved. Solution-based coaching is more positively received by employees because it implicitly communicates a supportive message. Employees find encouragement with the jointly selected “solution.”

Employee performance assessments have undergone radical changes in how they are administered and used. Instead of being used to document the past performance of an individual, the assessment has become a tool to identify areas for improvement and areas for professional growth. From such areas identified, a growth plan can be created and followed. The OSKAR method is a powerful strategy that leaders can implement to provide valuable guidance.

About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor www.AllBusiness.com, www.MarketingInsiders.com, and www.WomenOnBusiness.com. Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.