

## Coaching for Supervisors



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## Introductions

- Name
- Your relationship to Williams
- Someone who brought out the best in you. What did they do? What was the impact?



## Objectives

- Understand the nature and value of a coaching orientation as a supervisor.
- Develop strategies for coaching for
  - Engagement,
  - Performance, and
  - Development/Retention



## Norms

- Confidentiality
- Participation
- Listening
- Self-care



## Agenda

- 1 • **Principles of Coaching**
- 2 • Coaching for Engagement
- 3 • Coaching for Performance
- 4 • Coaching for Development and Retention

## Principles of Coaching

- Coaching Defined
- Listening Skills
- Powerful Questions



## Coaching Defined

- Coaching vs. direction
- Coaching vs. evaluation

### **You Write the Slide:** Define: Coaching

- Based on the ideas we gathered from the check in, what is your personal definition of coaching?



**Coaching Defined**

Write your personal definition of coaching.

## Characteristics of a Helping Relationship

- Listening attentively
- Understanding the other person's point of view
- Accepting the person non-judgmentally
- Caring enough to be committed and involved (but not overly involved)
- Being genuine.

## **LISTENING SKILLS**

## Dangers of Advice Giving

- You know how advice is. You only want it if it agrees with what you wanted to do anyway.

-John Steinbeck

- Advice is effective if:
  - The person you're talking to knows what the problem is
  - The person you're talking to has communicated the real problem
  - You have the needed advice
  - The person you're talking to will accept the advice coming from you
  - The person you're talking to follows through on your advice

In other words ... hardly ever.  
AND

Advice giving does NOT increase the person's resiliency or capacity.

## Creating a container

- The more intense or difficult a conversation is, the stronger the container must be.
- Consider:
  - Privacy
  - Lack of distractions
  - Time bound
  - Norms
    - Confidentiality
    - "I" statements
    - Describing behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, not labeling the other person
    - No interruptions
    - Volume and gestures moderate
    - Time outs

## 1 Mouth, 2 Ears

- Minimal Encouragements
  - Echoing words or phrases
  - Verbal cues that you are listening “Oh?”, “Mm hmm”, “Right.” etc.
  - “Is there more about that?”
- Open-ended questions
- Body language
  - Non verbal cues that you are listening
  - Subtly mirror body language.
- Pauses

## Summarizing for Understanding

- Summarize
  - I hear you saying X. Am I getting that right? Is there more about that?
  - When there is no more, summarize everything they’ve said.



## **POWERFUL QUESTIONS**

### Powerful Questions

- Open ended
- Make the person think
- Break habits of limited thinking
- Open up new choices

# Choice Map™

We choose moment by moment



**START**

**Choose**

**Learner Mindset**

**Judger Mindset**

**React**

- What assumptions am I making?
- What are the facts?

- What happened?
- What do I want – for both myself and others?
- What can I learn?

- What are they thinking, feeling and wanting?
- Am I being responsible?

Whose fault is it?

- What's possible?
- What are my choices?
- What's best to do now?

**LEARNER**

- Thoughtful Choices
- Solution Focused
- Win-Win Relating

**SWITCH**

Ask Learner Questions to Avoid Judger Pit

**Switching Lane**

- What's wrong with me?
- What's wrong with them?

**JUDGER**

- Automatic Reactions
- Blame Focused
- Win-Lose Relating

- Why am I such a failure?
- Why are they so stupid?
- Why bother?

**JUDGER PIT**



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# Powerful Questions

Powerful questions are provocative queries that put a halt to evasion and confusion. By asking the powerful question, the coach invites the client to clarity, action, and discovery at a whole new level. As you can see from the following examples, these generally are open-ended questions that create greater possibility for expanded learning and fresh perspective.

## **Anticipation**

What is possible?  
What if it works out exactly as you want it to?  
What is the dream?  
What is exciting to you about this?  
What is the urge? What does your intuition tell you?

## **Assessment**

What do you make of it?  
What do you think is best?  
How does it look to you?  
How do you feel about it?  
What resonates for you?

## **Clarification**

What do you mean?  
What does it feel like?  
What is the part that is not yet clear?  
Can you say more?  
What do you want?

## **Elaboration**

Can you tell me more?  
What else?  
What other ideas/thoughts/feelings do you have about it?

## **Evaluation**

What is the opportunity here?  
What is the challenge?  
How does this fit with your plans/way of life/values?  
What do you think that means?  
What is your assessment?

## **Example**

What is an example?  
For instance?  
Like what?  
Such as?  
What would it look like?

## **Exploration**

What is here that you want to explore?  
What part of the situation have you not yet explored?  
What other angles can you think of?  
What is just one more possibility?  
What are your other options?

## **For Instance**

If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?  
If it had been you, what would you have done?  
How else could a person handle this?  
If you could do anything you wanted, what would you do?

## **Fun as Perspective**

What does fun mean to you?  
What was humorous about the situation?  
How can you make this more fun?  
How do you want it to be?  
If you were to teach people how to have fun, what would you say?

## **History**

What caused it?  
What led up to it?  
What have you tried so far?  
What do you make of it all?

*continued >>*

## Powerful Questions, continued

>> page 2

### Implementation

What is the action plan?  
What will you have to do to get the job done?  
What support do you need to accomplish it?  
What will you do?  
When will you do it?

### Integration

What will you take away from this?  
How do you explain this to yourself?  
What was the lesson?  
How can you make sure you remember what you have learned?  
How would you pull all this together?

### Learning

If your life depended on taking action, what would you do?  
If you had free choice in the matter, what would you do?  
If the same thing came up again, what would you do?  
If we could wipe the slate clean, what would you do?  
If you had it to do over again, what would you do?

### Options

What are the possibilities?  
If you had your choice, what would you do?  
What are possible solutions?  
What will happen if you do, and what will happen if you don't?  
What options can you create?

### Outcomes

What do you want?  
What is your desired outcome?

If you got it, what would you have?

How will you know you have reached it?

What would it look like?

### Perspective

When you are ninety-five years old, what will you want to say about your life?  
What will you think about this five years from now?  
How does this relate to your life purpose?  
In the bigger scheme of things, how important is this?  
So what?

### Planning

What do you plan to do about it?  
What is your game plan?  
What kind of plan do you need to create?  
How do you suppose you could improve the situation?  
Now what?

### Predictions

How do you suppose it will all work out?  
What will that get you?  
Where will this lead?  
What are the chances of success?  
What is your prediction?

### Resources

What resources do you need to help you decide?  
What do you know about it now?  
How do you suppose you can find out more about it?  
What kind of picture do you have right now?

What resources are available to you?

### Starting the Session

What's occurred since we last spoke?  
What would you like to talk about?  
What's new/the latest/the update?  
How was your week?  
Where are you right now?

### Substance

What seems to be the trouble?  
What seems to be the main obstacle?  
What is stopping you?  
What concerns you the most about . . . ?  
What do you want?

### Summary

What is your conclusion?  
How is this working?  
How would you describe this?  
What do you think this all amounts to?  
How would you summarize the effort so far?

### Taking Action

What action will you take?  
And after that?  
What will you do? When?  
Is this a time for action? What action?  
Where do you go from here?  
When will you do that?  
What are your next steps? By what date or time will you complete these steps?

**YOUR TURN!**

## Peer Coaching Exercise

- Groups of 3
- 3 Roles: Coach, Coachee, Observer
  - *Coachee*: choose a management issue you could use some help on. Talk about it with your coach.
  - *Coach*: For 5 minutes, use listening and powerful questions to help the coachee explore the issue
    - No advice
    - Don't worry about getting to an action plan
  - *Observer*: Using the worksheet, give the coach 1 minute of feedback
    - What did they do especially well?
    - What would you recommend they try in the future?
- Rotate roles

## Agenda

- 1 • Principles of Coaching
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## Engagement



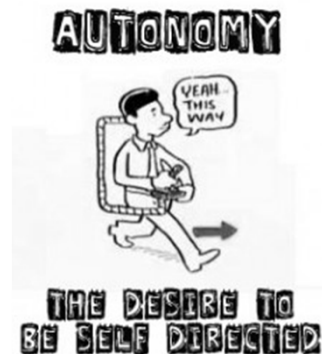


## Drive



## Autonomy

- People perform better when they can choose:
  - Task – what they do
  - Time – when they do it
  - Team – who they do it with
  - Technique – how they do it



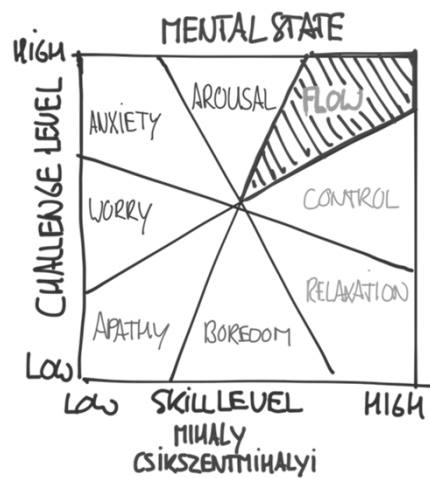
## Mastery

- “Even in low-autonomy jobs, employees can create new domains for mastery.”  
Example: Office maintenance person
- Mastery mindset:
  - Incremental theory of intelligence



## Mastery

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: The Flow State





## The Mastery Mindset

- Basic beliefs that support us in obtaining mastery:
  - We can get smarter
  - It will get tough, but we'll hang in there
  - It will never be perfect
  - Prizes learning goals over performance goals
  - Welcomes effort as a way of improving at something that matters.

## Purpose

- “Humans seek ... to be part of a cause greater and more enduring than themselves.”
- “Williams seek to provide the finest possible liberal arts education by nurturing in students the academic and civic virtues, and their related traits of character.”



## Your Turn!

- Form 3 Groups
  - Autonomy
  - Mastery
  - Purpose
- Individually, complete a worksheet
- As a group, discuss what you learned
- Choose someone from your group to debrief to the large group

### **Working with Autonomy**

How would you describe the level of autonomy of your team?

What are the organizational obstacles you see in granting your employees more autonomy?

Do you have any anxieties or fears about what would happen if you granted your team greater autonomy? What are they?

Skim the options for increasing autonomy in your workplace on pp. 162-174. Create a plan for implementing one of them, or develop a plan based on your own ideas.

### Helping Your Employee Experience Mastery

<p>1. Describe your employee's finest hour – a moment when they were at their best. (<b>Tip:</b> Make sure your employee knows that you noticed this and appreciate it.)</p>
<p>2. What strengths or aptitudes did they show?</p>
<p>3. What can you do to help them create another experience of mastery?</p>
<p>4. How can you adjust their role and responsibilities so that they play to the employee's strengths?</p>
<p>5. What elements of the "mastery mindset" does the employee already have (see pp. 118-125)? What elements may they need to develop?</p>

6. Based on the information above, create a plan for helping your employee have more experiences of mastery.

### **Connecting Your Employee's Work with Purpose**

What would happen to your team if your employee's position suddenly ceased to exist?

How would your team benefit if your employee had consistently high performance?

Who are the people that benefit from the services of your employee? What are the different ways in which they benefit?

Using your answers to the questions above, write one sentence that reflects your personal sense of the mission of your employee.

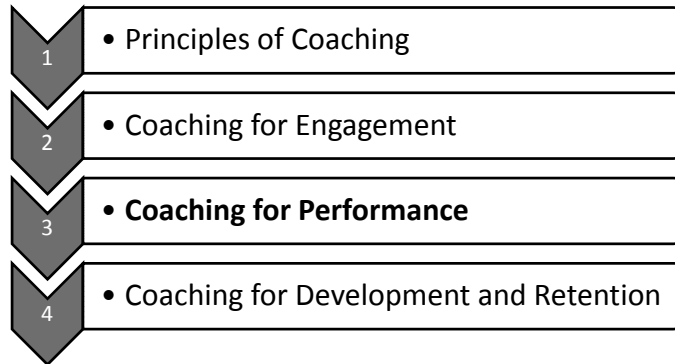
**Continued overleaf ...**

What is the link between this employee's work and Williams College's Mission "to provide the finest possible liberal arts education by nurturing in students the academic and civic virtues, and their related traits of character."

How can you help your employee connect their work to an important purpose?



## Agenda

- 
- A vertical list of four items, each preceded by a grey chevron pointing downwards containing a white number. The chevrons are stacked vertically, with the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.
- 1 • Principles of Coaching
  - 2 • Coaching for Engagement
  - 3 • **Coaching for Performance**
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## Coaching for Performance

- Basic Principles
  - Factors influencing performance
  - Using the Socratic method
- 5 Steps

## Factors Influencing Performance

- Focus on these factors, rather than trying to change the person.
- Complete the worksheet and develop an action plan



## 16 Reasons They're Not Doing What They're Supposed to Do

Adapted from Coaching for Improved Work Performance by Ferdinand Fournies

	Could this be an issue?		
	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. They don't know what they're supposed to do.			
2. They don't know how to do it.			
3. They don't know why they should do it.			
4. They think they are doing it, but they are not.			
5. There are obstacles beyond their control.			
6. They think it will not work.			
7. They think their way is better.			
8. They think something is more important.			
9. There is no positive consequence to them for doing it.			
10. There is a negative consequence to them for doing it. (i.e. they're punished for doing what they're supposed to do.)			
11. There is a positive consequence to them for not doing it.			
12. There is no negative consequence to them for not doing it. (i.e. they get away with it)			
13. Personal limits (capacity)			
14. Personal problems			
15. Fear (i.e. they have negative predictions about doing what they're supposed to do, even if they're unrealistic)			
16. No one could do it.			



## Using the Socratic Method

- Structured line of questioning designed to help employee recognize the problem with their performance.
- “Thought transmission.”
- Ex: Fournies 168-172

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3. No (or delayed) raise
4. Loss of perks (specify)
5. No opportunity for promotion
6. Demotion
7. Termination

Some managers don't want to list *termination* as an alternative. That's okay, but it means that when, after all your coaching efforts, the employee either by action or by saying so tells you to get lost, you will have to live with the problem. Fortunately if you use thought transmission correctly with the items in the second box, 95 percent of employees will agree there is a problem. Sometimes in the high-tech business world you will have a techie you can't live without but who breaks all your rules. It is up to you to answer that first question, "Is it worth my time and effort?"

Ninety-five percent of those who did not agree there is a problem after discussing the results of the thing done wrong will agree there is a problem when they understand the consequences to them if they don't change their behavior.

In the last box of the Coaching Discussion Plan write what you want performance to look like when it is done correctly. Obviously it should be related to what you wrote in the first box. In our example you might write, "She will work on work according to the assigned priority and finish projects on time."

Your next step is to have a coaching discussion. Following is an example of how the coaching discussion will proceed. It is important to remember that this is a discussion: two people are participating in a conversation. You are not lecturing someone. It is also important that you don't answer your own questions. Frequently employees have learned that if the boss asks them a question and they don't answer it, the boss answers his or her own question. Don't do that. When you ask a question wait for the answer. If after 15 minutes the employee does not answer, say, "Do you want me to repeat the question?"

Your coaching discussion would proceed something like this:

You: Do you know why I called you in? (Always start with this question to get their attention.)

Her: No.

## Coaching: The Face-to-Face Discussion 169

You: We have a problem.

Her: What problem?

You: It has to do with your working on low-priority work when high-priority work is assigned. We talked about it twice in the last month.

Her: Oh, that again. I told you the last time we talked that I have a lot of things to do and feel as a professional I should be able to choose what work I do in what order. After all I am not a child. But I will take care of it.

You: (Ignore the empty promise "I will take care of it." You have heard that before.) Do you know what happens when you work on low-priority work when high-priority work is assigned?

Her: Yes, I get a lot of things done that I think should be done.

You: Look, all of the work assigned to you are the projects I give you which are high priority. If you are working on low-priority work when high-priority work is assigned, are you working on assigned work or not working on your assigned work? (You are using thought transmission. The sounds you want to come out of her mouth are "I'm not working on assigned work." To accomplish that, ask her a question which ends with two alternatives: the one you want and its opposite. She has to pick one.)

Her: Well, I'm not working on assigned work. But I'm working on a lot of other things I think are important.

You: (You got the answer you wanted; don't pay attention to the rest.) Right. If you don't work on assigned work when you should, are you following the assigned work schedule or are you not following the assigned work schedule? (Notice how the opposite alternative is said completely. If you said "work on schedule or not," the answer you would get is "not." You don't want that.)

Her: Obviously, the assigned work schedule is not being followed.

You: Right. When you don't follow your assigned work schedule, are your projects most likely finished on time or most likely finished late? (You use the words "most likely" because some of them are finished on time.)

Her: I don't care.

You: (She just answered a question which you did not ask. Treat it that way.) I didn't ask you that question. The question I asked was when you don't follow your assigned work schedule, are

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your projects most likely finished on time or most likely finished late?

Her: Some of them are finished late.

You: That's right. (Notice that you are reinforcing correct answers.) When you finish your projects late, are other people who need your work able to do their work or is the work of others delayed?

Her: (silence)

You: Do you want me to repeat the question?

Her: Delayed.

You: Correct. When you delay the work of others is that good service or is that bad service?

Her: I suppose they think it is poor service.

You: Right. As you know, the work we do eventually becomes products for our customers. If we delay the work of others which delays delivery of product, is that good service to customers or bad service?

Her: Bad service.

You: Right. When our customers get bad service or late deliveries do they ignore that or do they buy the product from our competition?

Her: I don't know.

You: Guess.

Her: They probably buy from our competition.

You: Right. When we lose customers to competition, is our revenue retained or is revenue lost?

Her: Revenue is lost.

You: Right. (You just finished communicating *the results of the thing done wrong*, so ask the big question.) Now do you agree there is a problem?

Her: Yes.

Hooray! you just got through the first step, *getting agreement that a problem exists*. You don't need to use the information in box number 3, *consequences if it does not stop*. Now you are ready for the second step of the coaching discussion (Fig. 10.1, page 157) which is mutually discussing alternative solutions. You begin that step by asking, "How are we going to correct this problem?"

## Coaching: The Face-to-Face Discussion 171

But what if this employee hadn't agreed there was a problem and responded like this:

Her: Well, I understand those things happening but I think I am a good worker with a broad picture of what is going on around here and I think of myself as professional who should have some freedom of choice in how I schedule my work.

You didn't get agreement, so move on to the consequences to her if she does not correct the problem.

You: Do you know what is going to happen to you if you continue to work on low-priority work when high-priority work is assigned?

When you ask this question sometimes the employee will say, "You can fire me." If you would not do that, say, "No, I wouldn't; what else?" If you have listed termination as a consequence, say, "You're right. I need someone in this job who will do what needs to be done and I wish it were you; what else?" If the employee says, "If you fire me, there is nothing else," you may reply, "Before we fire you what might happen to you?"

Her: You will probably keep hassling me.

Your first reaction to this response probably is to defend yourself. Don't bother. Only pay attention to responses which will advance the coaching discussion.

You: Last year you said you like the projects I give you because they are creative and interesting. If you continue to work on low-priority work when high-priority work is assigned, will you continue to get the interesting projects or will I give them to someone else?

Her: You mean you will not give me any more creative project work?

You: Right. Also what do you think will happen to your appraisal ratings?

Her: You will probably give me a low rating.



You: Right. If you get a low appraisal rating, what will happen to your next raise?

Her: You mean you will not give me a raise because of this?

You: Right. One of your perks is going to the regional customer meetings. Do you think you will continue to attend those meetings or will I send someone else?

Her: You will probably send someone else.

You: Right. If you don't work according to the assigned priorities, will you be recommended for promotion or not recommended for promotion?

Her: You will probably not recommend me for promotion.

You: Right. We have people in lower-level jobs who would like to have your job. Do you think you will keep your job or will you be demoted?

Her: Would you demote me over this?

You: Right. Neither you nor I have a contract which says we will have a job here forever. If you don't follow the priorities in your work will you be here as long as you want or will you be terminated?

Her: You mean you would fire me over this?

Every time the consequence of firing comes up always repeat the statement, "I need someone in that job who will do what has to be done and I wish it were you."

By now you might have concluded that she feels threatened by this conversation. Well, you are right. Nevertheless, there is a clear difference between you actually threatening to take her job away from her and her recognizing the consequences of *her own behavior*. Threats, per se, usually do not work. Sometimes the threatened worker responds with a resignation on the spot. If termination of employment is a realistic consequence of the employee's unsatisfactory behavior (self-destructive behavior), then it is important (and only fair) that he or she be made aware of that consequence. People are free to act as they choose as long as they are aware of the consequences of that action. It is only reasonable that your workers accept responsibility for their own behavior.

You: Right. I need someone in that job who will do what needs to be done and I wish it were you. Now do you agree we have a problem?

Her: Yes. I agree.

Hooray! You just completed the first step of the coaching discussion.

An interesting point you might raise here is why we pursued this so far, when, in the beginning of this discussion, the employee indicated her willingness to correct it. I can explain by asking you: "If someone is doing something inappropriate now, and she does not think it is a problem or important, what makes you think she will begin to do it appropriately? Also, she probably told you several times before this discussion that she would correct the problem.

A common manager's complaint is that employees frequently promise to eliminate a nonperformance problem, but they don't. The only short cut to step number 1 getting agreement, is if you called somebody in and the discussion went something like this.

You: Do you know why I called you in here?

Employee: Yes, I believe you called me in because I have been late with my projects. I know it creates a problem to the people I service. I am going to correct it.

You: Do you agree that it's a problem?

Employee: Yes, I agree that it's a problem, and I am going to work according to the assigned priorities.

Hooray! You just finished step 1, *getting agreement that a problem exists*, and you are ready for step 2.

One good question that may occur to you is: "What do you do if you can't get an employee to agree that a problem exists?" This will rarely occur if you have done your homework before beginning the coaching discussion. If it does occur, however, it is likely that it will have happened for these reasons:

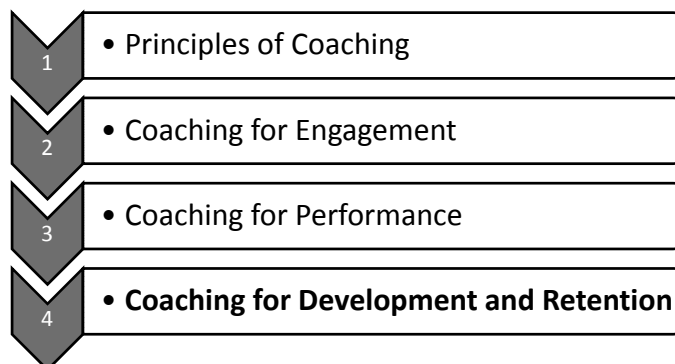
1. You are not dealing with a behavior.
2. What you are dealing with isn't really important.
3. It is important, but you have not identified all of the results and consequences under categories 1 and 2.
4. You are trying to get the employee to recognize unrealistic consequences or hypothetical consequences, which are not likely to occur.
5. You are not using *thought transmission*; instead of the consequences being verbalized by the employee, you are verbalizing them, and the employee is nodding his or her head or merely saying yes or no.



## 5 Step Method

1. Getting Recognition that a problem exists
2. Mutually discuss alternative solutions
3. Mutually determine which solution to implement
4. Follow up to insure solution is implemented
5. Reinforce any achievement

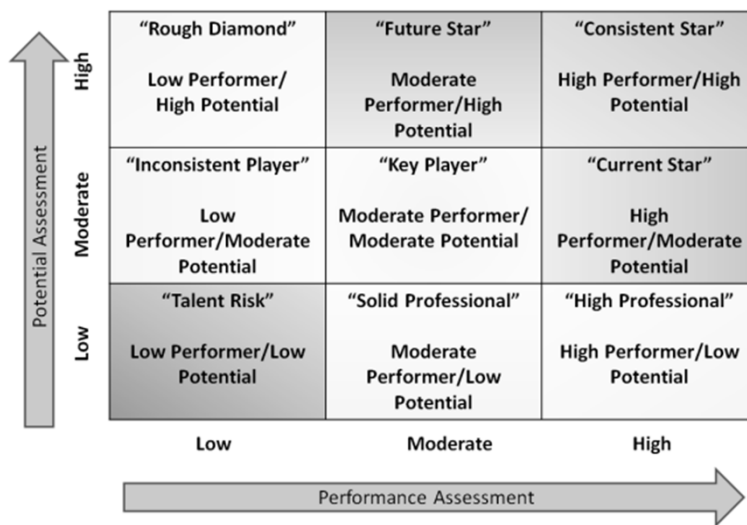
## Agenda



## Coaching for Retention and Development

- 9 Box
- The Stay Interview

### 9 Box



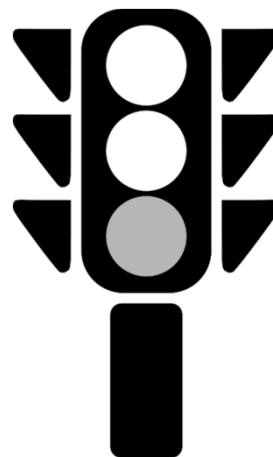
## Stay Interview

- Interview with a valued employee to:
  - Identify factors that keep the person there
  - Identify factors that could cause the person to leave
  - Gather information that could be used in a retention plan



## Your Turn

- Pair up
- Read the questions
- Do a stay interview on your partner
- Switch!



## Identifying High Potential Employees

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Question	Yes	No
1.	Does this person have a proven track record for accomplishing impressive results, not just meeting expectations?		
2.	Does this person take charge and make things happen, or sit back and let things happen before producing?		
3.	Does this person inspire confidence in his or her decision making?		
4.	Can this person lead through persuasion and influence? Can he or she serve as an effective sounding board to others who are struggling with complex issues?		
5.	Do others trust this person to lead projects and teams, even though he or she doesn't have a leadership title?		
6.	Does this person have an understanding of how to separate "what" from "how"? An awareness that establishing the destination before deciding on the mode of transportation is essential?		
7.	Can this person see the big picture? Are priorities apparent, or does she or he become mired in the details and tactics?		
8.	Do obstacles stop this person? Or do they represent challenges, not threats?		
9.	Can this person manage multiple shifting, complex priorities?		
10.	Can this person adapt quickly to change?		



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## TALENT MANAGEMENT

# The Many Benefits That Come From Using 'Stay' Interviews

by  [Dr. John Sullivan](#) on Dec 3, 2013, 9:09 AM | [3 Comments](#)

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*First of three parts*

Many firms [use exit interviews to find out why employees are leaving](#) their jobs.

Unfortunately, asking an employee on their last day “*why are you leaving?*” doesn’t provide useful information in time to prevent the turnover.

A superior approach that I’ve been recommending for over 20 years is a “[stay interview](#).” I alternatively call it a “pre-exit interview,” because it occurs before there is any hint that an employee is about to exit the firm.

A stay interview helps you understand why employees stay, so that those important factors can be reinforced.



## Related Conference Sessions

- [How the Best Recruiting Teams Recruit for a High Performance Workforce](#)

High Performance Workforce  
Summit is in Atlanta, GA, on May 28–

**Definition:** A “*stay interview*” is a periodic one-on-one structured retention interview between a manager and a highly valued “*at-risk-of-leaving employee*” that identifies and then reinforces the factors that drive an employee to stay. It also identifies and minimizes any “*triggers*” that might cause them to consider quitting.

## The many benefits of “stay” interviews

Some of the reasons why stay interviews have proven to be an effective retention tool over the years include:

- **They stimulate the employee** – Most employees are excited simply by the fact that the organization is concerned about their future and that their manager took the time to consult with them.
- **They're personalized** – Unlike engagement surveys and many other retention tools that are focused on what excites a large number of employees, this approach is customized to a single identifiable individual and their wants.
- **They are limited to key employees** – By having a “stay” discussion exclusively with your key employees who are at risk of leaving, you focus the manager's effort and you minimize the overall time that the manager must devote to retention.
- **They include actions** – Unlike exit interviews, which only identify problems, stay interviews also encourage the parties to identify actions that can improve the employee experience and actions that can help eliminate any major frustrators or turnover triggers.
- **Lower employee emotions** – The discussion occurs before the employee has made the decision to consider leaving. As a result, the emotions of the employee (and perhaps the manager) are lower.
- **Low time pressure on the manager** – Because the employee is not actively interviewing for a job, there is less time pressure on the manager to immediately solve the identified retention issues.
- **A focus on the positive** – Most of the interview is focused on identifying and then reinforcing the positive factors that the employee enjoys about their job. Although some negative factors may be covered, they are not the primary focus of the interview.
- **They don't require training** – Most managers can successfully conduct stay interviews without any formal training. A simple “how-to toolkit” is generally all that a manager needs to successfully conduct these interviews.
- **They are inexpensive** – These informal interviews don't require a budget. In most cases, an hour of a manager and an employee's time are the only major cost factors.

### Tomorrow: 20 Stay” Interview Questions to Consider

*Dr. John Sullivan is a well-known teacher, author, and HR thought leader. He is a frequent speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 and Silicon Valley firms. Formerly the chief talent officer for Agilent Technologies (the 43,000-employee HP spin-off), he is now a professor of management at San Francisco State University. An expert on recruiting and staffing, he was dubbed the "Michael Jordan of Hiring" by Fast Company magazine. Contact him at [johns@sfsu.edu](mailto:johns@sfsu.edu).*



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## TALENT MANAGEMENT

# Stay Interviews: 20 Possible Questions You Should Consider Asking

by  [Dr. John Sullivan](#) on Dec 4, 2013, 8:05 AM | [No comments yet](#)

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*Second of three parts*

**Note:** Part 1 of this series was [The Many Benefits That Come From "Stay" Interviews](#)

There is no required standard set of questions that must be used in stay interviews.

Ideally however, you want to limit the number of questions that you select so that you finish the interview within one hour. I have broken the type of questions to select from into four different categories.



## A) Introductory questions

**1. Approaching the employee** – Approach the targeted employee during a lull period and use an introductory statement something along this line. “I want you to know that both I and the firm appreciate your commitment to the firm and the great work that you have been doing.

If you have a few minutes, I would like to have an informal conversation with you to ensure that we fully understand the factors that make you loyal and that keep you here, and any possible actions that we can take to bolster your job experience and to keep you happy.”=

**2. Starting the interview** – Start the interview with a simple introductory statement like the

following. “Thanks for taking the time to have this discussion. As one of our key employees, I want to informally pose some simple questions that can help me to understand the factors that cause you to enjoy and stay in your current role.

During the interview I will also use a series of questions in order to identify any factor that could possibly frustrate you to the point where you might even begin to consider other job opportunities.”

## B) Identify factors that make the employee want to stay

**3. Positive stay factors** – Tell me specifically, what factors cause you to enjoy your current job and work situation (including people, job, rewards, job content, coworkers, management etc.), and as a result, they contribute to your staying at our firm as long as you have? Help us identify the factors that make you more passionate, committed, and loyal to your team and the firm.

**4. Reasons you give to others** – If you have ever been asked by a close friend or have been contacted by an external recruiter, can you tell me what reasons you gave them for wanting to stay at our firm?

**5. “Best work of your life” factors** – Do you feel that you are currently doing “the best work of your life?” Can you list for me the factors that could contribute to you” doing the best for your life?” (Note: this is the No. 1 key retention factor for top performers)

**6. “Job impact” factors** – Do you feel that your work makes a difference in the company and that externally it has a noticeable impact on customers and the world? Do you also feel that your coworkers think that you make a difference? (Note: this is the No.2 key retention factor for top performers.)

**7. Fully used factors** – Do you feel “fully utilized” in your current role? If so, can you identify the factors that make you feel fully utilized? Are there additional things that we can do to more fully take advantage of your talents and interests?

**8. Are you listened to and valued** – Do your colleagues and teammates listen to you and do they value your ideas, inputs, and decisions? How can that area be improved?

## C) Identify actions that might increase loyalty and commitment

**9. Better managed** – If you “managed yourself,” what would you do differently (in relation to managing “you”), that I, as your current manager, don’t currently do?

**10. More positive elements and fewer less desirable ones** – Can you make a list of the elements or motivation factors in your current role that you like best and that you would like “more of? What factors would you miss most if you transferred you to a completely different job? What things do you really miss from your last job at the firm?



Can you also make a list of the less-desirable elements or frustrations in your current role that you would like to do “less of?” Are there any frustration factors that keep you up at night, that enter your mind while driving to work, or that cause you to dread having to come to work at all?

**11. Dream job** – If you were given the opportunity to redesign your current role, can you make a list of the key factors that you would include in your “dream job?”

**12. Where would you like to be** – Can you help us understand your career progression expectations and let us know where you would like to be in the organization two years from now?

**13. Challenge factors** – Can you list for us the most challenging but exciting aspects of your current job situation? Are there actions that we can take to further challenge you?

**14. Recognition** – Can you highlight any recent recognition and acknowledgment that you have received that increased your commitment and loyalty? Are there actions that we can take to further recognize you?

**15. Exposure** – Can you highlight the recent exposure to executives and decision makers that you have experienced? And are there ways that we could increase or improve that exposure?

**16. Learning, growth, and leadership** – Can you highlight for me your positive experiences in the area of learning, development, and growth? And are there ways where we could increase that growth? The employee should also be asked if they desire to move into a leadership role, and if so, what are their expectations, their timetable, and their concerns?

## D) Identify “triggers” that may cause employees to leave

Triggers are occurrences or events that driver loyal employees to at least begin considering looking for new job.

**17. Identify possible retention triggers** – If you were to ever begin to consider leaving ... help me understand what kind of “triggers” or negative factors that might cause you to consider leaving? Please include both job and company trigger factors.

**18. Recent frustrations** – Think back to a time in the last 12 months when you have been at least slightly frustrated or anxious about your current role. Can you list for me the frustration factor or factors that most contributed to that anxiety? Can you also help me understand what eventually happened to lower that frustration level?

**19. Others made you think** – If you’ve had conversations with other employees who have considered leaving or who have actually left our firm, did any of the reasons that they provided for leaving cause you to at least partially nod in agreement? If so, can you list those factors and tell me why they seemed to be at least partially justifiable as a reason for leaving

to you?

**20. Past triggers** – What are the prime factors that caused you to leave your last two jobs? Are there factors from your previous jobs that you hope you will never have to experience again at our firm?

### Tomorrow: 4 Stay interview Formats You Really Should Consider

*Dr. John Sullivan is a well-known teacher, author, and HR thought leader. He is a frequent speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 and Silicon Valley firms. Formerly the chief talent officer for Agilent Technologies (the 43,000-employee HP spin-off), he is now a professor of management at San Francisco State University. An expert on recruiting and staffing, he was dubbed the "Michael Jordan of Hiring" by Fast Company magazine. Contact him at [johns@sfsu.edu](mailto:johns@sfsu.edu).*

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## TALENT MANAGEMENT

# 4 Stay Interview Formats You Really Should Consider

by  [Dr. John Sullivan](#) on Dec 5, 2013, 9:09 AM | [2 Comments](#)

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*Last of three parts*

**Note:** In case you missed them, the first two parts are [The Many Benefits That Come From “Stay” Interviews](#) and [20 Possible Questions You Should Consider Asking](#)

If you know why an individual employee stays, you can obviously reinforce those factors.

And if you know far enough in advance what factors might cause them to leave, you can get a head start in ensuring those turnover causes never occur.

If you have decided to try these stay interviews, here are four “*why-do-you-stay?*” formats to consider using depending on your situation.

## 4 formats to consider

These formats include:

1. **A one-on-one interview with their manager** – Have their manager ask the targeted employee questions during a face-to-face interview. Getting managers to talk to their own employees is such a powerful tool, this format beats the other options hands down. Skype and telephone interviews are also acceptable as close alternatives.



2. **A one-on-one interview with HR** – In cases where the employee's manager may be reluctant or where they may themselves be part of the problem, an HR professional can be assigned to conduct the interview. Because they are experienced interviewers, in some cases, the results can actually be more accurate and insightful.
3. **Questionnaires/ Surveys provided to current employees** – Providing a sample of the currently targeted employees with an electronic survey or questionnaire that asks the same questions in item No. 1 above is an acceptable option. This approach may actually be required for remotely located or shift employees.
4. **A focus group covering a small group of employees** – In this format, you ask a group of targeted employees in the same job family why they stay and what might cause them to leave. Remember not to over generalize with group wide stay or turnover factors.

## Additional stay interview issues and actions

This section contains additional elements, issues, and key questions.

- **When to approach the employee** – Stay interviews should be scheduled periodically — usually once a year during a slack business period. It's usually a good idea to interview all key employees around the same time, so that you can implement common actions at the same time. Conducting them less frequently than every two years can be problematic in periods of high turnover. For new hires who naturally have a higher risk of leaving, conduct stay interviews at four and eight months.
- **Handling possible resistance** – If an individual employee has never participated in a stay interview, you should expect some level of anxiety and even resistance simply because they're not accustomed to talking about their own motivators and frustrations. Typical issues that you might encounter include: concern that you are questioning their loyalty or commitment, being uncomfortable discussing their personal feelings, not having sufficient time to prepare for the discussion, and the fact that the manager doing the interview may be a primary contributor to their frustrations.
- **Who to select for stay interviews** – Don't cover every employee; prioritize your employees based on your estimate of the negative dollar business impact if they left and the probability that they might actually leave within the next 12 months.
- **What if the identified issues are irresolvable?** — In a small percentage of cases, these interviews will bring up some major problems and issues that can't simply be easily resolved by their manager. In those cases, HR should be consulted but if the issue cannot be resolved, a longer-term "replacement plan" as well as a shorter term "backfill plan" will be needed in case the interview actually triggers the employee to leave.
- **Develop a stay interview tool kit** — HR must accept responsibility for developing an effective stay interview approach that all managers can follow. Use the toolkit format because it gives managers choices, so that they can customize the approach to their own

Situation. The toolkit should include dos and don'ts, frequently asked questions and answers, a directory of help services, a list of possible "stay questions" to ask the employee, and most importantly, a list of acceptable retention actions that are available to any manager for improving an employee's job and for minimizing possible retention triggers.

- **Consider related retention actions** – Most organizations that find stay interviews to be highly impactful should also consider implementing post-exit interviews. Post exit interviews occur months after an employee has left. These delayed interviews often reveal the "real underlying reasons" why key people left. Re-recruiting is another tool that should also be considered. Recruiting is where key employees are approached periodically with the goal of completely restructuring their job, so that it becomes at least as exciting as any job that an external recruiter might be able to offer them.

## Final thoughts

The concept of "stay interviews" is simple. You must periodically work with key employees to increase the number of reasons why they stay and to minimize anything that frustrates them and that may act to trigger their departure.

If you are a manager and you think that these interviews may be unnecessary, and if you expect to win "The War To Keep Your Employees," you must forever bury the notion that the best employees will "naturally" stay at your firm without you having to periodically take major actions.

Employee retention is growing as an issue because we live in a world where the minute after a manager does something to anger or frustrate an employee, the employee can react negatively by instantly applying for a new job by simply pushing a single button on their smart phone. This "stay interview" approach is a combination of customer relationship management and market research approaches. And by using it, HR can move retention closer to becoming a more data-driven function.

The stay interview has proven to be easy to learn and highly effective, almost any manager can dramatically reduce their turnover rate and save hundreds of thousands of dollars by implementing this simple and inexpensive tool.

*Dr. John Sullivan is a well-known teacher, author, and HR thought leader. He is a frequent speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 and Silicon Valley firms. Formerly the chief talent officer for Agilent Technologies (the 43,000-employee HP spin-off), he is now a professor of management at San Francisco State University. An expert on recruiting and staffing, he was dubbed the "Michael Jordan of Hiring" by Fast Company magazine. Contact him at [johns@sfsu.edu](mailto:johns@sfsu.edu).*

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## Resources and Next Steps

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- Program evaluation link will be sent by email.
- You'll get a link to a course page with all the materials.

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