

Listen to this excerpt of a talk given by a professional coach trainer.

Optional activity:

While you listen, decide whether the following sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True or false?
1 You should organise more than one meeting in advance.	
2 You should treat all coaches in exactly the same way.	
3 You should give the coachee plenty of advice.	
4 You should build up a relationship with the trainee before you start coaching.	
5 The coachee should decide what the agenda is for each meeting.	
6 You should try not to use negative expressions with your coachee.	
7 If you are upset you should put on a brave face and have a coaching meeting.	
8 You should never postpone a meeting.	

I'm going to spend the last few minutes summing up the main points and offering you some coaching tips that hopefully you'll find useful – whether you are just starting out as a coach or whether you want to improve your coaching skills and learn to be a better coach.

First of all, set up regular meetings, one-to-one meetings. That way you'll develop a relationship with your employee and you'll be providing him with an opportunity to share his ideas with you. Schedule a series of meetings in advance. You might have to change the date or the time of a meeting but at least then your employee – or coachee will see that you are serious.

Don't fall into the trap of comparing the performance of the person you are coaching with the performance of somebody else. Each individual should be treated as a unique situation. This will affect your training style. You should adapt and adjust accordingly.

Think carefully about the starting date and the finishing date. Never start coaching until you have built up a relationship with your employee and don't stop working on that relationship until the coaching stops.

Don't sit across the table from the person you are coaching. This creates an adversarial relationship. Sit side by side or at right angles to each other. It's also a good idea to use a neutral place and not your office.

Rather than base a coaching conversation around an employees weakness or a problem, try approaching it in a positive way. Use the opportunities to build upon the coachee's strengths and explore ways of profiting from opportunities.

Above all, listen. Listen to everything your coachee has to say and listen well. Listen actively and attentively and try not to intrude with your own ideas. It is the coachee who sets the agenda. It's your role to listen and to help him reach his full potential. Similarly, you should avoid giving advice. Instead just try to provide information that the person will find useful for planning their next course of action.

Watch your language. Try to avoid negatives like "I don't think" or "you shouldn't". Praise and encourage as much as possible. Use expressions like "what if we tried to" or "another option might be". Similarly, watch your body language. You must avoid de-motivating your coachee at all costs.

Finally, never coach when you are upset or in a bad mood. You will end up taking things out on your coachee and that is counter-productive and unfair. Wait until you feel calm and are able to focus 100 % on the task at hand, even if this means postponing a meeting. Right. I think that's everything so I'll open the floor to any questions...

Answer key: 1T; 2F; 3F; 4T; 5T; 6T; 7F; 8F.