

5 Steps for Stakeholder Centered Coaching

STEP 1: Receive feedback from self-selected raters (stakeholders)

Successful people have a high need for self-determination. Ultimately, therefore, ownership of the behavioral change process will have to come from the people who are changing their own behavior and not from an internal or external coach. Successful people are responsive to help in achieving goals that they have set. They tend to resist changes that make them feel “judged” or “manipulated”.

Successful people also have a desire for internal consistency. If they publicly state that certain behavior is important, they will be more likely to strive to be a positive role model in demonstrating this behavior.

In most cases, understanding what behaviors need improvement is often not their major challenge. Their major challenge will be demonstrating these behavior changes.

When successful people respect the source of the feedback, they are much more likely to learn and change. They will almost always respond constructively to feedback when they are involved in selecting the behaviors and selecting the stakeholders. By making the stakeholder feedback anonymous, people tend to focus on what they need to improve and not who did the rating. It is hard to deny the validity of items that we say are important as evaluated by stakeholders whom we respect.

STEP 2: After receiving feedback (online survey or behavioral interviewing), select one or two important leadership behaviors to improve

Many of the successful people that we coach are extremely busy. Historically, a main reason that people do not “stick with” their change plan is over-commitment. They don’t need another “laundry list” of goals. Therefore, we suggest that two should be the maximum number of leadership behaviors to focus on improving. In fact, changing just one high-leverage behavior (biggest impact) will create a significant difference.

If successful people see the connection between their behavioral change goals and their personal goals, they are more likely to change. And, if the people we are coaching see the connection between changing behavior, achieving their vision, and living their values, they will be even more committed to 'do what it takes' to achieve lasting change.

STEP 3: Involve respected colleagues in the behavioral change process

Ongoing involvement from supportive colleagues (stakeholders/raters) is almost always associated with positive behavioral change. Colleagues are much more likely to help if they feel that they are respected and that their advice is requested (as opposed to expected).

Successful people respond well to getting ideas and suggestions for the future that are aimed at helping them achieve their goals. When they feel they are being encouraged and supported by the people around them, they will be much more likely to “stick with it” and achieve positive, long-term behavioral change. If they feel they are being judged or manipulated, they will tend to become hostile to the process and quit trying.

Therefore, we teach successful leaders to have involvement conversations with each colleague during which they:

- Thank each colleague for his/her feedback and express gratitude;
- Inform each colleague of the targeted leadership behaviors and why they are important;
- Ask each colleague to help by providing constructive, future-oriented suggestions;
- Recruit the respected colleague to provide ongoing suggestions to help them improve.

And, we establish these ground rules for colleagues (raters/stakeholders):

- 'Let go' of the past and focus on the future
- Provide timely specific feedback on progress over the past month

- Provide helpful suggestions and avoid being cynics, critics, or judges

Not all suggestions are implemented (leadership is not a popularity contest). However, well-intended and constructive suggestions for the future are always appreciated. A key function of the coach is to help the person being coached develop an action based on stakeholder suggestions.

Findings on the usefulness of this process are clear. When successful people write down behavior change goals, announce these goals to respected colleagues, and involve the colleagues in helping them improve, positive measurable change is much more likely to occur.

STEP 4: Develop a follow-up process that provides an opportunity for ongoing dialogue on selected behaviors with selected stakeholders

Our research on feedback and follow-up has clearly shown that leaders are much more likely to achieve a positive, measurable, sustainable change in behavior if they consistently involve selected colleagues (through follow-up conversations) in the change process. These follow-up dialogues are a focused conversation and need take only a few minutes (very time efficient). The recommended frequency of these follow-up conversations is monthly.

When stakeholders/raters are trained to be supportive, the follow-up process provides an ongoing opportunity for constructive feedback, recognition, and most importantly feedforward (suggestions). It reinforces the individual's public commitment to change. Ongoing dialogue creates a process in which both parties are focused on improving performance and the relationship, not on judging each other.

STEP 5: Conduct mini surveys at the 6 and 12-month mark

Mini-surveys are a simple and efficient way to measure behavioral change. Mini-surveys are very short and focus only on the selected leadership behavior(s) that has/have been selected by the person being coached. They are designed so that the raters evaluate behavior that occurs only during the coaching period. They focus on the stakeholder's/rater's perception of the individual's improvement - not their effort. A sample of a mini-survey follows.

Table 1: Sample Mini-Survey

Five months ago Jim committed to improve the following leadership behaviors. Please rate from your POV Jim's change in effectiveness over the last 5 months.

Jim's commitments were:

Individual Items

Goals:

1. I will listen to differing POVs with an open mind before giving his opinion
-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 NCN NI
2. I will assess individual's ability and confidence in determining the appropriate leadership style in differing situations.
-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 NCN NI

To what extent has Jim followed-up with you on the areas that he has committed to improve? (Check one)

No Perceptible Follow-Up

Little Follow-Up

Some Follow-Up

Frequent Follow-Up

Consistent (Periodic) Follow-Up

1. What specifically has Jim done to improve that you want to reinforce?
2. What specifically suggestions can you give Jim moving forward to improve even more?

After receiving the mini-survey results the individual thanks the raters, involves them in future change and continues the process. This is almost always a positive ex-

perience for the individual and for the raters/co-workers. When done consistently well, the positive change is seen quickly, builds momentum, and is sustained.

In summary, helping successful people change a couple key leadership behaviors is both an opportunity and a challenge. Our “before-and-after” research has taught us a great lesson – successful people will not change behavior simply as a result of attending a course or seminar. They get better because of their efforts and the efforts of their respected stakeholders/raters.

Therefore, in our unique coaching process, we work with the individuals we are coaching AND their colleagues (stakeholders/raters). Both are actively engaged, and both benefit from the process. Our unique coaching process is a true systems approach to behavior change and performance improvement.