

USING A COACHING STYLE: FLEXING YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Could you use a coaching style more often? Coaching can improve people's contribution, boost team performance, and ultimately take some of the pressure off you. It takes time and energy upfront, but do you remember the managers who helped you develop, or the ones who left you to sink or swim?

A coaching approach is not always appropriate. In an emergency, everyone needs to follow instructions. In a case of totally unsatisfactory performance or poor behaviour, decisive action may be needed, rather than hoping that coaching will resolve the situation.

Adopting a coaching style requires a leader to stand back from any personal reaction to an individual and remember that most people come to work wanting to do their best.

Try asking yourself:

- Am I providing enough clarity about the work to be done, the outcome that's needed, and the timeframe for next steps?
- Am I giving them space to explain what support they may need and what may be holding them back?
- What type of approach will work best for this person's personality? Does it help them to have written guidance to take away, or a diagram?
- How can I give feedback in a way that they can receive it?
- Do I know what motivates them? For example, if they are ambitious for promotion, can I explain how addressing this challenge will help them?

Coaching works best when you are genuinely curious about the other person and what would help them be at their best. It helps if you:

- Use open questions and allow the person time to think before they reply
- Listen carefully and build on what they say
- Check you have a shared understanding of what happens next
- Encourage them to draw on their previous experiences and to be confident they can do what's needed.

This is the last in our series of Prompts about flexing our leadership style.