

Growth Coaching – Key Learnings and Reflections

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As an educational leader, I was looking for ways to build the teaching and learning capacity in my school. Growth Coaching would provide me with an opportunity to develop further my own practice and get more value out of the professional development already on offer at my school. I was grappling with how to be an instructional leader who gets everyone pulling in the one direction and using their talents in ways that really make a difference. I was uncertain about how to give clear, productive feedback.

At Growth Coaching International, they work with educational leaders looking to get better outcomes - for themselves, for their staff and ultimately from their students.

Growth Coaching International works with educational leaders who recognise that the quality of leadership across the school is one of the most important drivers of improved teaching practice and student learning outcomes.

The Growth Approach

Coaching sessions are broadly structured around the GROWTH model.

8 steps of coaching



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This model has proven to be both popular and effective in providing a transparent approach to coaching conversations and a simple but effective scaffold for assisting leaders to have more

effective coaching conversations with their own people.

The coaching approach encourages coaching participants to involve colleagues in their own coaching journey.

Solutions Focus

Solutions Focus is an exciting and complete approach to change. It is now being used as the methodology of choice where efficient, respectful and lasting change is wanted.

In helping individuals and teams progress on their challenges the Solutions Focus approach seeks to:

Bring attention to what's wanted rather than focus on what's wrong and analysis of the problem situation;

Highlight current resources and strengths that can help things progress rather concentrate on gaps and what's missing

Stay at the surface and address what emerges in conversation rather than explore underlying motivations

Emphasize progress towards the what's wanted via small next steps rather develop long term goal achievement plans

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My training required me to work with a person over a period of time, to talk through and use the processes I had learned. I also had a coach who worked with me on my own personal goals. I have outlined below the processes I used – I feel this is the best way to provide you with an insight into Growth Coaching.

Background to the Coaching Relationship

I coached an employee from Auckland Regional Transport. D is a Community Transport Co-ordinator and more recently holds a new position with Travelwise.

We established a relationship of working together under the Travelwise programme because my school is involved in this. Knowing that I am training to become a Growth Coach, D approached me and asked that I work with her. We discussed leadership coaching, teambuilding and the growth approach.

Because of my training in NLP, I felt many of the aspects of Growth Coaching mirrored what I knew from NLP. This meant I could integrate my NLP knowledge with Growth Coaching so that I felt competent in working with this programme.

D and I discussed the Growth Coaching model in relation to her making progress in achieving her goals. We had eight coaching sessions. In all sessions, I used the Growth Model. I linked NLP questioning techniques to this process as I have found that they align well.

At session four, D told me of an opportunity that had arisen at Auckland Transport. We worked together to identify the skills she felt she needed and how she would go about the application process. She outlined what she would like to achieve in relation to this position. It was important to focus on the 'solutions and her strengths', on what she does well, rather than on negative aspects. We talked using the 'Solutions Focus' model.

D won the position. She has become very enthusiastic with the Growth Coaching model. The relationship we have developed has meant that I can act more quickly on the information she gives me, meaning that my questioning using the Growth model has become more direct in each of the levels of the Growth Coaching model.

I now feel competent in using the Growth Coaching model. I demonstrated a high level of commitment to using the three pillars of coaching in relation to working with D. I asked lots of solutions focused questions which meant that D could focus on the desired results.

In working with D, it was wonderful to see her developing her own thoughts, perceptions and beliefs. She was able to see how in developing these, she was able to identify significant issues and work towards specific actions that enabled her to practice this new learning. She enjoyed the opportunities to explore new ideas, to try these out and celebrate her successes.

I have developed a coaching plan as a result of working with D. This allowed me to coach her in developing goals that were measureable and specific to her needs. I became more competent in working with D when her focus changed. This meant that we could move between the contexts of what we were discussing to being aware of goals she might like to set in the future. She was happy for us to continue working on her specific goal when she knew we could talk about other areas in the future.

Before working with D, I thought about personal goals for my own development in working as a Growth Coach. It was important that I:

- Exhibit and use integrity at all times
- Develop my ability to ask the right questions
- Be supportive, honest, fair and be motivated
- Enjoy opportunities to search for new ideas
- Know the importance of establishing relationships, being aware of cultural values
- Be an active listener, developing trust and focusing on the relationship

As a result of Growth Coaching, I am aware of my own Emotional Intelligence Competencies.

Specifically I:

- Understand the way I am, have self-confidence, am realistic of my own abilities and maintain a sense of humour.

- Integrity is my most important value. At all times, I am conscientious and have very high standards. I am aware though, that I can make mistakes and am open to support and suggestions.
- I am particularly aware of cultural differences and work hard to understand these.
- I actively listen to other people's ideas and welcome their input.
- I am now working with and coaching members of the school leadership team in modelling Growth Coaching. We are working together to develop their understanding of Growth Coaching with the intention of introducing this to the whole staff. We have an excellent professional relationship where we acknowledge and celebrate our successes, working together to manage any conflicts.

The implications for my coaching practice

The major implication for my coaching practice is that I introduced Growth Coaching in my school.

I am already working with the senior leadership team. In this I have taught them:

- The Growth Coaching model
- Have worked with each of them to set a goal
- Have had two ½ day workshops where I developed their learning of the growth model, the coaching skills, emotional intelligence
- Asking questions
- Goal setting

From the outset, my Senior Leadership Team and I have focussed on communication and listening. We have discussed what it means to be an attentive listener and how to enhance effective communication.

We work together on developing their Growth Coaching skills throughout the year. My two Deputy Principals are booked on the two-day Growth Coaching course later this year.

At Hillsborough Primary School, we felt the time had come to consider our appraisal programme. I feel that while the current programme meets the requirements of the Teacher's Council, I wanted to provide opportunities for personal growth and give the senior leadership team and staff a new direction in appraisal. I feel that introducing Growth Coaching will be of tremendous benefit to all of the staff at Hillsborough Primary School. We would provide professional development opportunities for the rest of the staff and introduce Growth Coaching as our appraisal model from 2015.

The coaching practice I have had with D for eight sessions and further coaching with three other people, together with working with Nicky Knight, my coach, has meant that I could use the learning I had gained when attending training to become a Growth Coach. I believe it is really important to get the best out of people.

I have really enjoyed the opportunity to train to become a Growth Coach. I am passionate in helping, guiding, assisting people in their personal and professional growth.

Thanks to you all for this opportunity.