

The OSCAR Coaching Model

The OSCAR model builds on the well-known coaching model of GROW. However, it is particularly suited for a business setting because it aligns itself with the concerns of managers; namely, thinking about the risks and the consequences, the possibilities, and the steps to get there. It is also useful for managers as it has a robust review process.

A description of the OSCAR Model

OUTCOME

People with well-formed outcomes achieve much more than those without clear outcomes. Successful coaching sessions typically involve helping the coachee to develop a deeper understanding of the outcome they want. Most people are not used to thinking in terms of outcomes and therefore the initial outcome they present initially has not got the clarity needed to become desirable and motivational.

It is the skilful questioning of the coach that enables the coachee to develop a “well formed outcome.” The word ‘outcome’ is often anchored to a feeling of collaboration and involvement as opposed to feelings of demand and pressure, often associated with the words ‘goal’ and ‘target’. Positive outcomes are often achieved in an environment of collaboration and mutual support. Telling someone to achieve a target is very different from allowing an outcome to be defined in partnership and allowing a mutually agreed action plan to emerge to achieve it.

SITUATION

Once the coachee has clarified and tightly defined their outcome the next step is to clarify the current situation. Very often coaches and managers as coaches spend too much time focusing on the current situation, thus allowing the coachee to get bogged down in the problem rather than focus on the outcome. The emphasis here is to help the person being coached to acknowledge the current situation and to recognise the impact the issue is having on them and perhaps the rest of the team, the organisation, their personal lives, family etc.

The purpose of asking ‘What is the current situation?’ is to raise the awareness of the person being coached and to help them understand the full impact of the current situation and what the implications will be if they are not able to deal with it effectively. Alternating between desired outcomes and the current situation helps the coachee to ‘reframe’ their thoughts and beliefs. By just using the first two components of the model the manager is unconsciously starting to apply some key psychological principles to the process.

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

By using OSCAR the coach/manager encourages the team member to generate a number of options to choose from. The aim is to get the coachee to generate at least three choices. Having multiple choices raises awareness in the coachee that they do have control of their decision making i.e. the coachee is no longer able to say “I don’t have a choice” or “It’s all out of my control” or even, “I have to do this or that” - using OSCAR enables the coach to put the control firmly back into the hands of the coachee.

By asking ‘What are the consequences of that choice?’ the coach challenges the coachee to look deeper at all the upsides and downsides of that choice. Again, the simplicity of the

model enables the manager to help raise the awareness of the coachee about the impact of their behaviours, attitudes and decisions.

It is worth noting that at this point the motivational aspects of pleasure and pain can be used to encourage the coachee to take action (Anthony Robbins 1997). There are, after all always at least two choices – do something, or do nothing. Doing nothing is often the most popular choice people make. It is only when the consequences of the choice to do nothing are explored that the coachee will be driven to want to act. Upside consequences and downside consequences, positives and negatives, pluses and minuses, pleasure and pain – this is easily understood language and a technique most people have already used when they have made decisions in the past.

Once the coachee has generated sufficient choices, and a degree of motivation has been achieved, the next question to ask is “Out of all those choices, which one(s) will best move you towards your outcome?” This is the action step within the OSCAR model.

ACTION

Here the coach helps the coachee to formulate the:

- Specific actions they will take
- When they will take those actions
- And on a scale of one to ten how willing they are to take them
- Ongoing process of review.

It is vital that the coachee takes full responsibility for the actions to be taken. All the actions must be time framed, measurable and reviewable. A big problem facing managers is that team members struggle to come up with actions. This happens either because:

- The outcome hasn't been defined enough to provide clarity
- It isn't something that they feel they have control of
- They are so conditioned to being told what to do that the first time they are asked what they are going to do they are wary of giving the 'wrong' answer
- They really don't know what to do, i.e. they haven't got the knowledge they need and they may need support with this

If they truly don't know what action to take, then the coach/manager is now aware that there may be a training or communication issue that needs to be addressed. If they feel they have no choice in the matter, the coach/manager needs to raise awareness in the coachee that there is always a choice. If the person being coached doesn't believe that their actions will make a difference, then they will be reluctant to voice them let alone commit to take them. Has anyone ever told you they were going to do something – then didn't do it? Why does this happen? Simply, it was not important enough to the person committing to take those actions. What raises the commitment to action is a clear outcome, a desire to move from the current situation to that outcome, involvement in the logical process of making the best possible choices by considering the upsides and downsides of each choice. It is only after these steps that real commitment can be made to actually following through and taking action.

The role of the coach is to remain neutral through the coaching process. However, the problem for line managers is that they can never truly be neutral because whatever action their team member takes the ultimate responsibility lies with them and that is why the review component of OSCAR is so important.

REVIEW

When the coach and coachee agree to review the action plan, a subtle pressure is left with the coachee that the choice not to take the actions agreed is no longer an attractive choice. It is vital that the manager as coach ensures these reviews are held – otherwise a strong message is given out that the actions agreed are optional!

In business it is often far too easy for the agreed actions to get lost in the everyday 'urgent' issues of the job. To stop that happening and to ensure that the person being coached prioritises their agreed actions it is key that they commit to taking some action within the immediate future – to develop momentum and maintain motivation. The review component of OSCAR allows the line manager to monitor the team member's progress and commitment. This is also useful for another reason – namely that the manager's 'manager' will want some assurance that the manager knows what's going on in their team!

ACTIVITY:
Think about your own workplace. How might using the OSCAR model help you and your colleagues?

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O Outcome (Your Destination)	Outcome Helping the team member to clarify their outcomes. What do they really want? What's on your mind? What's the issue? / What do you want to discuss / achieve? What's important about that (issue) for you now? What would be different if you achieved that? What's the real challenge here for you? What do you want? What do you need from me / how can I help? (Examples of outcomes 'I need to know how to (a behaviour to address) or 'I'd like to get clearer about (a dilemma to resolve)
S Situation (your starting point)	Situation Helping the team member gain clarity around where they are right now and to raise awareness in the person being coached (not the coach / leader). Caution getting embroiled in 'the story'. What is the current situation? What's actually happening? Who is involved? What's standing in your way? Or What's your own responsibility here? What will happen if you do nothing? If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to? (You can ask again....)What's the real challenge here for you? On a scale of 1-10, how important is this issue? On a scale of 1-10, how much energy do you have to tackle this issue?
C Choices and Consequences (Your route options)	Choices and Consequences Helping the team member to generate as many alternative choices as possible and raise awareness about the consequences of each possible choice. What have you already tried? What choices do you have? (Including a probe into a 'do nothing' option) What is the upside and downside of each choice? (consequences) (e.g. time, cost, people involved, how practical, any unexpected negative consequences?) What do you now think is your best option? Aim for 3 different options including doing nothing

A Action (Your detailed plan)	Actions Helping the team member clarify their next steps forward and to take responsibility for their own action plan. What actions will you take? What will you do next? How will you do it? When will you do it? With whom? What support do you need? (How will you get that?) On a scale of 1 to 10 how willing are you to take those actions (If evident) I sense a little reluctance here. How committed are you to doing this? How will you know when you have achieved it? What might get in the way? What's a reasonable time to come back to me / to review progress / to report to x... What is your first step?
R Review (Making sure you are on track)	Review This step creates an ongoing process of review and evaluation and support their accountability. Helping the team member to check that they are on course and if they are able to adapt to any changes of plan. What actions are you actually taking? How far are the actions moving you towards your outcome? What milestones have you already achieved? How has your plan changed? How will you celebrate success? When will we next meet to evaluate progress?