

THE eManager

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING HEALTH SERVICES

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Coaching for Professional Development and Organizational Results

Editors’ Note

MSH HAS DEVELOPED AN APPROACH TO HELPING MANAGERS become more like coaches, which has proven successful in various settings. In Nicaragua, for example, coaching became a critical part of an organization’s push toward financial sustainability in a time of crisis. It transformed the way senior managers and supervisors related to clinic directors, whose roles needed to change in fundamental ways (see the Working Solution on page 13).

THIS ISSUE OF THE *eMANAGER* will help you examine your managerial practices and give you the tools to expand your role from manager to manager as coach. Using the OALFA (Observe, Ask, Listen, give Feedback, and reach an Agreement) self-assessment, you can evaluate your coaching skills and make a plan to refine and apply them. ■



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The Manager as Coach

Health care providers who have moved into managerial positions have to be able to coordinate the actions of their direct reports, work with the resources—money and people—they are given, and create the conditions for outstanding performance. They have to be more than managers: they have to be coaches, too.

Coaching was originally associated with sports. No one can expect to reach excellence in a sport without a coach. In sports having a coach is a smart move, not something to be ashamed of or a sign of incompetence. A coach is there to help an athlete improve and succeed.

The concept and the practice of coaching in sports are transferable to the health care setting; after all, we want our teams to be successful, resilient, and strong so that they can provide high-quality health services. Every person on the team has to realize his full potential, and the team members have to work harmoniously to reach the team's goal and manage the stresses that come with facing challenges together.

Without realizing it, managers have always relied heavily on some aspects of coaching. Coaching is typically about giving directions, instilling esprit de corps, and disciplining team members who are not contributing effectively to the team's performance. But coaching is also about challenging the members of a team, recognizing their achievements, giving them honest feedback, listening with attention, and encouraging the development of talent so that each person can grow as a professional and valuable member of the team. By looking at what coaches do, we can expand the manager's role beyond giving orders to include providing feedback, challenges, and support. The manager as coach can push people to excel by drawing on untapped talent and underdeveloped skills and by cultivating the psychological hardiness needed to overcome setbacks.

What Is a Manager?

This issue uses the term "manager" to mean a *manager who leads*, at any level, by applying management practices and skills such as planning and organizing work and leadership practices such as inspiring and mobilizing staff.

Managing means organizing the internal parts of the organization to implement systems and coordinate resources to produce reliable performance. Leading means enabling others to face challenges and achieve results under complex conditions.

See *Managers Who Lead* (MSH 2005) for more information about these interlinked roles.

Workplace Challenges for the Manager as Coach

When managers are asked what is most challenging about their jobs and what takes the most time, the answers almost always relate to personnel and interpersonal issues. By learning to coach,

managers can address many recurrent problems and free up some of the time they spend on those problems. At the same time, they can nurture their staff to contribute more and better to the performance of the team and the organization. Typical workplace challenges that managers can address through coaching include:

- What can I do if someone is performing satisfactorily but I know she has much more potential?
- What do I do if I cannot see the commitment in some members of my team but I believe it is there?
- What should I do if despite the efforts of a team member he is not achieving the results I expect?
- What can I do if a member of my staff is very skilled but her behavior is damaging to team morale?

Coaching as an Intervention for Professional and Organizational Improvement

Coaching is an ongoing partnership that helps people who are coached to produce positive results in the workplace. Through the process of coaching (as defined by the *International Coach Federation*), people being coached deepen their learning, improve their performance and job satisfaction, and enhance their quality of life.

Coaching consists of a series of conversations over time, rather than a single conversation in the context of a performance review. If after an initial conversation the employee is interested in being coached, positive change becomes possible and the dilemmas mentioned in the previous section can be addressed.

A coach helps the person being coached:

- *understand his behavior* and how it is related to his performance better;
- *develop alternative behaviors* that are more effective;
- build confidence to *practice new behaviors* to produce intended professional as well as organizational results.

What Coaching Is Not

Coaching is not mentoring or psychotherapy, nor is it the same as counseling or supervision (supportive, facilitative, or traditional). *Mentoring* is about teaching new or junior employees how to advance and get things done in the workplace. Sometimes we call this “learning the ropes.” *Psychotherapy* is the application of a set of techniques by a trained expert to help the patient overcome, resolve, or cure the current manifestations of underlying psychological problems. *Counseling* focuses on a specific issue such as career, grief, addictions, health, marriage, or family dynamics. The counselor helps the person cope better and solve her problem using techniques that the client can learn to apply on her own.

The purpose of *supervision* has traditionally been to ensure that work, both technical and administrative, conforms to organizational and clinical standards and policies. The concept of facilitative supervision, introduced by AVSC (now EngenderHealth) in the 1980s is closest to the concept of coaching: Facilitative supervision is an approach to supervision that emphasizes learning, joint problem solving, and two-way communication between the supervisor and those being supervised. Facilitative supervision is carried out in a group setting (with a clinic team, for example) because the issues that need to be addressed can best be addressed collectively.

How Coaching Differs from Supervision, Counseling, or Mentoring

The distinctive features of coaching are that it takes place primarily in a one-on-one relationship (unlike facilitative supervision), does not require specialized training (unlike psychotherapy and counseling), and focuses on an aspect of performance that needs to be improved (unlike mentoring). The manager as coach helps the person being coached make distinctions about his own behavior at work and how this behavior is related to his performance. The coaching conversation helps generate new behaviors to produce intended results. As the practice of these new behaviors begins to bear fruit, the person being coached develops confidence in his ability to be a valuable member of the organization and work team.

Skills and Attributes of Coaches

Coaches need to have a strong desire to help others succeed by exploring their options and developing their potential. Because the beliefs we hold about people color our coaching interactions, coaches should also cultivate self-awareness by honing their ability to look critically at themselves. Coaches must also be sensitive to the political and social contexts in which the person they are coaching operates, and they have to be capable of observing and understanding the subtleties of human behavior and emotion.

Using the self-assessment in this issue can help you determine if you have these skills. If you want to build your coaching skills, you can do so on your own (by reading, taking an online course, or observing a great coach), through a workshop, or with help from a mentor or colleague whom you have asked to help you practice listening and giving feedback.

How Does Coaching Work?

An organization's failure to achieve its objectives can sometimes be traced to unclear objectives or a mismatch between what people set out to do and what they actually accomplish. These failures cause frustration and waste resources. An employee may blame other people or circumstances when she does not produce her intended results, absolving herself from taking responsibility. But if the coach helps her realize how her behavior influences her work, she can change her behavior and produce better results.

To change her actions, an employee has to examine the underlying reasoning that produced them. A coach can help her articulate her reasoning and gradually modify her behavior. When she succeeds in changing her actions and brings about the results she intended, then she has learned something.

The Coaching Conversation

A good place to start is to have a conversation with the person being coached to explore whether she acknowledges that there is a difficulty in her work that she cannot resolve independently. If the employee is open to receiving help and willing to learn and make changes, then the foundation for a good

coaching experience is set. If periodic supervision or performance review conversations are already established in the organization, the manager can use these as a springboard for a series of coaching sessions that focus on aspects of the employee's performance that could be improved or on the development of untapped talent.

During the coaching conversation the coach plays various roles. She provides support by showing respect for and acceptance of the person being coached. She helps him find answers rather than providing them. She poses questions to help the person being coached to reformulate his interpretations of the relationship between his actions and the results. The coach also challenges him by asking about his reasoning and pointing out inconsistencies among reasons, beliefs, and actions. She helps in the discovery of new possibilities for action, supports the development of new competencies, and asks for a commitment to the agreed-upon goals.

OALFA: A Set of Coaching Skills

To hold an effective coaching conversation, you need to develop a few basic skills. A simple acronym—OALFA—can remind you of the five skills: Observe, Ask, Listen, give Feedback, and arrive at an Agreement. These are skills that all managers need and which you probably already practice, although perhaps not as fully as you could. Each skill is discussed separately in the following sections.

Observe

Sometimes we do not see what is obvious because our minds are busy with other things. Quietly observing someone's face or the way a person walks into a room or sits at her desk can give us many clues about her state of mind or mood. Does she appear tense or relaxed, tired or lively? Does she appear upset, depressed, or happy? What nonverbal cues is she communicating through body language and facial expressions?

Share your observations in a nonjudgmental way to test the inferences you have drawn from them. For example, "You seem tired, am I right?" Be ready to explain what led you to that observation ("You are yawning a lot"). Perhaps the person is sick or

something has happened that he is not willing to share. Use the opening to express your genuine concern and as a first step toward establishing trust.

Ask

Asking, as in inquiring rather than making a request, is one of the most important tools of a coach. This inquiry is useful only if it is based on a real interest in the reality of the person being coached. This reality includes his experience, feelings, interpretations, reasoning, and point of view. *Authentic inquiry* presupposes that you are truly interested in the other person and recognize that you do not know what she is experiencing unless you ask. Doing so requires humility, especially if in your culture older and senior people are assumed to be more knowledgeable.

However, you do not have to take everything the other person tells you at face value. Your inquiry can

help the person see things he did not see before and adjust his reasoning where it is illogical. Questioning, and in some cases gentle confrontation, can open doors to new perspectives.

Asking good questions is an art that can be learned. Not all questions are good questions. Sometimes questions masquerade as inquiry but are really judgments or commands presented as a question, for example, “Don’t you think you should have done that differently?” Such inquiry blocks learning, which defeats the purpose of coaching. Leading questions also block learning. Table 1 contrasts inquiry that encourages learning with inquiry that blocks learning. Sometimes it is only the tone of the questioner’s voice that separates the two.

By asking questions the coach can help the person being coached learn to correct errors and change behaviors on her own. This is very different from being *told* to correct an error or change a behavior.

Table 1. Two Types of Inquiry

Inquiry That Encourages Learning	Inquiry That Blocks Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do you see this differently? ▪ What’s your reaction to . . . ? ▪ What led you to that conclusion/action? ▪ Could you say more about that? ▪ Why is that so? ▪ What makes you . . . ? ▪ What kept you from telling me? ▪ How do you think I/you contributed to that? ▪ How can I/you/we . . . ? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don’t you agree? (especially when said in an intimidating way) ▪ Did you do that because of X, Y, or Z? ▪ Do you really think you did a good job? (when you think he did not) ▪ Why don’t you just try what I’m suggesting? ▪ Why didn’t you just tell me? ▪ Why are you so defensive? ▪ Why don’t you . . . ? ▪ What’s the matter with you?

Source: MSH 2005, p. 223

Listen

Listening is not the same as hearing. Peter Senge writes, “Listening requires opening ourselves. Our typical patterns of listening in difficult situations are tactical, not relational. We listen for what we expect to hear. We sift through others’ views for what we can use to make our own points. We measure success by how effective we have been in gaining advantage for our favored positions” (in Kahane 2004, p. x).

In a world where technical expertise is highly valued, people often do not listen carefully unless they think the person speaking is an expert. Good listening involves an attitude as well as a skill: You have to believe that the other person is worth listening to and has something of value to say.

Listening is difficult when your own mind is busy chattering away or occupied with concerns that have

nothing to do with the other person. Listening is hard when you have a strong urge to say something or when you have already come to a conclusion about the other person's problems or issues.

There are three disciplines for learning to listen better. First, true listening requires the discipline of **focus**: focus on the other person and your intent to help him. Second, listening requires *empathy*, the ability to put yourself into the other person's shoes: imagine what the world looks and feels like from his perspective. And third, listening requires the ability to handle *silence* with some degree of comfort.

To practice *focus*, verify that you have correctly heard and understood the other person by periodically summarizing, briefly, what she said. Ask if that is what she meant to say. In making your summary, consider also the emotions behind the words. For example: "Let me see if I have understood you well. You tell me that you . . .? Is this what happened?" This summary gives the person being coached a chance to correct misperceptions or misunderstandings and shows that you really listened.

To practice *empathy*, try to rephrase in your own words what you think the other person must be feeling, using body language and facial expressions as cues but also the feelings you would imagine having yourself in a similar situation. For example, when somebody is talking about having to give the result of a positive HIV test to a pregnant woman, you could say, "That must have been very difficult for you." Your words will convey that you are sympathetic (literally, "suffering with her"). By leaving a pause after the statement you give the other person the opportunity to confirm the feeling ("Yes, indeed.") or deny it ("No, not really, I was more . . .").

Becoming comfortable with *silence* takes practice. In our hurry to fill up silence with chatter, we miss opportunities for insights and revelations. Let the person being coached think about a question for a while; this pause may improve his answer or prevent simplistic answers. Practice being silent by not jumping in, counting until 30 if you must, and observing what happens.

Feedback

The purpose of feedback is to give the person being coached information about how others see and experience what she does and says. Giving feedback is like holding up a mirror in front of someone. If the feedback is provided with care and respect, then the person being coached can determine whether she likes what she sees in the mirror or not.

A good way to prepare for giving feedback is to look for what the person being coached is doing well, what he needs to do better or improve, and what he needs to stop doing. Starting with positive feedback builds confidence. By looking for things that can be improved, the coach can shorten or even eliminate the list of what needs to be stopped. After all, most things that a person should stop doing could be reframed as something that can be done better. This sort of feedback combines reinforcement of what the person is doing well with giving suggestions about where more practice or learning is needed. Most people are grateful for such feedback because they want to do better. But be specific. Generalized statements that include words like "always" or "never" sound like accusations, which make people defensive. When their primary concern is defending themselves, they stop listening. See Box 1 for tips on providing effective feedback.

Agreement

The next step in a coaching conversation is exploring alternatives to current behavior and making a decision about what course of action to follow. The coach helps in this process by summarizing insights into how the actions have led to unintended results and inquiring about expectations of future actions. At this stage, the coach draws on all the OALFA skills to arrive at one or more alternative actions with a view to producing different outcomes and developing agreements about next steps. These plans should include a commitment on the part of the person being coached to make the necessary changes and practice the new behaviors before the next meeting. Some people are so disciplined that they can do this on their own, but most people need help from the coach to stick to their commitments and give them feedback, as they tend to fall back into old patterns.

Box 1. Providing Effective Feedback

- Select an appropriate time and private place to talk.
- Be specific about the behavior that you appreciated or that bothered you.
- Describe the facts; for example, say “On Tuesday and Friday you were 30 minutes late” instead of “You always come in late.”
- Describe the impact (positive or negative) of the action on you, your work, or the work of your team.
- Express your feelings without blaming the other person for them.
- Give the other person the chance to express his point of view, feelings, or difficulties.
- Make a specific request for a different behavior when an action or behavior has had a negative effect.

Thus, the final part of the coaching process includes an agreement to talk again to review what changes the person being coached has made and provide feedback on what happened as a result. Write down the agreement, including detailed instructions on the

timing of follow-up conversations and the support you will offer along the way.

Box 2 provides an example of using OALFA to address a workplace issue.

Box 2. Using a Coaching Conversation to Address a Workplace Issue

Ana was a well-prepared, high-functioning deputy administrator of a district hospital whose managerial and technical expertise was recognized by her team members. Despite her skills, however, members of her team complained about her, and some of them refused to work with her. Her supervisor observed that when someone expressed a point of view Ana thought was incorrect, she sometimes responded without sensitivity. As a result, sometimes her colleagues lost face in front of the team, or, worse, in front of clients. The supervisor asked Ana if she wanted to explore ways to get along better with her team members, and she agreed.

In the coaching conversation, her boss used inquiry to discover why Ana was having conflicts with colleagues. The coach asked her to describe what happened when there were conflicts, and he expressed empathy with her commitment to telling the truth. At the same time, he asked her, “How do people react when you criticize them publicly? How do you think they feel?” Through this inquiry Ana became aware that she was not heeding other people’s feelings.

Once she separated her commitment to telling the truth from her commitment to treating her team members respectfully, the coach helped her explore new ways of dealing with colleagues. The coach asked questions such as: “Is there a way you can maintain your integrity while respecting others’ feelings? What can you do to make your colleagues part of the success instead of embarrassing them?”

Through the coaching conversation, Ana’s boss led her to discover what she had not previously recognized about her own behavior at work. She learned strategies for interacting more tactfully with her colleagues.

OALFA Self-Assessment

The self-assessment will help you evaluate your proficiency in observing, asking questions, listening, giving

feedback, and coming to an agreement. Score each of the following statements by assigning a number from 1 to 5 using the scale at the top of Box 3.

Box 3. OALFA Self-Assessment

1	2	3	4	5
I seldom behave like this	Sometimes I behave like this	I frequently behave like this	Very frequently I behave like this	I almost always behave like this
When providing coaching . . .				
Observe				Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I pay attention to the other's facial expressions and body language. ▪ I look for opportunities to have a conversation and work things out when there are misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. ▪ I am aware of other people's moods. ▪ I'm observant; I notice when someone wants to talk to me. ▪ I am able to distinguish a coaching opportunity from routine supervisory interactions. 				
				<i>Observe Total:</i>
Ask				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My questions are motivated by a desire to understand the person or situation better. ▪ When I ask a question, I probe further and inquire about the facts rather than accepting the first answer I receive. ▪ I ask questions to broaden my perceptions about the issue rather than to confirm my point of view. ▪ When the other person expresses his opinions, I inquire about the facts on which these opinions are based. ▪ I ask questions to challenge the other person's interpretation of a situation or experience. 				
				<i>Ask Total:</i>
Listen				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I listen attentively to the other person without thinking how I am going to respond. ▪ I try to imagine being in the other person's shoes when I am listening. ▪ I do not judge the other person's behavior. ▪ I summarize the messages I hear using my own words to ensure that I understood them. ▪ I listen for what is not said. 				
				<i>Listen Total:</i>
Give Feedback				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I describe to the other person what I observe about his behavior in very specific terms. ▪ I describe to the other person the likely consequences of his behavior. ▪ I offer feedback in private. ▪ I always start with strengths when offering feedback. ▪ I give feedback in such a way that the other person can hear what I have to say. 				
				<i>Feedback Total:</i>
Arrive at an Agreement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I help the other person identify concrete and realistic actions he can take. ▪ I help the other person identify obstacles and discover practical ways to overcome them. ▪ I establish clear agreements that underscore the responsibility of the other person for carrying them out. ▪ I request a decision and commitment from the other person to change his behavior. ▪ I follow up on these agreements periodically. 				
				<i>Agreement Total:</i>
				Total:

If you score 100 points or more, you are very practiced in these coaching skills. If you score less than 75, there is room for improvement; you could request coaching for yourself or practice your skills on your own (see Table 2).

Table 2. Tips for Improving Coaching Skills

OALFA Skills	Ways to Strengthen These Skills
Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to observe without judgment. Stick to the facts (what do you see?) rather than what you think you see. Write down these facts and check how many of them are objectively observable and how many are subjective impressions. When you interpret what you observe, check whether your interpretation is correct by asking: "You seem tense. Is something the matter?"
Ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you plan to have a conversation, prepare good questions in advance. Review each question to make sure it is an authentic inquiry that will help learning, rather than one that blocks learning. Before the conversation, tell yourself: "I know very little about this person's experience." Or, "I would like to get his perspective, especially if it is different from mine." After the conversation, review the questions you actually asked and the answers you received. What have you learned about the other person? About yourself?
Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold back when you find yourself wanting to give advice. Instead listen for hints that the other person already knows what your advice would be. Practice writing a summary of what the person being coached said in a conversation. Practice identifying the feelings underneath the words. Verify if you are correct. Increase your tolerance for silence. If you wait patiently, you allow the other person to respond thoughtfully.
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about how you would like to receive feedback from a peer or a boss. Practice being specific when giving feedback, referring to specific behaviors without labeling them. Before giving negative feedback, look for behaviors that merit applause and encouragement, and then phrase the negative feedback as a request for improvement.
Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each time you make an agreement, ask yourself whether it is actionable and has a time limit. Write down reminders for follow-up in your diary or on your calendar. Before closing a conversation, make sure there is an agreement.

Using the Challenge Model as a Coaching Tool

The Challenge Model (Figure 1) offers a systematic approach that you can use to structure the coaching conversation and lead the person being coached through a step-by-step process to identify and face a specific challenge and produce a desired result. The Challenge Model helps the person being coached create a path from a broad understanding of what the work is to a specific set of tasks that need to be accomplished within a given time period to arrive at a specific, measurable, appropriate, and realistic result. (For details about the Challenge Model, see <http://erc.msh.org/toolkit/pdf/ResourcestoSupportManagersWhoLead.pdf>, pp. 179–81.)

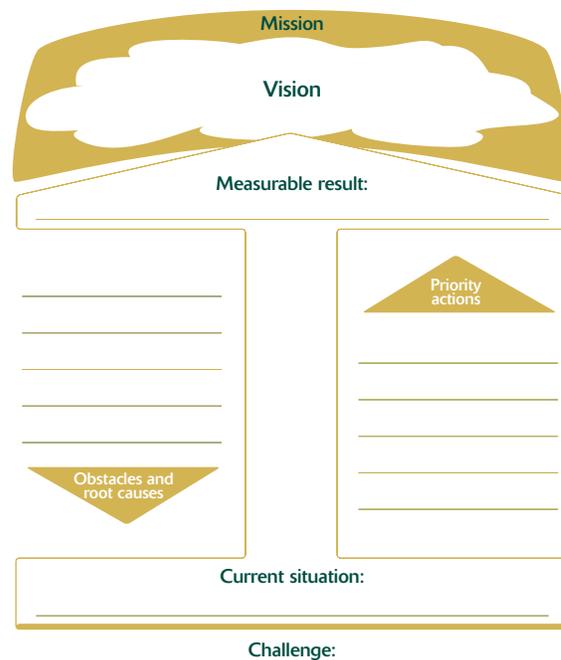
The following process is suggested for using the Challenge Model as a coaching tool.

Step 1. Contracting and setting priorities. Establish a contract with the person being coached at the beginning of the coaching process. The purpose of contracting is to clarify goals, set objectives and milestones, discuss expectations, and set a schedule for future meetings. Explain the coaching process and present the Challenge Model. The model will help to focus the conversation and establish the personal challenge within the framework of the organization's mission and vision and the unit's contributions to carrying out the mission.

Step 2. Establishing a vision and short-term desired result. Next you help the person being coached to articulate a vision by guiding her through a process in which she imagines how she wants to be after two more years in her position. Once this vision is clear, the coach helps her narrow this goal to a specific, measurable result to be achieved in the next six months. This process of formulating results is iterative. The first formulation can be reconsidered after the current situation is analyzed.

Step 3. Assessing current performance. The third step is assessing the state of the performance of the person being coached. You and the person being coached draw on sources and methods such as direct observation, self-assessment, and feedback from others (clients, peers, subordinates, senior staff) to establish as honestly and precisely as possible the

Figure 1. Challenge Model



[How will we achieve our desired result in light of the obstacles we need to overcome?]

employee's current performance level with respect to the measurable result identified in the previous step.

Therefore there is some homework to be done—scanning—before this meeting. It is possible that the current situation is better or worse than first imagined, which may require refining the specific result.

Step 4. Defining the challenge and setting a course for action. Use the next coaching meeting to define the challenge by analyzing the expected result and comparing it with the employee's current performance. The gap between these two constitutes the challenge. Once the person being coached has formulated the challenge (How can I achieve the specific result, given the current situation?), use inquiry to help her analyze the causes of the gap.

Questions to help a person explore the causes of the gap include:

- Why are you experiencing this challenge now?
- Why haven't you already achieved your identified desired result?
- What is keeping you from moving toward that result now?

- What have you tried to do about it? Why do you think that did not work?
- What are you doing now that keeps you stuck in the current situation?

To each answer, you can respond with another “Why?” to help the person being coached get to the underlying reasoning, beliefs, and values that explain why previous corrective actions may not have worked. Once the person being coached has a better understanding of the root causes that underlie the gap, she can start to identify the behavior changes and other

interventions that will help her overcome the challenge and produce the desired results. These are then captured in an action plan, and you help her arrive at an agreement for change.

Follow-up sessions: Monitoring progress and evaluating results. Between meetings, the person being coached implements the actions agreed upon. During each coaching conversation, review how the implementation is going, what results have been achieved to date, and how to continue to improve performance. Box 4 summarizes the positive results of a coaching intervention using the Challenge Model, based on a real example.

Box 4. Coaching a Clinic Director Using the Challenge Model: The Case of Alexandra

Alexandra is a young, successful, and entrepreneurial physician who is very focused on producing results. Recently appointed to be the clinic director of a reproductive health clinic in a large city, she is ill prepared for the managerial aspects of her new job. As pressures on her clinic to become financially sustainable have increased, her supervisor from the head office has begun coaching her to improve her management and leadership performance. This improvement is essential for Alexandra and her team to achieve the clinic’s financial goals for the year.

The clinic needs to develop new markets and products to increase clinic income. Alexandra was given resources to learn about marketing. She was also assisted by a marketing consultant to develop a package of services at an attractive cost to increase demand for clinic services. These inputs helped but were not enough. Observation and feedback identified lack of staff involvement in making the clinic succeed and little support from the head office. Alexandra had noticed these problems but felt powerless to do anything about them.

During the coaching sessions, Alexandra learned how to express what she wanted from her staff and the head office and how her own behavior was sometimes an obstacle. Her coach helped her to discover how she was contributing to the situation and what she could do to change it. She made several changes in her own behavior: she established a mechanism to communicate better with her staff; she shared with them the clinic’s financial situation and pressures; she listened to their needs and complaints; and she began to walk around more and organize gatherings to discuss matters. She could see the behavior of her staff change in response to her new behaviors, and they seemed more committed. She learned to be more assertive and persistent in her demands, calling head office staff personally to secure more effective follow-up and to make the case for the clinic’s needs using data to support her case.

Below is the Challenge Model as Alexandra and her coach used it during the coaching process.

Measurable result: Increase clinic revenue by 10%

Director’s vision of her clinic: The clinic is serving a variety of markets in the city. Clinic teams are continuously and actively involved in learning and exploring better ways of doing things. Client satisfaction with the clinic’s services is at an all-time high. The head office has delegated authority to the clinic director to make decisions on procurement, clinic administration, and negotiations with staff on work conditions.

(continued on next page)

Specific results to be achieved in six months: The clinic's revenues will have increased by 10%, the volume of sales at the new pharmacy will exceed \$1,000 per month (on average, higher than in any month in the past), and the clinic will offer services in two new specialities (cervical cancer screening and mental health).

Current situation: Clinic staff lack an understanding of marketing. Staff are doing the minimum expected, taking no responsibility for the fiscal health of the clinic. They seem unaware of the clinic's goals and unclear what authority the clinic director has. The head office is unresponsive to the clinic's demands and needs. There is not a focus on clients and little awareness of their needs; no distinctions are made among different kinds of clients and their specific needs.

Causes of the gap: Clinicians with poor management and leadership skills are in charge of clinic administration. Power differences among the levels are great, blocking communication between staff and the director and between the director and head office staff. There is a pervasive attitude of "This is not my problem." Processes at the head office are highly centralized, and clinics must go through cumbersome bureaucratic procedures to request help.

Priority actions:

- Hire a marketing specialist, and conduct training on marketing and market segmentation for senior clinic staff.
- Conduct regular staff meetings to improve communication between the director and her personnel.
- Create incentives for personnel to become more responsible for reaching clinic goals.
- Advocate for relaxation of procedures to request support from the head office.
- Implement new procedures and practice new attitudes to advocate at the head office for the clinic's needs.

Results: In six months the clinic achieved its financial sustainability goal. Its revenues increased by 10%. The new pharmacy was also earning an average of \$1,000 per month, and the two new speciality services had been started.

An Organizational Commitment to Coaching Is Essential

The need for highly qualified and committed people in today's challenging public health environment demands a shift in the relationship between supervisors and supervisees. However, managers do not change their behavior simply because someone thinks it is a good idea, and even when they want to change, they are likely to find it difficult to become skilled coaches without support. The way managers behave is shaped by the organizational culture. Ingrained practices reinforce the command-and-control style of traditional management. Organizations that want to change this style must provide the tools, models, and incentives for their managers to become coaches. The following questions can serve as a test to see

whether the organization's leadership truly wants to change the culture:

- Does the organization require even its most senior managers to make the transformation to being coaches (or being coached)?¹
- Does the organization make available to new managers opportunities to be coached on how to establish and develop productive relationships with their staff?
- Does the organization demonstrate a commitment to coaching in the hiring and promotion of managers?

¹ Because its dynamics are different, executive coaching is not discussed in this publication. For example, senior managers should be coached by someone outside the organization who has no stake in the behavior and decisions of the person being coached.

- Is the relationship managers have with their staff taken into consideration in their performance evaluation?
- Is the role of the manager as coach publicly recognized, valued, and rewarded?

The case study about PROFAMILIA illustrates how an organizational commitment to coaching can make a profound difference in individual performance and thus in the results that an organization achieves.

Working Solution—Coaching as a Strategy to Improve Organizational Results: The Case of PROFAMILIA, Nicaragua

PROFAMILIA, a private, nonprofit organization and affiliate of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in Nicaragua, has provided reproductive health services in the country for over 30 years. In 2003 its largest donor, USAID, announced that it would withdraw its financial support at the end of the year, which meant that PROFAMILIA needed to achieve financial sustainability in a very short time. At the end of 2004, its sustainability rate was 86%. If the situation did not improve, the organization's reserves would soon be depleted, putting its future in jeopardy.

Until this time, the clinic director's role was largely clinical. Little of his attention went to management of the clinic or leadership of its team. PROFAMILIA's head office decided that the organization's future required its clinic directors to take on a different role, one for which they were not well prepared. To support the development of management and leadership competencies among clinic directors and achieve the clinics' financial sustainability goals, a coaching strategy was established in 2005.

The management team at headquarters used the Challenge Model to define this intervention. Based on the vision of a financially viable and sustainable organization, PROFAMILIA set the short-term goal that each clinic would increase its revenue by 20% by the end of 2005. Given the predominantly clinical role of the clinic directors, the challenge was obvious: "How can clinic directors control the expenses of their clinics and expand clinic services to become sustainable, given that no attention is paid to either management or marketing issues?"

The root cause analysis revealed, among other things, that clinic directors were unprepared to pay attention to marketing, management, and leadership issues because these subjects had not been part of their professional education as clinicians. They had also not been given opportunities or rewards for developing these skills at work.

The managers decided on a coaching strategy in which clinic directors were provided with a coach for two-hour monthly sessions. The coach helped them explore their potential as active participants in the organization's efforts to become sustainable. During these sessions an action plan was developed and the coaches were available for follow-up support to achieve the result established for each clinic.

Respected and trusted senior managers and supervisors were selected to become coaches. They were trained by an external expert coach during a three-day workshop supplemented by four hours of follow-up coaching over six months. Each clinic manager chose a coach from this group. The clinic directors and coaches made agreements about confidentiality and commitment to the coaching process. The monthly coaching conversations were structured, and each coach followed a set of guidelines for them. During the sessions, the coaches helped the clinic directors become more confident managers and develop their potential as managers who lead.

The coaching process lasted from February until August 2005. The eight clinic directors who participated all completed the process and expressed satisfaction with it. One of them said: "My growth was enormous. It has been very useful for me, not only in the clinic but in general. I was skeptical but I saw the results and I feel very satisfied." In the evaluation the clinic supervisors stated that they were incorporating coaching techniques and a coaching approach in their relationships and interactions with all clinic staff.

This strategy, which was one of several that were implemented as part of PROFAMILIA's strategic plan, led to a remarkable result: PROFAMILIA increased the overall financial sustainability of its clinics from 86% to 95% in 2005. The transformation of the supervisors into coaches and the clinic directors into managers who lead contributed greatly to this result.

Reviewers' Corner

A forum for discussing concepts and techniques presented in this issue

"The case of PROFAMILIA exposes the importance of receiving training and careful follow-up in coaching, with the goal of successfully institutionalizing it in the organization."

—Lourdes Quintanilla, Cali-Des, Saltillo, Mexico

"The information and suggestions in this issue are also valid for our Nepalese context. The authors have mentioned in detail various aspects of effective coaching. . . in a very user-friendly way so that even a layman can follow the instructions for coaching others for results. OALFA is an effective approach for practicing coaching skills."

—Tatwa P. Timsina, Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), Nepal

"It is important to install a real culture about the importance of coaching at all organizational levels, not just as if it were an individual option on the part of one or another manager. For this to happen it is important to reinforce the importance of a culture of coaching being embraced by the whole managerial class from top leadership to the lower levels."

—Luciano Braga, Brazil

"OALFA is useful, particularly the self-assessment. . . . There are a few ideas that you could expand on, e.g., authentic inquiry and observation versus evaluation. It might be useful to check *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by Marshall Rosenberg."

—Lorna McPherson, USA

Resources

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Questions for Discussion and Reflection

Where in your organization can you see coaching being used as an organizational improvement strategy?

Who would be the coaches and who would be coached?

In your organization, how would coaching senior leaders be similar to or different from coaching junior or midlevel managers?

What risk would developing and implementing a coaching strategy entail?

In the case of PROFAMILIA, what alternatives to coaching or complementary strategies could have been used?

What challenges do you see for a manager who wants to coach his staff? How could these challenges be overcome?

What coaching skills do you need to develop further and how do you plan to go about doing it?

THE eManager

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