

Coaching at Work - Less is More

When someone comes to you with a problem, we tend to go into problem-solving or advice-giving mode. 'Coaching at Work' is the opposite of giving advice and offering our opinion. Applying coaching at work keeps the responsibility to think through a problem on the coachee, who must do the talking and problem-solving through being asked coaching questions.

Fighting our urge to help others with advice and opinion begins with listening intentionally. We are not coaching when we jump into problem-solving mode, as we stop listening and start talking. Apart from the fact that our advice may not be good, there are other shortcomings to problem-solving for others:

- By giving advice, we take ownership away from the person who has the problem; advice-giving can be disempowering.
- Our opinions have our own bias, and we risk reinforcing a shared bias.
- We may confirm the 'story' as it is told, allowing the person to see themselves as the victim, the helpless worker, or the recipient of a bad boss who is the villain.

The first coaching rule is to let others think and talk by *getting others to think and talk*. This requires being aware of the following insights and techniques:

- Practice listening intently and fight the need to give advice or opinion.
- Ask clarifying questions about the situation. This can be done safely by recalling words that the person says to you. For example:
 - I heard you say that you have problems with your boss, can you explain that more specifically?
 - You just mentioned that his behavior confuses. What behavior or action do you think is confusing?
- Keep inviting the other to explore and design some solutions. For example:
 - "You have said that his indecisiveness leads to silence in team meetings; what do you think you can do in this situation to help?"
- Finish a coaching at work discussion with a recap and agreement for action. For example:
 - "I think it's great that you see your boss is open to others taking the initiative in meetings. You have said that you are willing to try this in the next meeting. Can we agree that we will meet to discuss how this goes after your next meeting?"

Coaching at work can be as simple as making yourself accessible and holding a session of just a few minutes. The key to this approach is not to take on other people's problems but to listen and ask questions that keep the other talking and working through the issue.

Coaching techniques are embedded in ELITE professional development offerings in MC Management and The Global Leadership Cohort.

For more information on coaching, visit: <https://coachingfederation.org/>