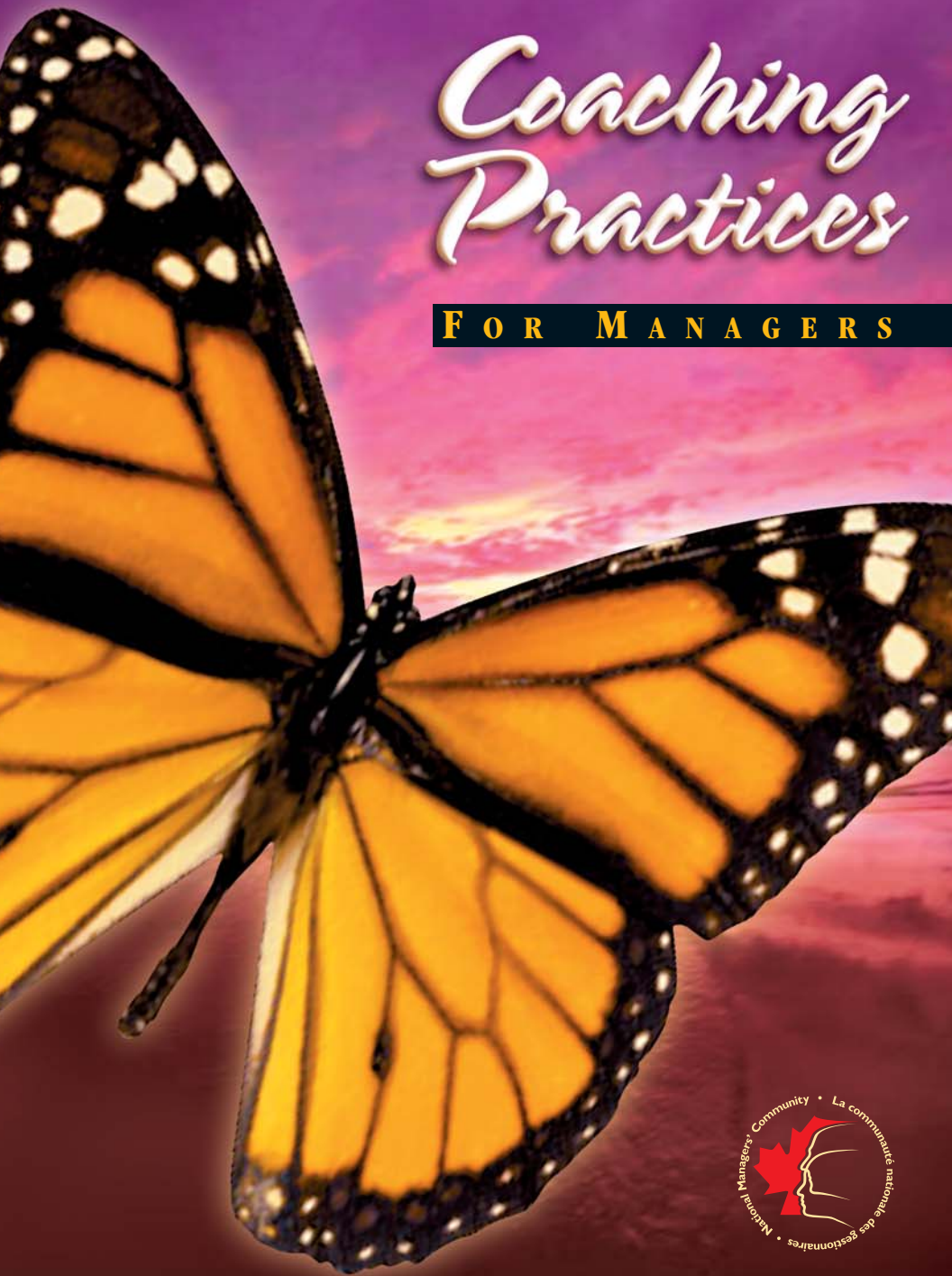


Coaching Practices

FOR MANAGERS



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

*“Coaching is not about teaching
the caterpillar how to fly,
it’s about creating an opening
for it to see the possibility.”*

– Paul Lefebvre, Leadership Coach

To discover more about the world of coaching, visit:
www.leadership.gc.ca/coaching

The National Managers’ Community is supported by a Secretariat and a Council made up of representatives from regional manager networks and the National Capital Region. They provide leadership and support to managers across the Federal Public Service by acting as an advocate, facilitator and information broker. Visit our website:
www.managers-gestionnaires.gc.ca

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the first edition of *Coaching Practices for Managers*! The National Managers' Community is proud to offer you this exciting new publication.

Coaching Practices for Managers was created in partnership with The Leadership Network (TLN). We are extremely grateful to the co-authors, Paul Lefebvre and Roxanne Cameron of TLN, who have generously shared their knowledge and expertise so that we can pass this work on to public servants across Canada.

Coaching Practices for Managers is about evoking excellence in others. The eight practices included in this publication are practical, easy-to-use and can be implemented immediately by leaders at all levels, not only within your organization but in your personal life as well.

The National Managers' Community is committed to continuous learning and to providing practical tools to help managers across the country be the best the Public Service has to offer. We believe *Coaching Practices for Managers* will be a valuable resource for public service renewal in the future. We invite you to read, practise, explore and discover your own possibilities!

Barbara Martin

National Managers' Community Secretariat

www.managers-gestionnaires.gc.ca



AUTHORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We had been looking for new ways to reach out to managers asking for more learning on coaching. We knew they wanted something practical and affordable. We also knew they wanted to go beyond the theoretical, learn together and be able to apply their learning back in the workplace. ***Coaching Practices for Managers*** was designed to do just that. The format was inspired by Bob Chartier's widely distributed and popular book, developed for the National Managers' Community: ***Tools for Leadership and Learning***.

The original version of ***Coaching Practices for Managers*** was first tested with the National Managers' Community Council members in the fall of 2002. This led to the presentation of several workshops to over 1,000 managers, from across the country, in less than five months. It also led to the further refining of the coaching practices and to the publication of this first edition.

We wish to extend our deep appreciation to The Leadership Network and to the National Managers' Community Secretariat for their substantial support, financial and professional, in producing ***Coaching Practices for Managers***.

Special thanks are in order to Bob Fisher, Jill Lang Ward and Karen Bonner for their valuable advice and relentless commitment to bringing coaching to the Managers' Community. We also wish to acknowledge Kathleen Keenlyside for being the first manager to take up our challenge to lead ***Coaching Practices for Managers*** workshops on her own, thus demonstrating our work is practical, affordable and most importantly, replicable.

So here they are: Coaching Practices meant to help you observe your world in a different way and to provide access to new ways of leading and getting things done. Enjoy!

Paul Lefebvre and Roxanne Cameron

Leadership Coaching
for the National Managers' Community Council

For more on coaching visit The Leadership Network website:
www.leadership.gc.ca/coaching



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND: A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Leadership Coaching was introduced to the Federal Public Service through the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) in 1997. It was seen, at the time, as an important learning and development method for the modern leader. It was also viewed as an important strategy for culture change in line with the learning organisation principles presented in the Clerk's Fifth Annual Report.

Over the next five years, hundreds of executives were exposed to the coaching approach through CCMD training and Jim Selman's work. They learned the language of coaching and some know-how in applying the coaching approach in their daily work and even in private life. Several others gained access to more advanced learning in coaching and have increased the coaching capacity in the Public Service.

In 2000, The Leadership Network (TLN), with a mandate to support leaders at all levels, created 'Coaching Connection,' a website that is a source of information, knowledge and self-learning on coaching for public servants (www.leadership.gc.ca/coaching).

In 2002, The National Managers' Community Council (NMCC) recognised the emergence of the coaching capacity in the Public Service and made mobilizing this 'coaching energy' through various initiatives one of its strategic objectives. One of these initiatives is *Coaching Practices for Managers*, which was developed in partnership with TLN.

Welcome to *Coaching Practices for Managers*. Are you looking for some practical and affordable training in coaching to support you in your work? Are you looking for some new ways to challenge the culture you live in? This booklet has been designed with you in mind.

You will be invited to reflect on what is going on around you in your daily life, to learn new coaching language and to expand your observation skills. You will have an opportunity to share your findings with colleagues, to consider new ways of seeing old problems and to try out new approaches. You will be challenged to take each practice a step further and use it in a self-observation mode and in observing others around you for periods of time.



This is applied continuous learning at its best! Clearly an invitation to play, an invitation to get involved and an invitation to become ‘response-able’; that is, more able to respond (as opposed to ‘responsible’ which often carries the weight of blame and obligation).

First things first however. **Coaching Practices for Managers** is not about improving your decision-making or problem solving skills. It is about giving you access to different actions as a result of becoming a different observer of the culture around you. Are you ready?

Here are a few things you need to keep in mind regarding **culture**. Most of the time we don’t see it. It’s transparent, like water to a fish. Its purpose is to maintain the status quo. It is a set of written or unwritten rules that usually determine what is possible and what is not possible. We carry it with us wherever we go and it shows up as our little internal voice.

What is the **coaching** contribution? Coaching is about helping you see what you don’t see about yourself and about the culture you live in. It is about evoking excellence in others. It is not committed to the status quo. It provides access to competencies you already have but are not aware of. It is reflection and action oriented. It challenges common sense and creates openings for you to see new possibilities.

As you can see, coaching offers a new way to relate to culture and culture change. It’s time to play, to observe the culture you live in. It’s time to explore how you can change what needs to be changed so you can get back into action.

Here are the eight coaching practices for managers. They are accompanied by their respective slogans:

1. **WORKING WITH COMPLAINTS** – *Find the hidden requests in complaints*
2. **LISTENING FOR COMMITMENT IN COMPLAINTS** – *Hear the commitment*
3. **CHALLENGING GENERALISATIONS** – *Catch generalisations*
4. **WORKING WITH ASSESSMENTS** – *Be aware of limiting assessments*
5. **WHAT’S MISSING?** – *Look for what’s missing*
6. **WORKING WITH MOODS** – *Observe the power of moods*
7. **THREE TYPES OF CONVERSATION** – *Focus on the right conversation*
8. **WORKING WITH RECURRENT PROBLEMS** – *Look inside*



WORKING WITH COMPLAINTS

What is this practice?

A way to move from complaints into action by uncovering the hidden request

Why should I use it?

Often we lose energy and momentum dealing with complaints. Use this practice to help liberate yourself and others from being stuck in complaints. In the midst of every complaint is a request that needs to be made.

How does it work?

1. List 1-3 complaints you have.
2. List 1-3 complaints you have observed from others.
3. For each, what is the request that needs to be made?

Keep in mind the following ‘viruses in language’ around requests:

Note: Requests can be accepted, denied or renegotiated.

Not Making Requests

Often people don't make a request. They may complain inwardly or to others but still they make no requests of the other party. Reasons for reticence may be concern about asking for help and worry that a request is an imposition.

Living with Uncommunicated Expectations

Often we have private conversations with ourselves about what others should and should not do. But we never make overt and open requests of these people. Subsequently, when they don't do what we expect, we're disappointed, resentful, and angry.

Making Unclear Requests

It's foolish to think that others should know what we want. To coordinate successfully, your requests must be precise and detailed. You're not insulting the listener if you make detailed requests. You're setting up the possibility for mutual satisfaction.

Not Observing the Mood of Requesting

Some people make requests like demands. Or, conversely, they make requests like a beggar. When you do this, you fail to see that your mood affects the listener. If you're demanding, people might decline your requests; if you are too tentative they may not take it seriously.

*Material adapted from **You Are What You Say** by Matthew Budd*



How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) For the next two weeks, observe and note your complaints. Reflect on:
 - i. What is the hidden request?
 - ii. What is preventing you from making the request?
2. **Further practice:**
 - a) Turn this into a habit both with yourself and others and notice what is happening in the workplace as a result.

COACHING STORY: WAITING AND WAITING FOR APPROVALS

The complaint I brought forward to my colleague for coaching was that every time I put in a request to attend a conference I have to wait until the last minute to get approval. This means I have to keep asking my boss: “Is it approved yet?”

My colleague helped me look at the way I had been making my requests. I realized that I had not made these requests formally and I had, in fact, not given my boss much information about the conferences I wanted to attend. My colleague helped me identify the points I needed to include in my requests such as the cost, the deadline for registration, the link to my learning plan.

I decided that I would resubmit my most recent request in writing with all this information for my boss to consider. I might also talk to my boss in person, but this time with the information I need at my fingertips.

Other examples of complaints and requests

I have too much on my plate.... *Request help.*

We don't have enough resources.... *Request a conversation about priorities.*

We need more time.... *Take a look at the promise you made about when it would be done and then make a request to adjust the time frame.*

I don't know how to do this.... *Request assistance or information.*

LISTENING FOR COMMITMENT IN COMPLAINTS

What is this practice?

A way to understand and deal with what is behind people's concerns and complaints

Why should I use it?

Often, when people complain we react and focus on the story. Use this practice to uncover the commitment hidden in the complaint.

How does it work?

1. Working with a partner, identify a complaint he or she has.
2. What appears to be the other person's underlying concern?
3. Listen for and try to uncover what the other person is committed to.
4. Share your findings.
5. What do you learn from this? What action is now available to you?

Note: repeat exercise with other partner

How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) Over the next two weeks, observe your complaints from the point of view of uncovering the hidden commitment.
2. **Further practice:**
 - a) Observe complaints around you from the point of view of uncovering what the other person is committed to.
 - b) When you are talking with someone who is complaining, listen for the commitment you are hearing. You may want to offer your observation if appropriate.

COACHING STORY: HE'S GOT GREAT IDEAS BUT HE IS ALIENATING EVERYONE!

A new employee has recently joined my team. He seemed very innovative and talented at the interviews and I was excited about the fresh approach he would bring to our team. However, since he joined us he has had little contact with the rest of the team and he has been rushing projects along without consultation. This has led to a number of inter-personal conflicts.



I brought this situation to my colleague for coaching because I had had a number of conversations with this new employee about office protocols, establishing trust with the team and consulting more but his behaviour continued. In these conversations, the new employee said he understood that managing relationships was important but he didn't want to compromise the quality of his work and his creativity.

In speaking to my colleague about this I really poured out my frustration. I felt torn between my support for the talents he brings to the organization (the work itself has been outstanding) and for the others in the work unit who are used to a more consultative and inclusive approach.

My colleague suggested that she was hearing my commitment to community in my complaint. As we discussed this, I realized that community is part of a wider vision I have for moving our team into the future. It is very important to me to introduce what is new while respecting the past. I really feel sustainable change must include both.

After discussing this further with my colleague I decided to share this community-based vision with my new employee. I also wanted to explore his personal vision and how our commitments can support each other.

This practice helped me see I needed to have a conversation about values and purpose with this employee, a conversation that was much deeper than ones directed to solving day-to-day situations.

Other examples of listening for commitment

Meetings take too long.... You may be committed to focusing your energy and not dissipating your efforts. You could offer to help organize meetings or to facilitate them.

Priorities keep changing.... Your commitment may be to working on and completing projects that you feel are an important contribution to the organization. What requests do you need to make? Ask yourself what am I doing this work on behalf of?

CHALLENGING GENERALISATIONS

What is this practice?

A way to become aware of and to challenge generalisations

Why should I use it?

We make generalisations all the time, much more than we think. There is no action in generalisations. Use this practice to catch generalisations and move into action.

How does it work?

- 1. List or recall generalisations you have heard in recent days:**
 - a) The ones you have made.
 - b) The ones others have made.
 - c) The ones about situations (big generalisations).
- 2. Share your observations.**
- 3. Challenge these generalisations by bringing them to the next level of specificity.**

Note: Example of 2 types of generalisations you can challenge:

- a) Words like never, always, every, all, nobody
- b) Unspecific statements such as:
 - i. Morale is bad there.
 - ii. Our team is the best.
 - iii. There aren't enough resources.

How can I continue to use this practice?

- 1. Become a different observer:**
 - a) Catch yourself making generalisations. What are you learning from this?
- 2. Further practice:**
 - a) Each day challenge one generalisation around you.



COACHING STORY: CHALLENGING OUR WAY INTO ACTION

A group of managers were asked to identify general statements they often hear in the work place. They were then asked to reformulate them to make them more specific. In each case, the group acknowledged that, in their general form, the statements leave little room for action. Conversely, when they were more specific, the group could see how each statement might lead to further exploration and resolution.

Here are some examples of the general statements they worked with and questions that challenge these generalisations.

1. We need to change the culture.... *What part would you change first?*
2. We need to challenge the system.... *Which part of the system? Who has to change it? Who says it has to change?*
3. You have to look at the Big Picture.... *What is the Big Picture that you see?*
4. Nobody wants to do business with this division.... *Who doesn't want to do business with this division? How do you know they don't? Is the problem with any particular part of the division?*
5. It will all be sorted out after the reorganization.... *What seems to be most pressing? Are there things we could do now? What could be left until later?*
6. We need a working group to address this issue.... *Are there other ways to address this issue? What aspects would be best addressed with a working group?*
7. What isn't measured doesn't get done.... *None of it gets done? How do you know it doesn't get done? How do you know that it is the act of measuring that is responsible for it being done?*
8. This will never go through, it will never happen.... *Which part of it has a chance? According to whom? It will never go through?*
9. It is hard to get away from the office.... *When is it hardest?*
10. I can't make presentations.... *What kind of presentations? To what audiences? On what subjects?*

WORKING WITH ASSESSMENTS

What is this practice?

A way to expand your view and use of assessments (judgments and opinions) in order to get things done

Why should I use it?

Often we treat our assessments (judgments and opinions) as facts. We often think that good assessments are true, bad assessments are false. They are neither true nor false – they may be valid. Use this practice to better understand the role of assessments in making things happen. Also, learn how assessments can limit and even block action.

How does it work?

1. Identify three positive and three negative assessments (for example, assessments about your personal qualities/attributes such as "I am shy" or "I am a hard worker").
2. For each of these positive and negative assessments identify:
 - a) What does this open up – what does it make possible?
 - b) What does this close down?
3. What do you learn from this? What action is now available to you?

How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) For the next two weeks, observe and note assessments you make about yourself.
 - b) Note what these open up and close down.
2. **Further practice:**
 - a) See if you can use what you have learned about assessment to go beyond often seen assessments such as:
 - i. "Morale is bad."
 - ii. "Workload is high and there is nothing we can do about it."
 - iii. "She is my best employee."



COACHING STORY: OPENING AND CLOSING ASSESSMENTS

A group of 100 managers worked through this practice. Here are some examples of the attributes they identified along with what each opens up and closes down.

Attribute	Opens up	Closes down
I am passionate about my work.	I am energetic.	I only want to do certain things e.g. what I am passionate about; other tasks can be left out.
I am loyal.	I have perseverance.	I can be rigid. I stay with things too long when I should move on.
I am optimistic.	I can see the positive side of people and events.	I overlook what I take to be the negative side of people and events.
I am enthusiastic.	I have energy for new things.	I can be too eager and not critical.
I am composed.	I don't react to situations, I stay calm.	People think I am cold or I don't care. I have difficulty driving home the importance of my message.
I am a high performer.	I feel lots of satisfaction and I create opportunities.	I have difficulty dealing with people who aren't as interested in the work and it is a challenge for me to distribute responsibility.
I am judgmental.	I make decisions quickly.	I dismiss ideas quickly and I can be biased.
I procrastinate.	I don't waste time on things that end up not being urgent because the situation has changed.	I am often stressed and I miss out on opportunities because I am always busy.
I am shy.	I am a good listener.	I may not seem engaged and I have difficulty connecting to others.
I am impatient.	I have a strong sense of accomplishment and I get things done.	I can make poor decisions and I don't involve others as much as I should.

WHAT'S MISSING?

What is this practice?

A way to find out what could be causing people to be stuck or unable to take action

Why should I use it?

When things are not happening we often react by looking for what is wrong. Use this practice to look for what is missing by observing three important elements for action.

How does it work?

1. Identify a situation where action is not taking place (for you or others).
2. Review and identify which of the three elements below could be missing:
 - a) **Commitment**
 - Level of commitment from those involved
 - b) **Competence**
 - Knowledge, abilities and skills of those involved
 - c) **Structure**
 - Plans, resources, support required
3. What do you learn from this? What action is now available to you?

How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) Over the next two weeks, observe and note situations in which things are not happening for you.
 - Which of the three elements is missing?
 - Which action will you now take? Be specific.
2. **Further practice:**
 - a) When you meet people who appear to be stuck or unable to take action use questions around the three elements to help them.



COACHING STORY: SIX DRAFTS AND IT'S STILL NOT A FINAL PRODUCT!

One of my employees has given me at least six drafts of a document. He is new to the job and his document doesn't follow the sample I gave him. He keeps changing things from draft to draft and these enhancements are actually adding errors. Things that were fine in a previous draft are changed and new errors are made.

When I looked at this situation from the point of view of what was missing – commitment, competency, or structure - I realized that my employee was clearly committed to doing a good job. The fact that he has done all these drafts and that he is trying to enhance the document show this.

In terms of competency, I am not sure he has the writing skills he needs. However, before I look at training, I would like to concentrate on ensuring I have a structure that supports him in doing this work. I am not sure he knows the time pressure we are under with this document.

Also, it might be helpful to make one of his peers available to him while he does his first document like this one.

Finally, I think it might help if I explained the process we use for completing these kinds of documents in more detail so that he understands the entire process, who is involved, and the formats we use to produce this work. I will concentrate my attention on these areas and see if there is an improvement. My focus will continue to be on looking for what's missing rather than on what is wrong.

Other examples of looking for what's missing?

We depend on data from another division to produce our reports. Whenever we are under tight deadlines their input is always late.... *Try focusing on structure e.g. on developing a process together for handling urgent files.*

I have developed a great new process that streamlines our work but no one will use it.... *How much time have you spent discussing it and getting their input? Focus on including others and commitment will grow.*

WORKING WITH MOODS

What is this practice?

A way to observe moods and work with them. It is also a way to understand underlying internal conversations

Why should I use it?

We often respond to moods by either ignoring them and/or hoping they will go away, or by trying to talk our way out of them. These approaches frequently have little effect. Use this practice to better understand the power of moods and how to have an impact on them.

How does it work?

1. Review the table below and become familiar with examples of judgments and behaviours around moods; the table also offers ways of working with moods.
2. Examine a situation in which you observed one or more of these moods:
 - a) In you
 - b) Around you
3. What do you learn from this observation? What action is now available to you?

<i>Mood</i>	<i>Judgment person has made</i>	<i>Behaviours</i>	<i>How to work with</i>
<i>Scepticism</i>	- I doubt.	- Question, question	- “What degree of certainty will satisfy you?”
<i>Resentment</i>	- I have been hurt and there is nothing I can do about it.	- Get even covertly - Distance - Keep score card	- Teach them how to make requests.
<i>Cynicism</i>	- No one, nothing is worthy of respect.	- Insult - Put down	- Be as straightforward as possible with them as to why you are doing this.
<i>Frustration</i>	- I must make something happen but I can't	- Complain a lot - Work hard	- Look for possibilities and ask “what is the request?”
<i>Resignation</i>	- Nothing new is possible... especially for me. - I have no choice.	- Withhold knowledge - Becoming indispensable	- Notice and appreciate small steps, small victories - Start with small possibilities, choices.

Material adapted from 'Coaching, Evoking Excellence in Others' by James Flaberty,



How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) For the next two weeks observe your moods in light of the above table.
 - i. What do you learn from this?
 - ii. What actions will you take?
2. **Further practice:**
 - a) What is the prevailing mood in your work place? Practise working with these moods using the above table.

COACHING STORY: MOVING BEYOND RESENTMENT, FRUSTRATION AND RESIGNATION

The following are three situations managers presented in our sessions with them. For each, the situation is described from the point of view of the person with the prevailing mood. This is followed by suggestions for dealing with the mood drawn from the table in this practice.

I lost a competition and even though I wish I didn't, I **resent** the person who won and has taken over that job in our office.... *What requests could you make – for training, to take on an assignment, for feedback on how you did on the competition, to work on a project of interest to you?*

My workload is really high and I am **frustrated** because I have tried delegating and the quality of the work I get back is so poor I might as well do it myself.... *What other ways might you explore to reduce your workload? What is a way that you would never normally even consider? Try moving one thing each day from your To Do List to your Not To Do List.*

We have been working on renewal within my community for over ten years. Frankly, I am **resigned** to the fact that no initiative will make a difference....*Try listing all the changes that have been made, even the small ones.*

THREE TYPES OF CONVERSATION

What is this practice?

A way to distinguish different types of conversations when coordinating action

Why should I use it?

When we are working with others and things aren't happening the way we would like, we often look to blame **ourselves**, **others** or **it** (circumstances, the system, the weather etc.). Use this practice to identify what is missing when action is blocked or not happening as planned. Often what is missing is a conversation.

How does it work?

1. Identify a situation where action is blocked. You are stuck, going nowhere.
2. Determine which of the three types of conversations described below may be missing:
 - a) Conversation for **relationship** (mutual trust & respect)
 - Done with the intention to build relationship.
 - Foundation for making things happen
 - b) Conversation for **possibility** (feeling included as a player)
 - Done with intention to explore possibilities.
 - This is an exploration without commitment.
 - c) Conversation for **action** (making things happen)
 - Done with intention to move into action.
 - Consists of requests and promises, which include conditions of satisfaction.
3. What do you learn from this? What action is now available to you?
4. Share what you have learned with others in your group.

Note: The sequence is important. When action is not happening go back to the conversation for possibility. Pay attention to the conversation for relationship when possibility is an issue. People may be in different conversation types. All three together are important to getting things done.

How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) Observe your actions in the work place when you are stuck from the point of the view of the three conversations.
 - What do you learn from this?
 - What actions will you take?



2. Further practice:

- a) Pay attention to situations where action is stuck. Engage the missing conversation and see what happens as a result.

COACHING STORY: INITIATIVE OFF THE RAILS

We launched a large initiative, which didn't succeed. When we looked at it through the lens of the three conversations, we realized that we jumped into conversation for action right away. We set target dates, milestones and got people doing the work as quickly as we could.

Although we did some selling of the idea and we set up advisory groups, the conversation for relationship was not very strong – not strong enough to sustain something as big as we were introducing. When questions and problems arose from the front line or from stakeholders we encouraged people to stay the course and, looking back on it now, I realize we thought of these comments as dissent. In the end, we realized that these groups were bringing forward valuable information and that, had we taken this into account earlier, we would have prevented bigger problems later.

In our enthusiasm for the new initiative, we pursued the conversation for possibilities at first but once we had chosen a direction we didn't want to re-open this discussion. Many stakeholders were not involved in these discussions and never felt that all the alternatives had been pursued sufficiently. Once we were on our chosen path we accommodated difficulties as best we could. Unfortunately, we only revisited possibilities when it looked like the whole initiative was going to fall off the rails. At that point, we were in salvage mode and, in the end, none of us was satisfied with the final result. We realized we had not paid attention to the relationship side of the project.

Other examples of looking at situations from this lens

In my division we get along great but everyone seems to be doing their own thing.... *Is there a common mission or vision? You might focus on conversation for possibility.*

In my group we are known to have a great morale and our vision and mandate are the envy of other groups. We are not so great at meeting deadlines, however.... *How clear are you on making requests and promises? Focus on the conversation for action.*

WORKING WITH RECURRENT PROBLEMS

What is this practice?

A way to find new solutions to a recurrent problem

Why should I use it?

Often, when faced with a recurrent problem, we repeat the same approach hoping for a different result. Use this practice to take a fresh look at your problem solving skills when faced with a recurrent problem.

How does it work?

1. Identify a recurrent problem you have been trying to solve.
2. Reflect on the approach you have been taking up until now.
3. What does this open up - make possible?
4. What does this close down?
5. What do you learn from this? What action is now available to you?

How can I continue to use this practice?

1. **Become a different observer:**
 - a) Over the next two weeks, observe your approach to recurrent problems in terms of
 - What this opens up?
 - What this closes down?
 - b) What possibilities now show up for you?
 - c) Ask a friend if they see a different possibility.
2. **Further practice:**
 - a) When you meet people who are facing a recurrent problem ask them what they have been doing to solve it up to now and what does this approach open up / close down. See what happens.

COACHING STORY: HIRING ALWAYS TAKES TOO LONG

I am a manager who often has vacancies on my staff and I feel it is impossible to hire indeterminate staff in a timely way. I asked for coaching from a colleague because I was sitting with two vacancies and my usual way of trying to solve this wasn't working.



My colleague asked me to talk about all the ways I had been trying to solve this problem and I told her about my experiences in exploring competitions, assignments, and COOP programs.

She then pointed out that, in all my attempts to handle this, I was working alone, as an outsider who felt she had to constantly come up with new solutions. When she told me this, I realized this was the usual way I was proceeding and I recognized how stressful this is.

She asked me, "What does my usual way of approaching this issue open up?" I realized that being an outsider allows me to take an impartial look at what is going on, to be innovative and to have a clear idea of what I want to happen. We then talked about what my usual way closes down. I began to see that it closes down connecting with others and seeking their support. It also closes down finding simple, tried-and-true solutions.

At this point, we began to explore ways I could use networks to find out more about how to classify these positions so they will attract more applicants. I also decided to meet with other managers in my department who are facing similar issues and see what we can learn from one another.

This practice helped me see that I did not have to solve this alone (my usual way) and I realized that working with others actually makes me feel both more calm and innovative.

Other examples of recurring problems and ways to try a new approach to them

In the face of a recurring problem I always take on too much responsibility and I don't delegate... *Try leaving a few things undone and see what happens, become more aware of your needs in the situation, make requests, and explore other ways of doing things than your own.*

When I am faced with a difficult problem I start to work harder and harder... *Ask yourself what this approach is on behalf of and sit with the question for a while.*

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING A HALF-DAY SESSION WITH *COACHING PRACTICES FOR MANAGERS*

Logistics

- The half-day session needs to be three to three and one-half hours long
- 25 participants is ideal but you could have as few as 8 and as many as 40
- The room needs to be large enough for round table groups with seating for 5 participants. There should be space for people to move around these tables easily.
- 2 flip charts are needed for the front of the room, along with pens and paper
- Provide copies of *Coaching Practices for Managers* for each participant
- Audience: managers at all levels


Conducting the session

We find that you can usually cover three to four practices in a half day. The choice of practices depends on what you think will best meet the needs of the group. The session usually begins with an introduction and a discussion about what coaching is. Groups often respond well to examples and stories, which illustrate the power of coaching for individual and culture change, drawn from your management and coaching experience. The rest of the time is devoted to working with the practices. As you go through the practices use the outlines in this booklet.

Here is a sample sequence for covering the practices:

Activity 1	In groups of three	WORKING WITH ASSESSMENTS
Activity 2	In groups of three	WORKING WITH COMPLAINTS
Activity 3	At each table	WHAT'S MISSING? or, THREE TYPES OF CONVERSATION
Activity 4	In two groups	CHALLENGING GENERALISATIONS





*“Our built-in reflex is to
chase the answer
but wisdom comes from
sitting with the question.”*

Paul Lefebvre - Leadership Coach

CONCLUSION

We hope that you have found these practices useful. If you or your Community of Practice requires further information or assistance, please contact the authors or other members of the National Managers' Community Council. Updates on these practices and other reference material will continue to be available on the National Managers' Community website or on the coaching website at:

www.coaching.gc.ca



NOTES:

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

