

## How To Coach Others 'In-The-Moment'

By Lisa Quast, Forbes | September 21, 2015



Some people will tell you that you must obtain formal training to be able to coach others. Yet when I think back to when I was growing up and early in my career, some of the best coaches I ever had never had any type of formal "coaching" training. And it's only been fairly recently that certification training programs for career coaching came into existence.

While training can be helpful, you don't necessarily need it to be able to help others. And that's what coaching is all about... it's about helping others (individuals/teams) achieve results or overcome obstacles to get from where they are now, to where they want to be in the future. This could be in their career, obtaining new skills, completing projects, overcoming issues in their personal life, playing sports, etc.

An approach I like to teach is what I call coaching "in-the-moment" – and it doesn't require any lengthy training sessions. All it requires is the ability to observe others, ask questions and listen to their responses. One of my athletic coaches was a master at this. She would watch me perform one of my gymnastics routines, such as on the balance beam, and then she would ask me about it. Through this question and answer process, I was able to discover for myself the ways I could improve.

Most people learn through experience... and most learning can be enhanced with self-analysis. So the key to effective coaching is not to tell others *how* to do things, it's to ask the kind of questions that will lead them to discover answers for themselves.

The 3 coaching "in-the-moment" questions:

1. What went well?
2. What didn't go as well as expected?
3. If you had a do-over – what would you do differently?

These questions can be asked in almost any situation to others (or even yourself) such as after a presentation, after completing a project or major task, after a job interview, after a meeting... the list is almost endless. Let's take a look at how this might play out in a work situation.

Scene: Someone I manage has just given a presentation at work. We are now sitting down in a conference room to talk about it. I'll call my fictional employee "Ann."

Lisa: "You did it! You gave your first presentation in front of an audience. What went well?"

Ann: "I can't believe I did that! I was terrified, but I actually enjoyed the experience. I felt like the group was really engaged with the topic because I saw a lot of heads nodding as I explained all the issues we've been having. I also thought my pace was good. No one seemed to get bored or check emails on their phone."

Lisa: "Is there anything that didn't go as well as you'd hoped?"

Ann: "I lost my train of thought in a few areas, which threw me off on what was coming up on the next slide."

Lisa: "Knowing that, what might you have done differently, if you could have a do-over?"

Ann: "I think it would have helped if I'd printed out the presentation and had a hard copy next to me. I could have written a few keywords next to each slide, that way I could have glanced down at it to help me remember my main points."

*Note: Sometimes, you might need to ask additional probing questions to help the person discover other areas for improvement.*

Lisa: "How were you feeling after your presentation when audience members began asking you questions?"

Ann: "That was tough! I didn't realize there would be so many questions."

Lisa: "Is there anything you could have done to be more prepared to answer their questions?"

Ann: "I wish I'd have thought about the types of questions I might get. If I'd have brainstormed a list of potential question, then I could have prepared some answers ahead of time."

Here's why the three questions are important:

1. **What went well?** This highlights the specific things done well so the positive actions can be remembered in the future.
2. **What didn't go as well as expected?** This question draws out areas for improvement. These are things within the person's control, but could also reveal areas that are outside their span of control.
3. **If you had a do-over – what would you do differently?** This encourages self-learning because it asks the person to apply the answers to the first two questions in a way that will help them improve future performance.

Coaching "in-the-moment" isn't difficult – anyone can learn the technique. All it takes is some practice and a sincere heart to help others (and yourself) learn through their experiences. Try it today and see how it works.

*Lisa Quast, author of the book, [Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want, Every Time](#). Join me on Twitter @careerwomaninc*

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