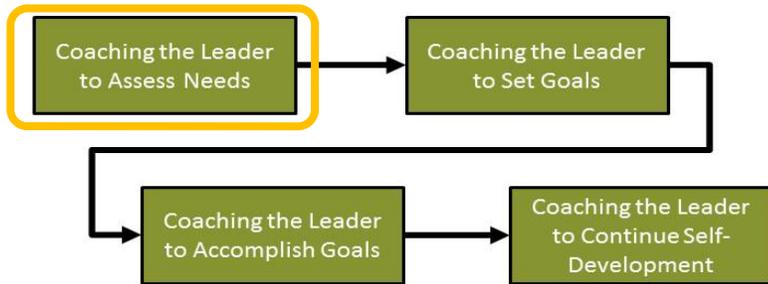




Process to Effectively Support Leaders

This newsletter is the first in a series of four newsletters that presents a process coaches can use to provide support during the coaching process to the leaders they coach. An overview of this process is provided in the diagram below, with the focus of this newsletter identified by the highlighted box.



At the beginning of this coaching process, as a coach it is important to help the leader assess what he or she needs and hopes to gain from the coaching engagement. This newsletter will help you as a coach understand how to put focus on the leader.

What is a Coach?

Coaching is partnering with an individual in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential (International Coaching Federation, www.coachfederation.org). With MSAF, coaching is a customized development process that helps a leader to create developmental paths forward.

How Does Coaching Differ From:

Mentoring	Mentoring is a voluntary developmental relationship between two people, one more seasoned (i.e., mentor) and one with less experience (i.e. mentee). Mentoring usually involves a long-term relationship to encourage career development; coaching is typically short-term to focus on a specific performance need. Mentoring tends to be broader in scope and focus on developing the mentee overall, while coaching focuses on a specific issue.
Developmental Counseling	Developmental counseling is a process by which leaders review a subordinate's demonstrated performance and potential. This involves the supervisor working with a subordinate whereas coaching typically utilizes an external person (i.e., outside the rank/unit) to help the leader develop.
Consulting	Consulting is an interaction in which an individual with specific expertise facilitates idea generation or problem resolution related to that area of expertise. It does not involve a partnering relationship as coaching does.
Professional Counseling	Counseling is an intervention by a skilled therapist that helps address underlying psychological problems. Counseling is broader in focus than coaching. The goal of counseling is to help individuals understand the root issues of longstanding problems whereas coaching aims to improve performance.
Teaching	Teaching involves an individual with specific content expertise who educates others by providing knowledge and materials that are relevant to the content area. Whereas teaching is directive and information provided in only one direction, coaching involves a supportive, two-way relationship

In this Issue

Overview of a process coaches can use to support leaders

- This newsletter covers the first step, Coaching the Leader to Assess Needs

Differentiation between coaching and other types of guidance or relationships

Explanation of how coaching can help leaders assess their needs

Four steps to help leaders assess their needs

- Gather information
- Gauge nature of relationship
- Engage in a professional way
- Encourage follow-up sessions

Case Study

- Shows how to help a leader assess needs in a professional, effective manner



How Can Coaches Help Leaders Assess Their Needs?

To be effective, the coach needs to determine what the Army leader needs and wants from the interaction at the onset of the coaching relationship. This understanding will set the tone for the coaching engagement, making sure that the relationship remains leader-focused and is based on exactly what the leader needs. Based on needs identified by the leader, objectives for coaching outcomes can be set. These objectives should be concrete, outcome-based, and achievable within a specified time frame.

To help a leader assess needs, there are various activities that a coach should do throughout the coaching process:

- 1) The coach should *ask the leader important questions*. These questions will guide the leader through a formal process for identifying his/her own needs. Questions should be aimed at understanding the leader's leadership style, current leadership challenges, and support needs. The coach should not tell the leader what should be important, but rather ask questions that guide the Army leader to indicate his/her needs.

Powerful inquiry is important at this step as it is a type of reflective questioning that can be used to guide leaders. For example, with powerful inquiry coaches ask questions to clarify expectations, understand the leader's assumptions, guide the leader to realizing possible implications or consequences of their actions, and assist in planning for the future with the leader (see Coaching Newsletter, Volume 12 for a full overview of powerful inquiry questioning).

Example questions that coaches could ask to help determine the leaders needs include:

- What approach should we take to ensure this coaching engagement is most beneficial to your development?
- How would you describe yourself as a leader?
- What are your leadership strengths?
- What areas do you need to develop as a leader?

- 2) The coach can create lists of the leaders needs and guide the leader in *prioritizing those needs*. Together, the coach and the leader can create a **Values Prioritization Matrix** (see below) that organizes the leader's developmental needs. A prioritization matrix lays out needs and identifies the resources and level of effort that would be necessary to accomplish them. This can help determine where to begin work with regard to accomplishing developmental goals as it will help to understand which goals can be accomplished immediately to have a large impact versus those that will require more extensive time and resources. The "target" represents the optimal needs to tackle first.



The remainder of this newsletter includes four additional steps that coaches can take to develop a strong coaching relationship to help leaders assess their needs.

Step 1: Gather information to increase awareness of the leader's context

When coaching a leader, it is important for the coach to pay attention to issues that the leader needs to discuss; coaching does not occur in a vacuum and various issues can affect a leader's performance. The coach must understand the leader's environment as the coach cannot provide effective guidance without this understanding as all aspects of the situation can affect the leader's needs, goals, and ability to accomplish them. Additional information to gather and consider during a coaching engagement includes:

- Consider the leader's rank, function, and command to fully understand his/her needs for the coaching engagement.
- Review the leader's IFR or other background material before beginning a coaching session to ensure an understanding of how others view the leader.
- Learn about the leader's work situation so that relevant examples can be discussed. This helps to ensure that as a coach you are able to pull in relevant professional examples from your career when communicating with the leader.
- Respect the leader's learning style by providing coaching in a way that will help the leader learn. For example, some leaders may learn best from charts or visual aids while others will learn best from questioning or concrete examples.

Step 2: Gauge the nature of the coaching relationship

As a coach, it is important to avoid presuming too much regarding the leader or his/her thoughts. Ask the leader to fully explain thoughts and situations rather than applying your own interpretation of the leader's words. To do this, ask questions such as, "I hear you saying...Is that accurate?;" "How does this impact you?," or similar questions to understand meaning. Work to understand the type of developmental relationship that the leader wishes to have with you. For example, you could ask a question such as "Could you help me know how my experience would be helpful to you?" Finally, withhold personal judgments or opinions regarding the leader's needs.

Step 3: Engage in a professional, not personal way

To best help a leader, coaches should avoid emphasis on personal, non-work related stories or discussion. It is important to show the leader that you have his/her best interests in mind. You can build rapport by listening and creating a sense of safety for the leader, and refraining from making judgments. Further, make sure to avoid using language and examples that are crude or could be interpreted as discriminatory in any way. Coach characteristics helpful for engaging professionally with leaders include:

- **Self Awareness:** Coaches should have a high degree of self-knowledge. They should stick to their expertise and how to best share this information, such as if they have professional experiences to share and how these will help the leader.
- **Empathy:** Coaches should be skilled at listening, questioning, and being able to empathize with leaders. They should understand the leader's needs and focus on them; coaching styles may need to be adjusted to best help the leader. Empathy is different than sympathy (e.g., convey concern but avoid claiming to understand the leader's exact experience).
- **Credibility:** Coaches need to develop credibility; part of this is staying on task, and keeping your personal feelings and experiences out of the coaching relationship.
- **Integrity:** Coaches should be honest with the leader and uphold confidentiality as allowable. As a coach, you should be patient with the leader and follow through on what you said you would do.

Learn More: Resources on Providing Feedback

Want to know more about the Virtual Improvement Center?

The Virtual Improvement Center (VIC) is available as a resource for leader development on the MSaf website. The VIC offers numerous developmental activities including readings, exercises, and simulations organized by the Core Leader Competencies to make it easy to search by developmental need. The VIC can be viewed here:

<https://msaf.army.mil/My360/VIC/Default.aspx>

Additional Resources about Leader Self Development:

Army Handbook for Self-Development (http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/CAL/repository/SDev_Handbook20.pdf):

- **Analyze Your Roles and Responsibilities** (pg. 16-18): Leader can assess how roles and responsibilities overlap with interests and talents.
- **Set Your Next Milestone** (pg. 40-43): Helps leaders assess the next logical step to take in their self-development journey.

Know Yourself—Self Development Plan (<http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/toolbox.html>):

- Provides a self development plan for different levels of leadership. In the table provided, identify the type of leader in the left hand column and examine related links in the right hand column.

Step 4: Encourage follow-up sessions

After the initial coaching session with the leader, it is beneficial for the coach to check back in with the leader. The leader may need additional guidance after the initial coaching session. Also, the leader may want to make an initial change toward meeting his/her goals immediately following the coaching session, but then revert to old behaviors after the initial coaching meeting is completed. One-time coaching engagements are likely to be less successful than if follow-up with the leader occurs. By following-up with the leader, as a coach you will be able to assess if the needs of the leader have been met or if other needs have emerged that were not discovered during the initial coaching session. Further, follow-up allows you as a coach to help the leader monitor the progress toward the leader's objectives.

Case Study: Working with a Leader to Assess His Needs

MAJ Anderson is meeting with a coach, Mr. Brown, for a coaching session. Both Mr. Brown and MAJ Anderson reviewed the IFR in preparation for the coaching session and have made notes on what they found in the data. At the start of the coaching session, Mr. Brown explains that he will keep the contents of MAJ Anderson's IFR and their conversation confidential. He then asks MAJ Anderson about his background and recent assignments.

Mr. Brown then asks MAJ Anderson what he wants from the coaching experience and the Major pulls out his feedback report, saying "It says I'm horrible at 'Developing Others'. I'm not surprised – I've never been good at that." Mr. Brown responds "'Developing Others' is an area for improvement. Let's look at the ratings for this competency and see where we need to focus our efforts and where there are strengths we can build on." MAJ Anderson visibly relaxes as he realizes that Mr. Gordon is not there to counsel him about performance deficiencies, but is interested in helping him develop.

Mr. Brown re-engages MAJ Anderson in looking at his feedback by asking questions such as, "What else stands out in the assessment values?," "In what other areas were you rated high or low?," and "Have you examined the values of other competencies or components that relate to the one you identified?"

After re-examining the feedback, MAJ Anderson realizes components within the competency "Communicates" are rated somewhat lower. Mr. Brown asks if there is other evidence that this may be a developmental need. MAJ Anderson reads through the written comments in his IFR and finds several indications that his communication skills may be lacking. Mr. Brown then helps MAJ Anderson explore communication as a potential area for development by asking him to describe specific instances where he was or was not effective when communicating with others. At the end of the session, Mr. Brown reviews the developmental priorities with MAJ Anderson and says that he will contact the MAJ for a follow-up on progress toward goals in the near future.

Reading Between the Lines

- Before the coaching session, the coach has worked to gather information and learn about the MAJ's situation and feedback. He also engages in a professional manner by building credibility and showing integrity through the promise of confidentiality.
- At the beginning of the coaching session, the coach is trying to gauge the leader's needs for the coaching relationship. The coach also begins to help the MAJ prioritize his needs based on feedback in the IFR.
- The coach asks important questions to further understand the needs of the leader.
- The coach continues to help the MAJ determine, assess, and prioritize his needs. The coach engages in a professional way and builds rapport by listening to the MAJ and considering his needs. He makes the MAJ aware that he will follow-up after the session to make sure that the MAJ is on the path to meeting the identified developmental goals.

Participation in the Army MSAF program is required by AR 350-1, Appendix K for all Army leaders and units. Leaders who participate in MSAF benefit from new insights into their strengths and capabilities, and their developmental needs. Use of resources associated with the MSAF program, such as coaching and the Virtual Improvement Center (described on page 2), allow leaders to build upon strengths and improve areas of need.



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