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10-MINUTE GUIDE

The POSITIVE Model of Coaching

Giving people the best chance of achieving their goals.



This guide for managers explores
eight steps for coaching.

How can you guide your team members to develop goals that they'll be engaged with long term? And how can you help them to create strong networks of supportive allies?

One way to achieve this is to use the POSITIVE model of coaching – an eight-step framework for creating highly motivating goals with your people.

About the POSITIVE Model

The POSITIVE model of coaching was developed by Vincenzo Libri. He aimed to excite people about fulfilling their potential, and said, *“There is a fine line between mediocrity and excellence. On one side there is contentedness of being. On the other side, there is the commitment of becoming.”*

His acronym stands for:

- **P**urpose.
- **O**bservations.
- **S**MART.
- **I**nsight.
- **T**eam.
- **I**nitiate.
- **V**alue.
- **E**ncourage.

From “Beyond GROW: in Search of Acronyms and Coaching Models,” by Vincenzo Libri in *The International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching*, Volume 2, Issue 1, July 2004. Reproduced with permission.

It's designed to help you to think about long-term goals and objectives rather than short-term problem solving or feedback.



Top Tip

To deal with a specific performance issue or development need, other coaching frameworks may be more appropriate than POSITIVE, such as [Solution-Focused Coaching](#).

Applying the Model

Follow the steps below to use the POSITIVE model.

Step 1: Define Purpose

Your team member might only have a vague idea of how coaching can help, so start by asking them the following questions:

- What is your goal?
- What do you want to achieve in each coaching session?
- How do you think I can help you with that?
- What might you need to contribute to the process yourself?



Top Tip

Aim to [build trust and rapport](#) early on in a coaching relationship, and be sure to [listen well](#) throughout, so that the coachee feels comfortable sharing information, ideas and feelings with you.

Step 2: Make Observations

Once you've identified your coachee's goal and how coaching can help him to achieve it, encourage him to think about his current situation from a variety of perspectives, so that he can get a better understanding of it. Ask him to focus on the positive aspects, as well as the negative ones.

Use these [open questions](#) to probe further:

- What is happening now?
- How do you feel?
- What's going well for you?
- What's not going so well?
- Why is your goal so important to you?
- How does it tie in with your current role or your wider career objectives?
- How do you think you can reach your goal?
- Who else knows about your intentions?
- Who else is affected?
- What parts of your life does this have an impact on?
- What would happen if you didn't take action?
- What have you already tried or achieved in relation to this goal?

Step 3: Develop a SMART Goal

Your coachee now has a clearer grasp of what she wants to do, and has a good understanding of her current situation. You now need to help her to define her goal in [SMART](#) terms (so that it's Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

Consider asking questions such as:

- How important is this goal?
- How clear are you on it?
- What does success look like for you?
- How long do you have to reach this goal? Is this long enough? Or soon enough?
- How will you know when you've achieved it?

Step 4: Gain Insight

Next, your coachee needs to know that he has the will and the confidence to achieve his goal.

If he designed his SMART goal well, he'll likely feel excited and motivated by it. But if he feels discouraged or overwhelmed, the goal might be unrealistic, or it may be something that he doesn't really want to do.

You can help him to see if there's a problem with the goal, and what might solve it, by asking questions such as:

- How challenged do you feel by this goal, on a scale of 1-10?
- How excited are you, on a scale of 1-10?
- [How confident are you](#), on a scale of 1-10?
- What potential obstacles can you think of? How likely are they? How could you overcome them?
- If I ask you to visualize yourself achieving this goal, what do you see?

If he feels that the goal is too ambitious, explore whether his fears are based on a fair assessment of his abilities. If he's not energized by the goal, help him to identify how reaching the goal will help in other areas of his life, too.

When appropriate, go back to Step 3 and rewrite the goal to be more realistic – or more stretching!

Step 5: Identify a Support Team

Your coachee will have a much better chance of attaining her goal if she has the support of people who can provide encouragement and help along the way.

As her coach, you're a key part of this team. However, she also needs to identify others – such as co-workers, family members and friends – who will support her.

Ask these questions to help her to [identify suitable allies](#):

- Who do you feel comfortable sharing this goal with?
- Who has supported you with past goals?
- Who is most supportive in your life?
- Who has access to the resources that you need to achieve this goal?
- Who or what inspires you when things get difficult?

Step 6: Initiate the Goal

By now, your coachee has developed a SMART goal that he is excited about working toward, and has identified who can support him along the way.

Ask him these questions to help him to move on from the theory, to take action:

- When will you get started on your goal?
- How will you begin?
- How often will you work toward this goal?
- What will you do if you run into a difficulty?
- How will you ask your support team for help?
- What resources do you need and how will you get them?

Step 7: Create Tangible Value

Significant goals require long-term commitment, and it might be a long time before your coachee sees the results of her actions.

Help her to break down her goal into smaller ones that she can achieve monthly, weekly and daily. That way, she can review and celebrate progress regularly, and act on the [lessons learned](#) when things don't go so well.

Importantly, make sure that she identifies all of the steps that she needs to take to reach her goal, including researching and analyzing any data, and approaching her chosen allies in advance. At the same time, identify some high-impact quick wins, so that she can enjoy some early successes.

Consider these questions in this step:

- What preparation work do you need to do before you take specific actions?
- How will you recognize progress?
- How will you celebrate your successes – big and small?
- Who will you celebrate with?
- How will you feel once you've achieved each milestone?



Top Tip

Your coachee could [keep a journal](#) or use an app such as [Strides](#) to keep track of what she achieves each day.

Step 8: Encourage Your Coachee

The final step in this model is to give your coachee plenty of ongoing encouragement and support.

Meet with him regularly to ensure that you can keep in the loop and provide accountability. But you can also give encouragement between coaching meetings, through informal [on-the-spot feedback](#), emails and instant messages, for example.

When you do meet one-on-one, be sure to ask:

- How are you progressing toward your goals?
- How can I help you along the way better?
- Have you experienced any difficulties?
- Is the plan we created working well for you?

And be sure to praise him honestly and consistently for his hard work and dedication to his goal.

Key Points

The POSITIVE model of coaching offers a simple eight-step framework that you can use to help team members to develop and achieve their professional goals.

POSITIVE stands for:

- **P**urpose.
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The model is flexible, but it may not be suitable for solving problems or improving poor performance.

It is designed to excite and motivate people to work toward high-impact long-term goals, with the support of a team of allies – including you!

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