



Coaching Tips

By G. Thomas Herrington, Senior Partner, The PAR Group

For some people, coaching can be uncomfortable. All too often, the person being coached becomes defensive. But coaching should not be a battle. In fact, coaching is something you can do well, if you keep coaching positive and follow four basic tips.

1. State the Success Point.

A success point, based on the performance or action that you are coaching, should be both measurable and clearly definite. Before you start coaching you must first define what your determined point of success will be and then state it out loud. Next, show the person you are coaching how this 'point' will positively impact them and how their performance will impact the organization.

2. Acknowledge every success.

Once you determine your success point, you must acknowledge every success. It is much easier to coach based on success and then build one success on another. So start your coaching by acknowledging an aspect of the person's performance that is positive and then build on it. Be specific as you acknowledge. This is not cheerleading. This is coaching. You are pointing out a skill, quality or action that you clearly want someone to repeat.

3. For improvement, point out the solution instead of critiquing the error.

The next tip to improving performance is to point out a solution. Actually, to point out a solution means pointing *toward* a solution. You may, in fact, not know exact solutions in advance. You may need to do some experimenting. So, point *toward* experiments which seem to offer likely solutions, and remember to point only one solution out at a time.

Another key aspect to note is that solutions focused on the positive make performance even better. Focusing on what is wrong creates frustration and may actually cause someone to repeat the mistake.

For instance, telling a golfer, “Don’t slice it,” would probably cause him to do just that. You also wouldn’t tell a baseball player on the way to the plate, “Don’t strike out.” If you focus on what not to do, you will more than likely actually do what you brain is focused on, what not to do. How many times have you sworn not to get something on your tie, suit or dress only to have it happen in a matter of minutes, if not seconds?

As an example, try this quick exercise. When you read the word “fruit,” don’t picture bananas. That is the only rule. Don’t picture bananas. Did you picture bananas? Most people do. A better coaching technique would be to say, “When you read the word “fruit,” picture strawberries. Full 100% attention is then on what makes it better.

4. Experiment until your partner succeeds.

The final tip is to experiment until the person you are coaching, your partner, achieves some measurable success because you never want to end with failure. Your partner will remember that and will not be back any time soon. So ensure that every practice sequence ends with a “win” (a success or improvement.) Also, save all talk, analyses and conclusions until your practice period is over. Your focus, as you coach, must be on achieving measurable success.

In our PAR training courses, the certified instructors are not the only coaches. Participants engage in coaching each other. They use these four PAR coaching Tips as their guideline to practice and perfect their coaching skills. Following these simple tips get results faster which leads to lasting success.

Thomas Herrington is a Senior Partner of The PAR Group, an international training and development firm headquartered in Tucker, GA., and he is the co-author of [Cracking the Code to Leadership](#), a how-to book on the secrets of leadership. Email questions and/or comments to Tom.Herrington@thepargroup.com.

