

NALP Education Conference 2012, Austin, Texas
Performance Feedback using a Solution Focused Approach

Stages of an SF Coaching Conversation

1. Establish Rapport
2. Set Goals
3. Build Solutions
4. Give Feedback

1. Establish Rapport

- Show empathy and affirm understanding
- Listen actively (verbal and non-verbal cues)
- Offer compliments
- Acknowledge competence
- Seek clarification

2. Set Goals

- Collaborate to establish positive, behavioral goals
- Ask employee to frame the goal and then work together to reframe
- Turn negative goals (stopping or not doing something) to positive ones, not just as the absence of something
- Prioritize short and long term goals

Sample Questions:

- If the problem was resolved, what would be different?
- What would help for us to talk about today?
- What do you want to change?
- What would be better if this problem was resolved or less intense?

3. Build Solutions

Consider using 5 types of interventions or techniques based on SCORE principles*

S	C	O	R	E
Scaling	Competence or Coping	Outcome	Relationship	Exceptions

Scaling

Use of scaling gives the coach valuable information about how an employee perceives the situation. It opens the door for building self-confidence and personal agency, and provides a tool for tracking progress. Setting up the question takes some practice but people never say 0!

- i. Reality check: where are you now?
- ii. Build confidence: how did you get here? What did you do to make this happen?
- iii. Establish a desired outcome: what will be different when you are higher on the scale, even by one level?
- iv. Small steps to achieve outcome: what will you do next to get there?

Competence or Coping

Check in about what has been working so far to identify areas of competence and coping. Take a not-knowing stance.

- i. What has been working for you so far to address this problem?
- ii. What personal qualities do you have that will help you to achieve your goal?
- iii. What supports do you already have in place?
- iv. How are you going to track your progress?

Outcome

Imagine and describe a preferred outcome when performance is improved. Elicit a description of what the employee is doing differently when that outcome is achieved.

- i. What would a successful outcome be for you?
- ii. When this problem is resolved or less acute, what is one small thing you would notice that will tell you things are different?
- iii. What else would tell you that things were better?
- iv. Can you be more specific about what exactly you will be doing differently when you have reached your goal?
- v. Refer back to scaling – what can you do to move up one level?

Relationships

Enlist others in the conversation to support striving towards goals.

- i. What would xx say you need to do to move a step closer to your goal?
- ii. When you make these changes, who will be the first to notice?
- iii. What will others notice is different when you have made the desired change?
- iv. Identify someone who you think wants you to do well. What would s/he say to you that you wouldn't say to yourself?

Exceptions

Exception questions are a powerful SF tool to build personal agency. Be curious about times when the employee was in a similar situation and the problem was not as big. Building on exceptions to the problem may shed light on what could work in the future.

- i. Can you describe a time when this wasn't a problem for you or it was a little better? What was happening then? (note: if it is difficult to think of an example in work place setting, ask to think of a non-work situation).
- ii. When things are working well, what is different about those times?
- iii. Who did what to make the exception happen?
- iv. What did you do differently then?

4. Give Feedback and Take Action

This is the stage where coach/manager can share constructive feedback, information and resources they have that will help an employee to move towards the desired outcome.

Begin this stage by reiterating positive feedback about strengths and offer reminder about what has been working well. At a minimum, acknowledge willingness to have this conversation. For example, "I am impressed by your openness and creative thinking about what we can do to improve your performance".

Be clear about your expectations and offer ideas for how you can support employee to meet those expectations.

Ensure goals are stated, even better if written down, and that they are SMART goals: *specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and timely.*

- i. Ask what is the first step you are going to do take and by when?
- ii. Agree to a timeline for reporting back.
- iii. Commit and write it down.
- iv. Check in on progress within 2-4 weeks.