

The Flow of Coaching

James Flaherty in *Evoking Excellence in Others* describes a 7-step Flow of Coaching¹ process from first establishing the relationship between the coach and individuals on the team to observation, assessment, providing feedback and reaching agreement on future steps. The following is a summary and elaboration of the Flow of Coaching model:

1. **Establish the relationship** – for coaching to work, the relationship must be genuine and based on mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual freedom of expression. The coach must facilitate open communications where information is exchanged without defensiveness or argumentation. Freedom of expression is grounded in openness, listening, and confidentiality.
2. **Recognize the opening** – an “opening” is an event or an occasion that makes the individual or team more approachable for coaching, for example, a process breakdown, a need for enhanced competency, or the introduction of a new process or technique.
3. **Observe and assess performance** – in addition to observing immediate concerns, the coach should observe and assess how the team is meeting its commitments, working toward its identified future outcomes, and maintaining a constructive mood, while also assessing the level of competence in the group and individual behaviors.
4. **Enroll the team for a coaching session** – the coach and the team should make explicit what they aim to accomplish together, discuss potential barriers, identify desired outcomes, reach mutual commitment, and identify possible obstacles to success.
5. **Conduct the coaching conversation** – during the initial session, the coach should clarify the desired outcome of the coaching session, observe the team’s performance, set up communication expectations, and plan a follow-up session. During the next session, the coach reports on observations, addresses breakdowns, discusses new behaviors, and assigns new practice. During the third session, the coach reports on the observations of the new practice, results of the new behavior, effects of newly acquired competence, and suggests recommendations for the future. The coach should acknowledge positive results and progress and ask the

¹ Flaherty, J., *Evoking Excellence in Others*, Elsevier, 2010, p. 25

team to reflect on what they have learned from their own observations of their performance.

6. **Provide feedback** – the feedback should provide time for the team to reflect on the coach’s observations of their performance and on their own observations. By conducting a self-assessment, the team will better understand the corrections in behavior needed for sustained improvement.
7. **Agree on future steps** – the coach and team members should agree on the focus of future coaching conversations, practice sessions, and new behaviors to master.