

## **John Whitmore: The GROW Model**

### **Unlocking potential**

The key to unlocking the potential, which coaching provides, is the ability to be aware. Awareness means that the coach can gather facts and information, and determine the relevance of these, being already in possession of an understanding of the dynamics of the organisation in question. Due to the nature of coaching, and the fact that it deals with human nature, an awareness of psychology on the part of the coach is also important.

Another of Whitmore's central concepts is responsibility. An acceptance of responsibility results in a commitment, which optimises performance. He emphasises the need to move away from a 'blame culture', where responsibility is constantly shifted onto someone else.

According to Whitmore, the job of a manager can be simplified to two central tasks: to get the job done, and to grow his/her staff. If the principles of coaching are applied to that job, then both of those tasks are undertaken simultaneously. Therefore, the title of Whitmore's model is rather appropriate.

### **The GROW Model**

The GROW model is based around the theory that using questions rather than instructions in an organisation will foster change more readily. The acronym GROW stands for Goal, Reality, Options and Will. It provides a relatively simple framework for structuring a coaching session, and has been adopted by many of the world's major organisations.

- Goal: After discussion, a target to be reached in the session should be developed.
- Reality: It is important that this session is grounded in reality. The person being coached should be able to assess their present situation, and give concrete examples of their performance to date.  
Feedback should be provided at this point.
- Options: This stage offers the opportunity for the person being coached to suggest possible courses of action, and together with any that the coach puts forward, these should be evaluated and a choice arrived at.
- Will: The final part of the process involves the person being coached making decisions and having

the willpower to commit to them. Future steps to be taken should be confirmed and the coach should agree with the client how they will be supported through the ongoing development process.

Under these headings Whitmore suggests types of questions to develop the session as productively as possible.

**Goal:**

- How do you want your career to progress?
- What outcome do you want from this process?
- How do you feel this process will help you?
- Will this session be sufficient to cover the points you need to cover?
- What would it take for this process to be a success?

**Reality:**

- How do you see your style of management/leadership?
- How do you think others view your style of management/leadership?
- Can you provide examples of this?

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**Options:**

- How could the situation change?
- How could you improve the situation?
- Can you provide some specific options for action?
- Are you aware of the possible downsides to those options?
- Which of these suggested options would you like to try?

## **Will:**

- How can you put these options into action?
- Are you aware of any obstacles to these actions?
- What further support do you need from your coach?
- Does your organisation offer in-house support for change?
- If not, can you push for an in-house support system?
- Can you put this action plan into writing?

It is important to be aware that at all times in this process the client is gently being nudged towards developing their own action plan rather than being ordered along a certain route. Due to this more client- led approach, the GROW model is seen as being less directive than some other forms of coaching.

[1] Sir John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance: GROWing People, Performance and Purpose* (Nicholas Brealey, 2002).

[2] Timothy Gallwey was a tennis player in the 1970. He wrote *The Inner Game of Tennis* in 1975, which put forward a new way of coaching the sport. Gallwey believed in each person's innate ability to learn and perform. He saw the role of the coach as a facilitator of the player's own awareness of their development.

*Source; NHS Scotland, The Organisational Development Toolkit.*