



Coaching Questions for Founders: How to Evaluate Progress and Plan Next Steps

Article

For startup founders, coaching and mentoring their team is crucial to the success of their business. Effective coaching can help team members identify their goals, overcome obstacles, and improve their performance continuously. To achieve these outcomes, it's important to ask the right questions during coaching sessions. Here are some coaching questions and notes that can be useful to guide conversations with team members:

What are your objectives?

It's important to start coaching by clarifying team members' goals. Ensure that the objective is connected to the current problem and follows the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) framework.

Example: "What is your objective for this project? Can you demonstrate how it's linked to the current problem we're attempting to solve? Is it a SMART goal?"

What is the current state?

To assess the current state of a project or process, ask team members for numbers rather than opinions. Ask them to show you their data and explain how they arrived at their conclusions.

Example: "What numbers describe the current state of the project? Can you show me the data and explain how you got these numbers?"

What was planned for the previous step?

To evaluate progress, ask team members to describe their previous plan and what they anticipated would happen.

Example: "What was your plan for the last step of this project? What did you expect to happen?"

What actually occurred?

To objectively assess results, ask team members to provide facts and numbers. If they have a metric, ask them to present it. Then, inquire about what differed from their expectations.

Example: "What occurred during the last step of the project? Do you have a metric to show? What is different from what you expected?"



What did you learn?

After analyzing the results, ask team members to identify what they learned from the experience. Encourage them to reflect on their successes and failures and share their insights with the team.

Example: "What did you learn from the last step of the project? What were your successes and failures? What insights can you share with the team?"

What are the obstacles that are preventing you from achieving your goal?

To help team members overcome obstacles, ask them to identify the barriers that are preventing them from achieving their goals. Then, work with them to develop strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

Example: "What obstacles do you think are preventing you from reaching your goal? How can we work together to overcome these barriers?"

What is the next step?

After identifying obstacles, work with team members to develop an action plan for moving forward. Ensure to ask them what they expect to happen during the next step of the project.

Example: "What is the next step for this project? What do you expect to happen?"

By using these coaching questions and notes, startup founders can help their team members stay focused, motivated, and aligned with their business's objectives.

Agenda

Coach

- A person who trains and directs a person or team
- *"As a startup founder, your ability to coach and mentor your team is critical to the success of your business."*

Mentor

- A person who advises and supports a less experienced person or team member
- *"Effective coaching helps your team members identify their goals, overcome obstacles, and continually improve their performance."*



Goal

- An objective that a person or team is trying to achieve
- *"When coaching team members, it's important to start by clarifying their goals."*

SMART

- An acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, which are characteristics of effective goals
- *"Make sure that the goal is connected with the current problem and is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART)."*

Metric

- A measure or standard for assessing something
- *"If they have a metric to show, ask them to present it."*

Reflection

- Serious thought or consideration about one's experiences, actions, or decisions
- *"Encourage them to reflect on their successes and failures and to share their insights with the team."*

Obstacle

- A barrier or challenge that prevents progress or success
- *"To help team members overcome obstacles, ask them to identify the barriers that are preventing them from achieving their goals."*

Action plan

- A detailed plan outlining the steps required to achieve a goal
- *"After identifying obstacles, work with team members to develop an action plan for moving forward."*

Continuous improvement

- A process of constantly seeking ways to improve a product, process, or system

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- *“With effective coaching, you can create a culture of continuous improvement that drives success for your business.”*

Experiment

- A scientific procedure carried out to test a hypothesis or answer a question
- *“Work with them to develop experiments that can be run immediately.”*

Discussion

1. How do you think coaching and mentoring styles differ between Korean and American business cultures, and how can we adapt to these differences when working across cultures?
2. In what ways can we apply the coaching questions and notes provided in the article to improve our own English language skills and communication with colleagues from English-speaking countries?
3. What are some strategies you use to overcome language barriers in your workplace, and how can we support one another in improving our language skills to enhance our professional growth and success?