BOOST and the Coach Approach: Leading Effective Feedback Conversations that Drive Performance

By Marielle Gauthier (Redworks Communications and Coaching)

Strong leadership in tourism begins with clear communication, meaningful feedback, and a commitment to employee growth. Below are tips and tools to help you lead effective performance conversations and build more engaged, high-performing teams.

A Coach Approach

A leadership and management style that uses coaching conversations to empower employees to think independently, take ownership and grow.

Core Characteristics of the Coach Approach:
- Collaboration – Working with employees to explore challenges and co-create solutions.
- Deep Listening – Fully listening to understand the employee's perspective and experience.
- Powerful Questions – Asking thoughtful, open-ended questions that inspire insight and ownership.
- Self-Reflection – Creating space for employees to pause, reflect, learn, and arrive at their own answers.

Coaching for Performance

Performance coaching is an ongoing, one-on-one conversation that helps employees reflect, grow, and take ownership of their development. It supports both skill-building and mindset shifts so individuals can improve performance, unlock potential, and contribute to team and organizational success.

Non-Coaching Habits to Watch For
- Telling people what to do
- Jumping in with advice or rescuing
- Leading with judgment or assumptions
- Dwelling on the past or fixing problems for people
- Taking over or directing the entire process

Coaching, Feedback, and Mentoring: What is the Difference?

As a leader, knowing when to coach, give feedback, or mentor is key to supporting employee growth. Each approach is valuable, but they serve different purposes.

Coaching
- A reflective, question-based approach that helps employees find their own solutions and build confidence.
- *Use when:* You want to build problem-solving skills, support growth, or help someone move forward.

Feedback
- Clear, timely information about behaviour or performance to reinforce or redirect.
- *Use when:* You have observed something specific and want to acknowledge or adjust it.

Mentoring
- Sharing your own knowledge and experience to guide someone's development over time.
- *Use when:* Someone is navigating a new role or career stage and needs advice or insight.

Choose the approach that best supports the employee in the moment. When used intentionally, coaching, feedback, and mentoring all build trust and performance.

BOOST Feedback Framework

BOOST is a simple and powerful framework for delivering constructive feedback that builds clarity, trust, and improvement.

It focuses on five key components:

- **B – Balanced** – Highlight strengths and growth areas.
- **O – Objective** – Focus on factual observations of specific behaviours and actions, not on personality traits.
- **O – Observed** – Focus on actions and behaviours you have witnessed firsthand, not those reported by others.
- **S – Specific** – Be clear and concise about the behaviour or action being addressed, and specify what the employee should continue, change, or improve.
- **T – Timely** – Provide feedback as close to the observed behaviour or action as possible. Give feedback frequently and continuously.

BOOST + Coach Approach: Turn Feedback into a Conversation

Combine BOOST with coaching questions to create two-way conversations that build insight, growth, and ownership.

Ask open-ended reflection questions immediately after the BOOST portion like:
- What do you think happened?
- How do you feel that went?
- What will you try next time?
- What support would be helpful?
- Can you please walk me through your thinking at that moment?
- How do you usually prepare for … ?
- What might help you remember that step consistently?

This approach shifts feedback from "telling" to "engaging."

When Do You Give Feedback?

Typical situations for giving feedback include:
- After observing behaviour - e.g., a frontline employee missing guest service steps.
- Following significant events - such as after a challenging customer interaction or project completion.
- To reinforce positive behaviours - acknowledging a team member going above and beyond.
- When patterns emerge – e.g. repeated tardiness or consistently strong teamwork.
- During check-ins or performance reviews - to guide development and recognize progress.
- When changes occur - new processes, roles, or expectations that require adaptation.

10 Practical Tips for Giving Feedback

1. Be Timely & Specific - Give feedback as soon as possible and focus on observable behaviours, not personality traits.
2. Use a Balanced Approach - Mix positive reinforcement with areas for improvement to support motivation and growth.
3. Create a Safe Environment - Ensure privacy, minimize distractions, and approach the conversation with empathy and respect.
4. Be Mindful of Tone and Body Language - Use calm, open body language, and pay attention to the other person's nonverbal cues.
5. Focus on Feedforward - Offer suggestions for future improvement, not just critique past actions.
6. Engage in Two-Way Dialogue - Ask open-ended questions and invite the other person's perspective and solutions.
7. Align with Values and Goals - Tie feedback to personal goals or organizational values to increase meaning and impact.
8. Watch the 5:1 Ratio - Aim for five positive comments for every one constructive point to build trust and receptiveness.
9. Model Feedback Culture – Ask for feedback yourself to set the tone and normalize continuous improvement.
10. Follow Up and Support - Check in on progress and offer help or resources to support development and accountability.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Owner and principal of Redworks Communications and Coaching. As a seasoned accredited business communication specialist with over 20 years of experience, Marielle has extensive experience in strategic communications planning, media training, and crisis communications. As a certified Results Coach, she works with leaders of small to medium-sized organizations make improvements in individual and team performance, realize better outcomes, and achieve business goals quicker; and with individuals to help them achieve their personal goals to maximize their extraordinary lives.

She provides coaching, consulting, and training in the areas of retirement lifestyle planning; career change, transition and success; leader transition and development; mental fitness; building better relationships; effective communication; overwhelm and time management; employee engagement and customer service.