**Coaching others in job skills**

## Introduction

Coaching and training of workers is essential if an employer seeks successful performance of workplace tasks. While new employees can be coached in job skills or in organisation-specific requirements, existing staff can undertake coaching to increase their skill set by learning new skills and techniques on the job or where problems are evident, undertake re-training so that they work at the standard required by the organisation.

For employees to learn new skills or enhance existing skill sets, a coach is required who can guide them through a learning process. The coach must not only be competent in the skills being taught or reinforced but must also have an excellent set of interpersonal skills that enable them to engage the worker and sustain their enthusiasm for learning. Coaching is not simply the telling another staff member how to do something - it requires patience, empathy, understanding and leadership.

## What is the difference between training and coaching?

Training is a term that is used along with teaching, instruction and coaching. These terms are used to goal-driven activities established by some authority seeking improvements or modifications to work performance. The focus is to enhance or improve the work performance of an individual or group of participants.

The term ‘training’ is applied when this instruction is provided to a group of participants brought together for a common purpose. The training is usually in a formal context and structured to suit the needs of the group in terms of work performance.

Various forms of training are used in Australian workplaces:

* Formal training refers to a structured approach to learning in which the trainer provides a clear outline of the skills to be learnt. Example: Training for the responsible service of alcohol or a workshop on making espresso coffee making. Training of this type is generally carried out in large workplaces or at a learning institution such as a TAFE.
* Informal training occurs every day in the workplace and is generally unstructured. Example: A work colleague showing another worker how to access the customer database or a worker being instructed by the leading hand on how to use the new digital lathe – in these cases it consists of not only demonstrating how to do something but also the expected workplace standard. In the workplace, a worker can watch and analyse how other people carry out their tasks and use this information to improve their own skills and expanded their own knowledge.
* Paired training (sometimes called ‘buddy training’) is a term used to describe the on-the-job training where an employee is assigned a more experienced colleague (a ‘buddy’) to assist them learn. This approach is commonly used in induction and ‘onboarding’ programs where new employees are supported in understanding their new work environment. These forms of new employee support have an experienced worker given the task of instructing the new employee on relevant organisational standards and providing support and explanations for any questions. The purpose of this approach is to support the new worker to extend their existing skill set into the organisational specific skills and standards required by the employer.
* E-learning, sometimes known as Computer-based training (CBT), is where participants use software applications, email and the Internet to access learning information, activities and resources. This form of training can be effective when there is considerable background information to master (e.g. industry specific WHS, legislative changes, etc.), the participants may be widely separated geographically or when there are significant numbers of workers that need to achieve competency within short time frames. Example: Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training and certification is an online course.

While the term ‘coaching’ is often used interchangeably with training and instruction, there is a subtle difference. Coaching is a learning process using practical activities of commonly used skills. Coaching sessions are generally carried out in the work environment with a small number of staff members (often one-on-one). This approach focuses on flexibility in offering specific skill focussed activities that meet the needs of the involved worker.

Coaching within the Tourism industry include:

* Basic customer service skills
* Technical or practical skills, e.g. operating equipment and/or digital software, completing documentation, specific job skills for wait staff.
* Promoting and selling products and services.

A person assigned the role of a coach within a workplace is responsible for developing, supporting and monitoring the people assigned to them for specific skill development.

## Coach requirements

Some people may not make good coaches. This may be since they do not have the interpersonal skills (i.e. patience, good communication skills, etc.) or an exceptional grasp of the technical skills and understanding of the organisational standards expected. Others may simply feel uncomfortable communicating what they know or may not like the responsibility.

For coaching to be successful those persons selected as coaches must be able to do the task.

A coach should have the following characteristics:

* Experienced in the skills and knowledge of that workplace
* Enthusiastic about helping others grow in the work role
* Communicates well with others
* Well organised
* Understands the adult learning process
* Expresses empathy for others and is patient
* Supportive of others and helpful

Coaches are best drawn from the body of employees that are experienced operational staff who has some form of work authority (i.e. supervisor, team leader, leading hand, senior staff member, etc.) so that they may carry out these additional duties autonomously, while still being under the guidance/authority of others.

## Where does coaching happen?

Workplace coaching can take place in nearly any work setting. The setting needs to be planned so that it reflects the purpose of that coaching session. It is not practical to plan a coaching session on the maintenance of the landscaping equipment in the lunchroom.

Most work-related learning occurs on the job – you may learn some skills in a learning institution, but the bulk of your work specific skills and knowledge will come from your experiences and coaching in the workplace. Example: Someone will demonstrate how to book tours for a couple, conduct a commentary on the local wildlife or set the table in the restaurant. This will happen every day in your work life – it becomes a lifelong learning event!

Occasionally some of your work training may occur outside of your work site (e.g. trade shows, seminars, workshops, etc.). This type of training has benefits but is also quite expensive – not only the fees to attend the activity but the loss of a day’s productivity to the business due to your absence. This off the job training does have benefits such as the worker feeling important, being able to concentrate with less interruption from customers and other staff, accessibility to specialised equipment, etc.

Both types of work training may be held before or after work, depending on the circumstances.

Simulation Is also commonly used in coaching and training. Some work roles cannot be learnt in on-the job situations (e.g. an ambulance officer). In these circumstances, the worker may be trained in simulated environments which are as realistic as possible. These simulated work environments are often used in learning institutions such as TAFEs to cover several skills (e.g. training restaurants, role plays and mock customer service situations).

## Legal compliance

All workplaces must abide with government legislation. In general terms there are three categories of work focused legislation:

Workplace Health and Safety

Technical compliance

Value of the person

The first two categories of legislation are generally industry specific though there may be generalised elements found across multiple industries. The third category – Value of the person – is common to all industries and employment across Australia. In this category lie the legislation related to anti-discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO.

It is illegal in Australia to treat people unfairly or to exclude people or groups from workplace participation based on their characteristics. The term ‘workplace participation’ encompasses training, specific job roles and job promotion (i.e. career progression). For more information on the groups of people supported by these legislations conduct your own research on the Internet.

It essential that all work activities are carried out in a legally compliant manner and are fair. Decisions in any workplace need to be based on an individuals' skills and abilities.

Examples of discriminatory behaviour:

* Not offering someone training/promotion because the employer assumes they will get pregnant and take leave.
* Providing coaching/training only on weekends or during the evening and not offering alternatives disadvantaging parents who have family responsibilities.
* Not providing promotion, coaching or training based on gender.

## How and why people learn

Adults have many reasons for learning. Generally they need to be motivated towards the learning and see some specific benefit for themselves.

Motivation is an important tool in any work environment. Most people think that monetary rewards are the best motivational tool, however this is incorrect. At a basic level money is an important motivator, but there are other, more useful motivators. Some of the more valuable motivators are detailed below:

* If the worker sees value in what they are doing, they lift their performance and make their work duties relevant. Example: If workers see that their work contributes to business success (extrinsic motivation), or improves their skill set or makes them a better person (intrinsic motivation), they are likely to be more motivated.
* Training and coaching can contribute to motivation. Participants of these widen their understanding of the work they do and expands their understanding of their duties, rights, contribution to the operation of the organisation and how any improvements will alter their job.

Motivation for learning is different for every learner. Sometimes it is out of necessity, while other times it is just for fun! Here are some common reasons why adults learn:

* Personal interest
* Increased opportunities
* Survival
* Financial gain
* Feeling a sense of worth
* Legal/policy requirement
* Employment or promotion
* Peer pressure

As a coach, try to understand the motivations or the staff members. This will help you structure and deliver your session more effectively.

## Learning Preferences

When it comes to learning a new skill, people tend to prefer certain ways of learning. Example: if you purchase a new television what do you do? Do you read the instructions and then assemble the equipment? Do you look at the pictures in the booklet and try to figure out how everything fits together? Do you ignore the instructions and jump straight in and just try and put it together? Do you ask someone to explain or show you how it is assembled?

People tend to approach learning in different ways and assemble knowledge according to our personal learning preferences. This means that when you are training others, you need to consider the variety of learning styles so that each person can connect and absorb the new knowledge. Significant research has been conducted into learning styles of the past three decades and several theories and models have been developed.

The preferences a person shows towards learning are titled learning preferences or learning styles.

In the tourism industry you will find that many people prefer the kinaesthetic and visual learning styles. When coaching, try to tailor your coaching style to the preferred learning styles of the staff member you are working with. Often you will find that a combination of methods helps the staff member to learn the new skill. Combining visual and verbal instruction with hands-on learning activities means that a learner is more likely to achieve success and make learning meaningful to themselves.

## Adults as learners

Adults learn differently to children. Using teaching techniques that work well for children or teenagers may not be appropriate for learners in the workplace.

Here are some principles of adult learning:

* Adults have a higher sense of self-direction and motivation.
* Adults use their life experience to facilitate learning.
* Adults are focused on achieving goals.
* Adults need to know how the information is relevant.
* Adults are practical.
* Adults are looking for help and mentorship.
* Adults are open for modern ways of learning.
* Adults want to choose how they learn.

Adult learners are much more self-directed and motivated than young learners.

Adults tend to learn because they want to or they see the direct benefit of learning, rather than because they are told to or are expected to. However, just because adults have a larger reservoir of motivation, it doesn’t mean that they will learn just anything.

Adults must see the benefit, value and purpose of learning.

Your coaching programs should clearly demonstrate what the learner gains from their interaction, or learners will be quick to disengage. Show the value of the content, and learners will be much more likely to engage with it.

## Identifying the need for coaching

In most cases there are indicators that workplace coaching is required. This could result from an initial assessment of the existing skills of a worker, or an observed shortfall in performance standards, which means that a skills gap needs to be filled. Quite often employees themselves identify the training need by recognising their own shortfalls.

Indicators that coaching is required include:

* **Direction from the employee** - it is not uncommon for some employees to miss out on instruction when new skills or new procedures are introduced, especially in a shift work and casual labour environments. Some staff may not have the opportunity to practise certain skills often enough and therefore need some refresher training, while others may simply feel that they need some more instruction as a result, it may fall upon the employee to alert their supervisor that they require some additional training. Employees who take the initiative to request some additional coaching are generally self-motivated and valuable team members.
* **Direction from another employee** - a co-worker, team leader or supervisor may recognise that someone within the team needs more instruction. Example: A wait staff employee within the restaurant may be slowing down service as s/he can only carry 2 plates, while all the other wait staff can carry 3. This causes tension within the team (the chefs and wait staff), especially during busy periods. The employee clearly needs coaching on how to carry 3 plates.
* **Employee is new** - it is necessary and a legal requirement for all new employees to receive some sort of induction or onboarding training. Even though the staff member may possess strong skills and expertise it is important that they become familiar with the organisation’s standards and practices, especially with regards to standard operating procedures (SOPs) and WHS processes.
* **Change in procedure** - when new systems or policies are implemented, new equipment installed or new software introduced, then generally all staff directly affected will require coaching. If this is met with resistance, then the reasons why the training is relevant and beneficial for them and for the company must be reinforced
* **Results from a training needs analysis** - some organisations may implement more formal training initiatives such as carrying out a training needs analysis (TNA) of the organisation. A TNA is an investigative process undertaken to identify training needs of staff members within an organisation.

## Training Needs Analysis

How do you conduct a TNA? There are essentially 5 steps involved:

1. Identify competencies that relate to each job/role.

2. Identify competencies held by each employee for that job/role.

3. Compare competencies - look for gaps.

4. Outline training requirements to fill the gaps.

5. Create a training plan.

To start such an analysis you need to know the required performance criteria of the Job/task (the skills, knowledge and attitudes required) so that you can measure the staff's performance. You can find this from the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), job descriptions and competencies for each position. Once you have established this, you then investigate each staff member's skill levels and establish a profile of your current staff. Then, compare the required performances and the staff skill profile and look for any performance gaps that exist.

**Benefits of Conducting a TNA**

Training should be seen as saving money through increasing efficiency, reducing waste and improving staff motivation, which leads to reduced staff turnover. Good training plans help reduce staff stress and make for a more pleasant work environment. This will assist with the retention of staff.

Once the training plan is established it needs to be communicated to all staff. The training requirements and individual profiles need to be discussed with each person. The HR section of a business and team leaders of each section are normally in charge of this process.

The overall staff profile is then aligned with the individual' s needs and training sessions are organised in consultation with staff. Staff can self-assess whether they are already skilled or whether there are some gaps that need to be filled. Training sessions need to be planned and assessed to see how well the planned outcomes are achieved. It is important to have the sessions planned and scheduled.

## Preparing coaching sessions

Once the need for coaching has been identified you can start to prepare for the coaching. This begins with a few important preparation steps:

* Discussing the coaching with the staff member
* Planning the coaching session
* Organising a time and place

**Discussing the Coaching**

It is important to discuss details of the coaching with the staff member before it happens. This will put the employee at ease. Start by initiating an honest and open two-way discussion. Provide the staff member with specific details such as:

* Why the coaching is being conducted.
* Who will deliver the coaching?
* What they will learn.
* What the intended outcomes are.
* How it will help them in their job role.

Staff members identified as needing coaching may or may not know the reason they have been selected, so begin with explaining the purpose of the coaching. Focus on the desired outcomes of the coaching, rather than why they were chosen.

As a coach it is helpful to learn some background information from the staff member. Now is a good opportunity to encourage this conversation. Ask some relevant questions about their prior experience, as well as their motivations. This will help you tailor your coaching to the right level.

**Planning the Coaching Session**

Now that you know what and who you are coaching, you need to plan and structure the session. This involves thinking about the best way to deliver the coaching, based on the learning objectives, how the tasks can be broken down, how much time will be needed and what resources will be necessary. Many trainers use a session plan or similar template to assist with this.

A good session plan will outline such things as:

* The training or coaching objectives
* Key points to cover
* A sequential flow of steps
* Suitable training methods
* Approximate timing
* Training aids required
* Resource requirements

Those who choose not to use a written plan set themselves up for failure!

Clear and concise session plans are like roadmaps that can help you get to where you need to go and remind you of how to get there. Failure to use a plan can result in time being lost, steps being missed out, explanations being poorly structured and crucial training aids either forgotten or omitted. If you are nervous, this document will serve as an important rescue tool. Well-structured plans support the reporting process and are also useful should another trainer/coach need to take over.

There are many ways session plans can be drafted. You should use a format that is easy to use and is appropriate to the coaching situation. Try to avoid filling the plan with too much detail. Keep it well spaced and brief so when (or if) you need to refer to it during the session you can easily find your place.

When you write it you may need to do a couple of drafts before you are happy with your final version. Remember that a session plan is simply a guide and should only contain a summary of what you are going to say. You should never read aloud from the document; rather you should refer to it occasionally during your coaching. If you are not confident with the subject matter you are coaching, then you should either refer the task to someone more experienced or practise sufficiently before coaching the staff member.

**Organising a Time and Place**

For the coaching to be successful you must carefully select an appropriate location and time. Most workplace coaching is carried out during the rostered shift but depending on the skill it may be better carried out before or after worktime. It may even be best to conduct it in a simulated environment. As a rule, you should consider the following elements:

* How many staff members will there be?
* Is the location suitable? Do I need to book it?
* Does it have sufficient lighting/air conditioning?
* Will I be interrupted? Is it quiet?
* What time is most appropriate?
* Will the staff member be alert/ focussed then?
* Does that time/place suit the purpose?
* Do I need real life/customer situations?
* Does it fit in with my work commitments?
* Are training aids available?
* Are there any WHS requirements to consider?

As a coach, you must ensure that you arrive ahead of the staff members to prepare the area and have time for you to settle and be prepared. If the coaching is going to take you away from your workload temporarily, it may be necessary to leave yourself time to attend to any routine chores. Inform your colleagues where and when the coaching is taking place to avoid any unnecessary miscommunication or interruptions.

## Conducting the coaching sessions

Sessions need to be well planned and professionally delivered to successfully achieve the outcomes. This requires the coach to have a good knowledge and skills base, including all the required knowledge that underpins the tasks.

Coaching sessions can be broken into the following components:

Introduction Body Conclusion

Let's break down each stage and look at how each section should be delivered.

**Introduction**

* Welcome the staff member
* Explain the objective
* Explain the purpose
* Outline underpinning knowledge

At the beginning it is necessary to set the scene. You should start off by welcoming the staff member and establish a warm and nonthreatening environment. Remember that new staff members may be nervous, especially if they have never met you before.

If you hold a position of authority within the organisation, they may be even more apprehensive. If you have not already done so, you may want to find out a bit about their background so that the coaching can be pitched at the right level.

Next, explain the objective of the session. The objective is what the staff member must achieve, the required standard and under what conditions, e.g. time constraints. by end of the session. Usually it is something like *"At the end of today's session you will be able to..."*.

It may be useful to have the finished product/ outcome on hand, e.g. a plated dish, folded napkin. pre-set table. made-up bed, or whatever skill is being taught. This allows the staff members to see immediately what they are working towards.

It is equally important to explain the purpose, i.e. why the training 1s necessary, especially if the staff members are adult-aged learners. People often want to know "What's in it for me?" and will be less interested or enthusiastic if they do not know the purpose of the coaching. Explaining the purpose of the session will aid the staff member's comprehension and hopefully, spark their interest. Explain why the coaching is import ant to both the staff member and the company.

The introduction stage is also the best time to explain any essential background information. This is referred to as the underpinning knowledge - vital information that is required to enable successful completion of the task. Underpinning knowledge is one of the most important things to discuss!

Typical underpinning knowledge for your session may include:

* Ingredients or components of items
* Background knowledge of products and services
* Legal, WHS and hygiene factors/risks
* Essential underpinning skills
* Reasons why tasks are done in a particular way

 For example. imagine that you need to train a new wait staff team member. Kendra. on how to open a wine bottle. Firstly, you should introduce yourself and explain a bit about your professional background. You may like to ask her a bit about her previous experience, which will help put her at ease. Next let her know what you will be showing her:

Al this point in the coaching, it is also important to clarify any specific organisational procedures related to the task or skill being trained. For example, your organisation may have standard WHS practices and procedures that must be carried out before the task is done, e.g. barricading the area and displaying signage before commencing a cleaning procedure

There may also be organisation-specific ways of doing things, such as how you address guests. These procedures and standards should be inter-woven with the training. Using the wine example, if it is an organisational procedure to retain the cork to show the guest for inspection, then this information should be included.

By transferring all relevant information about the task, as well as the task itself, you will not only teach the skill but teach the correct way of doing It for your organisation. Coaching and training is therefore an essential part of maintaining the organisation's professional standards.

**Body**

The body of the session is where the actual coaching of the skills happens. It Is important that you structure this carefully to ensure maximal learning outcomes.

Coaching steps:

1. Trainer demonstrates
2. Trainer and staff member do It together
3. Trainer demonstrates again
4. Staff member practises individually.
5. Staff member is assessed

 Once the underpinning in formation has been provided you are ready to commence the demonstration. Explain how the demonstration steps will occur. It is important that the staff members watch and listen during the first run through, before attempting it themselves.

As you demonstrate the skill, move at a steady pace while explaining what you are doing. This is referred to as show and tell. Depending on the difficulty of the skill you may need to demonstrate it 2 or more times. Try to break the skill down into 6 - 8 steps. If there are more steps than that, the staff member will have trouble recalling the steps, and may feel lost and frustrated at the size of the task. If there are several steps to learn it is best to teach the skill in stages, only moving on to later· stages once the initial steps have been mastered.

After you have demonstrated the skill, invite the staff member to try it with you. Have them explain the processes you have just demonstrated so that you can gauge their understanding. Provide supportive feedback throughout, correcting any technique as you progress. Demonstrate the skill again to reinforce the learning and then allow them to try the skill by themselves. Avoid jumping in to help unless there is a safety risk; instead let them see their own mistakes and self-correct. This is an important part of learning. Again, have them explain aloud what they are doing.

Check the staff member's progress and have them repeat the process again and again if necessary. Watch out for bad habits and important omissions. You may like to ask them some quiz-like questions to assess their understanding, such as *"Why do we do that?"*

Questioning is a vital tool in any learning environment. Al ways use open-ended questions to elicit a full response, rather than a simple yes or no answer. Avoid asking *"Do you understand?"* as the staff member is only obliged to answer yes or no, and may say yes, even if they don't understand.

When you feel that the staff member has had enough practice, ask them to demonstrate once more for assessment. They should be able to carry out the task without assistance. Try to make this stage as unpressured as possible

In a formal environment the coach may be required to officially assess and record the coaching outcomes. Use this time to document how the staff member fared

**Conclusion**

1. Provide feedback
2. Recap key point
3. Invite questions
4. Thank the staff member

Now that the staff member has practised the skill and you have assessed their ability you are ready to wrap up the session. During this time you should deliver some final feedback. Ensure that you give comments that are warranted. If the skill was performed to the required standards (or better) don't look for criticisms, simply congratulate the staff member on a job well done. If you do feel there are some areas they need to address, then it is useful to use the sandwich technique. This entails that you explain:

* What they did well
* What needs improvement and suggested techniques
* An overall summary of what they did well
* An overview of further training, e.g. incorporating upselling techniques into wine service

This means that the constructive criticism or negative comment is sandwiched between two positive comments. It comes across as less deflating to the staff member. You should try to be specific with your comments rather than just "good work". Finally, recap the key points of session, reiterating the more difficult steps and the underpinning processes.

At the conclusion, thank the staff member for their participation and let them know what happens next, e.g. if more coaching sessions are required or if they will receive any monitoring or follow-up training.

As the coach, you should always offer extended support should it be needed. This is often part of the trainer-staff member relationship

## Following up on coaching sessions

Now that the session has concluded you may think that your responsibility as a coach is over. However, just as you performed many pre-coaching tasks, you now have some post- coaching responsibilities. This forms an integral part of the overall training/coaching program.

Following upon coaching involves three functions:

1. Monitoring the coaching process
2. Reporting
3. Evaluating

**Monitoring**

Once the session has been conducted it is essential to monitor and reinforce the coaching in the work situation. Do the participants apply the skills learned? Have their skills improved? Has the coaching improved their confidence? Try to gain direct feedback on the session from the participants, including how they feel about the new skills learnt.

Conduct weekly, fortnightly or monthly performance discussions, depending on your organisation's procedures. Let staff members know how they are progressing. To do this, you may need to seek the opinion of their colleagues or supervisors as to how they are performing post-coaching. If any performance problems are identified, then more coaching may need to be scheduled.

Monitoring staff members will also help you identify whether aspects of skills need to be practised. Having the staff member practise the skill may be sufficient to bring them up to the required level. If that fails, then further coaching should be conducted.

**Reporting**

Keeping an accurate record of the coaching sessions is necessary. You should keep a copy of the result for yourself and provide a copy to the Human Resources section of your organisation for the employee’s records. These records can be used as evidence for future employee appraisals and when new coaching is required. Many organisations keep registers of staff training as part of their quality and risk management strategies. This helps businesses ensure that their staff are adequately trained to operate machinery, use equipment and apply correct WHS practices in the workplace. You may also need to report to another staff member on the successful completion of staff coaching sessions.

If you identify that a staff member requires further coaching, you can supply a written comment for the employee's records outlining what coaching is necessary. Once competence has been achieved. The results can be updated.

**Evaluating**

Just as you evaluated your staff member's performance, it is equally important that your performance as a coach and the coaching session itself is assessed. Gathering information and feedback from everyone involved, e.g. the staff member, their colleagues, supervisors and external sources, enables you to fine tune or rework parts of your session or your delivery. Evaluation should be viewed as an ongoing and integral part of the coaching process. This allows for continuous improvement.

There are various methods that you can use to evaluate your coaching sessions. Examples include:

* Direct observation of the staff member in a work environment
* Interviews with related parties
* Self-evaluation
* Questionnaires

## Identifying performance problems

No matter how much preparation you undertake, sessions will occasionally fall short of your expectations. In many coaching sessions you will have to think on your feet and handle situations as they arise Here are some things that can affect the success of a coaching session:

* Breakdown in communication
* Shyness or lack of confidence
* Resistance to change
* Insufficient opportunity to practise
* Inappropriate circumstances for coaching
* Lack of experience

**Breakdown in communication**

Basic communication problems contribute to many issues in the workplace. As a coach you need to have a thorough understanding of the communication process and be able to quickly identify situations that could hinder your coaching. Consider the following:

* Speak clearly and at a moderate pace
* Project your speech towards your audience
* Speak with confidence, not arrogance
* Position your body and the demonstration area so that staff members can see
* Use open body language
* Plan ahead
* Break down steps into a sequential order (maximum 6-8 steps)
* Use a mix of visual and written aids
* Provide practical examples to contextualise the information
* Find out a bit about the staff members beforehand
* Be sensitive to cultural and language diversity
* Demonstrate and explain simultaneously
* Ask open-ended questions to clarify understanding
* Invite feedback/questions

Particularly in Tourism, there may be language and cultural barriers that affect how well a staff member understands. Always be sensitive to potential barriers and try to work around them so that all staff members are treated fairly.

**Shyness or Lack of Confidence**

Some people are naturally introverted and shy and may therefore find coaching sessions uncomfortable, especially if they must demonstrate skills in front of other people. When this occurs you need to use a different approach, otherwise the coaching session will be unsuccessful.

Tips for coaching those who are shy or lack confidence:

* Meet first and thoroughly discuss the impending session
* Give material in advance, e.g. demonstration videos
* Try to coach in a one-on-one situation, away from customers
* Provide supportive feedback throughout, e.g. well done, great, that's it
* Allow ample opportunities to practise
* Be patient
* Ease them into the job gradually

**Resistance to Change**

Change can create resistance and cause fear. Some people do not want to adopt new techniques or procedures. A coach can be seen as the ‘bad news’ messenger and may be met with anger and distrust. Always consider this as a possibility and plan your strategies to handle these disagreements or hostility prior to any meeting. It is easier to deal with anger and distrust if it arises by being prepared.

If staff members display negative body language, you need to identify and address the reasons. You need to establish at least a neutral feeling towards the activity or ideally positive solutions. It helps to reiterate why the training is undertaken and how it will assist in their daily operations. Address the issue openly with them and actively listen to their viewpoint.

**Insufficient Opportunity to Practise**

To learn a new skill, staff members require many opportunities to participate in hands-on practice. Avoid talking for too long with long explanations, then falling short of time for the employees to practise. Plan your approach and allocate sufficient time in the session plan.

To fully understand the detail of conducting complex tasks, a person needs to practise, not just talk or listen about it.

**Inappropriate Circumstances for Coaching**

Despite careful and detailed planning, certain circumstances may arise which mean that the coaching session needs to be rescheduled or postponed.

Inappropriate situations for coaching might include:

* Coach or staff member is unwell or affected by personal problems
* Coaching day/time is poorly chosen (may clash with peak service time)
* Coaching location isn't suitable/available
* Unexpected increase in customer activity
* Not enough staff to cover workload while coaching
* Insufficient resources

**Lack of Experience**

Just as a staff member might need a few sessions to fully learn a new skill, you might also need a bit of practice at coaching. Not everyone is suitable to be a coach, but every person who has coached others has needed to learn the necessary skills. You will improve your coaching and teaching skills as you practise and reflect on what you can do to improve your approach.

If in doubt about an issue, refer to a more experienced person or seek assistance from a supervisor/trainer in your organisation. Reading relevant books, watching appropriate YouTube videos or talking with other coaches all contribute to building your own skills in this area. Remember, learning for a coach is also an ongoing, never-ending activity.

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