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Growing on G.R.O.W – A more specific coaching model for busy sales managers

Coaching of employees by their sales managers is fast becoming an expectation from both senior management and employees themselves. Many sales managers are now being taught how best to coach their sales representatives by employing the standard coaching model called G.R.O.W, where G equates to the Goal, R to Reality, O for Options and W for Way Forward and Will.

G.R.O.W, constructed by Graham Alexander and championed by Sir John Whitmore, is a well-established coaching model and an excellent “starter” model to enable sales managers to get used to the structure of coaching. Very competent sales managers and sales coaches can use the model effectively by taking time and ensuring depth at each of the four stages but busy managers or less competent managers and coaches can tend to “skip” through the stages which, can often result in the following:

- Acceptance of Goals or Objectives without checking the validity of the reasons behind the goals or objectives.
- Unclear or a lack of full understanding of the Performance Gap between the present situation and the desired outcome.
- Lack of exploration in the Options phase meaning that only a few options and probably the more traditional “tried and tested” options are highlighted.
- Not enough time spent checking the Motivation of the employee to move the actions forward and also discussing how the manager is going to provide onward support.

All in all, G.R.O.W provides a structure but may not provide enough “discipline” for busy managers to ensure adequate depth of understanding and support.

The OUTCOMES™ Coaching model has been designed to enable managers and sales managers to undertake more structured coaching sessions with their employees and sales executives than perhaps they have been used to. The increased structure will result in more depth to their coaching and as such will enable an increase in more understanding, motivation and commitment to action than they may have experienced with other coaching models such as G.R.O.W. OUTCOMES™ provides more structure than G.R.O.W simply by the fact that there are more distinct stages that a manager or coach must adhere to. The initial reaction by most managers I have introduced it to has been one of initial frustration in that with it having more distinct stages to go through and check, it can take more time to implement. However, once the managers understand the reasons for the extra steps and the fact that if they use this model carefully, they will get good results, the managers have warmed to the model.

So what are the stages behind OUTCOMES™?

O = Objectives. What is the employee attempting to achieve? This stage is similar to the G in G.R.O.W in that the manager will attempt to get an idea of what specifically the employee is trying to achieve from either the coaching session or from their business or sales objectives.

U = Understand the Reasons. This is an important step as it is vital that the reasons behind wanting to achieve the objective are understood. More often than not employees either “under-stretch” or “over-stretch” their objectives. In sales, for example, one of the main “under stretches” is wanting to simply build rapport and fact-find within a sales call as opposed to actually sell anything on a first visit. By understanding the reasons behind the “rapport” objective, a manager can support and challenge a salesperson to achieve both the rapport and fact-finding objectives together with starting the selling process.

T = Take Stock of the Present Situation. It is important to spend time analysing the reality of the present situation so that a manager can establish a baseline and then –

C = Clarify the Gap between where they are now and where they need to get to, in order to achieve their objective. Sometimes with G.R.O.W an inexperienced coach or manager can perhaps jump from Reality to Options without fully understanding the “gap” that has to be “crossed” or “filled”. They can go straight to the “how” without fully understanding the “what”.

O = Options Generation. Time needs to be taken here and not the first option taken. How many managers ask; “And if there was one other way you could do it, what would it be?” or “What would be the result if you did nothing?” The pros and cons of each option need to be discussed. This stage can take time and many managers “skip” through it, or worse, manipulate their employee with leading questions that enable the employee to come up with the options that the manager wants to hear! Take your time and allow the employee to generate his or her own options.

M = Motivate to Action. Once the options have been discussed and the best way forward agreed, the manager must check the motivation of the employee to move on the actions. Are they agreeing to actions because that is what they think the manager wants to hear or are they really motivated to move on the actions? The manager must have the ability to check this and challenge any signs of demotivation.

E = Enthusiasm & Encouragement – The manager must at all times show enthusiasm for the objectives ahead and encourage the employee to do as best they can.

S= Support. The manager must always show support for the employee in the tasks agreed and must also ask if there is any support that they have to put in, in order to assist the employee. An example of this could be a sales executive asking their sales manager to sit in on a sales call and be prepared to help them with any difficult questions the customer may ask.

The last three stages are vital ones and ones which the inexperienced manager or coach may not go through when using G.R.O.W. They may have a “way forward” but

many will not check the “will” and even more still will not contract any form of “support”.

In summary **OUTCOMES™**, in a business-coaching context, offers the following advantages over G.R.O.W.

1. It is more structured and specific than G.R.O.W in that it has more specific steps that a manager must go through.
2. There is more explicit emphasis placed on Understanding, Performance Gap Analysis, Support and Motivation.
3. The mere wording is more business coaching focused. e.g. Objectives as opposed to Goals, which tends to be a life coaching term.

The feedback on **OUTCOMES™** so far has been excellent with sales managers feeding back that the emphasis on the motivation stages is particularly useful. Many confessed to skipping through G.R.O.W and not taking the time to explore situations fully.

The biggest challenge they have highlighted is that it takes time to go through all the stages and time, particularly in sales, can be a precious commodity. However one pharmaceutical manager commented:

*“I don’t take enough time with sales reps, particularly when I should be coaching around sales objectives. I tend to go through G.R.O.W, but not in any depth and although my first reaction was that I don’t have enough time to go through **OUTCOMES**, I realise that the investment of spending more time coaching will help in the long run. I believe that **OUTCOMES** will help me to structure my coaching more effectively”*

G.R.O.W is an excellent model to get people to start to structure their coaching. **OUTCOMES™** will take managers to a different coaching level thus ensuring that they are effectively coaching their employees and not just rushing through the process.

About the author:

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