

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to manager tools, soft coaching, running meetings. Part two, here we go. This chaos answers these questions. How do I help someone improve without the coaching model? What have I need more than feedback, but less than coaching? Is it okay to give lots of feedback at one time? Well, if you want to answer these questions, the more people listening,

Speaker 2 ([00:23](#)):

communication skills, it's one of those things that's really easy to overlook since we do it all the time. I mean, how bad can you be? You are literally practicing. Constantly. People seek help less often on communication, unless they know that they're struggling to attend one of our effective communicator conferences. You don't have to be struggling. We help individuals of all skill levels to enhance and better their communications with others. Communication matters. Getting better@itissomethingwecouldallinvestinfromtimetotimeregistertodayatmanager-tools.com forward slash training to join us at an upcoming event.

Speaker 1 ([01:04](#)):

Last week, Mark, we talked about what is soft coaching in particular, right? Something a little bit more than feedback, but not the full blown coaching model. And, and folks, if you're interested in the full coaching model, please, we have plenty of podcasts on that. So feel free to go listen to those. Um, and we, we talked about gaining soft coaching agreement from our directs, and now we're talking about the next thing on our list is no need for goal setting and brainstorming. And this is a significant departure from the full, full on coaching model.

Speaker 3 ([01:34](#)):

Yeah. And just for those people, maybe joining this week, um, I was in Palo Alto, uh, this week delivering a public conference, which I don't think I had done in five years. And, uh, we had some new listeners and I asked them sort of how they learned about us. And, uh, you know, one guy did say, you know, if I joined a four part thing in the middle, I'm a little confused. So if you're just joining us, if you're wondering what soft coaching is, basically our soft coaching guidance means giving relatively high levels of feedback to one of your directs over a fairly short period of time, not days, but maybe weeks to help them improve in a specific area. It's an intermittent step or an in between step between feedback, which you do with all of your directs, positive and negative. I actually shouldn't say that Mike, right, because, but coaching is a goal directed self development effort by one of your directs that lasts usually three months, uh, it's intensive because you're probably going to be talking about it every week.

Speaker 3 ([02:42](#)):

And there are tasks and deadlines involved. You'll have to listen to our coaching guidance and to give you an idea, you can do it all in five minutes a week. It's that easy. Most managers just make some fundamentally bad assumptions about coaching. And in my guess is you're probably one of them. No offense. So it ISO it was Mike. And so coaching is for something that'll take more than just a little bit of additional attention for a few weeks. If you just think you need a little bit of attention for a few weeks, then that's what soft coaching is for. We could have also called this a focus feedback, meaning, Hey, for the next few weeks, I'm going to give you focus feedback. In this one area, we decided to call it soft coaching because I told somebody about focus feedback. They said, Ooh, that sounds bad.

Speaker 3 ([03:29](#)):

Like she's okay, great. Alright. So we don't need goal setting. We don't need brainstorming, brainstorming. It generally don't need brainstorming for something that's only going to last a couple of weeks. Brainstorming is for generating lots of ideas for, you know, that's going to last, we might use five, six, seven, eight, 10 different resources in our coaching model, but we don't need that here. We did gain agreement, but it doesn't require that 15 minute upfront investment that coaching does. Uh, and part of the reason for doing that is we know for many of you having to sit down with your direct, even when we spelled it out, how to set a goal, how to brainstorm for many managers, the moment you say that with somebody you're committing to three or four months of talking to them almost every week about their performance in a particular area.

Speaker 3 ([04:22](#)):

And it creates the opportunity for failure. I think one of the underlying principles that most managers have is let's not set goals. Cause if I don't have goals, if I don't have numeric targets, if I don't meet them, I can't be punished for them. And that's true for a lot of managers in their overall job, not just in their relationship with an individual direct. So we understand that there's some risk of failure. If you sit down with the director and say, okay, in four months, you're going to be able to do X, particularly if you've never done coaching before. So with soft coaching, there's no risk of failing against the goal. There isn't a goal there's only improvement. Always be, be careful of somebody who says the goal is to improve because that's not a goal. That's a measure of incremental progress. Um, so what we're trying to do is use feedback to drive some improvement in behavior, more good, less bad behavior on the part of the direct.

Speaker 3 ([05:17](#)):

And it's going to be in a specific area in this particular cast, right? I think we're talking about running meetings and we'll do other soft coaching examples, uh, where we talk about different things, but you're going to give them more positive and negative feedback. You probably in general, you'd hope that in the beginning may, maybe it's 80, 20 negative feedback. Deposition by the end, it's 90 10 positive to negative, which would be pretty great. I think for a direct to sense that over time that they're gradually getting rid of their weaknesses and, and maximizing their strengths. Everybody likes that. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So does that mean though

Speaker 1 ([05:57](#)):

that we're not using additional resources like we do in coaching?

Speaker 3 ([06:03](#)):

Well, w we're not, that's true. Um, so in the coaching model, you're right, you and your direct identify a bunch of different resources through the brainstorming that the direct could avail themselves out to help them improve books, training, mentors, volunteering, special projects, specific assignments, task, delegation, classes, podcasts, online education, coding, camps, feedback, video, peer input, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And I have, I have Mike, I'll make a bet with you that the next three or four months we're on the road. Somebody can come up to you and say, Hey, that little bit you put in about soft coaching where you listed some of the brainstorm things that you've come up with in coaching. That was really helpful for my future coaching engagement. And if, of course folks, if you're a licensee, you can download the show notes and just copy that list into your next coaching model template.

Speaker 1 ([06:53](#)):

I have a note taking app notational velocity for you geeks. That's kind of what you use, but regardless I have in there a note that just has a list. It must have probably at this point 60 coaching resources that I can use. And when I go to a coaching, you know, engagement with one of my directs, I refer to that list of 60. And during the brainstorming session, now, frankly, as a manager, I let I don't, I'm not the first one to suggest them, but when there's a lull in the brainstorming, I'll throw some of them out there. And I just use it over and over and over again, very useful to have those, by the way, folks,

Speaker 3 ([07:29](#)):

there are many paths to enlightenment, just like there are many people in your life. Most managers think I'm going to coach them using tools that make sense to me. Well, of course, it's not about you. It's about them. So yeah, that's good. I'm always helpful. And you know, when I'm on the road, I offered people all the time. Hey, look, if you need to coach somebody and you're not really sure how to do it in particular. Yeah. Email us. If you're a licensee, email us, right? I'll give you my list. I've taught, I've coached a person on that before. It's not hard and you need all that stuff. If you're doing a three to six month project, you want it on the front end. You don't want to be running out of resources or essentially using up a resource by going to an online class a week and then going, okay, what do I do now?

Speaker 3 ([08:08](#)):

So you want to be able to go back to a previously thought of thought of lists. But when you talk about soft coaching, the how that happens in the improvement with soft coaching, doesn't need to be planned each time. The only real tool in the joint effort between you and your direct, helping you direct improve is their behavior and your feedback to them on their behavior, the assumption, and by the way, this assumptions pretty well proven in the HR human development, human performance arenas is that the attention and measurement of feedback causes performance improvements without requiring a plan or a gap analysis or resource planning or, or even budgeting. You just don't need that stuff. If you think you can see a relatively straightforward path over a short period of time. And when I say short, I mean, weeks not months to get your direct from where they are to where they need to be.

Speaker 3 ([09:09](#)):

Now that said, there's nothing wrong with the direct saying, yeah, I'd kinda like to supplement feedback here with some self development stuff. You know, they might say, Hey, do you know a book? Yeah, I know a book. I got books. And again, folks, if you need a book recommendation for a licensee, email me happy to do it. Now you wouldn't then say, Hey, here's the directions. You know, I'd kinda like to read about this. Okay, good. You wouldn't then sit down and go, let's come up with a plan for you reading the book. If they're motivated to read a book and they suggested, recommend a book and don't track whether or not they read the book, because in fact, if they read the book and are successful in reading the book, but their behavior is not changing. That's a distraction from them focusing on the behavior.

Speaker 3 ([09:54](#)):

There's nothing wrong. Some people would say, I really rather spend a couple of months studying the problem. Often, these are, for those of you who are just people, these are high CS. These are folks who say, no, I don't, I don't want to run that risk of having to change my behavior until I've come up with a plan in my mind or, or thought it through or talk to somebody else. Who's known all the options and so on. And they wouldn't say talk to somebody else, student. They wouldn't say that it's not a high slum. Now when I say talk to somebody else, I mean, talk to an expert, right? Yeah. But there's nothing wrong

with that. Per se. Now, somebody who you say, look, I really need to help you with meeting deadlines. And they say, I'm uncomfortable with a soft coaching approach. Can I have six months to study, you know, deadline management and tracking software and task management processes.

Speaker 3 ([10:47](#)):

And then the answer is, yeah, no, you can't, you can't delay for six months because you're going to study and, and beat it to death with knowledge, but a path that's, both of them were where the direct says, you know, I kind of like to supplement this and I think that's a good word to use supplement. Right? In other words, the primary thing is going to be me assigning work, you doing it and me paying attention and giving you plenty of feedback about it. And then the other thing could be, yeah. Read books, go to classes. Those are all good. Like online courses maybe. Yeah, absolutely. Why not? But again, I wouldn't try, I wouldn't track their performance in that online course. Right. Just like you attract the dream of the book, how about things that are more involved that I think of as, I don't know, longer term engaged.

Speaker 3 ([11:30](#)):

I think of a coaching model, the full coaching model. When I think about things like Toastmasters, but could Toastmasters apply here as well? It could. I mean, look, if you've got a direct who said, yeah, I'd love it. And I'd like to do a little bit more and we recognize the first thing we have to do is get all of our work done. So yeah. If they want to do more, I would, if you were my boss, Mike, and you said, yeah, I think you've got an area here where you need to get better and be like, okay, remember guys, by the way, there's, there's two classic reasons why you coach someone. One, the one that Springs to everyone's mind is that in some area that they are measured in, they are below standard. They're below the minimum. They're at risk. Their performance in that area makes them at risk more broadly.

Speaker 3 ([12:18](#)):

That's classic. Right? And that's why coaching has a negative stigma. The other one is a performer. Who's doing fine, perhaps better than fine, perhaps even outstanding, but needs yet more in order to go to the next level or to expand the repertoire or to just develop themselves generally, or to be considered for a different position somewhere else. Or as a classic example of self improvement and professional development, either one of those things can be true. And why would you want to say, Oh no, it's soft coaching. No, we can't use any additional resources. If the direct says, gosh, this is important to me. I'm willing to do it. So yeah, again, though, if you're talking about Toastmasters, you don't expect biweekly updates, you know, and attract whether or not they're going and how many ums and AHS they'd given him speeches. And so on. That's not to say you can't ask every couple of weeks, Hey, how's the Toastmasters going?

Speaker 3 ([13:14](#)):

Is it fun? It's good. You know, good people in the group and that's not measurement that's care and concern for your direct. Yeah. In, regardless of whether it's coaching or soft coaching. If my direct asks me, they're suggested they want to go to Toastmasters, I would absolutely encourage them to do so. I can't imagine saying doc, nah, don't do that. That's a waste of time. Yeah, I know. Yeah, don't do that. That's crazy. I think we said, yeah, I think we said before, Toastmasters may be the best, at least for me the best quasi professional association that I know of. Uh, and, and you, you mentioned you absolutely encourage it. I pay for it. Like no, here go I'll pay your dues go. Absolutely. Okay. We've kind of talked about that. Right. Which is the suggest task and then give tons of feedback. That's the heart of the coaching model.

Speaker 3 ([14:03](#)):

Yeah. That's the heart of the soft coach. Yeah. Right? Yeah. Yeah. Look, we've taken too long to get here. I apologize. We're filling in backfill so people can understand where soft coaching fits in, in the, in that Pantheon of manager tools, guidance. By the way, I mentioned Palo Alto, Mike, I heard from several people. There's just so much stuff out there. Where do I start? You know? Geez. I, I feel terrible. Okay, good. Then I can stop writing podcasts. There's too much. So the heart of the model is to suggest tasks. Your direct can do that. You feel like you can give them feedback on, right. We're focusing on one specific activity between manager and direct, and that is essentially targeted feedback. So let's get right to it. How would it sound? Okay. I might say, okay, look glad we've agreed about running meetings. Here's a good way to start.

Speaker 3 ([15:01](#)):

Let's have you run the next staff meeting. I'll watch you and I'll give you feedback either later that day or on our one-on-one the following day direct goes. Okay. So during the staff meeting, you make notes about things that go well and things that don't. Now, I'm going to make another aside here and I'm going to say this for probably the 10th time, which is not enough. And when I say it to people, their eyes kind of open up folks. If your meetings don't start on time and end on time and are efficient, Chris. And when you have guests come in, don't go, wow. You know how to run a meeting. You are absolutely underperforming the standard. If you're listening to this podcast, you are capable of running a kick tail meeting. Seriously awesome meeting. Some of it is you don't know how, and that's fine, but I'll tell you another underlying reason when you're running a meeting, let's say your staff meeting or a project, meaning there are three things you're probably doing.

Speaker 3 ([16:02](#)):

Number one, you're running in facilitating the meeting. Number two, you're probably wanting to provide content to the topics that are on the agenda, whatever surfaces, the agenda, which is probably in your ad. No wonder people can't follow it. And the third thing is you're paying attention to how people on the team interact, who trusts, who, who listens to, who went reps, who who's a little jerk and sits in the corner and whispers and complains. And so on three things. Now the first thing running a meeting, a monkey could run a meeting of the three things. The one that's least important, the one that's most likely given to somebody else. The one that is least valuable is running the meeting. When you start delegating, when you teach other people to run meetings after you've mastered it, which only take you six weeks after you've done that, you will then need to focus on the two most important things, which is providing content and watching how your team interacts with one another.

Speaker 3 ([17:00](#)):

And you will be able to do it in a massive sense of calm. The idea that we have managers all over the world, still running meetings and running them poorly. And haven't figured out this is a classic case for delegation. In fact, you don't really like running meetings, cause there's some stuff you gotta do and you never have time to create an agenda. Even though we have a podcast about how to create a quick agenda and like two minutes or take notes, which is also super easy. There's a podcast about that. Whether we've made it easy or not, it doesn't matter if you think it's hard and you haven't proven. And all we have to do is look at your behavior to tell if you haven't proven that you're interested, mastering it, give it to one of your directs who will see it as you tap them on the shoulder and saying, I think you're capable of doing more.

Speaker 3 ([17:45](#)):

And if you're a manager, that's how you felt when you weren't a manager, you wanted people to recognize that you felt you were capable of doing more. Let's take advantage of that. And I don't mean advantage in the negative sense. Let's honor. The people who want to grow and develop because professional growth and development is the engine of productivity, which is the engine of profitability in your firm. Okay? So we're going to assign the task and then we're going to pay attention to the direct. And during the staff meeting, we're going to make notes about things that go well and things that don't, and it's really simple during the followup discussion, maybe the next day, maybe you just hold them back at the end of the meeting. Maybe you do it two days later in their one-on-one. It doesn't matter terribly, but don't do it a week later, more than a week later because your memory will be bad.

Speaker 3 ([18:32](#)):

Basically what you do is use our event based feedback model to give a bunch of feedback. And there's a cast for that called event based feedback where you can get a lot more examples. But the key to event based feedback is you ask one time about giving feedback about an event where there might be multiple and fractions or, or, or successes. And then you just do lots of when you here's. What? So sound like this dude. Can you give some feedback when you start the meeting on time? That's good. Well done. When you don't send out an agenda, folks don't know how much time they have. And that's like, can you work on that? When you put the agenda on the first slide, the agenda goes away. When you move to the next slide, can you post it or send it out next time? That'd be good.

Speaker 3 ([19:19](#)):

When you take 10 more minutes on the first agenda item than you had planned for, it makes it in the meeting done on time, much harder. Can you pay more attention to the clock for each agenda item when you shush Bob, when he interrupts Miguel, that's good enforcement of the ground rules. We all agree to that good work there. I know that sounds really like mundane, but it's really good. Yeah. Those are all behaviors associated with good meetings. Right? Do more of this stuff, unless there's that stuff. I'm pretty soon you won't be doing any stuff that gets in the way and people are gonna go, wow, how'd you learn to do that? Ah, I got soft coach using a lot of feedback, but if you'll notice the task we assigned here is an activity related to the performance rather than a learning task or preparatory task, their performance tasks.

Speaker 3 ([20:05](#)):

Right? So in the coaching model where we think it'll take a little bit heavier lifting something more significant, they may have to do some learning. They may have to do in some, some, some, uh, personal development in order to prepare for the performance tasks that we're going to measure. But in this case in soft coaching, you just signed the tasks and it's just like getting wraps. You just want to get more reps that's all right. The task is not read a book about lifting the weights. It's lift the weights and then I'll watch you and give you some feedback. Yeah, exactly. Again. Oh, if the direct wants to study or learn or prepare, that's great. Don't just, don't assign task force because it starts to lard down the coaching model. Don't hesitate to help them think of ways to prepare, right. If they want to do that, but don't require it.

Speaker 3 ([20:54](#)):

And I would also say if they start struggling to get work done, and they they've created a bunch of self preparation, self development tasks, I'm like, dude, you can't, you can't have it both ways. Right? The

soft coaching is I'm going to pay attention, give you lots of feedback, but you don't need to be doing all that other stuff. And if you're going to do all that other stuff and then complain that you don't have time to get your work done, I'm going to tell you your work's more important than the self development tasks. The heart of South coast, soft coaching is them doing tasks that require them to use the skill that they want to improve.

Speaker 1 ([21:24](#)):

Okay. And then the last part of soft coaching is assessing performance regularly sitting back and saying, okay, this is, this is where I think you are.

Speaker 3 ([21:33](#)):

Yeah. As a general rule, if you're trying to improve something, but you didn't set a goal, more frequent comparisons of where we are versus where we want it to be are necessary. Right? If there's no clear goal, you better periodically check in my head in the right direction. Do I feel good about where I'm going? It's like the difference between heading East, if you're in California and going to times square in New York city in the former case, since there's no clearly defined goal, which therefore you can't attain, it's more necessary to review frequently, whether you're doing what you said you were doing, going to do, which is head East, otherwise the lack of a goal and the lack of checking your progress is going to lead to lack of continued effort. Particularly if you discover you're starting to go in the wrong direction and the other case until you get to kind of square, you know, you're not there.

Speaker 3 ([22:29](#)):

And therefore, you know, that more effort is required if you know where times square is. So the way you do that in the case of soft coaching is to have a discussion about how you and your direct feel about what level of performance they're at, how far they've gone and whether it's enough. So in the example of this situation, we're talking about running meetings, it might sound like, like this I'm feeling pretty good about how far you've progressed. I know there's more to do, but in terms of how long you've been at it for meetings or so in the last three weeks that you've run, you're getting pretty good at meetings. You're starting on time. Every time you've gotten out an agenda, I do still think you're still struggling with cutting off folks who ramble on. Maybe you can pay particular attention to that. And the next to me, two to three meetings.

Speaker 3 ([23:18](#)):

And by the way, I might then privately go to a couple of my people and go, Hey dude, will you ramble on in the next couple of meetings? I mean, why not? If I'm operating in my own ecosystem, which I have the ability to influence significantly, I'm going to create situations that support my goals and objectives. And look, you keep doing that. And look, if you thought it would take three weeks and it takes 10, don't worry about it. Yeah. Okay. Maybe it was a bad time for them. Maybe you were off your game a little bit. If you're going to use soft coaching, that soft word is important. Don't say we're going to be done with this in four weeks. Simply because you believe that along how long it's going to take them and then discover that they've got a learning weakness or you've got a scotoma, a blind spot for Matt bent, lift or something. And it takes 10 weeks and you say, Oh no, you're failing. There's no failing here. If I'm heading East from California and I'm continuing to head East, I'm not going West. I'm not failing. If you define success as achieving a goal and not achieving a goal is failing. Well, you're failing, but that's an overly simplistic definition. If you have a goal, failure is not achieving the goal within the time you



ascribe. If you don't have a goal making progress in the direction you hope to make is success. And there is no failure,

Speaker 1 ([24:38](#)):

right? It's like teaching your kid to walk. They fall down for three days. They don't get there. They fall down out, you failed.

Speaker 3 ([24:45](#)):

He started out as a failure. He's going to be a failure. I mean, why try? Why try? Yeah. So yeah, but at some point, hopefully your assessment is going to cause you to say, Hey, look, I think you got it. There wasn't a precise thing. I mean, it wasn't like we had a micrometer out here doing this, but you're running meetings now perfectly well enough for day to day life in this organization. Now, when you could assign your first cross-functional project, now, when you get promoted to be a manager, meetings will be one less thing to worry about. And in fact, if people see you doing this, now, if my boss pops in and for some reason you're running meeting, cause I'm gone and he sees you killing it. That's a notch in your belt in terms of, you know, being perceived as somebody who's ready for more responsibility, whatever form that more responsibility might take,

Speaker 1 ([25:36](#)):

wait a minute. But then my boss doesn't know that I can run them. And he thinks that it's just my directors creating all those success in my organization.

Speaker 3 ([25:43](#)):

Yeah. This, this is not a psychiatric, uh, podcasts. I sorry, how you feel is your fault. So let's summarize real quick, soft coaching. It allows you to help a direct improve by paying attention to their work, their performance, their, their behavior, and just giving them lots of feedback about it. It doesn't require a lot of preparation virtually none. And it can be done in two to three minutes a week. If you're wanting some improvement, some professional development among your staff with minimal time investment Trisoft coaching. All right. Thanks. My friend. You bet partner. We'll see you next week or maybe tomorrow. I don't know. Maybe tomorrow. All right.

Speaker 4 ([26:36](#)):

[inaudible].