



## Coaching

### Introduction

At SoundWave we do two things when it comes to coaching.

Firstly, we build coaching capability in others. Our approach guarantees clear improvements in the ability of managers to coach their people.

Secondly, we use SoundWave analytics to support coaching assignments where this makes sense to do so. It's the coaching that comes first and the selection of analytical instruments that comes second. But where a central feature of the coaching assignment is concerned with a clients ability to hold effective dialogue with others, then SoundWave is likely to play a part.

The model below illustrates the location of SoundWave in relation to competence frameworks and psychometrics that are often used for coaching assignments.



In many situations, small adjustments to the way one talks will yield dis-proportionately large benefits. For example, using the verbal strategy of Articulation rather than of Advocacy, will increase an individuals influencing ability considerably. Individuals who make this shift, report a immediate change in how others react to them. One Managing Director, reported an immediate set of feedback about how much more 'strategic' she appeared to be.

SoundWave coaching is full of such examples but this paper offers a concrete case example of a manager bedevilled with a poor and conflictual relationship between two of his team members. The manager was coached about how he could improve the situation by engaging the disputants in an Inquiry based dialogue which emphasised the need for more attentive listing. What follows is his summary account of what he did, drawn directly from a thankful e-mail.



“Hi Kevin,

We had a great session this morning with Lee and Neil – this was a follow-up to the last Coaching session. The approach worked a treat - see notes below.

Regards,

Tom

### **Part One**

#### **1. For Neil**

What are Lee’s strengths? E.g. on projects, what does he do well, how does he help the project, any other positive attributes that you can think of – just write them down for a few minutes.

#### **2. For Lee**

What are Neil’s strengths? E.g. on projects, what does he do well, how does he help the project, any other positive attributes that you can think of – just write them down for a few minutes.

### **Part Two**

#### **3. For Lee**

What did you hear Neil say about your strengths

#### **For Neil**

4. What did you hear Lee say about your strengths

### **Part Three**

#### **5. For Neil**

What do you think Lee could do better? E.g. on projects, or other areas – just write them down for a few minutes.

#### **6. For Lee**

What do you think Neil could do better? E.g. on projects, or other areas – just write them down for a few minutes.

### **Part Four**

#### **7. For Lee**

What did you hear Neil say?



1. Attendances at management meetings – Lee not always attending – patchy, whiteboard meetings
2. Getting commitments from Paul – and not sharing information with Project Manager
3. More willingness to be led and directed in certain circumstances.

## **8. For Neil**

What did you hear Lee say?

1. Involve lead electrical engineer at an early stage of the project
2. A/E need better involvement and need to know the detail.
3. Engagement for information from engineers.

## **Part Five**

Follow-up Actions:

### **Neil**

1. Setting out loading of engineer hours against various tasks on the project.
2. Have a change control planning session and agree actions/deliverables.
3. Educate A/E firm (service provider) on our requirements.
4. Set out project expectations. How communications will be done between electrical engineer and project manager.

### **For Lee:**

1. Communicate dealings with electrical contractor.
2. Attendance at whiteboard meetings –agree roles and ways of working at the start of a project. Who attends Whiteboards and what their role is. What decisions should be made at these meetings.
3. Have clear expectations of what role and involvement the A/E firm will have and how much scope they are taking on and making them fully aware of what our expectations are for documentation standards and design input, following upon RFIs especially during construction.

## **Part Six**

### **For Lee and Neil. How did you find the process?**

Both found the process was very good and worked well. Both said they understood each other a lot better.

Lee felt it would be worth doing for other one-to-one partnerships on an annual basis

## Any improvements?

For Part Three, we noticed there was more interruption/response on the areas for improvement, e.g. there can be a tendency to respond/defend with reasons when the other person is outlining areas for improvement. So, it was emphasised that one person should speak and the other person should only respond when the first person had gone through their part.

Overall it was a very enjoyable and worthwhile exercise and it was entered into with a positive and open approach on all sides. Thanks very much guys,

Regards,

Tom”

Tom’s summary of his ‘conflict resolution’ discussion illustrates the grounded and pragmatic nature of coaching, concerned as it is to tackle real problems faced by real managers, leaders and professionals. Tom’s own SoundWave self-perception result, revealed a lower preference for the Inquiry verbal strategy. Coaching highlighted the limitations of such style. Coaching built the awareness of its value and the skills to put it into practice.



Tom is a highly regarded ‘expert’ leader. The move towards more inquiry-based dialogue represents a significant shift in personal style and one which he has developed through attending three two-day workshops and two one-to-one coaching sessions.