

## Using Coaching to Help Achieve Your Goals: The Challenge of Follow-Through

**A**fter feedback from Grid seminar team members, participants come away with personal or operational goals they want to achieve. The seminar offers a “safe” environment where candor can emerge, where goals and aspirations can be more freely discussed and critiqued. But following through once you are back in the workplace can be a daunting task without the encouragement, candor, and support experienced in the safe seminar environment.

The key to change and self-improvement is seeing the motivational gap between where you are now and where you want to be. Once you become aware of where you want to be, the status quo is no longer acceptable. How many times have you made a New Year’s resolution that never “happens?” The same forces that conspire to thwart our New Year’s resolutions also conspire against our Grid goals. Self-deception, along with unsound group norms and practices, dampen enthusiasm and drag us back into old, familiar habits. This is why keeping them in front of you—keeping them fresh and real—is so crucial.

### Keeping Your Goals “Real”

People use all kinds of tricks to remind themselves of goals they have set such as writing them down and posting them in a prominent location, or setting reminders to pop up on a task list. These are helpful, but they are dependent on you alone to make it happen. Tying the proverbial “string around your finger” isn’t usually enough. Reciprocal coaching among team members, co-workers, supervisors, and managers is one of the best ways to maintain the supportive atmosphere of the Grid seminar and increase the likelihood that you will be successful.

**Your job as a coach** is to help people maximize their resources for advancing their goals. **Your job for being coached** is to strengthen personal awareness and follow-through.

### Guidelines for Coaching Others

The key is to remember your purpose is to “facilitate” the achievement of a person’s goals—to help him or her clear away distractions and open up the pathway. It is not to push, criticize, or prescribe solutions or actions.

**Ask the person to define the goal in simple terms.** Repeat it back so you both have the same understanding of what the goal is and what it involves. Review together whether this is a “S.M.A.R.T.” goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed). If it doesn’t pass the SMART test, offer critique points and ask questions that may help the person amend the goal.

**Link the goal to personal value:** Invite the person to “re-visualize” the gap that led to establishing the goal. “Why is this goal important to you?” “How would achieving it improve your relationships and/or your productivity?” “What changes will you have to make?” “What will ‘success’ look like?”

**Ask how it’s going so far:** “What progress have you made?” “On a scale of one to ten, where would you say you are now?”



Viewing progress in a tangible manner, like a scale, helps people visualize how far they’ve come and how far they have to go.

**Ask about any problems or barriers:** “What is the core of the problem and its cause?” “How would you solve it?” Sometimes a person becomes so fixated on a barrier,

there is no way to see a way around it. Getting the person to define barriers or problems in concrete, unemotional terms helps the person to see them more clearly and begin to develop practical solutions.

**Don’t Prescribe!** Your purpose is not to “fix” the person’s dilemma, but to encourage the person to use his or her own resources. Listen instead, and ask questions that make the person explore his or her own resources more thoroughly.

**After the session, conduct a post-critique** with the person to see how useful the coaching has been. Commit to a specific date and time for a follow-up session, if the other person feels one is necessary.

### Guidelines for Being Coached

**Actively solicit feedback or coaching,** especially from people you trust to be candid and helpful, and who will continue with their support until your goal is reached.

**Take advantage of every opportunity to revisit your goal,** so that your awareness and motivation remain vivid.

**Avoid defensive language or excuses about your progress.** This will immediately halt candor. Remember that the “coach” is trying to help you achieve your goal, not criticize you because you haven’t achieved it yet.

**Paraphrase feedback comments** to ensure you and your coach have a shared understanding.

**Take notes during your session** so you can review them for additional insight. Session notes can sometimes even be used to enhance the goal itself, perhaps shedding light on other aspects you hadn’t thought of.

**Be sure to thank people** for providing their feedback.