GROW Model

Good coaches do not give all the answers; they ask the questions that help people find their own. The GROW model is one of the most popular ways to structure a coaching conversation. It was developed in the 1980s by Graham Alexander, Alan Fine and Sir John Whitmore, and it became famous through Whitmore's book Coaching for Performance. Today, managers use it in one-to-one meetings, performance talks and everyday problem solving. GROW stands for four stages: Goal, Reality, Options and Will, also called the Way Forward.

1. G: Goal

G stands for the goal of the conversation. The coach first asks what the person wants to achieve, both from this talk and in the longer term. A good goal is clear, positive and within the person's control. Starting with the goal gives the whole conversation a direction and a purpose. Without it, the talk can easily turn into a long complaint about problems.

Example: before a driving lesson, the instructor asks the learner what they want to practise today.

At work: Lina, a customer service manager, meets a team member who feels overwhelmed by customer emails. Instead of giving advice, she asks what he wants to achieve this month, and they agree on a clear goal: every email answered within one day.

2. R: Reality

R stands for reality, which means the current situation as it really is. The coach asks questions about the facts: what is happening now, what has been tried, and what is getting in the way. The aim is an honest picture, without blame and without guessing. Often, simply describing the situation clearly brings new ideas. Exploring reality also shows how far the person is from the goal.

Example: someone who wants to save money first checks where the money really goes each month.

At work: Lina asks how many emails arrive each day and how long each one takes. The team member discovers that he spends two hours a day answering questions that the website already answers.

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3. O: Options

O stands for options, the different ways the person could move toward the goal. Here the coach helps the person think widely, without judging ideas too early. Useful questions include what else could be done, and what someone the person admires would do. The more options there are, the better the final choice is likely to be. Only after collecting ideas do the coach and the person compare their benefits and costs.

Example: a family planning a holiday lists several places before looking at the prices.

At work: Lina and her team member list several ideas: ready-made answers, a link to the website, a shared inbox with a colleague, and a quiet hour each morning. Then they discuss the pros and cons of each idea.

4. W: Will (Way Forward)

W stands for will, or the way forward. At this stage, the person chooses what they will actually do, and when. The coach checks commitment by asking how likely the person is to follow through, perhaps on a scale from one to ten. Possible obstacles and the support needed are also discussed. The conversation ends with clear next steps and a date to review progress.

Example: after the holiday discussion, the family books the trip and agrees who will do what.

At work: the team member decides to write ten ready-made answers by Friday and to start the quiet hour on Monday. Lina agrees to review his progress with him in two weeks.

Conclusion

In summary, the GROW model gives a coaching conversation a simple and clear shape. We start with the Goal, look honestly at the Reality, explore the Options and finish with the Will to act. The coach asks and listens more than they give instructions, so the person owns both the ideas and the decisions. The stages are not strict rules; a good coach can go back to an earlier stage when needed. Used regularly, GROW helps people grow in skill, confidence and independence.

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