

# Coaching Skills YOU Can Use In Your Digital Agency

Get more from yourself, your team and your clients...



## Chris Simmance

With 10 years of leadership experience, Chris knows how to get things done. He's worked with clients across all levels and been exposed to multiple layers in order for him to help you reach your goals as quickly or slowly as is right for YOU!

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## Get more from yourself, your team and your clients...

Coaching isn't just for coaches! Coaching skills can be used daily to help you support your team, keep clients longer and improve yourself on a personal level. In this article, I'll run through some areas that may seem simple at first but are hard to master. — these will all help you as you grow your business.

### The most important areas of coaching that you can work on consist of:

- Listening
- Being Curious
- Delivering Feedback
- Keeping people to account

All of these seem easy on the face of it, listen more, ask more questions, tell people your thoughts and ask them to deliver... NOOOOOT so simple in practice; here's why..

## Listening

Listening is a very difficult skill 'in the real world'. We've all got different backgrounds and experiences that make us all pretty different from one another. Why is this related to listening? Well, people rarely actually listen. We hear things and then turn them into thoughts from our perspective, which can miss key details or nuances that make what the person is saying more useful or valid. How often have you been listening to someone, coming up with a response and then just waiting out the clock for them to finish before telling them what you wanted to say? Or worse, not waited at all?

A great leader is a great listener. They don't need to have all the answers, they just need to be able to hear what's being said and understand it from the speaker's perspective. It can be difficult to do this all the time, but if you can manage it more often than not, you'll find that



people open up to you more and trust you more. Trust is the core building block of a great running agency, and it starts with listening!

## Being Curious

This is probably the second hardest skill to master, but it's so important. Being curious doesn't mean being nosy; it means having a genuine interest in what people are saying and why they're saying it. It's about empathising with them and trying to understand their point of view. If you can be curious, and I mean really curious, then you can start to understand the real problems that people have. The ones they might not even know they have. And once you understand those, you can start to offer solutions that they didn't even realise they needed!

Being curious goes much deeper, though, deeper than just interest. It's a core part of great Critical Thinking. Critical Thinking is what I like to call a Digital Agency Superpower, as it can make all the difference between excellent work and great margins. Critical Thinking, simply put, is the upfront thinking that happens individually and in teams, whereby all the "If this, then that" of processes turn into "So what? Then what?". Curiosity, when you're coaching your team, will allow you to uncover those unknown unknowns that may have cost time and money or added stress to people's lives.

**Always think:** Who, What, Where, When, Why and How when you're listening to your team or clients, and it will inspire curiosity that will uncover some lovely hidden gems and make life a lot easier.

## Delivering Feedback

Feedback can be a tough one, but it's so important. It's easy to shy away from giving feedback because we don't want to hurt people's feelings or make them feel bad. But the truth is, feedback is a gift. It's an opportunity for someone to learn and grow. When delivered in the right way, feedback can be one of the most powerful tools you have in your arsenal.

If it's not those three things, then it's not going to be useful. Feedback needs to be something that the person can do

something with; it needs to be clear and concise. If it's vague, then it's not going to help anyone. Giving feedback can be scary, but it's so worth it. The more you do it, the better you'll get at it, and the more your team will trust you and feel like they can come to you with problems.

## Keeping people to account

This is probably the hardest thing to do, but it's so important. If you don't keep people accountable, then they won't deliver on their promises, and things will start to slip through the cracks. This can be really tough, especially if you're a nice person who avoids conflict, but it's so important.



The key to delivering feedback is to make sure that it's:

- **Specific**

Make sure it's not vague or could be misunderstood. The simpler, more concise, the better in many cases. Always check for understanding.

- **Objective**

Keep feeling out of it as best as you can. Remember that the person receiving the feedback may not be able to, though. You can be objective and still empathetic.

- **Actionable**

If they can't act on it, you've done it wrong!



The key to keeping people accountable is to make sure that you:

- **Follow up** – This is non-negotiable. If you say you're going to follow up, then follow up. Otherwise, people will start to think that they can get away with not doing what they said they would.
- **Be consistent** – Don't let things slide sometimes and not others. This will just confuse people and make them think that they can get away with it.
- **Be clear** – Make sure that people know what is expected of them and when it is expected. Again, this avoids confusion and mixed signals.

Keeping people accountable can be really tough, but it's so important. If you don't do it, then things will start to slip through the cracks, and your business will suffer.

#### **To conclude...**

These are just a few of the coaching skills that you can use in your digital agency to help you grow your business. Remember, coaching is all about listening, being curious, delivering feedback and keeping people accountable. If you can grow and then master these skills, then you'll be well on your way to success.

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