



# Energising coaching conversations

Create a learning and performance culture  
by helping your team transform experiences  
into development opportunities

**#LAWW2020**

**ATKINSON**  
HR consulting

# Building a culture of learning

## Learning At Work Week 2020

Thanks for downloading our free guide to '[Energising Coaching Conversations](#)'.

[Learning at Work Week](#) is an annual event run by the Campaign for Learning, which is aimed at building learning cultures at work. It puts a spotlight on the importance and benefits of continual learning and development.

This year's learning at work week theme is '[Learning Journeys](#)', In this quick guide, we'll introduce Kolb's learning cycle, which takes us through the journey of learning from experiences. Then, we'll help you, as a manager to use the learning cycle to have your own energising coaching conversations and take your team members on a journey from 'do' to 'develop'.

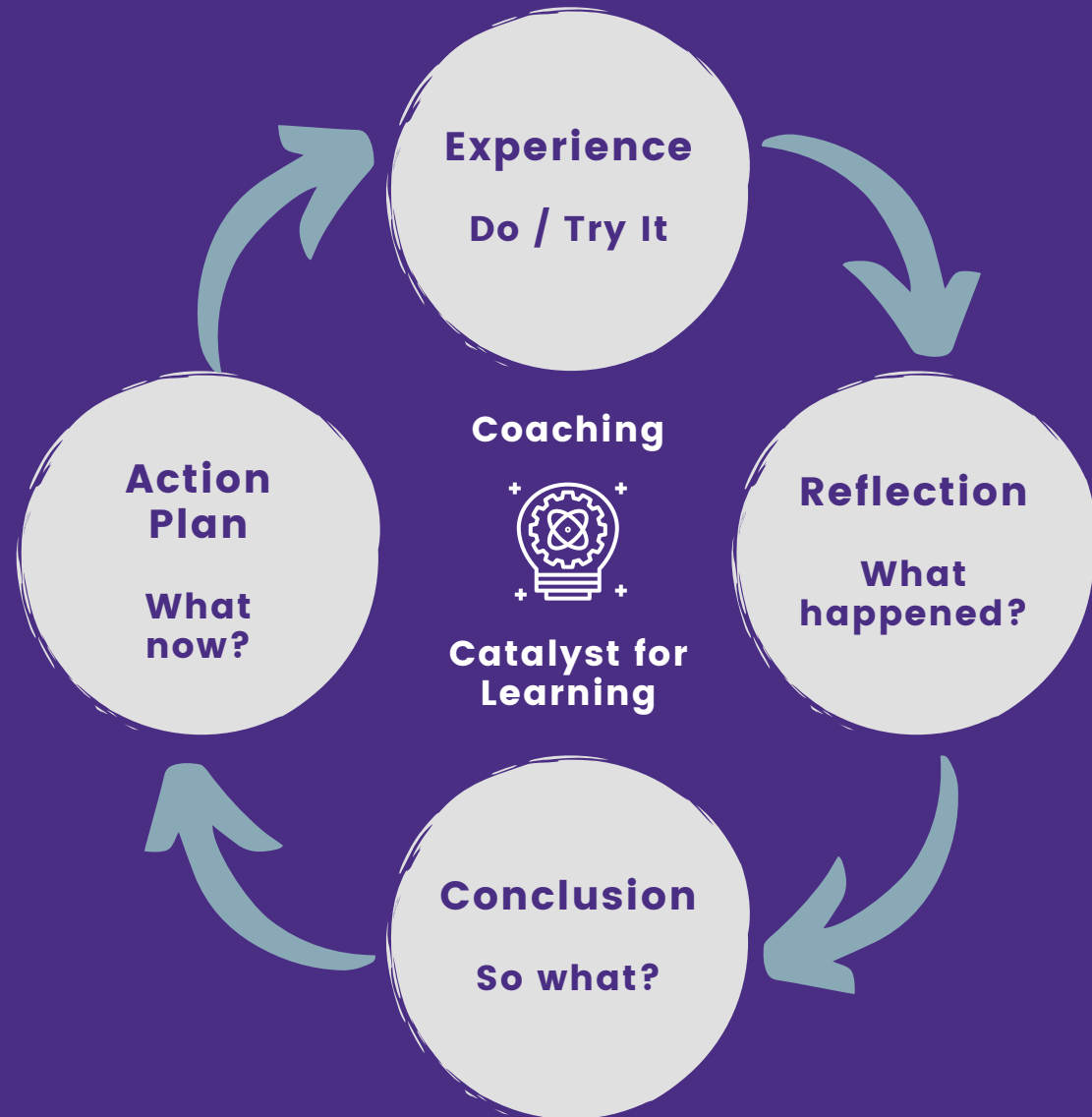
# Learning from experience

## The learning cycle

The learning cycle helps us us to understand the processes we go through to learn effectively through experience. It's also a really helpful framework for coaching conversations.

By guiding your team members through each stage of the cycle, you can help them to reflect on an experience and experiment with different ways of doing something, repeating the cycle as they refine and develop their approach.

The coaching conversation is a valuable catalyst to learning, and a powerful and useful step towards building a culture of learning and performance in your team.



# An experience becomes a learning opportunity when you...



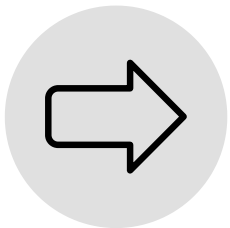
## Reflect (What?)

After the experience, stand back and reflect on what happened. Consider what you said, what you did, how you felt and what the outcomes were.



## Conclude (So what?)

The next stage is to draw conclusions from the experience. You might identify something that could be improved or changed, a challenge you'd like to overcome or a negative impact that you'd like to reduce.




## Next Steps (Now what?)

Then, plan the next steps. This might involve deciding specifically what you are going to do, when you are going to do it, what 'good' looks like and how you are going to measure success and what support or resources you will need to help you.

**The experience is not really a learning experience until you get the chance to do it again. You'll have more chance of continuously developing if you move several times around the cycle, experimenting with new methods each time.**

# The power of questions



The purpose of a good coaching conversation is to generate awareness and responsibility.

The key to this is asking the right questions.

“

I KEEP SIX HONEST  
SERVING-MEN (THEY  
TAUGHT ME ALL I KNEW);  
THEIR NAMES ARE WHAT  
AND WHY AND WHEN AND  
HOW AND WHERE AND WHO.

RUDYARD KIPLING

”

# Effective Questions

"Telling or asking closed questions saves people from having to think.

Asking open questions causes them to think for themselves."

John Whitmore

## Closed Questions

Did you do that?

Did you find that easy/difficult?

Will you do that?

Is that right?

Was that wrong?

Do you want to ?

Could you do that?

## Open Questions

What happened?

How did that feel?

How will you do that?

Tell me more about...

Why is that important?

Talk me through your idea?

What will you do next?

# Review Questions

Use these questions to help someone look back on the experience they just had - imagine they are watching back a recording of their experience.

- Talk me through what you've been doing
- Explain what you did when...
- How did you feel about...
- What could be the consequences of that for you and others?
- What was the most challenging part?





# — Questions to help draw conclusions

Use these questions to help make sense of the experience and look at it from different angles, figuring out why things happened, analysing their/others actions and coming to a few conclusions.

- What could you do to improve/address/prevent...
- What would you gain/lose by doing that?
- What advice would you give to a colleague in your situation?
- What other approaches could you try?
- What could be the advantages/disadvantages of that?
- What could you do differently?



# — Questions to plan next steps

Use these questions to look to the future, and plan how to apply what they have learned by creating a practical plan of action for next time they have the experience.

- How will you build on your successes next time?
- What are you going to do differently?
- What are the key steps to achieving that?
- What will you do first? Next?
- How will you do that?
- What will it take for you to commit to that action?

# Transform your leadership approach with just 3 questions

Mini coaching conversations can take place in less than 5 minutes, and can completely change the relationship with your team members and the culture within your team.

## Why is a mini coaching conversation so powerful?

- It doesn't take a lot of time.
- It can be done informally. Try before or after a meeting, over a (virtual) coffee or during a catch-up.
- You can help a team member to move around the experiential learning cycle to help them review and reflect on an experience.
- You can increase / decrease the level of challenge in your questions to suit different styles and levels of performance.
- You can create performance improvements and help to create a learning culture in your team.
- You create the expectation in your team that your regular conversations will push them to learn and improve.
- Your team will learn the process of reflecting on their experiences, so that even when you don't have coaching conversations, they will have them in their heads anyway.

# Example

## Q1

Ask one question to get them to review and reflect on what they are doing or what has happened.

Talk me through what you're doing.  
Tell me about what you're working on.

## Q2

Ask one question that gets them thinking, or exploring alternatives.

What have been the biggest challenges?  
Why did that happen?

## Q3

Ask one question that gets them to plan how they will improve, enhance or develop the aspect you've been focusing on.

What will you do differently?  
What will you do first?

# Now what?



Think of a conversation that you have had with a member of your team recently on a particular area of work. How did it go?

How could you improve it? Think through the conversation as a 3 step energised coaching conversation – how might the outcome have been different?

What, if anything, will you do differently next time?

What will you try during your next conversation?

# About Atkinson HR Consulting

The purpose of our work is to help create change, build capacity and drive quality around people management and performance in values-driven organisations.

We pride ourselves on helping our clients to achieve great outcomes and are delighted to have been named CIPD's Best HR/Learning & Development Consultancy in 2019.





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