

Preparation is important if best use is to be made of the time, both in terms of what you want to cover and how you will approach any potentially tricky topics.

Set Objectives For The Session

It is important to be clear at the outset what you want to achieve during the session. What topics do you want to discuss and to what end? Objectives might include resolving certain problems, or gaining agreement on particular performance or development actions. Your objectives may also include 'process goals' such as improving the relationship or the way that the coaching sessions run. Set out your objectives and prepare a short agenda. Go through the following as you do this:

Revisit previous action points

- What objectives were agreed at the last session? (Look at previous action points)
- What has been done/not done? What has gone well and not so well?
- Where is praise or criticism due? What lessons can be drawn?

The Role

Revisit/reflect upon the person's role and job description (if they have one).

- Has the person's role changed the last session? How? Why?
- Has this affected the person's performance? How? Why?

Reflect On Person's Strengths and Weaknesses

- What are the person's main strengths, key skills and important accomplishments – any examples? What are the person's key areas for development – any examples?

Priorities

- What are the most important issues that you want to deal with at the meeting?
- Think about what you want to say and what you want to ask

Development Needs

- What development do you think the person needs – will the person share this view?
- How do you think this should be done (don't just think training courses)?
- Think in terms of immediate performance and longer term career development

Hot Spots

- Will there be any sensitive or difficult issues to discuss?
- Plan a way to handle the known ones or avoid any needless quibbling

Consider Previous Coaching Sessions

- How have the sessions been going, how has the relationship been developing?
- What was learned from how the interaction went last time?
- How have you helped so far, and what can you do to improve/build upon last time?

Agree Time And Place

- Arrange with the person a mutually convenient time, duration (typically less than an hour) and place to meet. The venue should be somewhere quiet and free from interruptions.
- Make sure that the person has agenda in plenty time to prepare their own thoughts.

Session Structure

- What will be your main contribution to the session?
- What style should you adopt (and will it need to vary with different issues)?
- How much time should be spent on each issue?
- What should the tone of the session be?
- What tools or exercises may be useful to utilise in the session?