



GROW Coaching for Interpersonal Communications

Leveraging the

LEADERSHIP Communication Model™

For managers and coaches who need to improve the:

- L istening
- E mpathizing
- A cknowledging
- D iffering
- E ngaging
- R ecording
- S torytelling
- H elping Others
- I nspiring
- P lanning discussions for better outcomes

Skills for their employees

■ Background

The GROW model was developed initially in the 1980s by Graham Alexander, Alan Fine, and Sir John Whitmore. Performex has built upon the model by including an additional section for OBSTACLES and creating individual guides for specific competencies.

■ Interpersonal Communications

The GROW model was developed initially in the 1980s by Graham Alexander, Alan Fine, and Sir John Whitmore. Performex has built upon the model by including an additional section for OBSTACLES and creating individual guides for specific competencies.

Interpersonal communication is the face-to-face exchange of ideas, concepts, thoughts, feelings, and emotions between two or more people. Importantly, both verbal and nonverbal forms of personal interaction affect the quality of the exchange.

Interpersonal skills or “people skills” are crucial for employees’ success and careers because they:

- ❑ Affect innovation, productivity, and the organization’s work environment.
- ❑ Foster strong relationships with teammates, peers, and clients.
- ❑ Eliminate harmful conflicts and help people arrive at win-win decisions.

Based on our experience and extensive data, Performex has established the following interpersonal truths:

1. People believe others can easily perceive their intentions, beliefs, values, etc. They cannot. They hear words, experience behaviors, interpret nonverbals, and from that assessment they intuit one’s intentions, beliefs, values, etc. Therefore, if people are not skilled at matching their nonverbal communications with verbal communications, a problematic disconnect can occur.
2. While people strive to be understood, they seldom strive to understand. The focus of their interactions is telling, not listening.
3. People avoid structured communication when no one insists on following rules of order. Meetings and engagements devolve into inefficient and ineffective sessions.
4. Most people do not plan or have a strategy for difficult or challenging communications; they wing it, and as a result they often fall short of their objective.



5. Organizations often reward and recognize people who are verbose or eloquent, especially early in their careers, which reinforces poor listening skills.
6. While people practice giving speeches, they seldom practice their other, more essential communication skills.
7. Some people simply do not believe their interpersonal skills are malleable.

For individual contributors and managers, the following competencies and associated factors are needed to perform various roles in any organization:

- ❑ Communicate status, flesh out issues, give instructions, and make assignments
 - Planning communications
 - Recording commitments and decisions
- ❑ Create commitment and engagement
 - Inspiring
 - Storytelling
 - Engaging
- ❑ Influence opinions, outcomes, and gain alignment
 - Differing
 - Acknowledging
 - Helping—providing assistance or support
- ❑ Build and maintain positive relationships
 - Listening
 - Empathizing



Appropriately, the first letter of each factor forms the acronym LEADERSHIP.

■ How to Maximize the Effectiveness of Your Coaching for Interpersonal Communications

For simplification, we will refer to the individual or employee being coached as the coachee and the manager or mentor as the coach.

Coaches will use this GROW Coaching for Interpersonal Communications guide for two purposes: coaching for performance, which is to improve the behaviors and skills of employees in their current job, and coaching for development, which is preparing employees for future expanded and new roles.

As an aid to the coach, questions are provided for each interpersonal competency, following the GROW Coaching Process. The coach should plan their discussions by preselecting questions from the chosen competency.

■ Getting Started: Using the LEADERSHIP Assessment to Help Create Self-Awareness

Coaches should assign the Performex Interpersonal Communications Assessment [{Link}](#) to the appropriate employee. Once the results are available, the coach should analyze the report and rate the employee on each question, compared to the employee’s self-rating. Based on the assessment report, along with observations made by the manager, one or two communication competencies should emerge as opportunities for improvement.

The coach should read the LEADERSHIP article and assign the coachee to read it as well. The coach may want to focus the coachee on reading and understanding the sections that cover the factors that are associated with the competencies needed for improvement.



■ Competency 1: Communicate Status, Flesh Out Issues, Give Instructions, and Make Assignments by Planning Communications and Recording Commitments and Decisions

GOAL Questions

- What do you expect to achieve from having improved communications?
- What communications goal do you want to achieve?
- How does improving your interpersonal skills affect your current job or career goals?
- What would you like to happen with your interpersonal communications?
- What do you *really* want? And what else?
- What improvements in communications would you like to accomplish?
- What specific results are you trying to achieve?
- What outcome would be ideal?
- As far as communications go, what do you want to stop, start, or do more of?
- Why are you hoping to achieve your goal?

REALITY Questions

- Why are effective communications important?
- Why are efficient communications important?
- How will you ensure your communications are more effective and/or efficient?
- What would happen if you did nothing?
- Do you currently plan your communications? What would the benefits be if you did?
- What role does consistency play?
- The LEADERSHIP article talks about clearly stating the goal at the start of the conversation. What does that mean?
- How do you document the action plans/assignments that result from your meeting and interactions?
- What are the benefits of recording and tracking assignments? And what else?
- How does striking items off a list affect an organization?

OBSTACLE Questions

- What did the LEADERSHIP assessment tell you about your communication strengths and challenges?
- Which of your communication tendencies do you need to change or manage to improve?
- How can you be prepared for the issues that may arise in a conversation so that you can address them more efficiently?
- How will you prepare the other participants for essential conversations?
- How does your autopilot figure into communications?
- What prevents you from having a robust tracking system for agreed-upon actions and assignments?
- What holds you back from giving your direct reports clear and precise instructions?
- What obstacles exist that prevent you from having more effective and efficient interactions?
- What is the hardest/most challenging part of communications?

OPTION Questions

- What do the top thought leaders say about interpersonal communication skills?
- What has worked for you in the past? How could you do that more often?
- How could you make sure people understand your instructions?
- How would having a more robust tracking system for assignments and agreed-upon actions benefit you and your team?
- How can you become more transparent? And what else could you do?
- How can you be more concise? And what else could you do?
- What could be your first step towards managing your autopilot?
- What do you need to do to get a better result [or closer to your goal]?
- How can you improve the tracking of assignments and deliverables?
- Who else might be able to help?
- What good advice came from the LEADERSHIP article?
- What obstacles are getting in the way of success?

WAY FORWARD Questions

- What is the best/worst thing about that alternative?
- What will you do differently?
- Which options do you feel ready to act on?
- How will you know you have successfully addressed the situation?
- Which of the various options you gave for overcoming the obstacles will you commit to?
- What are three actions you can take this week to plan your conversations better?
- How are you going to ensure you record conversations and commitments?
- What suggestions in the LEADERSHIP article do you think you need to do right now? How are you going to do that?
- Is there anything else you can do?
- What is the likelihood of your plan succeeding?
- What would it take to make it foolproof?
- What other resources can help you?
- What small step will you take now?
- When are you going to start?
- What support do you need from me to get that done?
- What will happen [or, what is the cost] of you NOT doing this?
- How committed/motivated are you to implementing your plan?
- Is there anything missing from your plan?



■ Competency 2: Creating Commitment and Engagement by Inspiring Others, Storytelling, and Engaging Conversations

GOAL Questions

- What is engagement, and how does it benefit teams?
- How would creating energy and dedication on your team benefit you and the entire organization?
- What do you expect to achieve from having improved commitment?
- What communications goal do you want to achieve?
- How will improving your inspirational skills affect your current job and career goals?
- What would you like to happen with your storytelling skills?
- What do you *really* want? And what else?
- What improvements in commitment and engagement would you like to accomplish?
- How does creating more commitment and engagement affect the specific results you are trying to achieve?
- As far as inspiring communications go, what do you want to stop, start, or do more of?
- Why would being a better storyteller help you to achieve your goal?
- What benefits would you receive by creating more significant commitment and engagement on your team?

REALITY Questions

- What did the LEADERSHIP assessment tell you about your communication strengths and challenges?
- How do you rate your team's current excitement and dedication?
- When you encounter someone with a different communication style, what do you do?
- What does it take to make you positive and dynamic?
- Are you comfortable with your employees freely sharing, discussing, evaluating, debating, organizing, and prioritizing ideas?
- What role does storytelling play as a communications tool for you?



- What inspiring techniques do you use to generate enthusiasm and commitment?
- How does your prevalent mood affect your team's commitment and engagement?
- How do interpersonal communications affect employee commitment and engagement?
- Tell me about your ability to be positive and dynamic and create excitement.
- What impact does an inspired team have on results and innovation?

OBSTACLE Questions

- What prevents you from having a communications style that is exciting and contagious?
- When you find it challenging to be positive and dynamic, what is really going on?
- What tendencies do you have to manage to better flex your communication style?
- What are the biggest challenges you have in trying to be more inspiring?
- How do flight attendants manage their default facial expression? Do you manage yours, or does it just happen?
- How do your moods and business pressures affect your attitude?
- Tell me about your posture, smile, eye contact, and mannerisms. Do they exude confidence and a positive vibe?
- How do your moods, disappointments, stress, or personal issues interfere with your ability to project a positive attitude?
- What role does mental toughness and dedication play in interpersonal communications?
- What prevents you from being a more passionate communicator?
- What is your process for creating stories to tell your team?



OPTION Questions

- What do great stories do? What are the components of a great story?
- How could you develop a repertoire of stories you can use to convey important ideas and insights?
- How could you do less telling and shift to more questions?
- Which new communications behaviors could you adopt immediately? How could you implement and practice them consciously and continuously?
- How can you ensure your employees understand the "why" behind your requests and assignments?
- Name three things you can do to exude a more inspiring leadership style.
- What does it take to have a new, more positive attitude?
- How can you prevent your moods and issues from interfering with your attitude as a leader?
- Paint for me a compelling picture of the future for your team.
- How can you observe yourself in action?
- What does the Dale Carnegie quote, "If you want to be enthusiastic, act enthusiastic," mean?
- What techniques does the LEADERSHIP article suggest to create a compelling picture with passion?

WAY FORWARD Questions

- What nonverbal communications tendencies do you need to manage to project exceptional warmth and excitement?
- What are your best/worst options for creating more commitment and engagement on your team?
- What will you do differently to create more excitement and enthusiasm?
- How will you know you have been successful?
- Which obstacles do you need to eliminate? How will you eradicate them?

- What are three actions you can take to be more inspiring this week?
- How are you going to avoid day-to-day events from derailing you?
- What suggestions in the LEADERSHIP article do you need to do right now?
How are you going to accomplish them?
- Is there anything else you can do?
- What is the likelihood of your plan succeeding?
- What obstacles do you expect to stand out?
- What additional resources could help you?
- What one small step can you take now?
- When are you going to start?
- What support from me do you need to create more engagement?
- What will happen [or, what is the cost] of you NOT doing this?
- On a scale of one to 10, how committed/motivated are you to doing it? What would make your motivation a 10?
- Are there any gaps in your plan?
- How will you link your team's goals to the greater organization's overall goals?
- What will you commit to doing so your teams and colleagues are well informed and involved?
- What new steps will you take to draw out disengaged employees to find out what is on their minds?
- What will you do to ensure everyone understands the overall organization's goals and strategies and how they relate to the discussion?
- What will you do to regularly communicate the link between your team's goals and mutual interests and the organization's overall goals?
- What will you do to regularly communicate the link between your team's goals and mutual interests and the organization's overall goals?
- What will you stop, start, or do more of to make sure your employees and peers feel respected and comfortable when they are expressing their ideas?
- How will you become more comfortable with asking an individual for help solving problems?



■ Competency 3: Influence Opinions and Outcomes by Differing, Acknowledging, and Helping



GOAL Questions

- What is influence, and how does it benefit managers?
- How would having more influence benefit you and the organization?
- What do you expect to achieve from having more influence?
- What communications goal do you want to achieve?
- How does improving your differing skills affect your current job or career goals?
- What would you like to happen with your differing skills?
- What do you *really* want? And what else?
- How would being highly skilled at differing with others benefit you?
- What outcome would be ideal?
- As far as communications go, what do you want to stop, start, or do more of?
- Why would you want to help your team or others more?

REALITY Questions

- What did the LEADERSHIP assessment tell you about your communication strengths and challenges?
- How do you rate your influencing skills?
- When you encounter someone with a contrary opinion, what do you do?
- Who on your team regularly avoids expressing their opinion(s)? And who else?
- What occurs when you have disagreed with others? Give me some examples.
- Are you comfortable with having your employees freely sharing, discussing, evaluating, debating, organizing, and prioritizing ideas?
- When is groupthink an issue on your team?
- What role does storytelling play as a communications tool for you?
- What is your typical approach to communicating ideas and concepts?
- What is a default facial expression? Describe yours.
- What conditions help groups find the most rational and creative solutions and produce the most beneficial group dynamics?
- Give me some examples of where your listening and supporting skills came to light.
- How do you feel when someone openly disagrees with you?
- How do you capture the merits of another person's ideas, even if you disagree with them? Do you do this often?

OBSTACLE Questions

- When you disagree with someone, what holds you back from saying so? How does this benefit and hurt you?
- What causes your discussions to devolve into an "I'm right, and you're wrong" situation?
- What prevents you from communicating a decision that is contrary to the options presented by others?
- When things get heated, what are the challenges you have with remaining respectful and well-mannered?
- Does your highly analytical mind cause you to focus first on what is wrong with an idea or proposal, rather than considering what might be right about it? Why?
- Tell me about times when you felt you were obligated to be the expert. During these times, how did you react when others joined the conversation?
- If we perceive ourselves in a negative light, we see others and their ideas in a negative light. When do you feel inadequate?
- What instincts hold you back from acknowledging the merits of others' ideas?



OPTION Questions

- How can you phrase your remarks in a way that suggests that you have a concern and does not indicate that the other person's ideas are wrong?
- What steps could you take to master active listening and better supporting skills?
- What could you do differently to be heard and have your point of view acknowledged?
- How can you foster a culture where individuals express their differences without interfering with their respect and regard for each other?
- How can you avoid the context that "I'm right and you're wrong"?
- How could you remain more respectful and well-mannered?
- What could you do to explain the "why" better?
- How could you maintain the mind-set that the other person has useful ideas, information, or points of view?
- What are the most significant opportunities for you to become a better servant leader?
- How can you be an invaluable resource for your staff?

WAY FORWARD Questions

- What is the best/worst option for becoming more influential?
- After reading the LEADERSHIP article, what will you do differently?
- How will you become more influential?
- Which of the obstacles do you need to address first?
- What are three actions you can implement this week?
- How are you going to become famous for your servant leadership?
- What suggestions in the LEADERSHIP article do you think you need to do right now? How are you going to accomplish that?
- How will you make sure you acknowledge the contribution of the members of your team? Is there anything else you can commit to doing?
- What is the likelihood of your plan succeeding?
- What would it take to make it foolproof?
- What obstacles do you expect to encounter immediately?
- What is one small baby step you will take now?
- When are you going to start?
- What will happen [or, what is the cost] of you NOT doing this?
- What do you need from me/others to help you become more influential?
- How committed/motivated are you to implementing your plan?
- Is there anything missing from your plan?
- What will you commit to exerting more influence on opinions and outcomes?
- What steps will you take to influence opinions and outcomes?
- What will you stop, start, or do more of to have more influence on opinions and outcomes?

■ Competency 4: Build and Maintain Positive Relationships (Listening and Empathizing)

GOAL Questions

- Why is becoming a better listener vital to you?
- How would having more empathy benefit you and, subsequently, the rest of the organization?
- What do you expect to achieve from being a better listener or having more empathy?
- What communications goal do you want to achieve?
- What do you really want? And what else?
- What outcome for listening would be ideal?
- As far as listening goes, what do you want to stop, start, or do more of?
- Why are you hoping to achieve your goal of being more empathetic?
- What is the benefit of not having empathy, and the problem with having too much? What is the downside?
- Why do you consider yourself empathetic?
- Do you consider yourself an empath—someone who strongly feels and absorbs other people’s emotions and, as a result, finds it difficult to deal with the person’s job performance or negative behaviors?



REALITY Questions

- Rate your listening skills. When do you find it hard to listen?
- When were you first aware that being a better listener would benefit your relationships?
- Who interrupts you? How does that make you feel?

- How big of a challenge is listening for you?
- What happens within you when someone else is doing most of the talking?
- What is a default facial expression? Describe yours.
- How often do you reload while someone else is speaking? What is your inner motivation for doing so?
- Why do morale and teamwork suffer when people realize that their ideas and concerns are not being heard?
- When you are not an active listener, what is going on?
- What does reloading refer to in the LEADERSHIP article? Why do you reload?
- How does your communication style affect your team's commitment and engagement?
- What nonverbal communications indicate people are emotional or getting angry?
- Give me some examples of where your listening and supporting skills came to light.
- Do you easily interpret nonverbal communications?
- How do you feel when someone openly disagrees with you?
- How well do you capture the merits of another person's ideas, even if you disagree with them?

OBSTACLE Questions

- What did the LEADERSHIP assessment tell you about your listening and empathy, strengths, and challenges?
- Who or what are the people, situations, or times of the day that trigger your poor listening skills?
- When you disagree with someone, what holds you back from doing so? How does this benefit and hurt you?
- What causes your discussions to devolve into an "I'm right, and you're wrong" situation?
- What prevents you from communicating a decision that is contrary to the options presented by others?
- What prevents you from remaining respectful and well-mannered when things get heated?
- Does your analytical mind cause you to focus first on what is wrong with an idea or proposal rather than considering what might be right about it? Why?
- Tell me about times when you feel you are supposed to be the expert.
- If we perceive ourselves in a negative light, we see others and their ideas in a negative light. When do you feel inadequate?
- What holds you back from acknowledging the merits of others' ideas?
- What factors affect your ability to empathize?



OPTION Questions

- What steps could you take to be more receptive to any speaker?
- How could you pay more attention to nonverbal communications?
- What can you do when it is unclear what a given facial expression means?
- How can you avoid rushing to judgment?
- What are the key indicators that you are actively listening?
- The article mentions having phrases that spur listening and engagement by summarizing what the other person is saying. What are some of those phrases?
- How could you incorporate visualization into your plan?
- How can you manage your motives and behaviors in situations where you typically would not listen?
- What steps could you take to master active listening and supporting skills?
- Which techniques in the LEADERSHIP communication model can you use to be more empathetic?
- How can you resist the urge to stop listening while you formulate a rebuttal?
- Imagine yourself as one of your employees, feeling what they feel and seeing the world from their point of view. What do you feel and see? Is this difficult for you?

- How is empathy different from sympathy?
- What three things could you do tomorrow to become more empathetic?
- Validating or justifying others' emotions helps to convey your acceptance and respect for the feelings they are experiencing. How can you justify others' emotions more effectively?

WAY FORWARD Questions

- What is the best/worst alternative to becoming a more effective listener?
- What will you do differently to empathize more?
- How will you determine whether you have been successful?
- Which of the various options you gave for overcoming the obstacles to empathize will you commit to?
- What are three actions you can take this week to be a more active listener?
- What suggestions in the LEADERSHIP article do you think you need to do right now? How are you going to accomplish that?
- How will you know when you have become a better listener?
- Is there anything else you can do?
- What is the likelihood of your plan succeeding?
- What would it take to make it foolproof?
- What obstacles do you expect to encounter and need to address?
- What one small baby step will you take immediately?
- When are you going to start being a better listener?
- What will happen [or, what is the cost] of you NOT doing this?
- What do you need from me/others to help you implement your plan?
- On a scale of one to 10, how committed/motivated are you to implementing your plan and improving? What would it take to make it a 10?
- Is there anything missing from your plan?
- What steps will you take to become more empathetic?
- How will you remind yourself daily to listen more and be more empathetic?
- What will you stop, start, or do more of to have more influence on opinions and outcomes?



■ Summary

Interpersonal communications are essential for everyone in a company. Almost all employees and managers alike have some facet of their communications that need radical improvement. They miss the opportunity to:

- Communicate status, flesh out issues, give instructions, and make assignments
- Create commitment and engagement
- Inspire others
- Influence opinions, outcomes, and gain alignment

Employees with underdeveloped communication skills can improve, provided they try and get supportive coaching.

■ References

70 Coaching Questions for Managers Using the GROW Model by Dan McCarthy, November 19, 2019. The Balance Careers. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/coaching-questions-for-managers-2275913>