

## Three-way contracting

One to one coaching is based on two key principles. First, the coach treats the coaching conversations as confidential. Second, the client sets the agenda for the coaching conversations. When coaching clients within an organisation, these principles need to be further explored with all parties via three-way contracting.

There are situations when a line manager, head of department or HR manager (the sponsor) needs an individual to develop or change a practice, skill or behaviour in order for the individual to succeed in their role. The sponsor would like the individual to receive coaching in order to address this particular development need. In this situation the sponsor is legitimately setting part of the agenda for coaching. There is often an expectation that this form of professional coaching is financially supported by the department or organisation in question. Three-way contracting is worth considering in these circumstances.

Three-way contracting helps explain:

- what coaching is and is not
- what expectations each individual at the meeting has of its purpose and the outcomes to be achieved
- how the process fits in to the wider picture within the organisation
- how everybody is going to work together – what each person needs to do – to enable the process to be impactful
- the optimum conditions for it to be successful
- respective roles and responsibilities
- how the effectiveness of the process is going to be reviewed and evaluated

Role of the coach

- Contract over the confidentiality of the coaching relationship going forward
- Facilitate a discussion where there are differences of opinion or expectations, in order to deepen understanding.
- Helping both parties to agree a review/feedback process – how will they know there has been a shift?
- Listen, stay curious, notice and reflect back any cultural barriers to coaching e.g. discouragement of coaching within the working day; perception of coaching as a remedial tool. Use this opportunity to glean more contextual information e.g. the current challenges facing the organisation and the team; the local climate.

The key aspects of three-way contracting are:

- The sponsor has spoken explicitly to the individual about any developmental needs and/or concerns,
- The individual agrees to be coached by a coaching professional recommended by the organisation - or at least have a matching conversation.

- There is an initial three-way meeting between the individual, the sponsor and the coach to agree a shared understanding about the objectives and expectations of the coaching relationship. This meeting also agrees how the individual will share with the sponsor what has taken place through the coaching conversations
- In the course of the coaching conversations the individual may also discuss other matters that are important to them, but are not necessarily part of the sponsor's agenda
- The coach will not provide feedback or assessment to the sponsor unless this is explicitly agreed with the individual
- The manager will assess the impact of the coaching through their observations of the day to day achievement or behaviour of the individual
- Where appropriate, there may be a further three-way meeting between the individual, the manager and the coach to review progress and at the end of the coaching programme. There also may be an evaluation form to be completed by coachee and sponsor.

<https://davidclutterbuckpartnership.com/managing-the-three-way-contract-in-executive-coaching-and-mentoring/>

#### Questions to ask the sponsor before the three-way contracting meeting

- Why did you want this person to be coached?
- What are the goals or outcomes you want for this person?
- How will you support him/her in achieving them?
- What signs/milestones will there be that change is taking place as you would like? By when?
- Has all this been discussed with the coachee, so there will be no surprises?
- What else, if anything, do you want to say?
- Does the coachee have a choice whether to be coached and if so, by whom?

#### Questions to ask the coachee before the three-way contracting meeting

- Why do you want this coaching?
- What are the goals/outcomes you want for yourself?
- What support would you like?
- When would you like to follow up on this conversation with your sponsor?
- What relationship issues are you experiencing with your line manager/sponsor which I might find useful to be aware of when holding the space for the 3-way discussion
- Are there any confidential matters or anything else to add to the coaching agenda that you don't wish to raise in front of your sponsor?
- What else, if anything, do you want to say?

#### **Why is 3-Way Contracting in Coaching helpful?**

Three-way contracting provides the coach and everybody else involved with the opportunity to clarify the purpose and outcomes together which then provides the following benefits:

- supports joint ownership of the process
- ensures that the coaching does not become an isolated process unconnected to other developmental or management processes
- helps to prevent mixed messages
- enables the coach to discuss – and role model – how the coach work and how key ethical issues such as confidentiality will be handled
- helps lay to rest any suspicion that there is a hidden agenda with which you the coach is colluding either knowingly or unknowingly – especially important if the coaching has been ‘directed’ or is related to a performance issue

Useful videos:

[https://youtu.be/\\_ymNkt9OHL0](https://youtu.be/_ymNkt9OHL0)

<https://youtu.be/uVfaNjoYBS8>