

# Managing Mindset vs. Coaching Mindset

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will differentiate between managing mindset and coaching mindset. Specifically, it will cover:

1. Managing Mindset
2. Coaching Mindset
3. The Spectrum
4. When to Use Each Approach

## 1. Managing Mindset

Leading, directing, managing, and problem solving are all essential elements of our work.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Think about this situation: You are in charge of a project, deadlines are slipping, other departments are frustrated with you, and your team is looking to you to get back on track. You know you are responsible for the team's performance and proceed with a Manager's Mindset to take action. You would most likely:

- Tell them what's going on—they are not performing up to the expectations set and are missing key deadlines.
- Tell them what to do—you would tell them what to do, possibly how to do it and provide new deadlines.
- Tell them how to fix relationships—you would provide direction on how to resolve issues with other departments.
- Tell them where to get support—you would provide direction on who should complete tasks and if and who else should be involved).
- Provide consequences for missing deadlines and deliverables such as pulling individuals from the project.



### BIG IDEA

Using the Manager's Mindset, you get the work done by stepping out in front of the team, leading solutions and strategies, and focusing on deadlines, numbers, and projects. You may also often do the work yourself rather than get others involved, so you know it will get done the right way in a timely manner.

## 2. Coaching Mindset

However, there are times when other approaches are called for if we want to develop our people and encourage them to take the initiative and create their own solutions.

A coaching Mindset allows us to move from the directive and prescriptive stance to a developmental approach where we focus on working with team members to strengthen their skills.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Now, think about another scenario: You have an individual who consistently performs well, exceeds expectations, and is highly valued in your department. Lately, however, you've noticed some things are slipping. Using a coaching Mindset, you would:

- Ask what's going on.
- Ask what's changed.
- Ask what options are available.
- Ask what you can do to help.
- Share observations and implications of the change.



### BIG IDEA

When you use a coaching Mindset, you get the work done by leading from behind, actively listening and asking questions and empowering individuals to collaborate to develop strategies and solutions.

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## 3. The Spectrum

We can think about managing and coaching mindsets on a continuum from a highly directive, prescriptive approach to a more facilitative, coaching approach.

On the directive end of the spectrum, individuals focus on telling, fixing problems, creating consequences, and being completely in control of the situation. Often, the energy exuded by the leader is highly focused, at times pressured, and moving at a fast pace. The underlying belief of the leader is that he or she needs to act in order to move the project forward and team members are unprepared to do so.

On the facilitative end of the spectrum, individuals focus on asking questions, sharing observations, offering support, and facilitating collaboration. Interactions with individuals on the facilitative end are deliberately focused on developing the individual through an exploration of options and encouraging the individual to come up with their own solutions. The underlying belief of the leader is that this individual has the skills needed to take more initiative to solve the problem and just needs some coaching in order to develop their own best options. Problems are opportunities to further develop an individual's talents.

The mid-range of the spectrum represents a manager who combines some of both approaches. Often individuals in the middle will provide high-level direction but delegate responsibility to someone else. They may also help in a directive manner but open up opportunities for coaching an individual later if appropriate to the situation.



### THINK ABOUT IT

Each of us tends to feel most at home at one end of the spectrum or the other. Take a moment to review the continuum and reflect on where you think you fall in the continuum.

- Do you most often approach issues from an expert viewpoint and problem solve your way through the issue?
- Do you engage individuals in further conversation for context and help them become more self-aware of their issues?
- Are you closer to the middle of the spectrum, using some of both approaches—providing direction one moment and developing and coaching when time allows?

## 4. When to Use Each Approach

To continue to develop as an effective leader, the key is to build capacity and flexibility to go one direction or the other based on the circumstances at hand. Great managers and leaders need to shift approaches, styles, and perspectives based on the needs of the individual, context, and situation.

As managers and leaders, we need to be able to step back and notice where the managing mindset works best and where the opportunities for a coaching Mindset appear. Of course, it's not always clear-cut, but there are times when the door is open to deliberately develop our people by slowing down and taking a coach-like approach. There are just as many times when deadlines are tight, skills are not high, and we need to move into a managing mindset and use a more directive and problem-solving approach. Often, the real issue at hand is not readily apparent, and the constraints are great.

Here are some characteristics that help to determine when to manage and when to coach.

The coaching mindset is appropriate when:	The managing mindset is appropriate when:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The individual has a strong foundation of knowledge and competence.</li><li>• The individual has an ability to resolve the issue but comes to you for answers.</li><li>• The individual and manager have a good relationship.</li><li>• The manager is ready to coach.</li><li>• There is a coachable issue, one that is easily defined and talked through.</li><li>• Coaching is especially appropriate for recurring issues.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The individual's skill level needs improvement.</li><li>• The demands at hand are new for the individual.</li><li>• The individual is looking for answers because they have no experience in the area.</li><li>• Time and resources are limited.</li><li>• The individual's timeline impacts several other individuals, teams, or projects.</li></ul>

The critical step for the leader is taking some time to determine the best approach before responding to a situation. Slow down the pace for a moment, take time to step outside of the situation, assess the situation, and ask yourself which approach will effectively address the situation given the constraints. Which approach will lead to the best results in the short-term versus the long-term?

The transition from relying on one approach to building your capacity to adjust your approach to each situation requires some real focus on your part. The goal is to deepen your capacity and build flexibility in

moving from one end of the spectrum to the other. For most of us, expanding our repertoire takes time and conscious effort.

➡ **EXAMPLE** Consider this situation: Andy is a manager wanting to broaden his approach from a mostly directive style to engaging in a more facilitative approach. At first, his list of requirements to make the move seemed enormous. He needed:

- Team and role expectations to change.
- Trust and a high level of confidence in others.
- Knowledge that chaos would not ensue.
- Stronger relationships with others.
- More time.

Kate, on the other hand, was accustomed to a problem-solving approach and needed to:

- Be open to not knowing all the answers.
- Learn how to ask open-ended questions.
- Know she was ready to coach.
- Move her expertise focus from knowledge and experience to facilitating growth and development in others.

Both individuals knew that all their needs would not be met immediately and had work to do to take time to assess situations and approach issues more flexibly.



#### **BIG IDEA**

The critical task is not only knowing the difference between managing and coaching but also knowing when to manage and when to coach. Observing the key characteristics of situations, asking some initial questions, and being aware of your own constraints and skills will help you in this transition.

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## Support

If you are struggling with a concept or terminology in the course, you may contact **NurseLeaderSupport@capella.edu** for assistance.

If you are having technical issues, please contact **learningcoach@sophia.org**.