

CONTRACTING AND COACHING



FACTSHEET

Exploring the importance of contracting before delivering coaching



In order for a coachee to speak openly and honestly with their coach they must absolutely trust that the information they give will not only be treated confidentially, but with empathy, sensitivity and respect. Contracting enables this trust to be built before the coaching begins.



Whether you are using external coaches, you are a coach, or you are helping others to coach, one thing remains the same, contracting, or defining the goals and boundaries at the outset, has a dramatic effect on the ultimate outcomes.

Before any coaching can take place you need to define how you are going to work together and what behaviours you need to look out for in each other. Contracting is the best way in which to do this. It helps to build trust and avoid any misunderstandings and conflicts. It can be anything from a 3-5 minute conversation, to an entire meeting focused on contracting before the coaching takes place.

Even experienced coaches don't always contract effectively. The temptation to get stuck into the issue right away is often too strong to resist! And how do you know when contracting ends and coaching begins? It's important to clearly define at the outset that you are going to spend some time contracting.

What are the benefits of contracting?

Contracting is like handing someone a manual about how you work, who you are, how best to make you happy, and in exchange you get theirs. This leads to:

- **Greater likelihood of achieving goals.** When people feel that they have had a hand in creating a plan, they are far more emotionally attached to the outcome and therefore far more likely to see it through to the end. When you contract with somebody you create the plan together.

- **Deeper trust.** In order for a coachee to speak openly and honestly with their coach they must absolutely trust that the information they give will not only be treated confidentially, but with empathy, sensitivity and respect. Contracting enables this trust to be built before the coaching begins.
- **Better chemistry.** We often speak of 'chemistry' meetings in coaching where coach and coachee meet in order to work out if there is rapport and if they will work well together. Contracting goes one step further and enables a deeper understanding of each to be formed, enabling better rapport and making it easier to work together.
- **Fewer conflicts.** Gaining insight into how somebody else prefers to work, and what makes them happy, means that when something isn't done in the way they you would do it, you will understand why and be less likely to feel frustrated.
- **Improved relationships.** The deep understanding of each other that comes from contracting naturally leads to better, longer lasting relationships.



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Examples of things to contract before coaching

- **Time** – How long you want to meet for? How often do you want to meet? When do you want to have achieved your goal?
- **Place** – Where is going to be the most stimulating environment for you? Where do you feel that you will be able to talk openly and honestly about your goals?
- **How to get the most from the coaching** – How best could I help you today? How could I mess this up for you?
- **How to motivate and manage each other** – How could you stand in your own way? How do you want me to support you if you do?
- **Feeding back** – How do you like to receive feedback? What could I do that would have an adverse effect?
- **What to look out for in each other** – What are your good and bad habits?
- **Things you need to be kept informed about** – Here is what I need to know from you. What do you need from me? What do we not need to discuss?

Conclusion

It might seem like common sense, but contracting is much more than that. It is a vital element of coaching and it needs to be done well. Skip it, or do it badly, and although you might not notice immediately, it will eventually impact on the quality of the coaching and of the coaching outcomes.