



EFFECTIVE COACHING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

To maximize job placement and retention outcomes, it is very useful to have a set of techniques and tools that can be used to coach program participants and graduates. Coaching can help develop the career potential of program participants by serving as a sounding board and offering fresh perspectives to the challenges associated with the job search process. It also can sharpen decision-making skills, improve interpersonal effectiveness, and increase confidence. This Bulletin will provide you with several coaching tools and techniques, all of which can be used to help participants overcome any internal or external barriers that might prevent their successful entry into the workforce. If your project engages mentors, you may want to share this Bulletin with them and encourage them to use it as a resource.

JOURNALING

Journaling is a coaching tool in which a person keeps a daily record of his or her experiences and, through this activity, gains greater self-awareness. You can ask a participant to record observations while searching for employment, or provide

reflection. In either case, the objective would be to focus the participant's attention on the actions needed to take to secure and maintain employment and achieve his/her career objectives. Journaling has many benefits. It encourages the analysis of alternatives, promotes the generation of new ideas, and provides a place to record networking contacts, lessons learned, and daily achievements.



To increase the effectiveness of this activity, a participant should be encouraged to set a regular time of day to record his or her observations. You will also want to encourage a participant to use a journal to record daily or weekly objectives, keep track of progress, and record information that he/she gathers through professional contacts and informational interviews. A journal is a safe place to express feelings about the job search process, both positive and negative.

homework assignments designed to encourage self-

TIME MANAGEMENT TIP

Given all the demands placed on program participants and the related tasks that must be accomplished, they will invariably need to prioritize what needs to be done and use a to-do list to ensure that they don't forget to do something that is important. There are many apps for creating to-do lists, but did you know that Gmail provides one at no cost? To learn how to access and use this feature, visit <https://support.google.com/mail/answer/106237?hl=en>.



ACTION PLANNING

The action plans of participants often lack specific and measurable tasks that can be used during coaching sessions to create accountability. As a coach, you want to encourage each participant to design a plan that has small steps, each of which can be measured. One coaching technique that increases the success of action planning involves asking the following question for each step in the action plan: “On a scale of ‘one’ to ‘ten’ with ‘one’ being highly unlikely and ‘ten’ being highly likely, how confident are you that you will complete this task?” If, for example, the participant indicates a “five,” you can ask, “What would it take to get you

WHOSE PLAN IS IT?

You’ve probably rented a car at some point in your life. Have you ever brought it to the car wash before you returned it? Probably not. After all, you didn’t own it and why should you take special care of it? For the same reason you want your participants to design their plan. If you design it for them, they are much less likely to complete the action steps.

to ‘six’ or ‘seven?’” This gives the participant the opportunity to state what he/she needs to achieve success and promotes ownership of the process.

EFFECTIVE COACHING TECHNIQUES

Lecturing, confronting, and directing are not effective coaching techniques. Greater success can be achieved through the use of good listening skills and an empathetic coaching style that engages the participant through open-ended questions and reflections. As you coach participants, consider the following: Are you...

- doing all the work and serving as an expert or are you collaborating with your participant and serving as a guide in the process? The latter is a much more effective technique.
- asking the participant to clarify and elaborate? For example, “You said you were nervous about asking for an informational interview. What would it take to make you more confident?”
- using opportunities to query extremes? If, for example, a program participant is a procrastinator and delays making decisions, you may ask, “If you decide to take this position, what’s the worst that could happen if the job does not work out?” Alternatively, you can ask the participant to look forward by saying, “If this job works out for you, how do you see your life turning out?”
- using opportunities to explore decisional balance? If a program participant is impulsive and is prone to making rash decisions, you may want to ask, “If you decide to do that, what are the advantages and disadvantages of making that choice?”
- consistently providing positive reinforcement as the participant demonstrates progress? Everyone likes to be affirmed.
- using open-ended questions such as, “What are you finding stressful about your preparation for the credentialing exam?”



- ending your coaching sessions with an open-ended question that confirms and strengthens a participant's commitment to action? For example, "What are the next steps you need to take to put your plan into action?"