

Refresher #7 Hijacking the Agenda

Coaching develops an individual's ability to solve their own challenges. Managers coaching in an organization can sometimes unintentionally sabotage this outcome with employees by Hijacking the Agenda.

First, is the situation where the manager (coach) has some personal experience with a similar situation and their mind leaps ahead, assuming unknown and probably incorrect similarities between the two situations. Second, the manager (coach) has some knowledge, expertise or suggestions they want to contribute which violates the prime directive of coaching. They are trying to prove their value by thinking rather than by being fully present and listening. It is difficult for coaches to put aside their natural tendencies to try and problem solve and "be smart" for their clients when their true role is to let the client be smart.

If you have knowledge, perspective, information or suggestions for your team member, it is imperative to bring this up outside of the coaching conversation. Declare that you are stepping out of the coach/client role. You may do this after the coaching session has concluded or you may consider pausing the conversation (step mentally into a new space in order to offer the perspective or experience) and then resume the coaching conversation. Both the manager and the team member should be clear about their roles and what kind of conversation they are having. Am I being coached? Am I being directed? Honoring the coach/client relationship allows for true growth and development to occur.

A more nuanced challenge is when managers weave coaching skills into their day to day conversations. When we simply apply coaching skills within non-coaching conversations, we do not fully capitalize on this development. Here, the manager may insert their personal views to expedite an outcome. This hybrid-model is effective at creating moments of engagement; however, there is far less personal development taking place. In this scenario, there is no actual coaching conversation. There is no specific Agenda and the client is not actively engaged in problem solving to the same degree as in a formal coaching session. Under this practice, we may solve the challenge at hand but miss out on the personal development that allows the team member to solve many future challenges on their own.