



Experts and novices: getting the leadership balance right



Managing a team is not easy. This is especially true in **healthcare management** where the team often comprises people with advanced technical and professional qualifications. These people can present quite a challenge to those tasked with leading and managing them – because this type of employee may not consider themselves to be subordinate to managers or leaders in that sense, according to Dr. Darren Leech, director and coach at [NHS Elect](#), which provides NHS organisations with high-quality support and training.

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Effective leaders are those who are able to adapt their style of operating, depending on the task and the person or people they are dealing with, explains Dr. Leech, who adds these varying styles consist of these four primary tools used by leaders and managers.

- **Directing:** Telling or instructing those who know little about the task or environment; usually used in emergency or time-critical situations
- **Mentoring:** Providing advice and guidance often relating to technical areas in which the mentor is seen as an expert and problem solver
- **Coaching:** Using questions that prompt reflection and action; the coach unlocks and enables the resourcefulness and motivation of the coachee to solve issues or problems for themselves
- **Delegating:** The assignment of responsibility to complete tasks or objectives to those with experience and expertise, without need for further instruction, advice, or support.

For example, an employee on his/her first day in a job would be open to receiving clear instructions and guidance, or turn to a more experienced colleague for advice or help with a task. On the other hand, Dr. Leech says, it is not difficult to remember a boss who tried to delegate to an inexperienced or junior employee, or indeed the manager who tried to direct an expert. When the wrong style is deployed, [the results often feature mutual frustration, conflict, and a lack of progress](#), Dr. Leech

points out.

To get the best from staff with expert knowledge and a desire to improve outcomes for patients, a coaching approach is useful. The ["GROW" model](#) is one of the most well-known frameworks for coaching conversations. This structure enables a coach (and coachee) to properly work through four clear stages of conversation:

- Goal – Setting a clear goal;
- Reality – Being clear about the current context and reality for the coachee;
- Option – Going through the options available, which is important to properly consider best possible steps forward;
- What/when – Being clear on the actions the coachee will undertake.

As Dr. Leech notes, a coaching style often results in expert employees seeing their manager or leader as an approachable peer, from whom they gain useful insights through reflection. These **employees also become more motivated**, by working towards decisions and actions that, ultimately, they generate for themselves.

Source: [National Health Executive](#)

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