



Through a combination of subject-matter-expert (SME) evaluation and artificial intelligence (AI), the analysis identified nine feedback themes, revealing intriguing insights into how coachees perceive and articulate the coaching they receive:

1. *Compliments*: Overall evaluation or appreciation of the coaching.
2. *Coaching Style*: The method and approach to coaching in general.
3. *Ground Setting*: Building relationships and establishing a foundation.
4. *Assessment Feedback*: Experience receiving assessment feedback and learning about yourself.
5. *Situation Exploration*: Facilitating the analysis of situations and challenges.
6. *Reflective Practices*: Session activities for reflection and learning.
7. *Between Sessions*: Experience and actions between coaching sessions.
8. *Solution Formation*: Facilitating the generation of actionable ideas.
9. *Goal Clarification*: Helping prioritize developmental efforts and reach clear goals.

The top two feedback themes—Compliments and Coaching Style—account for over 62% of all feedback. The remaining themes focus on specific coaching activities, reflecting the natural progression of a coaching engagement. Early themes—like Ground Setting and Assessment Feedback—tend to emerge in the initial stages, while later sessions highlight Solution Formation and Goal Clarification. These feedback insights illustrate a coachee’s evolving experience and personal growth throughout their learning journey.

## PERCEPTION OF NON-DIRECTIVE AND DIRECTIVE STYLES

Nearly one-third of feedback commented on Coaching Style, revealing two primary approaches:

- *Non-Directive Coaching*: Coaches ask probing questions to encourage self-directed learning, promoting self-discovery and personal insights. Coachees are empowered to uncover their own solutions and determine their next steps without being explicitly instructed.
- *Directive Coaching*: Coaches may offer expertise, insights, and perspectives to help challenge or reshape the coachee’s thinking, providing frameworks, strategies, or action steps for coachees to implement. Directive coaching can be effective when coachees seek structured support or immediate solutions.

Both coaching styles receive equally positive evaluations, but coaches who integrate both styles receive higher effectiveness ratings than those who rely on one approach. By combining both styles and adapting their approach to clients’ unique needs and circumstances, coaches can enrich the coaching experience, accelerate learning, and achieve results more efficiently.

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN COACHING EXPERIENCE

The primary objective of workplace coaching is to facilitate self-discovery. Personality assessments and feedback increase awareness of natural tendencies, enabling individuals to adapt more flexibly to situational demands.

Our research shows the added benefits of using personality assessments in coaching. Diverse personalities shape the coaching experience, influencing how a coachee perceives coaching styles and engages with specific activities. Coachee feedback shows that tailoring coaching approaches to individual needs leads to better outcomes.

We've identified distinct patterns between personality factors and the feedback themes coachees emphasize. For example, coachees with:

- high Agreeableness and Positivity are more likely to comment on Assessment Feedback, reflecting an enthusiasm for exploring new self-insights and engaging with evaluation processes.
- lower Striving—a trait related to goal orientation and persistence—frequently comment on Goal Clarification, suggesting they benefit from coaching that helps define and prioritize objectives.
- high Focus and Openness to Differences often comment on Between Sessions, indicating they value actionable tasks and follow-up activities that extend learning beyond the session itself.

Personality also influences how coachees respond to directive and non-directive coaching styles. For example, coachees with:

- high Sociability and Openness to Differences show a preference for non-directive coaching, which emphasizes reflective questions and self-discovery.
- strong Striving and Focus gravitate toward directive coaching, where concrete strategies and structured guidance are provided.

These findings show the critical role personality plays in influencing the coaching experience. When integrated into coaching strategies, personality assessments can help coaches create a more customized and impactful learning journey.

## INTEGRATING COACHEE FEEDBACK INTO PRACTICE

It takes two to tango, and effective coaching relies on a strong working alliance between coach and coachee. Coachee feedback offers four valuable insights that assist coaches in designing and continuously improving their practices:

### 1. Designing the coaching process

Leverage research insights into how coachees experience coaching at different stages. Understanding emerging feedback themes enables coaches to design a process incorporating critical learning milestones that align with the coachee's developmental trajectory.

### 2. Managing coaching pace

Coaching is not a one-size-fits-all journey. It requires balancing moving forward with sufficient time for reflection, understanding, and action. Insights into the coachee's experience can help coaches align the process to match their readiness and learning needs, ultimately boosting motivation and outcomes.

### 3. Building adaptive coaching capabilities

View non-directive and directive coaching styles as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, leveraging their unique strengths to meet evolving needs. Non-directive coaching supports reflection and self-discovery, while directive coaching provides clear guidance and actionable steps in situations that require structure, decisiveness, or immediate problem-solving. Adapting coaching approaches to align with the coachee's personality and learning preferences makes coaching more effective, relevant, and impactful, regardless of the situation or challenges.

### 4. Integrating feedback loops for continuous improvement

Regularly incorporating coachee feedback drives continuous improvement and improves overall coaching effectiveness. By analyzing feedback, coaches can learn what is working well and what needs improvement, allowing them to focus on successful areas and adjust approaches where necessary. This iterative process enables coaches to refine their methods, ensuring a positive and impactful coaching experience.

## BUILDING EVIDENCE-BASED COACHING PROGRAMS

Workplace coaching continues to gain momentum as organizations recognize its pivotal role in driving employee development and organizational success. However, with this growing popularity comes an increased demand for evidence-based coaching to ensure a return on investment.

Studying the practice of coaching through the lens of the coachee provides a powerful opportunity to meet this demand. By understanding how coachees experience coaching and respond to different activities, practitioners can refine their programs to deliver greater impact. Insights from coachee feedback improve coaching strategies and pave the way for evidence-based practices that align with the dynamic needs of today's workforce, ultimately maximizing the value of coaching for individuals and organizations alike.

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