

SOCIAL STYLE® and GROW™



Alan Fine began his career as a tennis coach working with up-and-coming tennis professionals. As he worked with athletes, he realized that the biggest performance challenge wasn't that people didn't know what to do, but rather that they didn't act on what they already know. In other words, performance breakthroughs come from the inside out. Over the years, Fine and his collaborators developed the G.R.O.W.™ Model, a proven approach to helping people effectively coach others.

GROW is an acronym for a four-step process of Goal, Reality, Options and Way Forward. It is constructed upon a deceptively simple insight—that breakthrough performance comes more often, not from acquiring additional knowledge, but from removing internal interference that allows the person to act on what they already know. Similarly, the SOCIAL STYLE Model™ is both easy to understand and to apply to improve interpersonal relationships. This whitepaper looks at how GROW and Style can support and enhance individual and organizational performance.

OVERVIEW

SOCIAL STYLE Connections

SOCIAL STYLE is the world's most effective interpersonal skills model. The *Connections* Whitepaper Series looks at how SOCIAL STYLE complements and supports other popular workplace programs including Situational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Crucial Conversations, SPIN Selling, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team and The Extraordinary Leader.

SOCIAL STYLE and GROW

In the past, managers and leaders were not necessarily expected to coach and develop others, at least not formally. But the world of work has changed dramatically, and the ability to effectively coach and develop others is frequently a leadership imperative. In fact, it is not only leaders who are called upon to be coaches. Any person can serve as a coach.

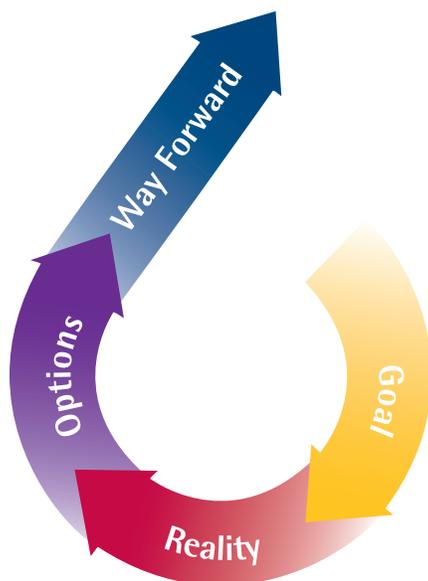
Recent research in the United Kingdom¹ found that 80% of organizations surveyed had used or are now using coaching, and another 9% were planning to. Companies that use coaching see the benefits: 95% of organizations believed coaching benefited the organization, and 96% believed it benefited the individual being coached. This study also recognized that more support is needed for people who are called upon to be coaches. Only two-thirds (66%) of organizations offered any form of support for their in-house coaches, such as learning and development programs; the rest were on their own. A similar study in North America² also showed the importance of coaching, indicating that coaching is now an integral part of leadership development programs and a vast majority of business professionals see the value of coaching as very high.

Leaders are busy people and they need tools that they can quickly learn and put into practice to help develop others. The GROW Model is a proven process that helps people coach more effectively. This simple framework helps coaches tap into the full capabilities of their people by allowing them to focus on the key things they can do to contribute to the organization's objectives. This coaching process increases people's focus and mindset, which, in turn, leads to further success.

SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility provide coaches with a simple method for understanding people's natural behavioral Styles. When combined with the GROW approach, individuals can greatly enhance their coaching effectiveness. This paper describes the two models and shows how, when used in conjunction, they result in a powerful approach for coaching and developing others.



The GROW Model: An Overview



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GROW is an acronym for a four-step process that helps people get to action in a structured way.

Goal: The coaching process begins by the coach helping the coachee establish a clear goal for the conversation. The coach is able to establish a clear understanding of the goal by identifying a specific outcome, asking effective questions, and actively listening to the person being coached. The coachee is able to verbalize the context of the situation, allowing him or her to move forward.

Reality: When a clear goal is established, the next step is to describe the reality of the situation. What is the current level of performance? What is the challenge faced by the person? What factors are contributing to the situation? The leader and the person being coached develop a common understanding of the situation by sharing information and building knowledge together.

Options: Once the current situation is clearly defined, it is time to develop options or possible solutions. Again, the coach facilitates a brainstorming session with the person by asking questions and drawing out the person's ideas. With no judgment and no evaluation of ideas, the coach is able to draw on personal experience and understanding of the issue to suggest add-on options to the person's already-developed brainstorm list. At this stage, the coachee identifies a set of possible actions to explore and creates possible next steps.

Way forward: The two parties now move from inspiration to implementation. Once options are explored, specific actions can be designed. The coachee commits to a specific set of actions, along with milestones and check-in points as needed. The coach may offer support as necessary. Before summarizing any commitments, barriers to success are discussed. The coaching session is summarized to confirm understanding and commitment.

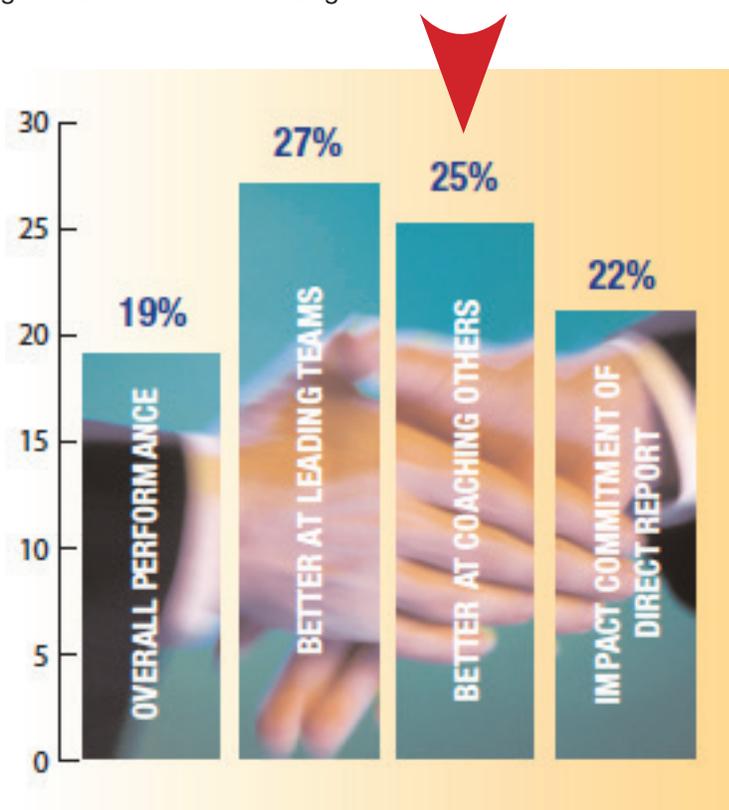
The GROW Model provides a framework for coaches to draw solutions from the "inside out" while decreasing their mental interference. By following this structured, yet flexible, process coaches become more comfortable having coaching discussions and empowering others in their professional development. So what's the connection to SOCIAL STYLE? Let's examine how SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility help people be even more effective coaches.

SOCIAL STYLE and GROW: A Powerful Combination

The SOCIAL STYLE and GROW Models are highly compatible. GROW minimizes interference in the coaching process by providing a structure for discussions; it is a systematic approach to problem solving achieved by asking questions and coming to agreements. It helps coaches keep conversations focused and aligned with business objectives.

One of the greatest challenges coaches face is managing the emotions that are inherent in any coaching relationship. The fact is, coaching can bring out emotions for both parties, and coaches can be anxious about beginning a coaching discussion. Coaches ask themselves: “How do I deal with people’s emotions? Where do I start with a tough conversation? What do I say and how do I say it?” GROW is a process that is based on strong coaching principles, has a beginning, middle, and end, and provides a path to faster and better decision making. It includes recommended language to manage these challenges, minimize interference, and get to the business at hand. Like SOCIAL STYLE, the Model follows psychological standards for attending to human nature and human needs.

Understanding the SOCIAL STYLE Model helps coaches apply the GROW approach more effectively by tailoring coaching conversations to particular individuals. This is accomplished by understanding their Style-related needs and preferences, and adapting the conversation and relationship based on those Style characteristics. In addition, the Model helps coaches understand themselves and how their Styles affect the people they’re coaching. By paying attention to these two things, coaches are practicing Versatility in their relationships. Research has shown that leaders with high Versatility are 25% better at coaching than leaders with low Versatility.³ What is most significant about this research is that the coaching effectiveness evaluations came from the leaders’ own direct reports, those in the best position to discriminate good coaching from poor coaching.



Next, let’s look at some examples of how Style and Versatility, when combined with GROW, enhance a coach’s effectiveness.

The Coachee's Style

Each Style has preferences for how they communicate, use time, and interact with others. These have important implications for all work relationships and are particularly critical during coaching conversations. The effectiveness of the GROW strategy can be significantly enhanced by recognizing these differences and adapting the approach to fit individuals' Style needs. Here are examples of how the GROW approach can be adapted to meet these Style preferences.

ANALYTICAL STYLE

Goal — Explain the purpose ahead of time; let them know what is happening, how you will go about it, and why you are meeting. Ask them to come prepared with a specific goal in mind.

Reality — Refer to the “current situation.” Ahead of time, ask them to bring their data. Send them your questions in an email and explain why you are taking this approach. This gives them time to gather their thoughts. Spend more time on this step; focus on information, evidence, insights, and perspective. Ask each question more deliberately and be prepared for long sections of silence while they are thinking. Refer to your notes and repeat back what you have heard.

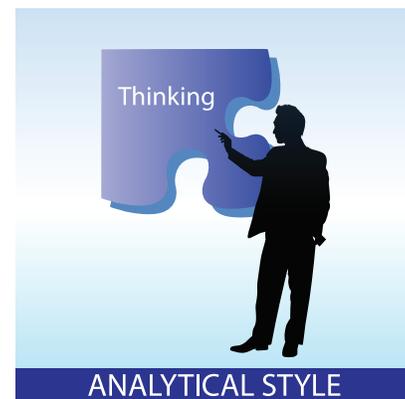
Options — Since they are comfortable with questions and solving problems, ask questions such as, “If you had unlimited time, money and resources, what would be the ideal outcome.” Ask questions that leverage their advice and expertise.

Way Forward — Take your time; read back all the options with deliberateness. Help them settle on as much detail as possible until they feel comfortable to move on. You may need to give them “think time” before nailing down specifics of the action or commitment.

DRIVING STYLE

Goal — Share with them, up front, the “end game” of the conversation. Agree on a timeframe for the conversation, and then jump right in; don't spend more than a minute in this stage. Avoid qualifying language and move the conversation along.

Reality — Refer to the “current situation.” Move quickly; spend the least amount of time possible before moving to the next stage. Take good notes or ask to record the call as they will be moving quickly. If you are going to give them the notes, put them in bullet format. On occasion, repeat back what you have heard but keep it to 5 to 10 seconds; conciseness is key. Pick up the pace at which you ask questions. Keep your facial expressiveness and reactions to a minimum.



The Coachee's Style — cont.

DRIVING STYLE — continued

Options — Since they are comfortable with options and solving problems, ask questions such as, “If you had unlimited time, money and resources, what would be the ideal outcome.” Be precise with your questions; be brief and then be quiet to listen.

Way Forward — Get here quickly as they may have already, while exploring options, mentally outlined the next steps. Make sure you ask them about any obstacles to success. Push them to set specific commitments. Then make sure you wrap it up within the time limits agreed to upfront. You don't need to outline as much detail here as long as you agree on timeframe. You can ask how the goal fits with their overall vision or big picture goal.

AMIABLE STYLE

Goal — Spend some time relating up front; ask open-ended questions about how they are doing before jumping into the coaching. Include qualifiers with some of your questions, such as, “What MIGHT you like to get out of OUR time together?” and “What might be helpful for us to focus on today?”

Reality — Make sure you ask them, “What's been getting in the way for you? For others?” It's helpful to spend some time asking about “others.” Ask about the team's perspective. Acknowledge their ability to look at the situation with a critical eye and for bringing data to the table along with an evaluative perspective.

Options — Allow more time for brainstorming; use silence and wait for an answer. Look down at your paper and take notes to show you are paying attention while not making them uncomfortable with strong eye contact. Ask questions that put them in the shoes of others – the team, colleagues, and friends. Smile to encourage a larger list of ideas and to show that all ideas are welcome and will not be judged. Use words like “might,” “could,” “may,” and “possible.” Acknowledge them along the way for the size of the list they are creating, being careful not to judge or evaluate ANY idea.

Way Forward — Ask what help and support they might need from others in order to implement their solution.



The Coachee's Style — cont.

EXPRESSIVE STYLE

Goal — Spend some time relating; be personable before jumping into business. Allow extra time for the coaching meeting. You may have to spend more time at this stage, helping them wade through all the ideas and to narrow the focus.

Reality — Allow them to spend more time here; they may need to explore their thoughts and blow off steam. Show patience, repeat back often, and allow for some humor (smile at their jokes).

Options — Be flexible; ask questions not included on the GROW form. Be prepared to spend more time here. Look at them often, repeat back what you have heard so that they can hear what they are saying. Acknowledge their energy during this phase; this is a strength they bring. They might enjoy it if you flip-charted their ideas so they could see the size of the list grow. Ask them to “picture a perfect world.” What would be happening?

Way Forward — Ask them what's most exciting about the commitment they are making. What might get in the way of success? Help them to settle on a specific “what and when.” Acknowledge their energy and passion around their work.



The Coach's Style — cont.

AMIABLE STYLE

Know Yourself — You have a strong need to maintain friendly relationships, so you may be too timid about sharing your true opinions of someone's performance. As a result, the people you coach might be unclear about your expectations and, therefore, meaningful progress might not be made.

Control Yourself — Be specific with your feedback and advice. The people you coach will appreciate information about their performance, along with your recommendations. Make a distinction between your relationships with people and their job performance, particularly since most of the people you coach will also do this.

EXPRESSIVE STYLE

Know Yourself — You can overwhelm the people you coach, both with your energy and your opinions. Depending on the type of feedback you're giving, you can be aggressive or dramatic. You might dominate coaching conversations, talking too much without giving the other person an opportunity to share their opinions.

Control Yourself — Check your behavior by slowing down and allowing the people you coach plenty of opportunity to state their viewpoints. Use the 30/70 rule; you talk 30% of the time and the coachee talks 70% of the time. Avoid the phrases "you should" and "I think." Instead, say "you might" or "you could." Lower your volume with some people, and ask questions to help others open up to you.

To utilize the GROW strategy most effectively, coaches need to maintain awareness of their own Styles and how their behavior affects the people they're coaching. By doing this, coaches can be more neutral and open during coaching discussions without letting their own behavioral preferences get in the way of implementing the best solution.



Benefits & Summary

InsideOut Development's GROW coaching process is a proven and effective method for helping people become proficient coaches. The Model is a systematic approach, providing a framework that coaches can use to enhance the effectiveness of their people and themselves.

The SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility Model increases coaches' value by giving them a strategy for adapting the GROW approach to people of different Styles. By understanding behavioral differences and adapting the GROW strategy to meet Style preferences, individual coaching sessions are much more likely to result in positive actions more quickly than would otherwise be possible. In addition, employing greater Versatility through self-awareness and self-management helps coaches neutralize their negative impact on others, allowing the people being coached to openly share their viewpoints and ideas.

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- 1 Institute of Leadership & Management (2011). Creating a Coaching Culture. Available for download at www.i-l-m.com.
- 2 Sherpa Consulting (2011). The Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey 2011. Available for download at www.sherpacoaching.com/survey.html.
- 3 TRACOM Group (2005). Documenting the Relationship between Versatility and Job Performance: Managerial Success Study. Available for download at www.tracomcorp.com.

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