



FUEL FRAMEWORK: WHAT MAKES THE EXTRAORDINARY COACH UNIQUE

by Jim Clemmer

There are many models and approaches to coaching skill development. The FUEL conversation framework evolved from extensive research. FUEL is designed to achieve behavioral outcomes, challenge assumptions, and strengthen an adult-to-adult partnering relationship between the coach and the coachee. Many coaching models are based on sports coaching approaches and designed to provide training, give advice, mentor, solve problems, and set action plans.

A core difference of *The Extraordinary Coach* approach is moving the manager from telling, directing, and giving advice to asking non-leading and open-ended questions to guide the conversation so that both coach and coachee learn, arrive at a better solution, and ultimately the coachee owns the outcome.

The commonly used approach in many other coaching skill development programs are directing or leading questions that results in follow up conversations along the lines of “how are you doing with implementing my solution/action plan.” This results in a lack of coachee commitment and follow through and managers’ frustration when action plans are poorly implemented.

The FUEL Coaching Conversation Guide provides these key differences from most coaching models:

Step 1 – FUEL: Frame the Conversation

Fosters a safe atmosphere and mutual understanding for the coach and coachee to outline the purpose, process, and expected outcomes of this coaching conversation. Whether initiated by the coachee or the coach, this step starts by putting a heavy focus on the coachee’s control of, or strong ownership/buy-in for, the conversation and its outcomes.

Many other approaches: start the conversation with clarifying the end goal of the problem or issue being discussed. This assumes the stated goal is the right one that’s most likely to lead to the desired results. Starting with the “solution” minimizes or skips the opportunity to validate and vet the problem further. This approach also misses a key chance to create shared ownership between the coach and coachee which increases accountability.

Step 2 – FUEL: Understand the Current State

Challenges the assumptions of both coach and coachee, revealing any underlying patterns or beliefs that may drive the coachee’s behavior and get in the way of results.

Many other approaches: fail to understand the circumstance and the motivations of the coachee and provides an incomplete view of the dynamics and possible root causes of the situation. Without powerful open-ended and non-leading questioning the coach must settle for the “facts on hand” in order to assess the situation. This often results in discounting or ignoring deeper emotions, beliefs, and underlying patterns hidden beneath the surface. Failing to probe perceptions and differing perspectives can lead the conversation down a narrow and pre-defined track that reduces mutual understanding/learning and restricts possible causes and solutions.



Step 3 – FUEL: Explore the Desired State

Creates a vision of success from the coachee's perspective. Once the Current State has been uncovered, it provides a framework for the coach to help the coachee consider his or her desired outcomes. This step also addresses the issue of the changes likely needed to reach the desired state and provides a framework consistent with many change models.

Many other approaches: moving to options without laying the groundwork with coachees can create these problems:

- This phase may be inefficient and even wasted if the stated goal is not the right goal or is prescriptive. The coachee may simply follow the coach's lead and lose his or her personal investment in the solution.
- Often the situation calls for change that is disruptive, resisted, or unexpected. Failure to adequately prepare the coachee can lead to poor results and even risk damaging the relationship.
- Emphasizing obstacles at this stage of the process (rather than as one component of a success plan) risks giving unnecessary weight to potential barriers, often at the expense of the "ideal" or aspirational objective.

Step 4 – FUEL: Lay Out a Success Plan

FUEL is both structured enough to provide novices a powerful framework, while remaining flexible and open for more challenging and nuanced coaching conversations.

Many other approaches: are most effective at offering novice coaches a starter process, but don't adapt as well to more complex situations and needs.

Other Key Differences

FUEL is applicable to a wide variety of interactions: manager-initiated, employee-initiated, performance coaching, career coaching, reinforcing feedback, redirecting feedback, etc. Many other coaching approaches are more oriented to coachee-initiated coaching conversations raising problems to be addressed or advice giving/training situations initiated – and often owned – by the manager.

FUEL also avoids the risk of directing a conversation to a misplaced or misdirected goal because it inserts the Understanding stage before exploring options.

THE CLEMMER GROUP *Stronger People. Stronger Organizations.*

For over 20 years The CLEMMER Group has been making people better for organizations and organizations better for people by using well-researched and proven approaches forged through deep experience with hundreds of organizations and thousands of leaders. Highly customized services include assessments, training design and delivery (or training internal trainers), culture/skill development for higher health and safety, defining/revitalizing vision and values, executive coaching, service/quality improvement, employee engagement, career and succession planning, strategy development and execution.

The CLEMMER Group also provides customized leadership keynotes, workshops, and retreats drawn from Jim Clemmer's seven international bestselling books and The CLEMMER Group's proven implementation frameworks. Topics include Leading Change, Leadership Inspiration, Balancing Management Systems and People Leadership, Service/Quality Improvement, Strategic Planning, Team Building, Employee Engagement, Building a Culture of Safety, Coaching Skills, Lean/Six Sigma Leadership, and Strengths-Based Leadership.

ZENGER FOLKMAN *Elevating Leadership Strengths*

Zenger Folkman is pioneering ground-breaking strengths-based leadership research, assessment, development, and sustainable implementation systems. Zenger Folkman's unique systems use evidence-driven approaches for developing extraordinary leaders and empirically showing their performance impact on sales, profits, employee engagement, health and safety, turnover, and customer satisfaction. Founded on pioneering, empirical research using strengths-based 360-degree assessments and other surveys, Zenger Folkman has built one of the world's largest collections of research data – hundreds of thousands of feedback surveys on tens of thousands of managers.

Jim Clemmer and Jack Zenger's training and consulting firms first partnered when they led The Achieve Group and Zenger Miller. Their "blue chip" Client list testifies to Zenger Folkman's well-developed and highly proven system that produces extraordinary results.

If you are interested in discussing how your organization can boost effectiveness through extraordinary leadership, please contact us. We welcome the opportunity to explore how your organization can develop good performers into great leaders with exceptional leadership and coaching skills to maximize personal, team, and organizational results.