

Lynne Cooper and Mariette Castellino

C **The Five-Minute** Coach

Improve performance - rapidly

The Five Minute Coach is an essential approach for busy managers and internal coaches who need to make a difference fast.

**Mike Corker, Global Lead for Talent and Learning and Development,
Capgemini Infrastructure Services**

Lynne Cooper and Mariette Castellino

Coaching

The Five-Minute

Improve performance - rapidly

Coaching others to high performance -
in as little as five minutes



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Introduction

Do you struggle to balance all the demands on your time? Do you sometimes feel that you aren't achieving all that you'd like to? Wherever you look, are there problems to fix? If so, this book is for you.

We originally developed the Five-Minute Coach for managers. We were hearing that life was tough. From senior managers to team supervisors, no matter the size or sector of organisation, the common themes we encountered were long hours, high stress and far too little time out of work to get body and mind in balance, never mind achieve personal goals. That was a few years ago and, as we write this book, it seems that in general things haven't improved. In fact, with the current pressures on resources, competition for market share and increasing globalisation, people are struggling more than ever to maintain their personal and professional effectiveness.

Not so the managers – and others – who have embraced the Five-Minute Coach. They no longer fight fires constantly. They are getting much better results as others take ownership of issues where appropriate. Their approach to work has become more proactive and less reactive; and they are creating opportunities to get a strategic perspective and make a real difference.

As the name suggests, the Five-Minute Coach is an approach to coaching. Increasingly, people find a coaching style of influencing and leading much more effective than controlling and directing. The challenge individuals find though is that coaching just seems to take too long – until now. This book introduces you to a technique of coaching that's ideal for busy people who need to get results swiftly.

Developing the skills

Once you've learned the Five-Minute Coach technique, you'll find it becomes very easy to employ in your working day to make a difference in as little as five minutes. To build that flexibility you need to get to grips with the whole framework, such that you can run a formal coaching meeting with it. A full session does last more than five minutes, although it's still very fast.

After that you'll find yourself using Five-Minute Coach questions in conversations and meetings, and creating positive change around you as a result. Before long, coaching becomes integrated into day-to-day communications between you and your colleagues and a coaching culture emerges.

What it does

The Five-Minute Coach helps people to make a step change in the way they work, which in turn leads to significantly improved performance, in two simple ways:

- 1 **Delegating.** The process ensures that problems are delegated to their rightful owners. Rather than rescuing others, you relinquish responsibility and return issues back to those who raise them. Often the person who knows most about the problem is best placed to resolve it. With this approach you enable people to take responsibility, to devise solutions, to innovate and to make decisions. Meanwhile, you create the time to think and act differently, and make a more useful contribution yourself.
- 2 **Revolutionising thinking.** You establish a shift from problem-thinking to an outcome focus. Solving a problem can create a result that is quite different from that generated when attention is on an outcome – what we want to have happen. This doesn't involve ignoring problems; rather you have a new, effective method of moving beyond a problem.

Before long this step change becomes embedded. People start to consider outcomes rather than raising problems. They know they

can take ownership and choose when to ask for help – or coaching. Meanwhile, managers stop fixing everything themselves, coach where necessary and get a whole new perspective on the work they are doing. Stress reduces, performance improves and everyone benefits.

Clean questions

The Five-Minute Coach has its roots in Clean Language, a methodology for working with individuals first developed for use in psychotherapeutic settings. Its originator, David Grove, developed the concept of ‘clean’ questions¹ – those which contain the minimum of assumptions and none of the questioner’s ideas, thoughts or suggestions. These questions direct attention to the interviewee’s own words and deepen and develop her thinking.

James Lawley and Penny Tompkins studied and further developed Grove’s approach, creating Symbolic Modelling,² described in detail in their book, *Metaphors in Mind*.³ Thanks to this work and the training and support they have given to us and many others over the last decade and more, Clean Language is now used in many settings, from business to communities, schools to hospitals, charities to homes. You can discover more about Clean Language by visiting www.cleanlanguage.co.uk (see also Chapter 13).

‘Clean’ questions, the principles of Clean Language and the structure of Symbolic Modelling, including Lawley and Tompkins’s Framework for Change,⁴ are at the heart of the Five-Minute Coach. We have taken key clean questions and built a framework that is easy to learn, quick to use and effective at changing the way people think and work.

1 Grove, D. (1998). The Philosophy and Principles of Clean Language. Available at www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/38/1/.

2 See Chapter 13 for other opportunities to access information on Symbolic Modelling and Clean Language.

3 Lawley, J. and Tompkins, P. (2000). *Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modelling*. Developing Company Press.

4 Lawley, J. and Tompkins, P. (2012). A Framework for Change. Available at www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/313/1/.

How to use this book

This book is designed to help you learn how to use this pragmatic and impactful approach to coaching to change the way you work and improve the results you get.

Chapters 1 and 2 describe the Five-Minute Coach and what you need to do to get started. Chapters 3–7 then lead you through the five stages of the process, step by step. To learn the coaching approach you'll need to read them in order – at least initially. You'll discover that these chapters include the Five-Minute Coach questions and guidance on how to use them, complete with examples. You'll find tips, troubleshooting and practice activities, as well as ideas on how you can use the questions in five-minute conversations once you have learned to coach this way.

Then you'll find chapters to dip into when you want to learn more. Chapters 8 and 9 give you guidance on how to handle unexpected responses when coaching. Chapter 10 has some exercises to help you practise your skills. Chapter 11 tells you how the Five-Minute Coach is being used in practice. Chapter 12 explains more about coaching. Chapter 13 includes a list of resources should you want to take your journey of discovery with the Five-Minute Coach further.

Book conventions

Gender

At certain points in the book, to emphasise the importance of the coachee's role in the process, we refer to a coachee by gender (i.e. he or she). We use one pronoun only to make it easier to read, so for example, in the 'Five-Minute Stage in brief' sections at the start of Chapters 3–7, we have made the coachee female through all five. Elsewhere, we alternate gender from one chapter to the next – after all, this book is relevant to all!

Chapter 7
The Five-Minute Coach Stage 5

Motivating to Act

“The coaching allowed me to realise and remember my own potential and that I have freedom to make decisions about my own life without waiting for someone to tell me how to do it. I was pleasantly surprised, with a plan for the future by the end - all from my own head!”

Stage 5: Motivate to act	And when [first thing], then what happens? (Repeat until coachee is in a positive state and seems keen to act) And is that a good place to stop? (Hand over notes)
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Five-Minute Stage 5 in brief

Now that your coachee has an outcome and a plan of how to achieve it, your purpose in this final stage of the Five-Minute Coach is to leave her feeling impelled to take action. You use a question you've practised in Stage 2 to help her get a sense of how good things will be as the future unfolds and the outcome is achieved.

Using your coachee's words for the first thing that needs to happen (change the tense if necessary), ask:

And when [first thing], **then what happens?**

Having completed Stage 2, you've probably anticipated that you repeat this question with your coachee's latest answer:

And when [answer to last question],
then what happens?

Ask your question with enthusiasm and use encouraging noises to assist the coachee to feel the beneficial effects of each consequence as it emerges. Notice the effect this final piece of questioning is having on her. Keep asking the same question until you see or hear some positive emotion. For example, she may be speaking enthusiastically, smiling, nodding or changing posture. Now your coachee has engaged more fully with the whole outcome and action plan. She's motivated and energised to get started.

All that's left to do is to check the coachee is happy to end the coaching. Your final question is:

And is that a good place to stop?

As she agrees, hand over the notes you've taken.



Example: Starting with Stage 4 first step

Coach: **And when** you read the book, **then what happens?**

Coachee: I remind myself of what I need to do, and I get re-enthused about doing it.

Coach: **And when** you remind yourself, and you get re-enthused, **then what happens?**

Coachee: I find myself making the changes, without even trying.

Coach: **And when** you find yourself making the changes, without even trying, **then what happens?**

Coachee: Then life is easy, and I'm becoming my best without effort (smiling).

Coach: **And is that a good place to stop?**

Coachee: Yes!

Discovering Stage 5

This is the final stage of the Five-Minute Coach, where you make sure that your coachee will start to work towards achieving his outcome. Your role in this part of the coaching is to ensure that as well as having a plan in mind, or on paper, the coachee *feels* motivated and enthused to make things happen.

The difference that makes the difference

Having coached someone through three stages of developing an outcome – what he wants – and supported him to work through a comprehensive action plan, you could be forgiven for thinking that's enough. And in some cases you'd be right. Your coachee could be chomping at the bit to get started.

However, we have ourselves coached people to identify an outcome and work out exactly what to do to achieve it, only to find at the next meeting that the coachee hasn't actually done *anything*. Of course there's usually a rationale – 'I've just been too busy' being one of the most common.

We've put the final stage of the Five-Minute Coach together to overcome the problem of people not getting started on their action plans. With Stage 5, any resistance or reticence to take the first step of the action plan soon fades away.

Stimulating action

You're already familiar with the question in this stage. You used it in Stage 2 to explore the consequences of achieving an outcome:

And when ... *then* what happens?

In this last stage of coaching, you ask the question not about the outcome, but about the *action* that your coachee identified as the first thing that needs to happen:

And when [first thing], *then* what happens?

As you have been doing to date, write down key words and phrases from your coachee's response. Use these to ask the question again:

And when [answer to last question], *then* what happens?

You probably know by now that you are going to ask this question multiple times, using the coachee's previous answer on each occasion. You're engaging the coachee, step by step, with the process of moving towards his outcome. You lead him to rehearse the route to success in his mind, in the same way that top athletes prepare to win a competition. Your coachee ends up in a very positive state and inspired to take action.

Once you're sure that your coachee is enthused, positive and ready to act, it's time to conclude the coaching. Do this by checking in with the simple question:

And is that a good place to stop?

In our experience the coachee will be ready to stop at this point and say 'yes'. Then offer the notes that you've taken of the coaching session. In the unlikely event that he *doesn't* want to stop, you ask the very first question again: 'And what would you like to have happen?' If the coachee's response is another problem or outcome to explore, check whether it's appropriate to do that now, and if not, book another meeting.

Figure 10 outlines the steps to follow in Stage 5.

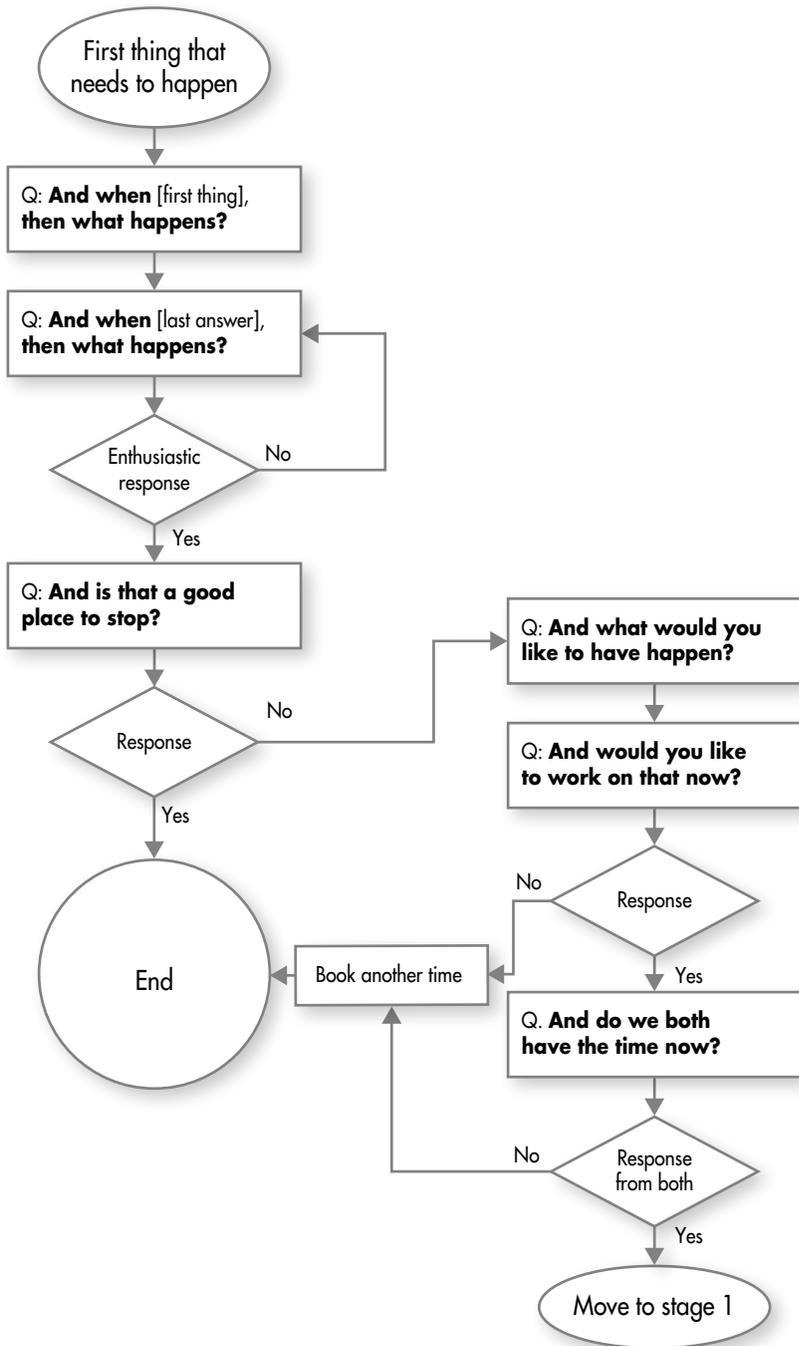


Figure 10: The Stage 5 Five-Minute Coach process

The Five-Minute Coach offers a simple, but very effective, step by step guide to coach quickly and effortlessly with amazing results. Short, punchy and easy to read, the user can swiftly learn this innovative tool for improving performance.

Designed for leaders, managers and supervisors in any setting, this groundbreaking approach to coaching on the job will improve job performance and satisfaction for the manager and team member alike.

Anyone who is looking for an easy to remember structured approach to improving outcomes in their work life or as a coach should definitely have this book on their shelf/e-reader.`

Sean Finnan, General Manager, IBM Global Technology Services

A “must read” for leaders at all levels across all sectors. The way the topic is handled has really made me re-look at the way I coach members of my team.

Douglas Waddell, Operations Director, Hand Picked Hotels Limited

An original, simple, yet highly effective approach to achieving change at an individual level or within a group and in diverse situations. It shows how some very small changes in the coach’s language can effect a big change.

Michèle Moore, Head of People Development, Elior UK

A useful addition to the armoury of any coach – from the manager of a team of staff to the parent of teenagers.

**Marian Ridley, Joint Director of Strategy,
Guy’s & St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust**

Reading this book made me think hard about the way I manage my own staff and reappraise my approach. Its clarity about how to make a real difference through effective coaching makes it a valuable addition to any manager’s briefcase.

Sir Steve Bullock, Executive Mayor, London Borough of Lewisham



Lynne Cooper is an accredited coach and coach supervisor working with individuals, teams and organisations. She has co-developed the Five-Minute Coach and is the author of *Business NLP for Dummies*.



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