

Welcome to Stellar Leadership podcast No.3

Stellar: *Welcome to Stellar Leadership podcast No.3. This podcast is based on an interview with Richard O'Rawe on the subject of The TOSCA Coaching Model. In our last podcast we were talking to Richard O'Rawe about the importance of coaching and the impressive results that can be gained when it is done well. Today Richard is going to tell us a little about his preferred coaching model.*

So I understand that you have developed a model that you call TOSCA...

RO'R: Yes, as I mentioned last time, we recommend a coaching pathway approach and as part of this, we use the five-step model as a coaching tool that is easy to learn and to use. We call it TOSCA

Stellar: *What is it about it that is so easy?*

RO'R: A coach can use it as a framework to guide discussion, session-by-session and topic-by-topic. Follow the five steps and you will open up a coaching conversation that will help the person reflect on the problem they face, explore options or choices for solving it and develop an action plan that they believe will deliver improved results.

Stellar: *How is it different from other models?*

RO'R: We have a different perspective on who initiates the coaching session. We have found that there are many occasions, particularly when coaching a direct report, when the individual is either unaware of -or in denial about - an aspect of their behaviour. As such, they are not necessarily motivated to change it. This is where the TOSCA model comes into its own. Here, the coach is as likely to raise the topic and initiate the conversation as the coachee.

This is one advantage that line managers have over external coaches. They are inherently interested in, and will know (through observation, performance data and other feedback) where there is room for improvement, even when the coachee does not see it for herself. A line manager can initiate the coaching conversation in a way that an external coach cannot.

Stellar: *So, take us through the five steps of TOSCA...*

RO'R: Step one is TOPIC. Before this, let me emphasise that a supportive ethos is at the core of the model and so this first step is designed to build trust between the two parties.

Stellar: *You mean Coaches demonstrate that they want the best for and from the coachee...*

RO'R: Yes, but it is also valuable to recognise the contribution the individual makes in other aspects of their role, particularly if the topic of the coaching discussion is something that needs improvement.

At the outset, the coach and coachee should jointly agree the topic or issue for the session, so that there are no surprises and the conversation stays focused. Once this is done, both parties can now agree on what will be an ideal Outcome from the session...

Stellar: *... giving us the O in TOSCA...*

RO'R: Exactly. Managers with “well-formed outcomes” – clear and specific goals - tend to achieve more. It is said that what comes before a great answer is a great question. Asking “what is the outcome you want to achieve?” or “what would success look like for you?” can be powerful questions. Clarity of outcome aligns all the effort that follows.

Stellar: *And, so what does the S stand for?*

RO'R: Step 3 is entitled Situation. At this point both parties need to take stock of the situation in terms of facts, perspectives and feelings. It is about understanding reality and dealing with different perspectives. The coach may need to challenge assumptions and generalisations.

Once the dialogue starts, it can become apparent that the topic the coach has in mind might not be the actual topic on which the coaching needs to focus.

The driver for the coach is to achieve a realisation that becomes an ‘a-ha’ moment. This is when the coachee begins to see that there are other ways to interpret events and this opens up new ways of thinking – new possibilities. That helps motivate the person to develop a plan.

It is at this point that Choices need to be made.

Stellar: *So Step 4 of TOSCA stands for Choice...*

RO'R: Yes, although it is important to not jump straight to a single solution. Ideally, ideas and options will be generated by the coachee, although sometimes the coach may need to provide some support and guidance. For ownership and commitment, it is much better if options are generated by the coachee.

The coach should pause to allow the coachee to reflect on their preferred option – the one most likely to achieve the outcome agreed and the one they can and will be able to act on.

It is important to seek a specific and personal commitment to the preferred option. The coach might ask, “On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to this option?”.

Stellar: *Which leaves only...*

RO'R: Action. Once the impact and consequences of the current course of action have been fully appreciated by the coachee and a commitment made that some change is required, then we can move on to the planning stage.

This is also the time to become highly specific: Any plan that is agreed should be SMART. Remember blind action, without clarity of purpose, may do more harm than good. We will always pause here to test the action plan against the original outcome asking, “Will this set of actions, if delivered, now achieve what you set out to achieve?” It is important to ensure that any resources needed to support the plan are covered.

Stellar: *And so how do you usually end a coaching session?*

RO’R: Well, for me, part of Action is to put review and follow up on implementation.

By reviewing progress periodically, both parties can make sure that their desired outcomes are actually realised.

Stellar: Thank you.