

# Owning Your Performance: a Guide for FAS Staff

Performance management has evolved from an annual year-end meeting to ongoing conversations between managers and employees throughout the year. As an individual contributor, your role in these discussions is critical. With regular guidance from your manager, you are more likely to develop your skills, find ways to tackle challenges, and explore new opportunities. Below are some suggestions for how to make the most from the coaching you receive.

## Requesting Coaching

- **Request time with your manager.** Regular one-on-one conversations will enable you to discuss current projects, review what's working well, and agree on where you need help.
- **Don't wait to ask for coaching.** Check in once you've completed a project, or met a particular challenge.
- **Ask specific questions.** Ask about particular projects or skills—"Did X approach work well? What could I have done differently with regard to Y?"
- **Think outside the meeting box.** Ask to have coffee or lunch with your manager for an informal coaching conversation.
- **Check in with your colleagues.** Your peers may have insights that your manager doesn't. Ask for their perspective.

## Evaluating the Coaching You Receive

- **Reflect on your own needs.** How do *you* want to improve and grow? Keep your goals and needs in mind when processing feedback.
- **Keep track of the coaching you are receiving.** By taking notes, you can track progress over time. It's easier to keep track of feedback in the moment than to try to remember what your manager said three months ago.
- **Identify specific gaps.** Using the coaching you've heard, find those areas where you think you can develop. Be as specific as possible about your areas for development—"I will 'follow the response plan I develop'" is more helpful than "I need to be more organized."
- **Have a plan.** For each area in which you want to improve, come up with specific actions that will help you get there. This could mean acquiring new skills or putting more focus on specific patterns of behavior.

## Hearing Difficult News

- **Listen to understand, not to respond.** Receiving critical insights can be hard, but try to use the opportunity to *really* hear what the other person has to say. Instead of getting anxious, try to understand their perspective. Ask for examples.
- **Develop a growth mindset.** Even when you're at your best, there's always room to grow and improve. Use the coaching as an opportunity to keep getting better.
- **Try to see things from your manager's perspective.** As yourself: "How do they see the situation and from what vantage point?"
- **Be open to another point of view.** You may receive feedback that differs from your own perspective. Increase your understanding by remembering to say these three words: "tell me more."
- **Find ways to make visible changes.** Make improvements based on the coaching you've received, and discuss these changes during your regular conversations.

## Putting Coaching into Perspective

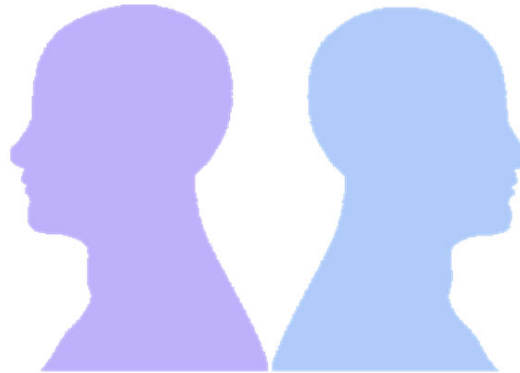
- **Connect coaching with priorities.** Setting priorities is a great motivational tool. Tying those priorities to feedback you've heard will keep you on track to achieving them. It's also okay if your priorities need to be adjusted based on what you've learned from the coaching you've received.
- **Look for patterns.** Once you've received ongoing coaching over a period of time, notice if any patterns come up. Give some thought to what you hear consistently and work with your manager to find ways to adjust your behaviors as needed.
- **Find opportunities to grow.** Discuss new projects and opportunities with your manager based on the insights you've received. Demonstrate commitment to your own professional development.

# Embracing a Growth Mindset

We all have a mindset – which is the perception we hold about ourselves. Our mindset has a significant effect on our ability to learn and acquire new skills, to navigate change, and to be resilient. People with a growth mindset believe their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, determination, and input from others. Those with a fixed mindset see their abilities and talents as innate gifts—you either have it or you don't. Research has shown that individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to achieve their goals, and persist when confronted with challenges. They also see coaching as a valuable part of their growth, not as a reflection of their innate skills. Embracing a growth mindset enables you to use coaching as an opportunity to improve.

## Fixed Mindset

- Sees basic qualities as fixed traits
- Avoids challenges
- Thinks talent alone creates success
- Sees additional effort as a waste of time and energy
- Gives up easily
- Ignores feedback
- Lacks resiliency
- Worries about looking bad



## Growth Mindset

- Believes basic qualities can be developed
- Sees talent or innate abilities as a starting point
- Embraces challenges
- Persists in difficult situations
- Listens to and learns from feedback
- Puts energy into learning and improving
- Sees challenges or mistakes as opportunities for learning

## Developing a Growth Mindset

As with anything else, developing a growth mindset takes practice. When you find yourself thinking along the lines of a fixed mindset, try to shift your thinking to the more “growth mindset” oriented thoughts below.

**Instead of:** *I'm not good at this.*

**Try:** This is a challenging project. What skills am I missing? How can I improve in those areas?

**Instead of:** *My manager gave me some suggestions for how to do things differently next time. That means they think this project was a failure.*

**Try:** My manager wants me to succeed, and cares about how I can improve in the future.

**Instead of:** *That's too hard.*

**Try:** This is a challenge, but it will help me push my boundaries and learn new things.

**Instead of:** *This didn't go the way I wanted it to. I'm so embarrassed.*

**Try:** This didn't go the way I wanted it to, but I learned some useful things I can put into practice next time.

**Instead of:** *Why should I even bother if I don't know that I'll do it perfectly?*

**Try:** Perfection isn't a realistic goal. There's always room to grow and improve. The right coaching is what gets me to the next level.