

The tips and advice you get from managers, mentors and coaches throughout your career will contribute to your personal and professional development along the way. In the workplace, your manager is often your first – and most important – coach, offering feedback about your performance to help refine your skills and target areas for development.

The following tips will help you get the most out of the coaching opportunities available to you:

1. To determine how best to help you, your manager needs to know what you want to accomplish. If you're not sure, take time to do a self-review, and then discuss your thoughts with your manager. This will help you gain clarity, articulate your objectives and ensure alignment with department goals.
2. Don't hesitate to ask your manager for information or to be pointed to relevant resources. Your manager is a storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and expertise. Your manager can be invaluable when facing challenges, or making important decisions.
3. If you are preparing for a big meeting or other stretch assignments, ask for a quick "coaching session" to talk through your strategy and pick up last-minute tips that lead to the winning outcome you want.
4. At times, your manager may give you constructive feedback or offer on-the-spot coaching. Rather than becoming defensive or resistant, be open to your manager's observations. Seek input about your observable strengths and weaknesses, discuss the lessons and be willing to take the necessary steps identified.
5. Complete any actions that you agreed to take and prepare to provide updates on progress or results. Respect the time commitments your manager has set aside for you. Treat the coaching conversations with respect and professionalism. Make an effort to prepare for scheduled coaching conversations.
6. Leave your ego at the door. If you disagree with any feedback from your manager, avoid getting into a direct conflict. Instead, politely ask your manager to explain the rationale. Through open conversation, you and your manager can achieve greater understanding and find a resolution.
7. Acknowledge your manager's coaching efforts. Express appreciation for your manager's support and interest in your personal and professional development.
8. As you move along your career and become a more seasoned professional – pay-it-forward by offering coaching to new staff or less experienced team members. Continue to add value by sharing your wisdom and experience to support and develop others.

"I absolutely believe that people, UNLESS COACHED, never reach their maximum capabilities."

Bob Nardelli, CEO, Home Depot