

Coaching with Mind-Maps®

The Coach's Story

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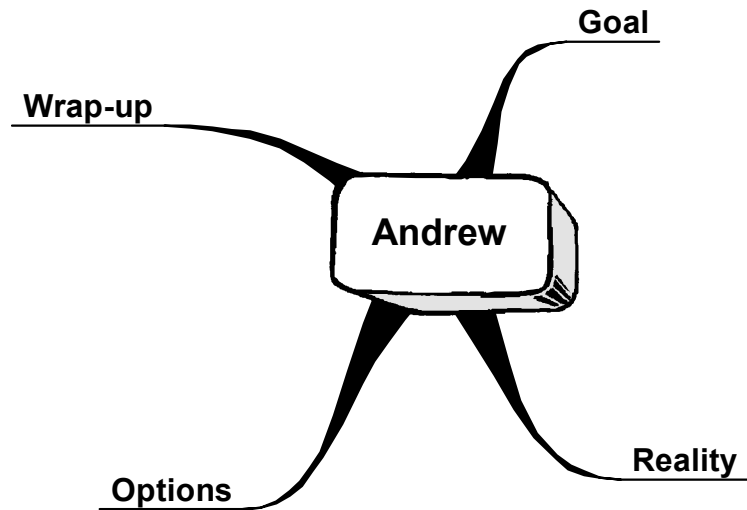
As I approached the office, I could make out a distinctive heat haze on the pavement. We were in the middle of a heat wave. This morning was balmy and humid. I opened the door of the office, or as people like to call, the shop. Hi Dave, how are you? Geraldine greeted me. She was a lovely person and always seemed to wear a smile. Geraldine was perfectly suited to the job. And then there was Andrew, the financial adviser. On the phone, as usual. People say he'd had a phone grafted to his ear when he was younger. He was just keen.

Hi Dave, can I make you a coffee? Yes please, I thought, but no, think of the caffeine. A glass of water will do me fine thanks. Thank goodness for those chilled water dispensers. Cold and refreshing.

Right Andrew, I'd begin. Andrew and I knew what the score was. Others didn't, they actually didn't like me doing my coaching visits. They regarded them as spot checks, but I was gradually turning my team around. I'd recruited Andrew, and from day one he knew what I'd stood for. Apparently the end of our first coaching day, he'd made the comment to Geraldine afterwards, that I never seemed to say much and I only asked questions. Geraldine had told him that was coaching.

On a piece of paper, I scribbled in the centre 'Andrew'. That gave me a focus for the day as it wasn't for my benefit – the day was devoted to Andrew's development. Yes I had returns to make, observation aids to tick off and compliance returns to email at the end of the day. Of course I'd do that, but a true coach has one person in mind, and today that was Andrew. Andrew always set the agenda, it was never mine.

I circled the word Andrew and drew four bold straight lines out of the circle to start my use of the GROW Model.



G	Goals
R	Reality
O	Options
W	Wrap-up

The GROW model was given to me years ago on a management training course. At the time I did nothing with it since the course focussed my attention on Training and Competence matters such as observations, one to ones, checklists and compliance. I was being targeted on the number of observation aids I completed and that was my goal.

I took a personal interest in real coaching after attending a course in London. It wasn't business based but involved sport. You see I'd just begun coaching a fledgling football team that my son played for and thought I'd better improve my football coaching. Well that course in London, sponsored by the Football Association, made me think about coaching at work, and I haven't looked back since.

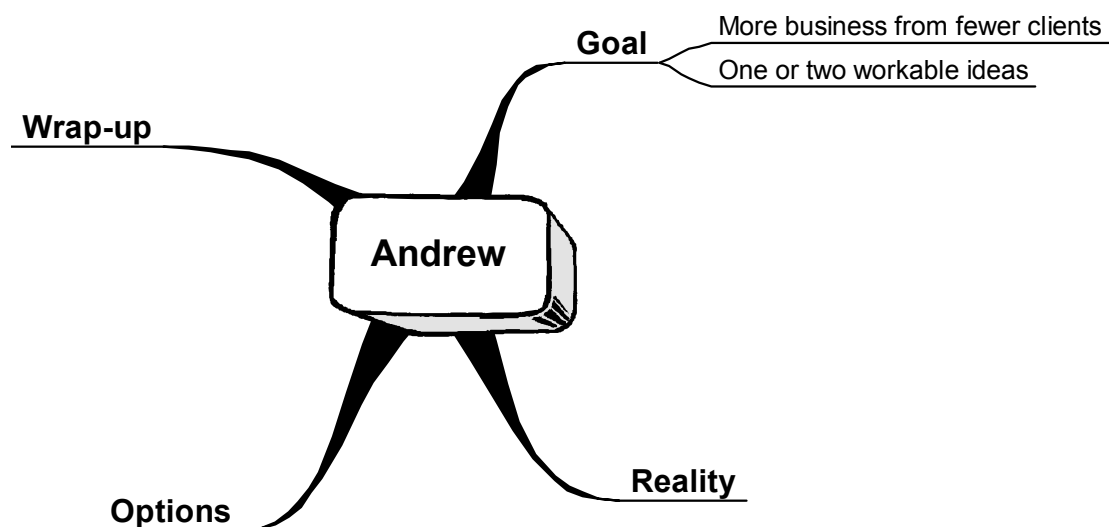
GROW is merely a structure to ensure I work with Andrew and assist him in achieving his goals. It's useful since it reminds me of where I'm going and it prompts me to ask lots of questions as Andrew

self discovers. I put it on one piece of paper since this gives me the big picture whenever I see the page. The big picture of Andrew's development can get hidden in the hubbub of a daily coaching session, and sometimes little issues can mean we go off the real subject. Oh, by the way, I always spend a day with my team. I learnt that a while ago. Popping in just to observe an interview didn't work for me. It meant the big picture was clouded and the focus became the interview and not the adviser conducting it. In my day I was a master at interview faking.

OK, Andrew, let's start with your aims. What specific goals do you want to turn the heat on today? Andrew knew where I was heading so didn't need to probe on this one. I've given that some thought, Dave. I want to maximise business from fewer clients. This was Andrew's major improvement goal set at the beginning of the year and very timely. The shop had two other advisers and the foot traffic was reducing. Our Internet site and direct sales were satisfying quite a few existing clients. Andrew's goal was very timely.

I noted this on my piece of paper.

OK Andrew, that's great. What specifically do you want to have achieved by the end of our day together? Andrew stopped to think. One or two new ways so I can get more business from my clients. I noted this down on my paper which looked like this:

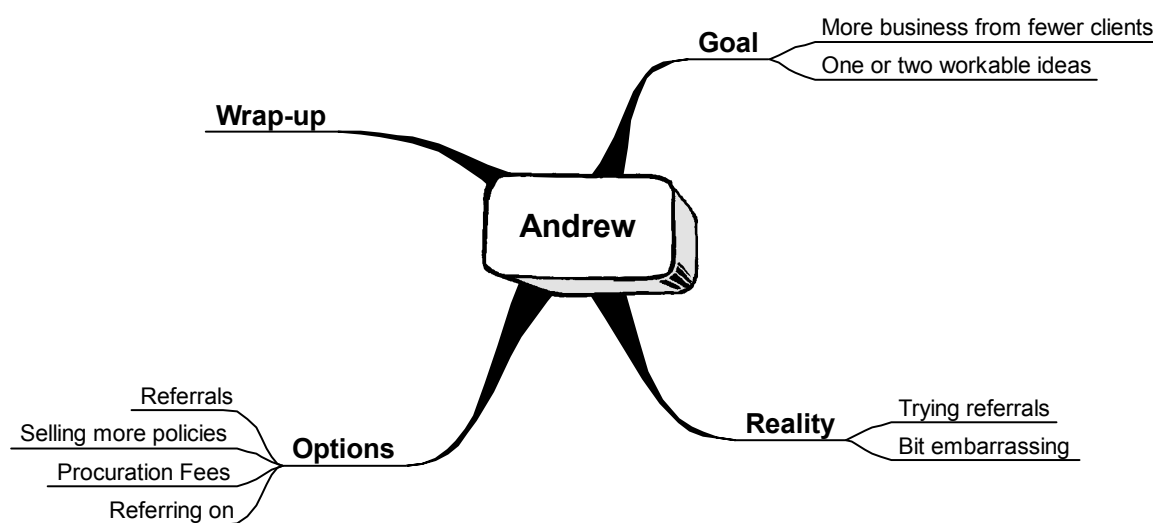


Would that be of value to you Andrew? Oh yes, but the ideas have got to work in this office, with my clients. What have you done so far Andrew, towards this goal? Again Andrew stopped to think. I've had a few ideas but that's as far as they've gone. I've been far too busy to stop and think about them. Well, let's do that I replied. Brilliant said Andrew.

I was now on reality from the GROW model. Andrew, you've had lots of ideas, but tell me what have you done up to now? At this point I learnt to shut up and really listen to Andrew. Not interrupting, accepting the pregnant silences, not telling him my stories but non verbally probing and prompting. Not a lot really was Andrew's reply. One of my looks was enough to keep Andrew talking. I ask my clients for referrals at the end of the interview. And what's been your success? Not much said Andrew, in fact it's a bit embarrassing. I'd like some ideas today if you can. To achieve what? To get referrals from my clients. What's your overall goal Andrew? To get more business from my clients.

The mind-map® kept me focussed on the bigger picture.

And what ideas have you thought about yourself, Andrew? Andrew had a lot of ideas. Referrals, selling more policies, maximising procuration fees, referring on to other parts of the firm, were all mentioned by Andrew. These were all noted on my mind-map® next to options.



Let me get this right Andrew. Your big goal is excellent – you need to increase business from fewer people that you'll see in the future. You've just given me loads of ideas and one that you've already tried is asking for referrals. Have we covered all the ideas that could work for you? I think so, do you have any ideas Dave? Some that have worked in other offices are repeat business from farming your client bank. Jeanie's selling pensions well on this basis. Could that work for you Andrew?

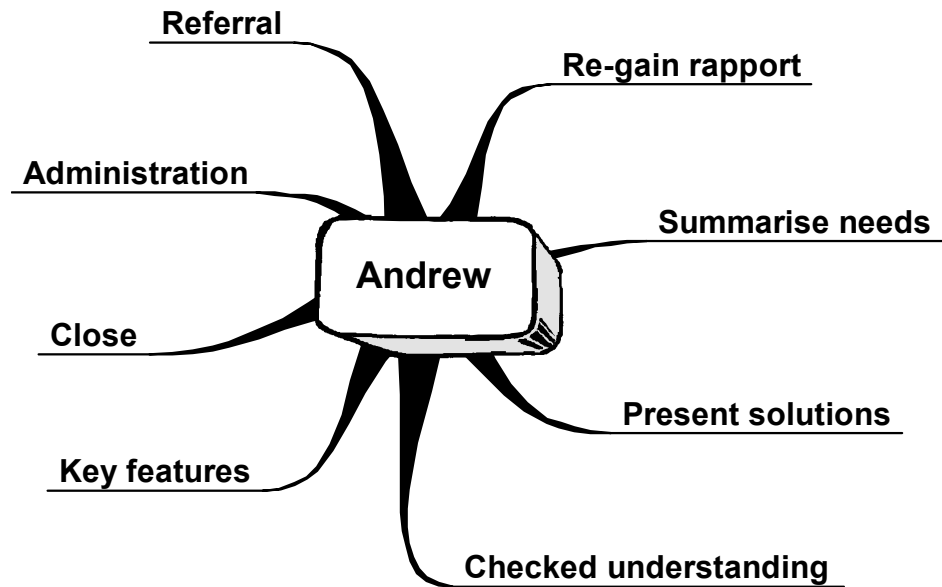
I'd learnt that as a coach you're entitled to make suggestions but just don't get attached to them as your idea. That's why I asked that last question to see what Andrew thought. It might work, said Andrew.

Let's move on from ideas Andrew. Which of those do you think are goers? I still think referrals are going to work and selling more plans to clients would be good. If it works at Jeanie's office, it's bound to work for me. OK then Andrew, let's see if today we can turn these ideas into some firm action eh? Good stuff, said Andrew.

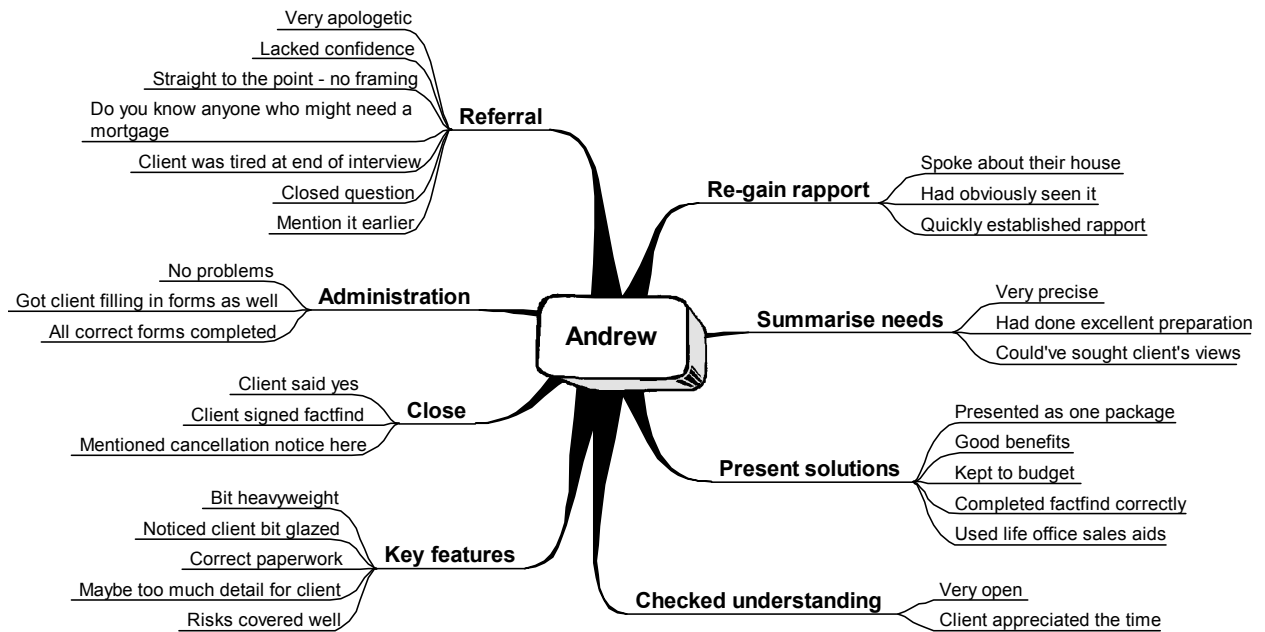
GROW had begun to work for the two of us and we had a real focus today which would develop Andrew. We needed to really dive into the options and get some ways forward. Just then Geraldine knocked on Andrew's door. Your 10.30's here. Thanks Geraldine, I'll be right with them. Time had flown. Andrew I'll observe this shall I? OK. What can I look out for specifically? Everything, uhm, compliance I suppose. I'll do that naturally, and if anything crops up I'll let you know. But your compliance is always spot on. Come on Andrew can I watch for anything that might help you with today's goal? OK, said Andrew, it's a sign up today, so I'll ask for referrals at the end. Can you watch that bit and give me some feedback?

Following my introduction to the clients, I snuggled down in the corner armed with my checklist that I had to email off later and a clean sheet of paper to mind-map® the interview. I'd figured that mind-mapping® interviews was preferable to writing out notes in linear fashion. My turning point was a few years' ago when I'd stood up after an hour long interview and ten sheets of A4 chocker full of writing spewed over the floor. It took me half an hour to piece it all together and use it as evidence for my feedback. Mind-mapping® the interview ensured I kept it on one piece of paper, made me keep to a

focus, in this instance Andrew's referrals and kept me away from the checklist until after the interview. It made it really easy to give feedback afterwards and was less stress on the wrist. I was converted. Before we started, it looked something like this:



As the interview progressed, I added branches. I noted down evidence of what was said and any issues I thought worthy of writing down. I had a separate branch for Andrew's specific request, i.e. referrals. As you know the order isn't always this perfect in real life, but the mind-map® process allowed me to add branches as and when they occurred but still keep control. At the end it looked something like this:



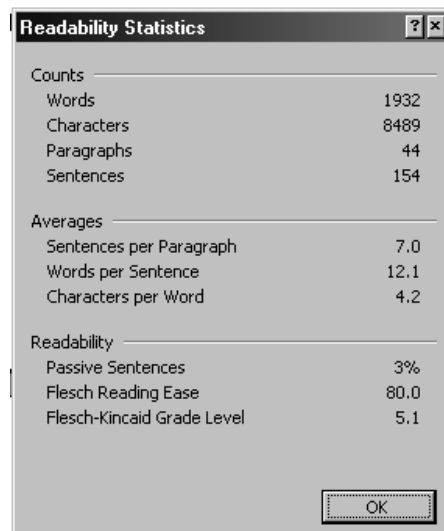
As the clients were leaving the office, I'd quickly complete the checklist, which I'd email to Head Office later. I was right, Andrew's compliance was spot on and needed no comment apart from acknowledgement. I congratulated him on an excellent compliant interview, which it was. I'd given up the 'how did it go' question a long while ago after one of my team burst out laughing on me and with a sly grin said that it went brilliantly. Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.

Andrew had asked me to watch out for his referral and it was this that I was going to give feedback on. That was the deal, and so I gave it to him. The feedback that was. An old manager of mine had taught me about giving feedback. Just get on with it, he'd said. AID then he'd advised. Give him the actions (A). Tell him what he did, what you observed but keep it impersonal. Next tell him what the impact (I) was, in other words, what you observed was the impact of what you did and finally eak out the desired (D) outcome, in other words, what else could be tried to get the desired result he wants.

A	Actions observed
I	Impact observed
D	Desired outcome

My mind-map® gave me the ammunition to give this feedback. I always probed for their ideas under the D – desired outcome, I would always go back to my GROW model and work with the options, that way we were always looking at the big picture of Andrew's goal. The Wrap-up consisted of allowing Andrew to decide his own next step. What was he going to do, what was going to drive him, how I could help, when by etc. Standard action planning stuff.

See you soon Dave, said Geraldine. See you Geraldine. I walked over to her and whispered in her ears. Do you know Geraldine, Andrew's worth his weight in gold to your team. I knew she'd tell him and he'd feel good about himself.



Readability Statistics	
Counts	
Words	1932
Characters	8489
Paragraphs	44
Sentences	154
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	7.0
Words per Sentence	12.1
Characters per Word	4.2
Readability	
Passive Sentences	3%
Flesch Reading Ease	80.0
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	5.1

OK