

Coaching Conversations with Medical Representatives

60-Minute Facilitator-Led Workshop for First-Line Managers

Sample Opening Hook

“Think about your last field coaching conversation.

Be honest.

How much time did you spend asking questions... and how much time did you spend giving instructions?

Most managers genuinely want to coach. But in the pressure of targets, coverage, prescriptions, and reporting... coaching slowly becomes reviewing.

‘Why were calls low?’

‘Why didn’t this doctor convert?’

‘You need to improve your opening.’

And slowly, the MR stops thinking.

They start waiting for answers.

Today’s session is not about becoming a professional coach.

It is about learning how to create better field conversations — conversations that help MRs think, reflect, and improve on their own.”

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Differentiate reviewing from coaching
 - Use simple coaching questions during field work
 - Apply the GROW framework in pharma field situations
 - Handle difficult coaching conversations more effectively
 - Conduct more reflective and developmental discussions with MRs
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Session Flow

Time	Slide Title	Objective	Trainer Talking Points	Activity	Learner Reflection	Facilitation Notes
0–5 min	Why Coaching Conversations Matter	Create emotional connection and WIIFM	Discuss how many managers spend full days in field but still see repeated mistakes. Explain difference between ‘telling’ and ‘developing thinking.’ Ask: “Have you ever explained the same thing repeatedly to the same MR?”	Quick show of hands and open sharing	“Where do my current coaching conversations become one-way?”	Keep tone conversational. Use examples like doctor objection handling, low call average, weak openings. Avoid theory.
5–10 min	Review vs Coaching	Help managers identify current habits	Explain how most field conversations become review meetings. Review focuses on numbers and gaps. Coaching focuses on thinking and improvement.	Ask participants to identify which statements sound like reviewing and which sound like coaching. Example: “Your call average is low” vs “What impacted your call planning today?”	“When do I become more of an inspector than a coach?”	Use humour lightly. Managers often recognize themselves quickly here.

10–15 min	What Good Coaching Looks Like	Build clarity around coaching behaviour	Share characteristics of good coaching conversations: listening, curiosity, reflection, ownership, future focus. Emphasize that coaching is not about being soft.	Pair discussion: “Think of one manager who genuinely helped you grow. What did they do differently?”	“What kind of manager do I remember learning most from?”	Keep emotional connection strong. Let participants speak.
15–22 min	Introduction to GROW Model	Give a simple practical structure	Introduce GROW in simple language. Goal = What do you want? Reality = What is happening? Options = What can you do? Way Forward = What will you commit to? Use pharma example throughout.	Trainer-led mini coaching demo with volunteer	“Which part of GROW do I skip most often?”	Keep it practical. Do not overload with definitions.
22–30 min	Coaching Demonstration	Show strong coaching conversation	Use a realistic scenario: MR struggling to convert a cardiologist despite repeated visits. Demonstrate manager using reflective questions instead of instructions.	Participants observe and note coaching behaviours used	“What did the manager do that increased ownership?”	Encourage participants to notice pauses, listening, and questioning style.

30–38 min	Field Coaching Simulation	Practice coaching conversations	Participants work in trios: manager, MR, observer. Scenario: MR has good product knowledge but weak doctor engagement. Manager must coach using GROW.	Role play simulation	“How easy was it to avoid giving solutions quickly?”	Rotate roles if possible. Keep energy high.
38–45 min	Difficult Coaching Situations	Prepare managers for resistance	Discuss difficult realities: defensive MR, experienced MR resisting feedback, emotionally low performer, MR blaming market conditions.	Group discussion: “What difficult coaching situations do you face most?”	“How do I react when the MR becomes defensive?”	Normalize these situations. Avoid portraying coaching as idealistic.
45–52 min	Weak vs Strong Coaching	Build self-awareness	Compare two conversations side by side. Show how language changes ownership and reflection.	Participants identify mistakes in weak coaching example	“Which habits from the weak example sound familiar?”	Keep discussion honest, not judgmental.
52–57 min	Personal Action Planning	Drive field application	Ask managers to identify one coaching behaviour they will consciously practice in next field work.	Individual reflection and peer sharing	“What is one question I will start asking more often?”	Push for practical commitments.

57–60 min	Closing Reflection	Reinforce learning emotionally	Coaching is not about having perfect answers. It is about helping people think better. One good coaching conversation can change confidence, ownership, and performance.	Final reflection round	“What kind of field conversations do I want my team to remember?”	End calmly and emotionally, not energetically.
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Strong Coaching Conversation Example

Situation:

An MR is struggling to improve doctor engagement with a high-potential diabetologist.

Weak Coaching Style

Manager:

“You are still not able to convert this doctor. I already told you last month to improve your opening and product detailing. You need to be more confident.”

MR:

“Sir, doctor is very busy. Hardly gives time.”

Manager:

“Everyone else is managing. You need to push harder.”

What happens here:

- Manager dominates conversation
- MR becomes defensive
- No reflection happens
- No ownership created
- Coaching becomes instruction

Strong Coaching Style

Manager:

“You’ve met Dr. Shah multiple times now. What do you think is working well in your interaction?”

MR:

“He listens initially... but after 1–2 minutes he becomes distracted.”

Manager:

“What do you think causes that shift?”

MR:

“Maybe I start sounding too product-focused.”

Manager:

“Interesting observation. What could help make the discussion more relevant for him?”

MR:

“Maybe I should start with patient cases instead of product features.”

Manager:

“That sounds useful. Which patient profile would connect best with his practice?”

MR:

“Uncontrolled diabetic patients with cardiac risk.”

Manager:

“Good. Let’s try that approach tomorrow and observe the difference.”

Why this works:

- Manager increases thinking
 - MR generates solutions
 - Ownership improves
 - Reflection becomes deeper
 - Confidence improves naturally
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Difficult Coaching Scenario

Scenario: Emotionally Low MR

An MR has missed targets for three months. During field work, the manager notices low energy, poor engagement, and visible frustration.

Common Manager Mistake

“Targets are already low. This is not the time to lose confidence.”

Why this fails:

- Ignores emotional reality
 - MR feels unheard
 - Conversation becomes pressure-focused
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Better Coaching Approach

Manager:

“I noticed today you looked more hesitant than usual during calls. What’s been on your mind lately?”

MR:

“Honestly sir, after continuous target misses... confidence has gone down.”

Manager:

“Thanks for being honest. Let’s not solve everything today. Let’s first understand where things are becoming difficult.”

Why this works:

- Creates psychological safety
 - Reduces defensiveness
 - Opens honest discussion
 - Builds trust before solutions
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Common Coaching Mistakes Managers Make

- Jumping into advice too quickly
 - Talking more than listening
 - Asking leading questions
 - Treating coaching as performance review
 - Interrupting reflection moments
 - Solving problems for the MR
 - Using judgmental language
 - Focusing only on targets and numbers
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Common MR Responses Managers Should Expect

- “Doctor doesn’t give time.”
- “Competition is very aggressive.”
- “Market itself is slow.”
- “I already tried that.”
- “Sir, the doctor only prescribes competitor brands.”
- “Maybe I’m not able to influence this doctor.”

Facilitator Note:

Teach managers to avoid immediately countering these responses. Instead, explore them.

Suggested Transition Statements

Transition 1

“Now that we’ve seen why most coaching conversations become reviews... let’s look at what actually makes a coaching conversation effective.”

Transition 2

“Coaching sounds simple when we discuss it theoretically. The real challenge starts in the field, when time pressure and targets enter the conversation.”

Transition 3

“Let’s move from understanding coaching... to actually experiencing it.”

Transition 4

“Good coaching is less about perfect questions and more about creating thinking.”

Debrief Questions for Activities

After Role Play

- What questions created the most reflection?
 - When did the MR become more open?
 - What moments felt like reviewing instead of coaching?
 - How difficult was it to avoid giving direct answers?
 - What changed when the manager listened more?
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Closing Summary

“Most managers don’t struggle because they lack intent.
They struggle because field pressure pulls conversations toward reviewing.

But one small shift changes everything.

The moment managers start asking better questions instead of immediately giving answers...
MRs start thinking differently.

And when thinking changes, ownership changes.

Confidence changes.

Performance conversations change.

You do not need to become a perfect coach after today.

But if your next field conversation becomes slightly more reflective, slightly more developmental, and slightly more human... this session has already created impact.”