Most employees believe their supervisors do a poor job of coaching. Marshall Goldsmith, considered one of the most successful executive coaches today, suggests using a six-question coaching process. The questions are meant to create dialogue, not to be dictatorial. Here are his six questions:

1. Where are we going? Outline the big picture—the organization’s direction, vision, goals—and ask where they think the organization should be going.

2. Where are you going? This surfaces the direct reports’ goals and priorities. Share your views as well. These first two questions can lead to a degree of alignment.

3. What is going well? Great coaches provide an assessment of what is working and then ask, “What do you think that you and your team are doing well?” This discussion gives you an opportunity to celebrate events that you might otherwise miss.

4. What are key suggestions for improvement? Begin by giving constructive suggestions for the future. Limit suggestions to key items. Then ask what suggestions the individual has and modify the improvements appropriately.

5. How can I help? Listen to the suggestions first. Then offer other things you could do and ask if the individual believes they might be helpful.

6. What suggestions do you have for me? This is important because it creates a partnership in which each of you is helping each other.

Schedule a meeting with your direct reports at least once each quarter and use these questions to initiate dialogue. Goldsmith also suggests that your discussion focus on the future, not the past. Listen intently to your direct reports and try to implement their suggestions. Do not try to prove the other person is wrong. Plan follow-up discussions between the quarterly coaching sessions.