

Act, Don't React Decision Tree

A simple process for deciding how to respond when something goes wrong

THE IDEA

In the chapter “Act, Don’t React,” I talk about the filters we can all have before we jump to a reaction. When something goes wrong, it’s easy to react immediately. But we can choose to act first.



How to use this resource: Work through the steps below to understand the process for acting instead of reacting. Then use the decision tree as a quick reference when a situation comes up, starting with good intent, determining whether it’s an event or a trend, and deciding whether training or coaching is the right next step.

1

Assume good intent

First, we can assuredly assume that bad intent is an infrequent occurrence, and we can safely work forward as if good intent is the prevailing expectation.

But, if you assume good intent, but that person does not, in fact, have good intentions, then please distance yourself from that person. If they can get help or change, wonderful. If not, then please do not persist in your relationship, and if that is a work relationship, please consider exiting them.

2

Determine event or trend

Once that is determined, then the question is: was the issue or incident **an event or a trend?**

From here, you need to go lighter if it’s an event. That will most likely only require coaching or a quick reminder. Or, it could be that the person had a human moment, and they will never do the thing again.

If it’s a trend, then it may be that they truly don’t know how to navigate the situation better. If that’s the case, it may be that they require training rather than coaching.

3

Have the conversation

Before deciding what to do next, actually have a conversation with that individual. Do not assume; do not damage their brand by publicizing their issue to the world. Proceed with discretion, have a candid conversation with the individual about the issue, and ask the following questions to determine if they need training or coaching:

- ◆ What would you do next time?
- ◆ What have you done in the past?
- ◆ What would you recommend?
- ◆ How would you handle this?
- ◆ If you were me, what would you say right now?

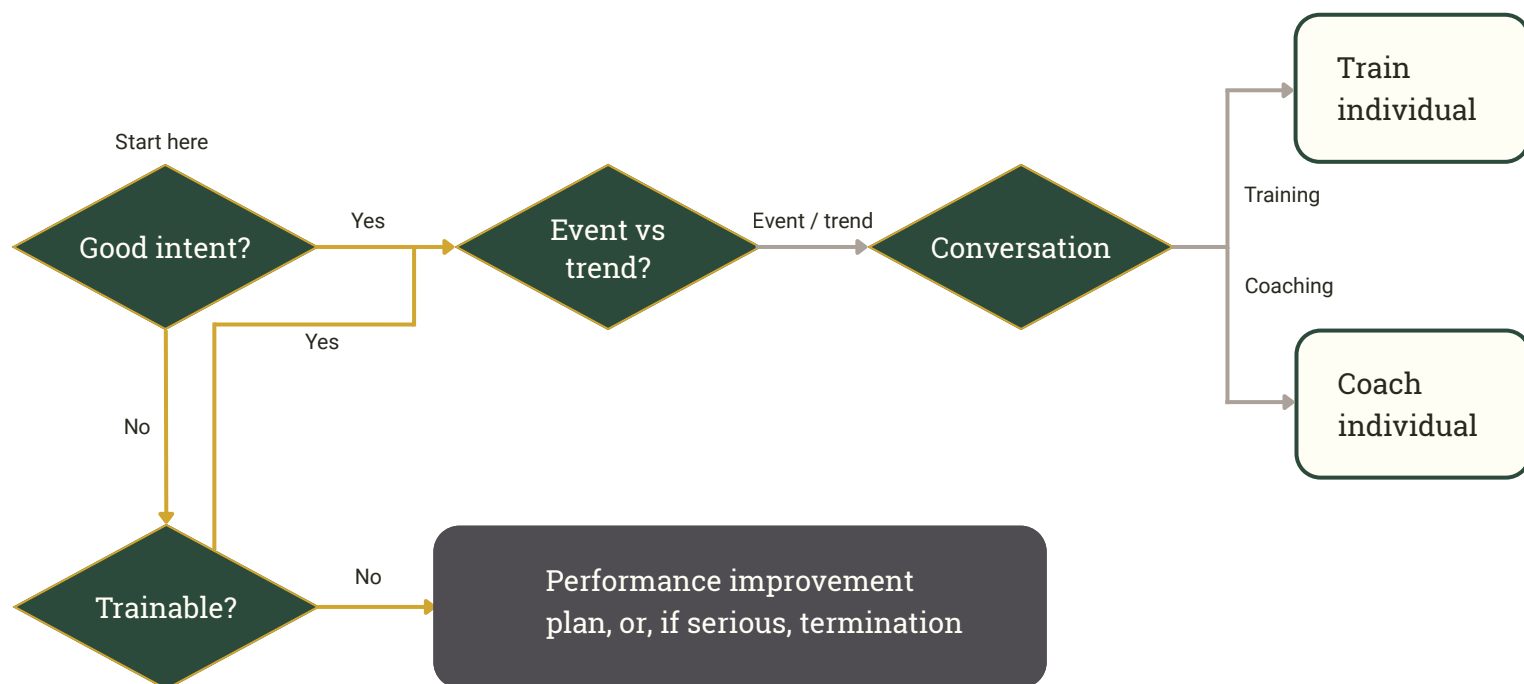
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Determine training or coaching

Now you can determine if it's a training or a coaching scenario and proceed accordingly.

Training = the person doesn't know the thing and needs to be taught from scratch

Coaching = the person does know the thing and just needs to be reminded or guided through this situation.



IN SUMMARY: HOW TO ACT, NOT REACT

- First, mitigate whatever emergency is occurring. Handle the client situation or whatever is occurring with the appropriate level of urgency, along with kindness, gravitas, and respect.
- Second, assume good intent.
- Third, evaluate if it's an event or a trend and proceed accordingly.
- Next, have a discussion to determine if it's a training or a coaching opportunity.
- Finally, coach or train. (The follow-up is critical.)

Remember, others' personal brands are in your hands at all times. Be gracious and protective of their brand as you would want them to be of yours.