



Coaching to Greatness

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Napoleon Hill, a nineteenth century writer is quoted as saying, “*It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed.*”

If nothing else, this quote gives all managers and supervisors one more reason to develop and improve the performance of their staff.

A critical component of the overall performance management system, coaching in the workplace is not a new initiative, but it is greatly underutilized. More than supervising, more than evaluating, coaching is the most basic of employee development tools available.

So why aren't more managers and supervisors making the effort? Well, true coaching requires listening, observing, regular feedback, encouragement and patience – but, the fruits of the labor are endless. In addition to improved performance and increased productivity, other benefits of coaching may include higher employee satisfaction rates and improved employee retention.

When supervisors make the transition to coach, they make a commitment of time and attention and, more importantly, a commitment to help employees master their work and grow their own knowledge and skills. Additionally, a coach helps to foster what may be the most important motivation a person can have – a desire for self-development.

Coaching can generally be broken down in to two main types. *Skill development coaching*, where the outcome is for the employee to learn a new skill, and *corrective action coaching* when the outcome is to improve sub-par performance or change unacceptable behavior.

Regardless of the specific coaching situation, the approach is typically the same.

The first step is to establish and communicate expectations. This is true whether you are coaching a veteran or novice, superior performer or marginal employee. Identifying your expectations gives a clear goal – whether it is to increase proficiency at cross-selling financial services or develop a comprehensive operating budget for the department.

Communication of the expected outcomes to the coached employee is essential. Additionally, in a corrective action coaching situation, it is important to clearly communicate the consequences if improvements are not made.

The second step in the process is to determine the resources necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Education or training resources are the most common and may come in many forms. In addition to classroom instruction, other resources include OJT (on-the-job training) correspondence classes and shadowing (where an inexperienced employee closely observes a more senior employee).



Also, new or modified equipment, or a simple change in policy or procedure may be necessary to facilitate achievement of the expectations.

The next step is to draft a plan. This is where the coach and coachee create the roadmap that will lead to the desired outcomes. They work collaboratively to arrange training, procure necessary equipment, and ensure logistical details are in place.

The final step is implementation. As with the previous steps, collaboration is the key. Throughout the implementation phase, it is critical that the coach and coachee enjoy a collaborative relationship wherein the coach provides regular feedback, and if necessary, further instruction. Regular coaching sessions scheduled on a monthly or quarterly basis help to ensure that busy schedules do not take precedence over the coaching meetings.

Occasionally, unexpected setbacks can impede achievement of desired outcomes. For example, economic conditions, regulatory changes, or an unexpected staffing shortage may hamper a manager's ability to achieve established goals. Part of the coach's responsibility is to help the employee anticipate potential roadblocks and chart alternate courses.

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