

COACHING I

5. BUSINESS MANAGEMENT COACHING TIPS & STRATEGIES

5.1. The Influence of the Human Resource Department

"There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great." --G.K. Chesterton

Want to find out about the essential components of a coaching relationship? Executives, managers, and others interested in career growth and development increasingly turn to a business coach for a personally tailored development process. Human Resources staff and managers need to get on board as coaches or miss this exciting opportunity to influence the next evolution of your organization's management potential. According to Winston Connor, formerly an HR Vice President and currently an executive coach, "Coaching is a different delivery system for training, since training, especially with long term managers and people who are further along in their careers, is not working. The coach works with the manager to tailor the training program in skill areas where we will have an impact. The coach helps managers make behavioral changes needed for growth." Connor advises that coaches need to be, "clear on the competencies that have impact on the bottom line. Measure them. Provide support for growth and change. Then measure again." Connor thinks the HR person should be the change agent within his organization: "He has the opportunity to provide the leadership needed, to become a part of the coaching venture, rather than an obstacle to progress." Connor also warns internal HR practitioners against, "trying to repackage old skills as coaching. In the consultancy approach, the HR person brings solutions. He is the expert. In coaching, we don't bring the answer. We bring a system, a process for helping the client discover the answers."

5.2. Top 10 Tips for Coaching Effectively

If you manage people, you should understand the importance of effective coaching. How someone is managed can have an enormous impact on their effectiveness and productivity, and thus impact the productivity of the entire team. To make sure

you're coaching your staff in the way that works best for them and helps them work their best for you read the 10 tips outlined below.

1. Ensure you fully understand what coaching is.

Many managers make incorrect assumptions about coaching. It's important that a manager uses a clear and consistent coaching model, and understands the "why" to enhance staff engagement and performance as well as the "how" using a collaborative dialogue model of engagement. The manager should be able to distinguish between 'bossing', coaching, counselling, training, and therapy.

2. Check your perspective on people.

A manager who sees people's potential is far better at coaching them towards it. A manager that judges people based on past and current performance, or believes that people are inherently limited, will not make a strong effort to engage staff for optimal performance. An engaged, well-coached employee will out-perform one who is being mismanaged by a weak boss.

3. Learn and practice an Effective Coaching Model.

It's crucial that you start with a coaching model that is research-based and proven. That being said, there is a difference between taking a two-day seminar on coaching, and actually developing coaching skills. The course is an **event**, but the other is a **process**. Just as getting into (and staying in) shape requires consistent workouts rather than just one visit to the "fitness boot camp" class, becoming a great coach isn't a quick fix. After acquiring the coaching knowledge, it's important to engage in continuous application. Partner with an organization that offers ongoing follow-up options.

4. Engage your Boss.

Sometimes a lack of engagement or support from senior management can be a real coaching roadblock. Present a case for the economic benefits of coaching, and make sure that they can see the ROI involved. With engagement at all levels of the organization, investment in a coaching culture will achieve greater traction and superior results.

5. Understand and value personality differences.

When coaching staff, be aware that each person has different motivators and communication styles. Learn the styles of your team in order to adapt your communication to the listener for increased impact. If someone is slower to speak and respond, for example, allow them time to think and process rather than interrupting with 'helpful' suggestions. Effective coaching adapts to the unique style and needs of the person being coached.

6. Prioritize your time - Stay focused.

Coaching can happen in different ways with different needs and circumstances. At times, there will be "mini" coaching opportunities that shouldn't be missed. On other occasions, longer or more intensive coaching sessions are called for. Plan your coaching times and know when enough is enough. Keep the session focused on arriving at a solution within the timeframe allowed avoid endless verbalization about the problem, and coach to a resolution.

7. Stop putting out fires.

A manager who regularly steps in to solve staff's problems isn't doing them (or himself) any favors. He's only training them to bring him the problems, rather than solving them. Coach your staff to develop their confidence and problem-solving ability. This alone will increase organizational efficiency. Sometimes the simple question, "What can you do about it?" will help to uncover a solution.

8. Seek regular feedback.

To support your continued growth, make sure that you get regular feedback. Awareness of where and how you are succeeding (and not) will assist you in making the changes you need for sustained improvement.

9. Listen, listen, listen.

One of the greatest skills a coach/manager must practice is active listening. Fully deploy listening skills with an open mind in order to ask more effective questions of the coachee, and get to the heart of an issue to assist them in finding a solution.

10. Keep growing and developing.

The rate of change in the world today means that every year, more and more of what we've previously learned becomes obsolete. Keep up-to-date with the latest research and development in the field. Attend coaching conferences, watch webcasts, subscribe to literature and web feeds.

5.3. For Managers - 5 Focus Categories

Business coaching has gone from fad to fundamental. Leaders and organizations have come to understand how valuable it can be, and they're adding "the ability to coach and develop others" to the ever-growing list of skills they require in all their managers. In theory, this means more employee development, more efficiently conducted. But in reality, few managers know how to make coaching work. According to the 2010 Executive Coaching Survey, conducted by the Conference Board, 63% of organizations use some form of internal coaching, and half of the rest plan to. Yet coaching is a small part of the job description for most managers. Nearly half spend less than 10% of their time coaching others. With such limited time devoted to coaching, organizations need to be sure their managers know how to do it right. To improve the quality and impact of your coaching efforts, start by giving your individual managers tangible information about how to coach their direct reports. Typically, managers meet their coaching obligations by giving reviews, holding occasional meetings and offering advice. For coaching to be effective, they need to understand why they are coaching and what specific actions they need to take. Coaching focuses on helping another person learn in ways that let him or her keep growing afterward. It is based on asking rather than telling, on provoking thought rather than giving directions and on holding a person accountable for his or her goals. Broadly speaking, the purpose is to increase effectiveness, broaden thinking, identify strengths and development needs and set and achieve challenging goals. Research from the Center for Creative Leadership has boiled down the skills managers need to coach others into five categories:

1) Building the relationship. It's easier to learn from someone you trust. Coaches must effectively establish boundaries and build trust by being clear about the learning and development objectives they set, showing good judgment, being patient and following through on any promises and agreements they make.

2) Providing assessment. Where are you now and where do you want to go? Helping others to gain self-awareness and insight is a key job for a coach. You provide timely feedback and help clarify the behaviors that an employee would

like to change. Assessment often focuses on gaps or inconsistencies, on current performance vs. desired performance, words vs. actions and intention vs. impact.

3) *Challenging thinking and assumptions.* Thinking about thinking is an important part of the coaching process. Coaches ask open-ended questions, push for alternative solutions to problems and encourage reasonable risk-taking.

4) *Supporting and encouraging.* As partners in learning, coaches listen carefully, are open to the perspectives of others and allow employees to vent emotions without judgment. They encourage employees to make progress toward their goals, and they recognize their successes.

5) *Driving results.* What can you show for it? Effective coaching is about achieving goals. The coach helps the employee set meaningful ones and identify specific behaviors or steps for meeting them. The coach helps to clarify milestones or measures of success and holds the employee accountable for them.

You should seed your organization with coaching role models. All managers need some guidance on the why's and how's of coaching, but most organizations can't afford to train them on a large scale, so the least you can do is make an effort to create a culture of coaching. The key is to create a pool of manager-coaches who can be role models, supporters and sustainers of a coaching mindset. When you select the right people and invest in their development and position them as coaching advocates, you plant the seeds for expanding coaching well beyond the individual manager-direct report relationship. Your role models demonstrate effective coaching both formally and informally, and they help motivate others to use and improve their own coaching capabilities. Always link the purpose and results of coaching to the business. Managers have to know the business case for coaching and developing others if they're to value it and use it effectively. Where is the business headed? What leadership skills are needed to get us there? How should coaches work with direct reports to provide the feedback, information and experiences they need to build those needed skills? Set strategic coaching goals, tactics and measures for the organization as well as including coaching as an individual metric. Finally, give it time. It's not surprising that managers feel they don't have enough time for coaching. Even if you make learning and coaching explicit priorities, time is tight for everyone. But as your coaching processes and goals become more consistent and more highly valued, in-house coaching will take root. Your managers will have a new way to develop and motivate their direct reports. Individuals and groups will strive to build new skills and achieve goals. And your business will be on track to a more efficient, comprehensive system of developing people.