

How to Be a Coaching-Style Manager

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Why Coaching- Style Management?

- Continuous improvement is the key to better business, as well as keeping employees focused and motivated
- ALL employees require the attention of their manager to do work better and faster, every step of the way
- Superstars (high performers) want recognition, but also want managers who can help them to get better and succeed. If you don't provide that for them, they will find it somewhere else!
- Low performers don't seek out coaching-style leadership, but they are the ones who most benefit
- Average performers who are unsupported by their managers are most prone to declining performance over time
- Coaching is an effective way to funnel the energies of your most enthusiastic, yet relatively inexperienced, young employees

What Defines Coaching-Style Management?

Being a coaching-style manager means:

- Talking about what's going right, wrong, and average every step of the way
- Reminding everybody of broad performance standards regularly
- Turning informal best practices into formal standard operating procedures, and teaching them to everybody
- Using plans and step-by-step checklists whenever possible
- Focusing on concrete actions within the control of the individual employee
- Monitoring, measuring, and documenting individual performance in writing
- Following up and providing regular candid feedback
- Asking really good questions

What Defines Coaching-Style Management?

- Listening carefully
- Answering questions
- Getting input
- Learning from what your employees are learning on the front lines
- Thinking through potential obstacles and pitfalls
- Anticipating and preparing accordingly
- Training and practicing
- Strategizing together with direct reports
- Providing advice, support, motivation, and even inspiration once in a while

The 3 Types of Coaching-Style Relationships

- **Mentors**

- Typically, a partnership between a promising young employee and an older colleague.
- Mentoring relationships cannot necessarily be 'forced', and often organizations mistake mentoring for what they are really looking for: career advisers and organizational supporters.

- **Career Advisers**

- More experienced leaders who meet regularly with another employee to discuss their career within the company, strategically
- Offers advice on what assignment opportunities to seek next, how to request desired training opportunities, and how to move within the company
- Recommends strategies for pursuing raises, promotions, desired work conditions, and when it might be advisable to hold off on these requests

The 3 Types of Coaching-Style Relationships (cont'd.)

- **Organizational Supporters**

- Beyond just discussing career strategies, organizational supporters use their influence and authority within an organization to advocate for an employee
- Steers their employee towards best training opportunities and decision-makers
- Ensures the best people don't fall through the cracks and find better deals elsewhere

The Power of Documenting Performance

- Documenting employee performance – that is, the **concrete actions** they take at work to do their job – is the foundation of great coaching-style management
- Managers who are “all over the details” are better able to:
 - Provide guidance, direction, and on-the-job training
 - Identify resource needs
 - Anticipate problems and correct small routine errors as they occur
 - Keep employees from making preventable mistakes
 - Set ambitious, but meaningful, goals and deadlines
 - Assess the appropriate scope of responsibility to delegate
 - Evaluate performance against expectations, and determine where employees can grow and improve
 - Hold employees accountable for their actions
 - Motivate employees by fairly linking their performance to rewards or detriments
 - Prevent low and mediocre performers from becoming comfortable in their jobs
 - Prevent high performers from leaving
 - Help the best people develop their careers

5 Ways to Document Performance & Monitor Concrete Actions

- **Watch employees work**
 - If you are having difficulties helping an employee succeed with a particular task, “shadow” that employee while they perform that task. You’ll find out exactly what they’re doing and how it can be done better.
- **Ask for an account**
 - In every one-on-one, ask: “What actions did you take to complete this task? Did you meet the spelled-out expectations?” Listen, make judgments, and move on to discuss next steps. If you hold these conversations regularly, monitoring performance becomes routine.
- **Help employees use self-monitoring tools**
 - Ask your employees to start using project plans, checklists, and activity logs. They can monitor whether they are meeting goals and deadlines laid out in a project plan, make notations within checklists, and report to the manager at regular intervals.

5 Ways to Document Performance & Monitor Concrete Actions (cont'd.)

- **Review work in progress on a regular basis**
 - For example, if the employee manages a database, spot-check the records. If they write reports, look at drafts. If they make phone calls, record them and listen to a random sample. You can't keep track of *everything* an employee does, but you can check random samples on a regular basis.
- **Ask around a little**
 - Gather intelligence: ask customers, vendors, coworkers, and other managers about their interactions with a specific employee. Always ask about their work, never about who they are as a person. Don't ask for evaluations, but rather for descriptions.

How to Coach on “Intangibles” Such as Soft Skills

- First, **start by defining** specifically what the desired soft skill means and what it might look like in the context of the employee’s job
- **Break it down** by spelling out what they need to do to improve that skill, step-by-step. For example: If the employee is trying to improve their attitude at work, describe the specific words, tone, or gestures they use when communicating that come off poorly to others.
- Whenever possible, **make it easy** by using ready-made lessons or exercises. There are plenty of online resources in the form of articles, videos, worksheets, or quizzes.
- **Involve the employee** by making sure they receive some form of deserved “credit” for improving on the desired soft skill
- **Make it practical** by spotlighting opportunities for the employee to practice this skill on the job, day-to-day, in an ongoing process of constant improvement

Questions?

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