

Highlight: Coaching

Summary

The goal of coaching is to help employees achieve their desired results. Coaching is used to obtain employee commitment to learning and continuous improvement. What makes coaching a superior management tool is that coaches seek this goal while also striving to keep positive relationships between themselves and their staff.

Value

Understanding and engaging in coaching activities helps individuals to:

- Help others succeed
- Help others learn or develop skills and knowledge, and new behaviours
- Jointly work with people to achieve performance goals
- Balance the needs and requirements of the organization with those of each employee
- Develop and improve communication skills between coaches and those being coached
- Provide support for individuals to do their own problem solving
- Assist people to incorporate the five principles of career building into their work and lives: change is constant, follow your heart, focus on the journey, build relationships and stay learning

Description

Coaching is a proven management strategy. Used well and consistently coaching helps strengthen the commitment and resolve of employees. This commitment is the foundation upon which learning and development is built. It is also crucial to any organization coping with constant change.

Managers will likely be called upon to provide many things; support, information, feedback, advice, contacts, clarification, a sympathetic ear and so on. Coaching offers a process to accomplish all this and more.

Example

Perhaps an employee has asked for some time to discuss a concern about not meeting deadlines related to a new project he or she is managing.

“What is it about this project that is causing you concern?”

To assist the employee to solve the problem, consider a question such as:

“What might you be able to do to overcome this obstacle?”

If the employee struggles with this question, an additional counselling technique would include the offer of help through other good questions such as:

**“How might we resolve this together?
Do you know someone who could help you?
What action could you take?”**

Focusing on non-judgmental questions may help the employee to be specific and be action-oriented. He or she may summarize the coaching session by saying:

“First of all I am going to discuss the project specifications with Lee and Terry. Secondly, I am going to read the contract, the project meeting notes, and the report by the analysts. Thirdly, I will...”

Process

Coaching follows a process that varies slightly, according to the purpose of the interaction. The three key steps are involving, developing and resolving.

1. Involving or initiating is the beginning of the conversation when the work revolves around building rapport and trust (or building upon these). Issues relating to time, confidentiality, outcomes for the conversation, etc. are discussed during this first. Coaches relate their employees' growth and development to the “business” the organization is in.
2. Developing focuses on exploring and expanding whatever issue is on the table. This stage varies according to which general type of coaching is required, but the coach's role is to manage a two-way discussion to achieve whatever goal was established at the outset.
3. In the resolving stage the coach works to: maintain and strengthen relationships with each employee; review the coaching session and affirm the employee's achievements (present and future); and plan together, the next steps the employee will take.

Four skill sets characterize the majority of coaching conversations. They are:

1. *Facilitating and guiding* to set a framework for learning and development. This generally involves the linking of employee needs and desired outcomes with the needs and business objectives of the branch.
2. *Counselling* includes assisting the employee who is seeking help with a problem, or who is looking for some help managing change.
3. *Teaching and tutoring* refers to those skills associated with providing direct coaching and instruction to employees (or identifying someone who can) to increase their level of competence.

The coach works toward having the three functions listed above initiated by employees since they are responsible for their own learning and developmental plans.

4. *Confronting and challenging* needs to occur in response to an employee's demonstrated lack of interest in learning and development, or to clarify steps an employee will take to align performance with requirements of the organization.

Implementation

Individuals who use coaching understand that there are at least four coaching themes that characterize coaching sessions. Coaches prepare themselves for coaching by:

- Focusing on the session with this employee and taking steps to be private and uninterrupted
- Specifying what the coaching session will cover and the time involved
- Choosing the most productive location for conducting the session
- Being relaxed and cordial

Practicing active listening

Maintaining comfortable eye contact

Demonstrating an interest in what
the employee is discussing

Once the stage is set, the coach will seek
to involve the employee before moving
into exploring the issue at hand.