

Important Principles for Coaching Your Team

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Wise managers recognize that they get paid for results and that their number one resource for achieving results in this down economy is their people. They also understand that people do what comes naturally to them, even if it is counter-productive, unless told to do something differently. Through coaching, managers can help all subordinates, even those that are mediocre, become optimum performers who achieve extraordinary results.

Too often, managers, in their quest to improve the performance of their division, point out only what's wrong with the individual's behavior when coaching. They assume that it isn't necessary or appropriate to applaud efforts that are effective. However, Frederick Herzberg in his classic study, *Motivation to Work*, found that people are highly motivated by achievement and recognition and are **not** motivated by failure.

Pointing out only the employee's failures can actually cause the person to become demoralized and give up. On the other hand, helping the individual to achieve motivates the person to try even harder the next time, especially if the person's efforts are recognized. In order to increase productivity, the manager's first job, then, is to provide more opportunities for achievement and look for ways to recognize those efforts.

There are many ways to recognize achievement. It doesn't have to be in the form of raises, bonuses or promotions. It can be as simple as verbalizing "Great job" or "I know you are really working hard." It can be inviting the person to lunch or mentioning the person's accomplishment at a staff meeting or in a newsletter or e-mail. Only when managers get out of their office will they notice these examples of

achievement and lesser degrees of failure. Ferdinand Fournies in his book, *Coaching for Improved Work Performance*, suggests managers write the initials of each person answering to them on their calendar at the beginning of each day. Then, before the managers go home, they should put an X besides anyone who has achieved something and circle each X as the manager recognizes it.

People do what they do because it seems logical to them and because they don't know what other alternatives are available to them. Managers must ask questions to learn what their employees now do and why. They can't sit in their ivory tower concentrating on their own tasks and expect different results. Once managers accurately analyze their staff's issues, they can give specific feedback that will help employees discover what other options are available that would allow them to maximize their performance.

Employees are different. They approach tasks differently and desire people to talk to them in a particular manner. They have different communication styles. Knowing the style of each member of the team provides the manager with key insights into their staff's behavior. Talking to them in their preferred style makes them more receptive to coaching suggestions and open to change. Communication styles can be gleaned by knowing each person on an individual basis and, perhaps, by utilizing instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Every manager wants to succeed and needs their direct reports to make this possible. People hold on to what feels comfortable, unless someone encourages them to try something different. By coaching, managers can institute critical changes that would help the division or organization to perform at optimal levels.

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