

Coaching Your Phone Reps

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The Purpose of Coaching

The purpose of any coaching session is to improve performance and to ensure commitment to superior performance. Your focus should be on what can be described objectively. Since attitudes, feelings and traits are subjective, they should not be discussed. Some pre-work, such as collecting accurate data, anticipating problems and rehearsing key points, may be required.

Your Role

In essence your job is to counsel, mentor, tutor and confront. The skills that you will need are:

- Honesty about ideas and opinions
- A warm and friendly personality
- Listening and attending skills
- The ability to confront problems in a positive and timely manner
- The ability to acknowledge the ideas of others
- The ability to probe and clarify
- The ability to respect other people's opinions
- The ability to nurture

The Four Step Process

The four steps to the coaching process are:

1. **Framing** (clarifying the purpose of the conversations, developing rapport, setting ground rules). Your success in coaching depends on properly framing or opening the coaching session. Be sure to answer any questions concerning the purpose of your session. An easy way to focus your coaching session as you open is to state how you feel about the importance of what you are doing, what you want the person you are coaching to do, and how taking these action steps will benefit them.
2. **Observing** (listening to past calls, replaying tapes of recorded calls, taking notes). The goal of this step is really to understand the strengths and limitations of your associate so that you can coach for a higher level of performance. "Bear" Bryant, the famous football coach did very little lecturing, very little hugging. What he did do was observe his players in action. He kept meticulous charts on every player for every game. The more he observed, the more he learned. If you observe too many things at once or are unclear about what you are looking for, your representative will feel overwhelmed.
3. **Exploring** (gathering information and insights into problems, exchanging feedback and jointly resolving issues). It is important to gain consensus on any performance issues. This may not be easy to do. There is a difference between feedback and criticism, but feedback is information. If it is done well, your representative can make an immediate, positive adjustment.

4. **Summarizing** (reviewing what has been heard, confirming the action steps, setting goals). In this last stage the goal is to obtain commitment to a higher level of performance and to end the coaching session on a positive note. Obviously agreeing on next steps and getting consensus on the way the representative will update you is important. Review what each of you has agreed to do. This will prevent any misunderstandings from occurring later on.

While there are four steps to the coaching process, they are not linear. You may go back and forth between each of these stages. Good luck on this most important endeavor!

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. To reach us, phone (847) 438-4480 or contact our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.