COACHING EMPLOYEES TOWARD BETTER PERFORMANCE

toolkit

HELPSIDE

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GAME
PLAN

Organizations of every size are looking for new ways to increase employee engagement and elevate performance of employees at all levels. As a leader, it's not just about your individual performance; it's about your ability to manage performance and coach the behaviors of others.

Coaching is a leadership skill that has delivered results in creating engaged employees and improving an organization's overall performance.

ACCORDING TO A STUDY CONDUCTED BY BERSIN & ASSOCIATES:

ORGANIZATIONS WITH COACHING LEADERS ARE 130% MORE LIKELY TO REALIZE STRONGER BUSINESS RESULTS.

ORGANIZATIONS WHO USE COACHING AS A LEADERSHIP TOOL ARE 39% MORE LIKELY TO HAVE STRONGER EMPLOYEE RESULTS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE.

ADDITIONALLY, ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE SENIOR LEADERS "VERY FREQUENTLY" COACHED OTHERS HAD 21% HIGHER BUSINESS RESULTS OVERALL.

Alternatively, not providing coaching to employees can lead to the development of some bad apples on your team. You know who we're talking about. The employees who show up late, under-produce and generally have a bad attitude.

According to a study by Will Felps, Associate Professor of Organization and Personnel Management at Rotterdam School of Management, groups with bad apples performed 30 to 40 percent worse than groups without a bad apple. Also, having a bad apple on the team results in less communication between others and can cause other good employees to exhibit bad apple behaviors.

Coaching bad apples and turning them into productive employees is much more cost-effective than finding new employees. In a study conducted by the Center for American Progress, the cost of losing an employee can fall anywhere between 16% of salary value for hourly, entry-level employees, to 213% of salary value for highly-skilled employees.

Still not convinced that bad apples can impede the performance of your team? Try this next activity.

BAD APPLE GROUP ACTIVITY

Put employees into small groups (6-8 employees) and ask them to complete a task.

Prior to the meeting, recruit one person in each group to secretly exhibit the classic bad apple behaviors below:

THE JERK	THE SLACKER	THE DEPRESSIVE PESSIMIST
• Cocky, rude • Chooses personal attacks over constructive criticism • Says things like, "Are you kidding me?" and "Do you have any idea what you're doing?" • Lots of eye rolls	• Leans back, feet up • Texting another person in a meeting • Commonly says, "Whatever." • Often overheard saying, "I don't care." • Will ultimately be heard claiming, "This job doesn't matter. Let's just get it done." • Lots of eye rolls	• Head down on the table/desk • States that the effort is unenjoyable • Overheard saying, "This work won't matter when we're done anyway." • Body language slackens and hunches down • Lots of eye rolls

Put employees into small groups and ask them to complete a task.

Task Ideas:
- Complete a crossword puzzle
- Build a Lego set
- Research a topic
- Solve a common business problem in your organization
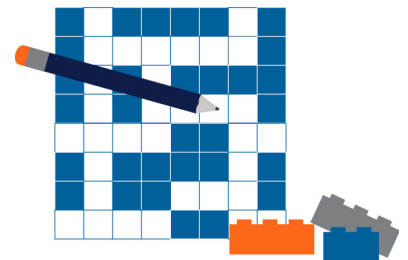
Observe the groups and note how long it takes for the bad apple behaviors to begin to rub off on others.

Bring the whole group back together and ask each group to share their experience to see if anyone brings up the bad apple.

Reveal the bad apples to the team and talk about how their behavior spread in each group.

WHY DO WE AVOID PROVIDING COACHING AND FEEDBACK TO EMPLOYEES?

If you've been a leader for a while now, you've likely been responsible for communicating with an employee about his or her performance. Depending on the type of communication, you may have experienced a defensive, or even argumentative employee.

Why does this happen? Our brains cannot distinguish between a real threat and a perceived threat to our survival. A real threat, such as a bear attack, triggers the same neural response as our boss telling us, "I need to talk to you." This means that as leaders starting a feedback or coaching session, we need to be aware that employees are already on edge. Be patient and do your best to make them feel comfortable. Emotions are likely running high, but if you can demonstrate that you genuinely care about their success, you will already be on the right path.

The best way to combat this uncomfortable feeling is to have a plan and execute it. The more often you have coaching discussions with employees, the easier they get and the more skilled you will become. It still won't be fun, but you may begin to feel a sense of accomplishment when your plan is successfully executed and your employees' performance starts to improve.

"I NEED TO TALK TO YOU"

THREAT

BALANCING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PERFORMANCE COMMUNICATION

Creating a company culture where both positive and negative performance communication is common will help fight those natural fight or flight responses from employees. This can be a difficult habit for leaders to develop, but the rewards are many. Employees will respond better when you focus on and develop those behaviors that enhance their experience, rather than always addressing negative behaviors. You will have an easier time molding employees into top performers with positive feedback than you will with negative feedback. That being said, don't be afraid to clearly and quickly address and manage behaviors that take away from your culture and fall below expectations. When you see something, say something.

COACHING VS. FEEDBACK

Coaching and feedback have been confused, misused, and misunderstood by leaders for years. When feedback and coaching are used together appropriately, they provide a powerful tool for leaders. Here are some of the differences between coaching and feedback:

FEEDBACK	COACHING
Feedback focuses on the past *"Your performance numbers from last week were…"*	**Coaching focuses on the future** *"At this rate, you are on track to close out the quarter at…"*
Feedback doesn't always include coaching *"You were 20 minutes late."*	**Coaching always includes feedback** *"Your attendance has been poor. This is not a usual behavior for you. What's going on?"*
Feedback provides snapshots of strengths & weaknesses *"Your project numbers are above average, but you customer satisfaction ratings are not meeting expectations."*	**Coaching references feedback as indicators of improved future behaviors** *"Your project numbers are consistently above average. What skills are you using to exceed those expectations? Would utilizing the same skills help you improve your customer satisfaction ratings?"*
Feedback ensures standards are met *"Our policy requires that unsatisfactory ratings are handled by…"*	**Coaching develops team members to adapt to changing circumstances** *"What options do you see?"*
Feedback sets objectives *"Today's individual performance targets are…"*	**Coaching creates/communicates a vision for the future** *"As you continue to meet or exceed your individual performance numbers, it will put you in a position to receive…"*

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

Feedback is telling, it requires minimal training and skill. It is a communication exchange that is generally one-way communication to the employee. The message is controlled by the leader with the end in mind of changing behavior or results in an employee. The message is focused on past behavior, data, information and is reactive to a situation.

WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is asking, rather than telling, with the objective of helping your employees self-actualize their own potential. Coaching is purposeful and requires a leader to ask the right questions to prompt self-reflection and motivate the employee to consider his or her own potential. The leader serves as a facilitator as he or she asks open-ended questions to help the employee think about and work towards meeting his or her highest performance potential.
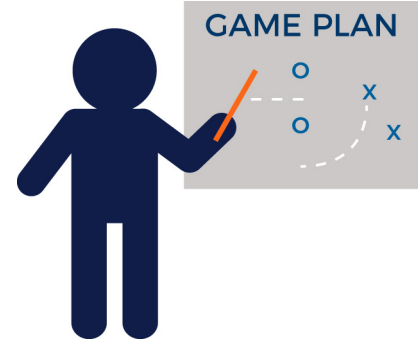
WHEN SHOULD I PROVIDE FEEDBACK?

If an employee is falling short or making errors, the leader needs to have a feedback conversation with the employee to promote self-awareness and provide clear descriptions of consequences for non-adherence. Ensure these conversations are timely and are not a backlog of past incidents.

WHY SHOULD I PROVIDE FEEDBACK?

Leaders who do not have feedback conversations leave themselves stuck with low performers who will continue to fail to meet expectations. For more information about providing feedback to employees, check out our on-demand webinar, Performance Communication Made Easy.

WHEN SHOULD I COACH?

Coaching is appropriate when the employee has consistently taken responsibility for what they're doing and appear ready for more responsibility. Coaching should occur when the leader believes the employee has the ideas and/or the answers that, if given the opportunity, might be uncovered.

WHY SHOULD I COACH?

Coaching helps facilitates growth when you want to develop your employee's knowledge and skill set.
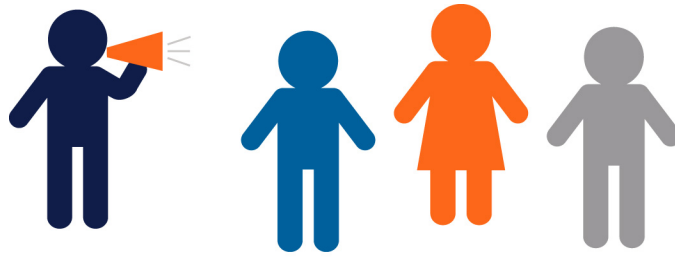
WHAT SHOULD COACHING COMMUNICATION SOUND LIKE?

Most of us don't start our day with the goal of upsetting our teams. However, by not recognizing the importance of good interpersonal communication skills, you may be hindering your ability to effectively coach your employees. Below are a few steps to help improve your coaching communication skills:

STEP 1 — CHECK YOUR STATE OF MIND AND CONSIDER YOUR LANGUAGE CAREFULLY

Before beginning a discussion about another's behavior, consider your own mental and emotional state. Coaching must be given in the right spirit, with a goal of helping the employee improve and become more effective in their role. The language you use to discuss your employee's behavior and performance is important. Be clear and concise, and focus on controllable behaviors.

Before you start the communication process, ask yourself the following questions to ensure your message will be well received:
- ✓ Am I aware of my biases and personal preferences?
- ✓ Am I conscious of my goal to help my employee develop and improve?
- ✓ What language will I use that is clear and unbiased?
- ✓ How will I focus on controllable behaviors, using observable facts as support, not personality traits?
- ✓ What outcome do I hope to see after delivering the message?
- ✓ What impact will this message have on our relationship?

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE

It's easy to jump right into the concern that led you to this coaching moment without considering the long-term effects. By taking time to consider the message beforehand, you will have an opportunity to create a message that addresses your concerns and without damaging your relationship. The message template below provides a guide for crafting your coaching message:

MESSAGE CREATION STEPS	EXAMPLE
Behavior	Not meeting deadlines
Prepare Specific Examples	Missed 3 project deadlines this past quarter
Describe Behavior to Employee Provide examples of what you have observed.	*"You have missed 3 project deadlines in the last 90 days."*
Provide Interpretation Explain your interpretation of the behavior.	*"It seems to me that managing your time has been difficult."*
Provide Explanation Share with the employee why his/her behavior is of concern.	*"Your work role involves contributing important work to a team project. When you do not meet your deadlines, it impacts the next stage of development and puts the overall project at risk."*
Check for Understanding	*Can you help me understand?*
Allow Response Time Don't be afraid of silence. Provide space for the employee to gather thoughts and respond.	*Pause and allow your employee to speak.*
Ask Clarifying Questions Ask questions to ensure that all concerns that might be impacting performance come out during the exchange.	*"Am I correct in understanding...?"* *"Is it your perception that...?"* *"Are you saying that...?"*
Develop an Action Plan Allow the employee to develop their own plan. Serve as a support and ask questions that allow the employee to determine how to improve.	*"What do you think will help you with...?"* *"What would you have done the same and what would you have done differently?"* *"How will you know if you're doing well?"*
Determine Outcomes Set specific, measurable results tied to specific dates.	*"You will have your project work completed on time. If you think you will not be able to meet the deadline, you will reach out to the project leader 3 weeks before hand and..."*
Restate the Plan	*"Your performance last quarter was a result of_____. The changes that you will make to improve this are _____."*

STEP 3 — COMMUNICATE WITH THE EMPLOYEE AND DOCUMENT THE COACHING PLAN

Once you have prepared your message, have a conversation with the employee. All performance communication should be done in private, not in front of the employee's peers.

After you've had the coaching conversation, it's important that you document the communication and agreed upon plan. In some situations, it may be helpful to have a witness available, but he/she should be another member of the management team. Use the template on the next page to document your coaching conversations.

STEP 4 — EVALUATE ONGOING PERFORMANCE

Based on the schedule agreed upon in the performance improvement plan, follow up with the employee to discuss results:

REDESIGN – IF EXPECTATIONS NOT MET

If the plan is not followed or the desired results are not achieved, complete steps one and two to prepare for the follow-up communication. Based on the plan and the determined outcomes, redesign your performance improvement plan to address any new concerns or disciplinary action. It's important that your message is consistent and you are clear about any disciplinary consequences.

REINFORCE – IF EXPECTATIONS ARE MET

If the expectations set forth in the performance improvement plan are met, follow steps one and two to prepare for a follow-up recognition communication. Let the employee know specifically what you appreciated to reinforce the positive changes in their performance. Check out our Employee Recognition Toolkit for ideas for recognizing and rewarding positive employee performance.

HELPSIDE

COACHING PLAN TEMPLATE
TAKING EMPLOYEES FROM GOOD TO GREAT!

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Employee Name: _____   Date: _____

Position: _____   Supervisor: _____

DETAILS
Describe potential growth opportunities:

_____

_____

_____

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4
Growth Opportunity Objectives: What specific growth opportunities does the employee have? Detail each objective. (completed by the supervisor)				
Expected Growth Opportunity Performance Standards: What are the expected standards of the growth opportunities? Detail the expected performance standards for each objective. (completed by the supervisor)				
Action: What specifically will the employee do to succeed with their growth opportunity performance? How and/or when will the growth opportunities be achieved? (completed by the employee)				

FOLLOW UP
A follow up review meeting will take place _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
Employee's signature: _____   Date: _____

Supervisor's signature: _____   Date: _____

COACHING PLAN SAMPLE
TAKING EMPLOYEES FROM GOOD TO GREAT!

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Employee Name: Robbie Coltrane   Date: 1/1/2018

Position: Customer Service Rep.   Supervisor: Maggie Smith

DETAILS

Describe potential growth opportunities:

Robbie does well with customer service. He has growth potential to help upsell additional products to customers, as well as provide additional services to our clients.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4
Growth Opportunity Objectives: What specific growth opportunities does the employee have? Detail each objective. (completed by the supervisor)	Upsell product to our customers.	Provide additional services to our clients and build up relationships with them.		
	Objective 1	**Objective 2**	**Objective 3**	**Objective 4**
Expected Growth Opportunity Performance Standards: What are the expected standards of the growth opportunities? Detail the expected performance standards for each objective. (completed by the supervisor)	Robbie can follow the script from the sales team to help upsell the product to our customers. He can also direct customers to specific parts of the website to show them where product is located.	Robbie can close the call by asking every client if there is anything else he can do to help them. This will help him to gain a better working and service relationship with our clients.		
	Objective 1	**Objective 2**	**Objective 3**	**Objective 4**
Action: What specifically will the employee do to succeed with their growth opportunity performance? How and/or when will the growth opportunities be achieved? (completed by the employee)	I will get a copy of the script from the sales team and utilize that to help sell our products.	I will build a service-orientated relationship with our clients and ask them how I can help or better serve them.		

FOLLOW UP
A follow up review meeting will take place   2/10/2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
Employee's signature: *Robbie Contrane*   Date: 1/1/2018

Supervisor's signature: *Maggie Smith*   Date: 1/1/2018

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BLIND COACHING ACTIVITY

You may conduct this communication activity with your leadership team, all of your employees, or a combination of both. This fun activity will help demonstrate the importance of coaching.
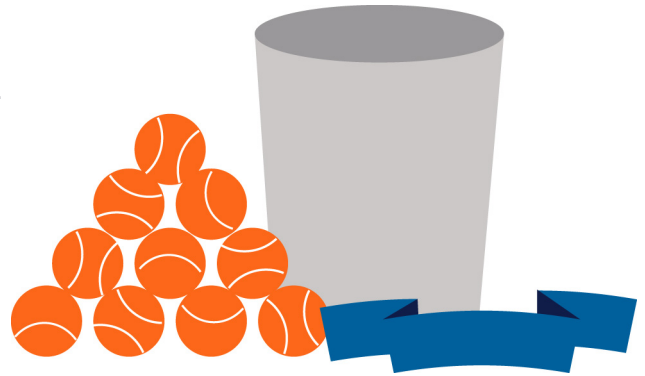
OBJECTIVE

Team members guide their blindfolded teammate in throwing balls into a waste basket.

ACTIVITY

What You Need
- 10 tennis/golf balls
- Waste basket
- Blindfold

Steps:

1) Ask a team member to volunteer to stand in the front of the room.

2) Blindfold the volunteer.

3) Place the basket four feet in front of the volunteer.

4) Ask the rest of the team to provide instructions to the blindfolded volunteer on how to make baskets. Instruct the group to yell "Score!" every time the volunteer makes a basket so they know which of their attempts are successful.

5) Explain that the volunteer will have one minute to get as many balls as he or she can into the basket using the directions and feedback given by the other participants.

6) After one minute, stop the game and ask the volunteer:
- Which types of messages were most helpful?
- What messages did you not receive that would have been helpful?
- What would you suggest to improve the type of feedback given?

7) Instruct the volunteer to put on the blindfold and try again. Repeat steps one through six.

8) After one minute, stop and discuss the differences.
Ask team members:
- What did you do differently this time when providing instructions?

Ask the volunteer:
- Do you feel like the change in instructions impacted your performance?

CONCLUSION

Being an excellent leader requires the ability to coach your employees if their performance gets off track. Just like most skills, being a good coach requires some practice.

In the end, coaching is about "letting go" of advice-giving, and instead assume the person being coached is whole, smart, and understands how to correct their behavior. By contrast, when we give feedback, we believe that the person we're giving feedback to requires our advice to figure out the actions they need to take. There is a time and place for feedback, as there is for coaching - but they are not the same. If you have further questions or would like help implementing coaching practices with your leadership team, reach out to our Human Resources team at 1-800-748-5102 or humanresources@helpside.com.

The PDF versions documents and forms in the toolkit can be found at:
www.helpside.com/coaching-toolkit