

Effective Coaching for Under Performers

"If your boss wants you to see an Executive Coach, chances are he or she thinks you're a valued employee who needs some fine-tuning." Wall Street Journal

Under performance can be defined in many ways. Typically it is an employee who has outstanding skills and valuable experience, yet is clearly not meeting the expectation of peers, subordinates and supervisor. This employee may be unaware of his under-performance and how it is affecting others.

The value and skill the employee brings to the organization is often outweighed by the cost and sometimes disruptive nature of replacing him. This training for the under-performing employee is a several-step intervention strategy that includes the participation of peers and supervisors.

Most employees are anxious and willing to effect change and will agree to an intervention strategy that involves a supportive team approach. Meetings are facilitated by a Corporate Institute staff person.

What is coaching?

An interactive process of helping others reaches their goals. It involves unlocking a person's potential to maximize his or her own performance.

Coaching allows managers and executives to develop:

1. Develops confidence and competence of others
2. Employee performance for better, more consistent results
3. Lateral leadership skills for greater cooperation from peers
4. Persuasion/negotiation skills for stronger, company-wide support
5. Clear, concise, communications for enhanced relations with clients, colleagues and partners

A Four-Step Model for Giving Corrective Feedback

1. Just the Facts - Give a clear behavior description

A behavior description is simply stating exactly what you saw or heard: just the facts. It is very difficult to argue with a good behavior description since you will be stating exactly what was said or done without giving any judgment or conclusion. For example, imagine you have an employee who is constantly late for meetings. If you were to say "You are always late for meetings, and I want it to stop," the employee would likely respond with something like, "No, I'm not, I was on time two weeks ago." Before you know it, you're into an argument and off track. A much better approach might be to say, "I noticed that you were 15 minutes late last Friday, you were 10 minutes late Tuesday, and you were 15 minutes late today." If true, it is impossible to argue with. The employee might try to justify why he/she was late but cannot argue with the facts. This approach separates the behavior from the person and makes the discussion more impersonal.

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Two key benefits to sticking to observable facts are that the approach 1) is much less confrontational and avoids putting the employee on the defensive, and 2) ensures that there is no misunderstanding around your concern.

2. Your Reaction - How does the behavior make you feel as the manager?

How, as a manager, does the behavior make you feel? Are you happy, frustrated, angry, embarrassed, or thrilled? It is important that your employees know how you feel; you are the boss. They may have no idea that you are upset or angry about a certain behavior until you tell them. They may try to dismiss the concern, but they cannot argue with how you feel.

3. Impact - What is the impact of the behavior on the larger picture?

What is the impact on morale, the team, customers, and the company? Some employees may be shocked by the impact their behavior has on other people. By describing the impact, you are giving the behavior importance.

4. Request - What do you want to see happen?

Make your request a question, not an order, since having the employee come up with the solution will result in much better buy-in. Also, if the employee does not follow through and change, you have every right to challenge them. It's quite difficult for an employee to explain why they did not follow through on their own plan. Two examples of the four-step model follow.

Some of the key steps in becoming an effective coach are as follows:

1. Know Yourself and Others
2. Describe the Performance Gap and its Consequences
3. Give Initial Feedback
4. Involve the Employee in Determining a Solution
5. Encourage and Express Confidence
6. Give Ongoing Feedback
7. Follow Up