



UNIT-3

Coaching and Mentoring

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand how coaching can be used to develop their team
- ✓ Explore various communication skills.
- ✓ Develop the coaching and mentoring skills that help improve individual performance.
- ✓ Recognize employees' strengths and give them the feedback they need to succeed
- ✓ Identify employee problems and ways you can help to correct them

Unit 3

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and Mentoring

The terms coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably. They seem synonymous, and while there are similarities and some overlap, there are also significant differences we want to bring to your attention.

A mentor is someone who shares their wisdom and can facilitate action that has a positive effect on our careers and lives. In Greek mythology, Mentor was the trusted advisor to Odysseus. Our use of the term mentor dates back to 1699 when French writer François Fénelon wrote *Les Aventures de Telemaque*, (Telemaque was Odysseus' brother), and the main character in the story is Mentor. This book gave us the modern use of the term mentor: counselor or teacher; trusted friend; one with wisdom and experience to share.

Mentorship programs in workplaces and universities are based on the idea of matching new employees with more experienced staff, who will advise and provide insight. In the workplace, mentors can advise, help with career advancement, provide professional development advice, and build networks.

The student of a mentor is often referred to as a mentee. However, the accurate term is actually **protégé**, and if you take it a step further to the Greek myths, would be called **Telemachus**.

Mentorships often evolve from a previous relationship (such as professors or previous bosses) and can also be formed with a current boss. Mentoring is usually done informally and is unpaid. There is not always a set agenda, and contact ranges from very frequent to on an as-needed basis.

Matching Mentors

First, read the left-hand column, which is a list of mentors to some very famous individuals. Then, write the name of that person's protégé (from the list below) in the right-hand column.

- Ñ Alexander the Great
- Ñ Sir Richard Branson
- Ñ Sir Anthony Hopkins
- Ñ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Ñ Helen Keller
- Ñ James Cameron

Mentor	Protégé
Freddie Laker	
Aristotle	
Roger Corman	
Sir Lawrence Olivier	
Johann C. Bach	
Anne Sullivan	

Defining Coaching

What Coaching Is

Distinct from mentoring, coaching is a conversation that helps people develop their skills, achieve success, and reach their goals. Coaching is a way of expressing the truth, confronting tough issues, and is centered around language that inspires. It is usually one on one, although there is team coaching going on now too.

Since work-related goals are often set by someone else to ensure the company's success, one of the coach's roles is to help the employee link their own motivation to corporate goals.

What Coaching Is Not

Although a coach can help someone perform better, coaching is not a performance management tool. Be careful of people who ask for coaching for what are really disciplinary problems rather than coaching issues. Disciplinary matters such as tardiness, attendance issues, insubordination, breach of contract, or inappropriate conduct are not part of the coaching conversation, and should be managed within their own, separate, context.

The Coaching Formula



The Three Factors

In order to be successful, there are three things that we need to consider:

- Ñ Aptitude: The knowledge, skills, ability, and talent to reach your objectives.
- Ñ Motivation: The attitude, confidence, focus, and drive to reach your objectives.
- Ñ Resources: Having the support (people and things), tools, and time to reach your objectives.

With these three factors addressed, people have the ability to be successful. A coach can help with all of these elements and to reach success at any level. The coach can also help to shift from small successes to moderate ones, and onward to high levels of success.

Coaching Skills

Coaching has evolved to become an expected competency for supervisors, and as it has evolved, so has the way that we coach. Effective managers at all levels recognize the need to develop the employees they supervise. By helping others expand their capabilities and improve their performance, managers and supervisors have more time to work on the things that will improve their own performance.

Managers and supervisors who are most effective at developing employees have incorporated the skill of coaching into their management style.

Coaching should not be confused with career counseling or performance reviews. Although coaching is related to both of these activities, it differs in that it is the day-to-day, hands-on process of helping employees recognize opportunities to improve their performance and their capabilities.

This skill requires you to have skills that allow you to analyze ways to improve performance, plan mutually acceptable actions, create a supportive and helpful climate, and influence employees to change behavior in positive ways.

Critical skills:

- Ñ Interpersonal communication skills
- Ñ Helping skills
- Ñ Mentoring skills
- Ñ Teaching skills
- Ñ Challenging skills

Coaching Assessment Review

Coaching Assessment and Scoring

Introduction

This self-assessment will give you the opportunity to look at your current coaching levels. You do not have to share your answers in the upcoming class, so please be very honest with your answers. Remember that you are enrolled in a coaching and mentoring course as a way to improve your coaching skills, so don't worry if you do not have a particularly high score. This will be a starting point before training gets underway.

We'll discuss what different scores mean during the course.

Assessment

For each item, indicate the degree to which you believe you use the skill or behavior by indicating your appropriate number from the scale. If you believe the description is "very characteristic" of your own behavior, write down "5." If it is "very uncharacteristic" of your behavior, write down "1." If your assessment lies somewhere between the extremes, use 2, 3, or 4, as appropriate.

		Score	Area
1.	I make contact with employees and talk to them as individuals on a daily basis.		Communication Skills
2.	I am approachable. Employees feel comfortable coming to me to		

	discuss issues.		
3.	I know my employees as individuals. They feel that I care about their welfare.		
4.	I am a good listener. I pay attention when others are speaking to me.		
5.	Conversations are two-way, with both parties exchanging views.		
6.	I try to identify the real problem rather than try to fix symptoms.		Helping Skills
7.	I encourage employees to find their own solutions to problems.		
8.	I encourage creativity or innovation.		
9.	I am always open to new ways of doing things.		
10.	I ask employees to take responsibility for their own problems.		
11.	Employees feel safe telling me when they have made a mistake.		Teaching Skills
12.	Employees are never made to feel inferior because they have made a mistake.		
13.	Employees are encouraged to develop new skills or knowledge.		
14.	Employees feel I am patient when they are learning a new skill.		
15.	I recognize employee strengths and help them use those strengths whenever possible.		
16.	I suggest networking opportunities to employees.		Mentoring Skills
17.	Employees consider me a resource on administrative matters.		
18.	Employees consider me a resource for suitable career options.		
19.	I encourage employees to apply for positions that suit their strengths.		
20.	I give employees advice for managing their way in the organization.		

21.	I help employees confront excuses.		Challenging Skills
22.	Ultimately I hold employees responsible for their own development		
23.	I give feedback on my observations without being judgmental.		
24.	I help employees recognize unproductive behaviors.		
25.	I am future-focused rather than past-oriented.		
			Score

Scoring

100-125 Points

Your coaching is capable of building real momentum for the people that you work with. Your own continued growth will help to support and encourage growth in the people that you are working with.

60-99 Points

You probably have good relationships with the people you are working with, and at times you are creating good momentum. Have a look at your ability to listen, ask thought-provoking questions, and provide feedback. See where you can develop additional strengths and watch your results get reflected in your ability to coach.

40-59 Points

This is an underdeveloped skill for you, but you have a good start. Look at the individual sections in the assessment and see if there are specific areas you need to address. Your fastest route to success might be in taking coaching specific training, as well as hiring coach to work with.

Below 40 Points

We suggest that you work on elements of communication, such as listening skills, asking questions, interviewing, and any other areas that need developing. Spend several weeks on this, and then come back to the questionnaire and repeat it. Sometimes we need to work on fundamental skills before we can launch directly into coaching.

Test Your Knowledge

Of the areas identified above, which two or three areas are most important for you personally to develop?

When will you get started?

Interpersonal Communication Skills

What are Communication Skills?

Interpersonal communication skills are the pathway by which all interactions between you and other people are made clear. In busy workplaces, we can easily shift from two-way, meaningful communication, to one-way order giving and receiving communication. One-way conversations are not a part of coaching, and neither is giving orders.

Test Your Knowledge

Identify helpful and hurtful things that we can say or do in a coaching conversation that are related to each element of non-verbal communication. Use the chart below to record your ideas.

	Helpful	Hurtful
Words		
Tone of Voice		
Facial Expressions		
Body Language		

Getting Better with Communication

As leaders, we should be spending a lot of our time asking questions and providing answers. When it comes to asking, however, we often aren't aware of our technique. Open questions in particular often give us difficulty, which is unfortunate since they are the most important ones for us to become skilled at using. If you are having trouble with open questions, it can be helpful to get more comfortable with small talk and easing yourself into the conversation at hand.

Open Questions

These are broad, general questions that require your conversation partner to provide more than just a "yes" or "no" answer. They also permit the other person to decide how much information to give.

Open questions can do the following:

- Ñ Give us more information
- Ñ Encourage your conversation partner to speak openly
- Ñ Encourage people to share opinions and ideas
- Ñ Help us determine if people have interpreted what we say accurately

Closed Questions

Closed questions can be answered with a single word or two, such as a simple yes or no. They can begin the closing process in a conversation, or provide confirmation of a detail, but they don't usually lead to a richer conversation or gathering more information. The advantage of closed questions is that they give you control over the questions and the type of answers you receive. Closed questions are easy to interpret and more questions can be answered in less time.

However, closed questions don't allow for detailed explanations or for the other person to share how they feel about a particular circumstance. If you wish to encourage a richer response or to encourage a frustrated person to talk freely, then you need to avoid asking closed questions. Here are some examples of closed questions:

- Ñ "Does this make you angry?"
- Ñ "Do you think that meeting was fun?"

To open up those same questions, you could try these open-ended statements:

- Ñ "Please explain how you feel about this situation."
- Ñ "Tell me how you feel about this meeting."

Probing Techniques

When we do not get enough information by using open-ended questions, we can use probes to expand the conversation.

Verbal and Nonverbal Probes

A probe will encourage your conversation partner to add to their previous response. Verbal probes are often a single word or short phrase. Some examples are:

- Ñ “Tell me more about that.”
- Ñ “That’s interesting. Tell me more.”
- Ñ “Really?”
- Ñ “Why?”
- Ñ “Can you give me a specific example of what you mean?”

Nonverbal probes rely on your body language and gestures to get the same results as a verbal probe. Some examples are:

- Ñ Raising the eyebrows as if you are surprised
- Ñ Nodding
- Ñ Frowning
- Ñ Pursing the lips

Probing Techniques

There are many ways that you can use probing in your conversations. We’ve provided some techniques for you below.

Ask an open question.

Some good questions include:

- Ñ “Can you describe that more clearly?”
- Ñ “Would you give me a specific example of what you mean?”
- Ñ “What do you think we should do?”

You’ll soon recognize that if you ask too many of these questions, your conversation partner will feel like they are under interrogation, so use them carefully.

Pause.

Many of us feel uncomfortable when silence overtakes a conversation, and we will fill the silence by expanding on what was said previously.

Use reflective or mirroring questions.

For example, if the employee says “I just don’t feel challenged by my work anymore,” you may respond by just reflecting back to them, “Challenged?” Then pause. Usually, the other person will provide you with an expanded answer without you asking more questions or interrogating. These kinds of statements also serve to focus or clarify and summarize without interrupting the flow of the conversation. They demonstrate your intent to understand the speaker’s thoughts and feelings.

Paraphrase.

Reflect what has just been said in your own words. “So if I understand you correctly, you...” This technique shows that you want to understand your conversation partner and that you want to be accurate. It also allows the sender to hear back what they have said from someone else’s point of view.

Use summary questions.

Summary questions are a helpful way of probing and winding up the conversation at the same time. “You have spoken to your colleague about his foul language in the office, you have tried to ignore it, and you remain concerned about the impact his swearing has on our visitors and staff. None of these techniques have worked to reduce the amount of swearing and now you are asking me to intervene. Have I got it right?”

Here is another example: when we asked an employee why it would take until next week to finish the project, one of her reasons was lack of cooperation from the production department.

Rather than come back with yet another question, you might just say “Cooperation...” in a reflective tone of voice, and pause again. Usually, the other person will recognize that reflection as a clue to expand or provide you with additional information.

Summary statements or paraphrases sum up what has been said, and will show that you have listened and absorbed what’s being said. Don’t use them to take over the dialogue.

The summary is the stronger cue that the conversation is winding down on that topic. However, if necessary or appropriate, you can follow this up with a fact-finding question (usually a closed question), such as, “Did you want to say more about the issue?”, or, “Do you have any other suggestions?”

Test Your Knowledge

Active Listening Skills

Write down the names of three people that you consider good listeners.

Active listening means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

Responding to Feelings

The content (the words spoken) is one thing, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to the speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension of listening. Are they disgusted and angry or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent! These are all feelings that you can reply to in your part of the conversation.

Reading Cues

Really listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- Ñ What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Ñ Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Ñ Are they stressing certain points?
- Ñ Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?

Demonstration Cues

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, providing you are genuine in using them.

Physical indicators include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give **verbal cues** or use phrases such as “Uh-huh,” “Go on,” “Really!” and, “Then what?”

You can use **questions** for clarification or **summarizing statements**. Examples:

- Ñ “Do you mean they were charging \$4.00 for just a cup of coffee?”
- Ñ “So after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?”

Tips for Becoming a Better Listener

- Ñ **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- Ñ **Don’t interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Ñ Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don’t let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Ñ Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ñ Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- Ñ When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well at work, you have to set a high example.

Critical Coaching Skills

Earlier, we mentioned that there are five critical skills for any coach.

- Ñ Interpersonal communication skills
- Ñ Helping skills
- Ñ Mentoring skills
- Ñ Teaching skills
- Ñ Challenging skills

Those interpersonal skills are critical. If your employees feel like you aren't approachable, and they can't talk to you, none of the other skills are going to matter very much.

Helping Skills

Use questions to obtain information, establish rapport, clarify, or stimulate thought. How they are asked can either facilitate or hinder the process of communicating.

Mentoring Skills

Overcome resistance and distrust by concentrating on what you have in common.

Be open about your own thoughts and feelings, demonstrate competencies in the individual's area, and always have the person's best interests in mind.

Teaching Skills

Encourage individuals and support them in thinking through their commitments to action.

Make your actions match your words (for example, if a person needs a coach's support, it is important that the coach not give the impression of being too busy).

Challenging Skills

Speak frankly from your more objective position as a coach. Draw attention to certain issues for the benefit of the other person.

Phrase your questions so the other person is challenged. (How do you know that? What evidence do you have for that?)

Setting Goals with SPIRIT

Setting Achievable Goals

Helping people set goals is a great way for them to see their own action plans come to life, and to realize that they can get what they are after. When you work with your protégé, ask them about their personal goals and dreams. If they have not given a lot of thought to this, it's worth recommending that they do

some learning about goal setting and achievement to help them stay focused and realize the value from having things written down.

Identifying Your Dreams

There are many areas that we can set goals in. Some ideas:

- Ñ Career (responsibilities or a specific position... or maybe even your own business)
- Ñ Income
- Ñ Relationships (marriage, children, family, friends)
- Ñ Things to learn
- Ñ Hobbies to take up
- Ñ Volunteer activities or charities to support
- Ñ Recreational activities
- Ñ Home, vehicles, or other possessions to purchase
- Ñ Places to travel to
- Ñ Spiritual
- Ñ Health (examples: lose 20 pounds, exercise more frequently)
- Ñ Educational
- Ñ Behaviors and habits to develop or change

Some specific dreams might include:

- Ñ Set up a well-organized and efficient workspace.
- Ñ Get promoted at work.
- Ñ Learn how to do yoga and practice it daily.
- Ñ Climb Mount Everest.

Now, clearly some of these are achievable in the short term while others will take longer. Some will obviously take more work than others. A coach is in an ideal position to help employees write their goals down in a meaningful way.

SPIRIT Goals

Each dream can be broken down into several small, achievable goals that will help people get where they want to go. Good goals should have SPIRIT!

Specific

Be specific about what you want or don't want to achieve. The result should be tangible and measurable. "Look gorgeous" is pretty ambiguous; "Lose 20 pounds" is specific.

Prizes

Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it's long-term. If your goal is to organize your work space, for example, you might purge old files and documents and then reward yourself with a new item for your space, like an interesting clock, a picture, or some other prize.

Individual

The goal must be something that the employee wants to do. If you want your protégé to organize their workspace but they think it looks fine, they are not going to want to work towards the goal unless they link their own motivation to it in a meaningful way.

Review

Review your progress periodically. Does the goal still make sense? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it?

Inspiring

Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall. "My workspace looks just the way I want it!" is far more inspiring than, "I hate this crummy workspace."

Time-Bound

Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. Even better, split the goal into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

Test Your Knowledge

Getting on Track

As a coach, you can help your protégé review their goals and stay on track. This means that each week, they need to schedule time to work toward those goals. For some goals, time may have to be scheduled daily. Your role is to help them get where they want to go. If things are going wrong, have a coaching conversation with them to identify barriers, problem solve, and keep moving forward.

Use the space below to create a goal with SPIRIT.

Learning Styles and Principles

Learning Styles

Despite having made it through the school system, there are people who struggle with learning. There are also teachers who work outside the school system (including coaches) who have not really learned much about how people learn. Essentially, we learn by seeing, by hearing, and by doing. We all have preferences for how we learn, and depending on what we are learning, we may need things shared with us in different ways. When we are working with employees, we must assume we need to use all three of these learning styles in order to make the principles of our coaching and teaching stick.

How many of you know you must see someone's name written down before you can remember it? That is an indication (not a guarantee) that you learn best by seeing your new skill being done by someone else, or you need to see directions on a map before you understand where you are going. On the other hand, if you need to actually say somebody's name before you remember it, or if you only understand a problem by talking it through, or reading it out loud, you may be an aural learner, meaning you need to hear what you are trying to understand.

Still others aren't really going to get the gist of any skill until they actually do it themselves, or incorporate some kind of physical activity. Kinesthetic learners have to be doing something, like completing the spreadsheet, or talking with the customer. During meetings they may be doodling or appear distracted, but they need the physical activity in order to register what's being said.

Think of the types of skills you have to teach. What can you do to make sure you have covered all the learning styles?

Test Your Knowledge

Consider a skill that you might teach. Then, identify activities for each learning style.

Skill	Visual Activities	Auditory Activities	Kinesthetic Activities

Adult Learning Principles

As adults, we learn to do by doing. Give trainees something practical to do with the information they have just heard. For example, have them fill in their planner for the next month or clean out their briefcase.

We get our impressions through our senses, so combine verbal explanations with written instructions, illustrations, or an object they can taste touch or smell. For example, in addition to verbal suggestions on time management, provide written materials, or perhaps demonstrate the proper technique for filing.

We learn when we are ready to learn. If possible, coach when there is a need for a particular skill. Help the employee understand how this learning can help them in their job, their career, or their interpersonal life. For example, learning to use time to our advantage is an essential skill if we juggle a job and a home, or if our job is particularly demanding. Most of us have things we would like to do if we could find the time.

We link new learning to what we already know. Try to make connections between what they are presently doing or saying and how they should behave differently after the training. For example, you could ask them to identify how they handle calls or e-mail now and help them work through a different way of handling these to save time. Ask them where they feel they start to lose control over their time and work from that starting point.

We learn one thing at a time, so teachers/coaches must watch that they don't rush through things too quickly, or give them too much to absorb at one time. After each learning point, it is a good idea to give people a chance to ask questions, to do an exercise to cement their understanding, or to let them practice what they have just learned. For example, you would want to make sure that trainees completely understand how to de-clutter their office before you move on to talk about using a planner.

We learn more rapidly when results are satisfying to us. Praise your trainees when they do well at even a small thing. Never ridicule them. Don't put people in positions where they might feel humiliated or threatened. For example, often just filling in a planner or setting up a telephone list of frequently called numbers can be a satisfying thing.

We need to understand what we learn. It may not be enough to just ask, "Is this clear?" or, "Do you understand?" However, if we break learning into small chunks and give them opportunities to practice, we can check back with them to see if we have been clear. Then, they have a better chance of

understanding. For example, a case study or a skill-building exercise based on learning how to say “no” may be appropriate.

The Benefits/Consequences Matrix

One technique that can be used when you want to challenge your employee to do the best they can do, or want them to change their behavior, is to draw out a four quadrant matrix like this:

Consequences of Not Changing	Benefits of Not Changing
Benefits of Changing	Consequences of Changing

This matrix should be filled in by the person who is being asked to make the changes (such as your employee). This is a way to give them control over the decisions they make, yet at the same time see the situation from a different perspective.

Whether you do one of these or any other type of exercise, remember to include documentation in your file. Coaching, like any of your leadership activities, requires a paper trail.

Skills Involved in Coaching

Write the correct term next to each meaning.

Term	Meaning
	Probing until you are sure you understand a problem or issue.
	Giving someone your complete attention.
	Showing the other person by both verbal and non-verbal messages that you are engaged in the conversation.
	Asking open questions, reflecting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and clarifying to gain more information.

Term	Meaning
	Similar to paraphrasing, in that you echo the other person's words, or rephrase them in your own words, to check understanding and to elicit more information.
	Not ridiculing, humiliating, or rejecting the other person's thoughts and feelings.
	Sharing similar experiences of your own as a way to find common ground.
	Staying in the present and drawing attention to what is happening in the conversation.
	Pausing to gather up the key points of the conversation thus far.
	Being specific and concrete in terms of what you mean and what you expect. Concreteness can be enhanced by examples and illustrations.
	Passing along references or other resources; a willingness to help an employee find those products or services needed to do his/her job better.
	Agreeing and clarifying strategies and next steps.
	Taking time to go over what has already been said, agreed upon, or decided.
	Putting strategies or specific steps in place to ensure forward movement toward a goal.
	Validating an employee's worth and skills.
	Choosing words that are clear and unambiguous so the other person is certain of what aspects of performance are a problem.
	Determining boundaries and setting limits on what elements of a problem are being addressed.
	Spending more time discussing what will happen in the future rather than going back to rehash what has already happened.

Term	Meaning
	Allowing an employee's concerns to be the topic of discussion, when warranted, rather than pressing forward with your own concerns.
	Listening, asking questions, probing, and reflecting until you have a clear picture of background information.
	Reaching mutual agreement on what has been agreed to.

Coaching Model

When it comes to getting results as a coach, it helps to have a process, as long as we don't become rigidly attached to that process. Nobody can really design a coaching process for somebody else. However, here are four steps that find their way into most coaching models.

1. Where are you and where do you want to be?
2. What are your options?
3. What steps will you take?
4. Give feedback and prompt self-reflection.

Note: It is important to understand that Steps 3 and 4 may be repeated several times when coaching employees.

Here are some characteristics that will be used in many of these steps:

- Ñ Use questions to prompt discussion on good progress
- Ñ Reach agreement on progress made
- Ñ Check the learner's understanding
- Ñ Give praise
- Ñ Look for good points to reinforce
- Ñ Clarify the next steps
- Ñ Make it clear that you are looking forward to the next stage

Giving Effective Feedback

Feedback is an essential component of coaching. Here are the six most important elements of effective feedback.

In Private

Feedback should be given in private if your comments can be embarrassing, and a formal feedback meeting should always be held in private. While some people like the attention that comes from sincere

praise or celebrating an accomplishment in front of others, some do not, and no one wants negativity shared in front of their peers.

Balanced

Balance in this context is about designing the feedback session so that, even though there may be constructive criticism required, the employee does not feel attacked, or that all you have to say about his work is negative. We recommend that you avoid the older form of “sandwich approach” (by making a positive comment, a negative, and then a positive). However, you should still start any feedback with a positive comment about some aspect of the employee’s work. If you are not comfortable with this, or not good at small talk, write some comments down ahead of time to keep yourself focused. Your employee will appreciate that you get to the heart of the meeting quickly instead of letting any anxiety build. Feedback that is delivered in specific terms and in a sincere manner is usually accepted well, even when we are receiving criticism.

Relevant

Keep the conversation focused on feedback that is relevant and job related, and to things which the employee has control over. For example, complaining about the way a letter looks when the employee only has access to an ancient printer that adds lines to everything, or asking for a sophisticated looking brochure when there is no budget provided for the proper paper and licensed photography, only adds to the employee’s stress and frustration.

Specific

Avoid general statements when you deliver feedback. “You seem unmotivated,” is not nearly as helpful as, “You arrived late to work at least three days a week, your last two assignments were late, and you did not attend the new employee lunch last week.”

Documented

Base your comments on documentation, facts, and your own observation. Don’t rely on what another manager or a colleague told you, or what someone overheard, when you should be available to monitor what is going on yourself.

Personal (In the Right Way)

Compliments or criticisms that are directed generally toward the team are meaningless to an employee. “We just don’t seem able to get out error-free invoices,” is not as constructive as, “Three of the last invoices you sent out had errors in them.” Describe the behavior that is unsatisfactory, rather than judge a person because of it. Base it on their actions, and don’t make a personal attack on the individual.

Coaching Problems and Solutions

Four Ways You Can Impact Learning

More and more, job candidates are asking the question, "What will I learn here?" If they don't like the answer they may keep looking.

For leaders, managers, and heads of projects, helping people learn is a critical contribution to individual and organizational success.

So, here are **Four Ways to Impact Learning** that will serve you well.

Impact on Curiosity: For every action there's a reaction. When we say or do something, people want time to react to it, talk about it, and understand what it means to them.

Practical Application: Allow time for questions and answers. The give-and-take after you speak is where people actually learn and where they begin to develop an affinity for, and commitment to, the topic. Even if you're an expert, the learning takes place as a result of people wrestling with the information or idea rather than being the recipients of a data dump--no matter how eloquent you may be.

Impact on self confidence: How you deliver and discuss the information impacts how people feel about learning it. People with position power--managers, supervisors, team leaders--all have the ability to build confidence in the learners or create a defensive atmosphere.

Practical Application: Tell the group at the outset that you value their questions and that you hope they'll jump in when they experience an "Aha!" or a "Help me, I don't get it." When someone asks a question, throw it back out to the group to give someone else a chance to form an answer that may be framed in a way different than your own. Thank people whenever they ask a question or offer an answer.

Impact on motivation: Even as youngsters, we knew who the teachers were who made learning exciting, interesting, and engaging. Why not be the "managerial version" of your best teacher. And remember this: **Managers Are The Mediators of Motivation.**

Practical Application: Take some time to develop questions and break people into groups to address them; if you're talking about a new marketing approach, give people a block of time to do a concept and present it to the group. You know the content. The time you spend designing the right approach will pay off in engaged learners and, ultimately, effective learning.

Impact on Creativity: Unless you're involved in safety procedures, accounting rules, or a regulatory issue, people want to be able to offer their own "variation on a theme." One of the reasons to bring people together is to capitalize on the collective creativity and varying viewpoints in the room.

Practical Application: Give people latitude to take the discussion in directions that you never thought of. Remember, you're in charge--but to try to be *in control* will shut down the kind of learning that the group--and you--have an opportunity to experience.

Bonus: When the noise level goes up and people start debating, discussing, and delving into the topic, you've been successful. Let it go until the energy begins to die down. Then, capture the points that they were making with their co-workers and discuss next steps. When learners sit passively, you may feel more relaxed because you feel in control not having to respond to questions or manage the group. What it may really mean is that they aren't engaged, aren't learning, and are waiting "until the bell rings" so they can go back to their workspace.

Further Reading:

- ✓ Battley, Susan. *Coached to Lead*. Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- ✓ Canfield, Jack, Mark Victor Hansen, and Lee Hewitt. *The Power of Focus*. HCI, 2000.
- ✓ Coe, Cindy, Dennis C. Kinlaw, and Amy Zehnder. *Coaching for Commitment (3rd Edition)*. Pfeiffer, 2007.
- ✓ Emerson, Brian, and Anne Loehr. *A Manager's Guide to Coaching: Simple and Effective Ways to Get the Best From Your Employees*. AMACOM, 2008.