

# ONE-ON-ONE COACHING

The most effective way to develop your people



BY JEFFREY W. FOLEY

Effective one-on-one coaching is one of the most important skills a great leader must possess. Effective coaching inspires in others an internal drive to act ethically to achieve goals. It drives performance, builds competence and confidence, and ultimately enhances relationships. The best coaches help people find ways to make things happen as opposed to creating excuses for why they can't.

Effective coaching also requires you to believe in yourself. You need to believe that you can have an impact in the workplace and that you can inspire others to achieve their goals. The real question is not *if* you will make a difference, *but* what difference you will make.

Respectful, transparent and regular face-to-face communication between leaders and their people breaks down barriers and builds trust. What you can see in a person's eyes or body language can be revealing. While technology can be effective at times, it will never replace human contact for discovery and inspiration.

The most impactful leaders are adept listeners and don't allow their egos to become roadblocks. When egos are alive and well, listening ceases, effective coaching environments disappear and organizations suffer.

## Recommendations

### 1. Create a positive and open environment for communication.

People listen to and follow leaders they trust. They engage in meaningful dialog and are not afraid to disagree with people they trust. Trust provides the foundation for a positive and open communication environment where connections between people can thrive.

When people connect, they learn about each other. They enable understanding of cultures, individual strengths and challenges. Knowing your people's unique capabilities and desires can help you focus on guiding them to success. Knowing your people also reduces the probability of promoting someone into a management position who does not want it or is not otherwise qualified. Not all physicians want to be managers. Not all sales people want to be sales managers. Not all technicians want to be a shop foreman. The costs can be exorbitant to an organization that wrongly promotes someone into a management position.

The following are questions that can help establish this open line of communication:

-What is on your mind?

-What can I do for you?

-How am I making your life more difficult?

When asked with genuine interest, people respond with more honesty. Meeting with your people regularly helps break down barriers. Talk to folks outside of the work area like the jogging track or grocery store. These informal sessions can be wonderful enablers of opening the line of communication.

## 2. Establish goals and strategies to achieve.

Most people want to know what success looks like. They want to be clear in their goals as an individual and, if appropriate, the leader of a team. Well-defined, measurable and relevant goals on paper help people gain clarity. Assigning responsibility with authority helps inspire an individual's commitment to be successful.

This also includes advice on how to reach their goals. Strategies are developed and agreed upon by the manager and team member so that both understand each other's roles. The probability of success increases dramatically when strategies and accountabilities are well-defined.

## 3. Enforce accountability by assessing performance.

There are many significant consequences when people are not held accountable for achieving goals or performing to standard. Integrity disappears, discipline erodes, morale evaporates and leaders are not taken seriously. Problem employees become a cancer in the organization, the best people leave and ultimately, results are not achieved.

Effective coaching demands assessment of performance. Without this assessment, no system of accountability will be achieved. If the senior leader does not hold his or her executive team accountable, subordinate leaders are likely to think, "Why should I?"

Consistent coaching sessions with your people are the key to ensuring effective follow-up assessments to celebrate successes and identify areas to improve.

## Summary

Coaching session agendas will vary based on a variety of conditions. Begin by reviewing the individual goals of those in the organization. Determine where the individual is contributing to the mission of the organization. Second, discuss what is going well. Where do both the coach and the individual agree on successes? Provide positive recognition for achievements where important. Third, discuss the challenges or areas for improvement. Underwrite honest mistakes in the pursuit of excellence so people can learn. Determine how you can help as the manager. Gain a clear understanding of the shortfall in the individual's ability and desire to achieve the goal, and what resources or assistance the individual needs to be successful. When unsatisfactory performance occurs, managers must address it. Leaders who never take action to remove an underperformer are doing a great disservice to their institution. All too often, good people serving in leadership positions fear the task of confrontation. They hope, magically, that something will happen which will turn the underperformer around and all will be well in the end. Hope is not a strategy; the magic seldom happens. Your goal as a leader and coach is to inspire a willingness to succeed.

Finally, as the manager, seek suggestions for how you can be a more effective leader for them. This question can change the dynamic of the coaching session and can provide powerful feedback for the manager in his or her quest to be the best they can be. Doing so will enhance their trust in you and help build confidence in their own capabilities.

Remember, effective one-on-one coaching can be the catalyst for attracting and retaining the best people, and that will ultimately help your organization to unprecedented results. 🌟



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