COACHING TO ACCOUNTABILITY: HOW TO ENGAGE, EMPOWER, AND MOTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES TO GREATNESS

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ABSTRACT

Most organizations meet with their employees once a year for a review. During the review, they find out what they did right or if there are areas of improvement they need to work on. But what is going on the other days of the year? Coaching is a distinctive approach that aids in developing the employees' full potentials. If done in the correct way, coaching is their roadmap to success and a benefit to the entire company. If done incorrectly, it can lead to workers feeling admonished, unappreciated, disrespected, and even punished. Employers must have an enlightened progressive staff to provide optimum service for their customers.

KEYWORDS: Employees, Organizations, Progressive & Customers

INTRODUCTION
BUILDING STEPS

The first step is to build a relationship of mutual trust and appreciation. The foundation of any good coach is rooted in the day-to-day relationships that he or she has with the employee. Without trust all will be lost and conducting an effective coaching meeting is improbable if not impossible altogether. A good coach must be open and clarify in a non-judgmental and non-accusatory way the specific reason the meeting is arranged. One of the most important steps in the coaching process is getting the employee to agree that there is a performance issue. Never overlook or avoid the performance issue; that is classic mistake manager make. A leader must be able to define the nature of the issue and get employees to recognize the consequences of their behavior. As the supervisor, you must specify the behavior and clarify the change that needs to happen. This can happen in three distinct ways: give examples of the performance issue, clarify expectations about improvement, and get an agreement on the change. To clarify the change process, probe the employee to get him or her to articulate his or her understanding of the consequences if the behavior is not changed and get agreement in writing (Graham-Leviss, 2017).

Explore ideas on how the issue can be improved or corrected by encouraging the staff member to identify his or her own alternative solutions. Avoid voicing your own unless the employee cannot think of any plausible solutions. Do not step in to choose an alternative for them, but instead let them come up with an alternative on their own. Once they come up with a good alternative discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the suggestion and explore additional suggestions. Ask the team member to explain how to resolve the problem under active discussion. Furthermore, get a commitment to act; in this step, you must get a verbal and written commitment on the action. Be sure to support the employee's choice and offer praise so that you foster engagement in the change (Graham-Leviss, 2017).

Employees will have excuses even for the most egregious behavior. A good manager is ready for any pretexts that may be communicated. Rephrase the point by taking a comment that was perceived by the employee as blaming or accusatory and recast it as an encouragement for the staff member to examine his or her behavior. Be empathic and show support for his or her situation and communicate an understanding of both content and feeling of the employee's remark. Most importantly provide constructive feedback and make sure that it is continual as time goes on in the process. Always be timely especially after any interaction, completion of a task, or if an observation was made. Be specific about any insight you offer about the change in the process. "You did a great job" is not specific enough. If you want them to know what they did right or wrong use precise understandable language and get confirmation that they understand. Focus on the "what" not the "why." Avoid making feedback seem as if it is judgmental. Begin with "I have observed" or "I have seen" and then refer to the behavior. Focus on behavior and not the person. Describe what you heard and saw and how those behaviors impact the team, customer, or the company. Always avoid a tone that exhibits anger, frustration, disappointment, or sarcasm (Graham-Leviss, 2017).

COACHING IS NOT EASY

Coaching requires courage. Feelings will be hurt, employees may cry, and certainly, some will get defensive. The goal here is helping someone be more successful not only for the company's sake but for the employee's as well. Sometimes speaking your truth can be a very difficult thing and you are not protecting anyone if you are not being truthful. If your feedback is specified and delivered in a thoughtful and caring way, the team member may not be happy at the moment, however, it gives that person the opportunity and support to make needed changes. The direct reaction initially may be anger, tears, and defensiveness and one must anticipate that. Give your employees time, and then help them to create a follow-up plan for continuous improvement. Many times, at this point, if the leader asks good questions, the ones being coached often will come up with their own solutions (Brody, 2017).

ASSUMPTIONS

When making assumptions we tend to come up with our own conclusions, which may not be the correct ones. Don't assume employees can't or won't change or that the problem will go away by itself because it won't. Also, don't assume that anyone else in the firm will come along and solve the problem. Faulty assumptions are no reason not to give feedback. If we allow poor attitudes or poor work to go unchecked this fosters an environment of poor morale and poor performance of other team members. This can destroy productivity and greatly hamper the activities of the organization in a very detrimental way. As the old saying goes "one must kill those dragons when they are young." Don't take anything for granted, especially that situations will get better and the environment will change for the best, for this is seldom true. As a leader, one must be the catalyst for change in every detail of the operation (Brody, 2017).

Asking Internal Questions

Good coaches ask questions of themselves. The most critical one is "What would I want in a coach?" What types of attributes do you think a coach should have? Certainly honesty, trust, high ethical standards, a caring helpful attitude, and an understanding of the human nature. A good coach also knows the business, the industry, and his or her market. Another key question is "Do I have enough time to do it?" The answer is a resounding yes. The most effective coaches find the time to coach their staff. Find informal opportunities to give employees feedback, such as after a meeting, a presentation, or a project to reinforce good points and any areas of improvement. Another good way managers makes time

for coaching is scheduling regular ongoing conversations with employees they are coaching. These conversations should be frequent, short, and focused. Try never to cancel if at all humanly possible. Rescheduling sends a message to the employee that the meeting is not important. Successful managers ensure that coaching time doesn't go to waste by concentrating it on the right people. Often managers tend to spend more time coaching poor performing team members than any other group. Too much time spent can expend your energy and your time. Instead give them enough assistance to climb to the middle. If they can't make it, for either lack of talent or effort, as the leader you must coach them up or coach them out. Setting this course, you can free up time to coach your middle and top performers, the people most likely to benefit from your effort (Brody, 2017).

Vulnerability is a Good Thing

As a participating member of an organizational team and a higher order leaders one must learn to build bridges and share information. Empowered leaders know how to connect with people to provide the company with effective and creative decision making. It is okay to ask subordinates for feedback. This may sound revolutionary, but it's a good way to get employees to be more receptive to coaching themselves. One of the hardest skills for a leader to embrace is being vulnerable. The very thought of being coached is met with great consternation and managers would not want to single out. In fact, the complete opposite is often true. Getting a 360 from an employee can provide the leader with profound insights into their personal strengths and successes. It also could point out improvements in how the manager coaches that can lead to increased productivity. Embracing our own shortcomings can often give gratifying and unexpected results: self-respect and most importantly a greater respect for others on the team. It takes fortitude to face criticism. Acknowledging a lapse of judgment is a humbling, honest, and clarifying experience. Being vulnerable reveals humility. At this point, there is no place for arrogance, judgment, or blame. These emotions are empty means because they signal self-protection and are time-wasting distractions to the mission and vision of the organization. Always promote an environment of feedback and collaboration (Brody 2017).

INTIMIDATION JUST DOESN'T WORK

While some leaders use tactics to lead their employees that are tantamount to intimidation, bullying, negative reinforcement, enlightened managers use more cooperative group skill-building approaches. Adopting coaching practices both improves relationships with staff and assists them in reaching their potential and the potential of the company. By coaching your workers, a good leader can mold them into the team you need them to be instead of bemoaning their shortcomings. Consistently pointing out shortcomings in a negative way only tends to alienate them to disengage and look for other employment. The company then loses good employees to its competition. Leaders that are totally money-centric rarely thrive in the long term and tend to go from job to job with not very much success. Strive to be employee-centric and the profits will follow you.

Training

To coach your employee right, stop the intimidation and make training a continued focus of the organization. Instead of engaging employees in one training session or program and then tossing them into the workforce fire make the training process an ongoing one. With regular pertinent training sessions on topics of importance to competitive survival and how that fits with the employee's managers can provide workers with the knowledge, they require to the succeed in their day-to-day tasks. With this process, you can craft a relationship in which you work with your employees as they

develop their skills to form a productive advantage for the organization.

Feedback

Constructive feedback is a key part of an active coaching process and is far different from the passive way any managers lead their staff. To truly coach, one must offer suggestions on improvement that are on target, positively put (even when it might be a negative situation), and done in a calm and professional manner. Here leaders tie workplace goals with employee goals and intertwine the goals together that foster a better workplace along with a better employee. Ask your staff "What do you want to do or accomplish in your life?" and then help them achieve it. Whether it is educational or professional, the rewards will be great both for the employee as well as for the company. Your investing in the present to create a forecasted future (Brody, 2017).

Communication Builds Trust and Empowers

What does your day-to-day communication with your team look like? Trust and mutual respect start with honest, forthright, and succinct communication. Traditional leaders see themselves as higher order managers and take the tone of voice that reinforces that perspective. An autocratic tone makes employees feel like children, especially if you reprimand staff in front of other staff or customers. This will cause immediate disengagement and defeat any attempts at accomplishing the vision, goals, and mission of the company. Effective leaders use active listening to hear and understand their employees and understand the situation more thoroughly. This can be achieved by communicating the employee's perspective back to them in your own words. Use phrases like "Am I understanding what you are saying?" and "Do you feel you've been heard and understood?" Sometimes employees just need to know that they have been heard and need to vent. Follow up the conversation with helpful questions. Staff who are effective communicators and listeners will become sound and effective strategists (Craig, 2017).

Keep in mind that failure presents an opportunity; it is not necessarily a bad consequence. Leaders need to remind employees of that fact. A good coach/leader empowers the team to transform areas of weakness into lessons learned, and as with all lessons learned in business, it takes time and effort to learn. As with all feedback, respond in a timely and concise manner, and be specific with details, describing observations and painting a picture of a future reality that can assist the employee in being successful in the workplace. Avoid any miscommunication and negativity. One must respond with empathy and work towards creative solutions when an employee communicates feelings of being overwhelmed at work or in life. This can have real-world positive effects on productivity and make the organization more competitive.

EXPERIMENTATION

A good coach empowers his or her team to innovate and experiment to grow and get better at processes and procedures that make the organization more competitive in the industry. The status quo and stagnancy curse progress and in the meantime, the competition are using this to get ahead of the firm in the market. Leaders must coach their employees to adapt, adjust, innovate, change, and then move forward. This is keys to the success of the company. The "no" manager is never successful in the long run and chases away great ideas that can be a game changer in today's competitive market-centered environment. Leaders must be the primary example and outlet of learning for employees, who won't sit back and wait forever for opportunities to develop. Employees must be made to grow outside of their comfort zones and to experiment. Give staff opportunities to speak to you about new ideas and calculated risk-taking, especially if they have done their homework and have valid claims, points, and evidence. How is an employee expected to grow if the leader

refuses to coach the team to the next level? Encouraging employees in this way will help the organization retain, empower, and grow talented staff. This will lead to a more competitive atmosphere and profits will improve at an exponential rate. A great leader must ask themselves a couple of key questions: "What does being a leader mean to me?" and "How do I lead employees to victory and empower them on their journey?" Focus more on the quality of the interaction and less on the quantity. The return on investment in empowering employees will multiply fruitfully. (Craig, 2017).

The Toolkit

One of the key elements of coaching is creating your own personal toolkit that fits your personality and the vision of the organization. Great coaches coach the root cause of the problem, not the end result. They build, mold, and encourage positive and ethical behavior that fosters the mission, vision, and objectives. Don't concentrate on surface-level issues. Leaders have to understand why the employee struggles in a particular area and use toolkit tactics to improve the skill. A coaching plan has benefits for both the employee and the leader and helps in two ways; it sets a course for consistent and clear coaching efforts across the development cycle. This ensures steady growth as opposed to coaching in waves that don't mesh with the goals of the company. It also focuses efforts on two or three skills and ensures alignment between the employee's development, the goals of the department, and the leader's coaching efforts (Corporate Leadership Council, 2010).

Of course, one should have milestones and target goals for all coaching activities that are achievable and realistic. Setting goals that are improbable to reach are one sure way to sabotage the entire effort and defeats the purpose. The true measurable outcome of the coaching efforts is the degree to which your employee improves in the targeted skill area. The problem confronting managers is that the lack of certain skills is usually just symptoms of deeper root causes of certain undesirable behaviors. Leader's work almost as a physician treating the root cause of the problems and the symptoms will dissipate and improved performance will be the end result. Some of the problems that can be improved include poor time management, poor prioritization, and the inability to say "no". Providing clear guidance to help the employee can differentiate between expected performance and perfect performance. As a coach, one must be able to explain the organization's big-picture strategy. This provides a blueprint of the vision of where the company wants to be in the future. This can help staff understand the urgency of projects and matrices that will aid the employee in understanding the mission of the department. Furthermore, coaching provides clearer boundaries for his/her job responsibilities (Corporate Leadership Council, 2010).

Information given to the employee in the coaching process should align with the development plan. This helps in ensuring that the staff member and the manager are working towards the same goals, which are the employee's development areas, and the activities that they should be engaged in. In this way, the process facilitates metrics that track the successful progress against these goals and should be identical to those in the employee's development plan. Leaders must be specific about what behavior is anticipated and what behavior is discouraged. A good coaching plan outlines the employee's responsibilities and the manager's responsibilities. Milestones, target dates, development areas, employee activities, and success measures should be tracked and explained throughout the process. Then success can be measured by employee improvement and the tracking of desired behavior. One must work on behavior, not attitude. If a staff member fails to demonstrate growth or reach the goals, it may be necessary to revisit the plan and regroup (Corporate Leadership Council, 2010)

CONCLUSIONS

Coach Them up or Coach Them out

It is unrealistic and improbable that every worker can be coached up. Managers cannot save everyone. This is an unpleasant fact about the workplace. Some staff just cannot understand how to change the very behavior that is holding them back from being a successful team member. When this happens sometimes the only avenue left is to coach them out. At that point, leaders will have to use caution and due diligence in the coaching out process. Make sure you follow the policies that the organization has in effect regarding such matters and that Human Resources and quite possibly Legal is brought into the conversation to make sure that the law is being followed to the letter. As a manager make sure the employee knows why he or she is being coached out and outline the attempts made to coach him or her to success. Always have a witness (another manager is a good choice) during the exit process.

Coaching can have great benefits for the organization, the leader, and the employee if it is done right. Many times, after the coaching is completed, the staff member becomes one of the highest producing members of the team. Coaching is a worthwhile endeavor that can even change some of the most difficult situations to a win-win for the company as well as the employee.

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