

Leading through Coaching



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The Five Conditions for Quality Performance

The work environment is warm and supportive. The workers must trust the managers;

Since quality is always useful, workers are only asked to do useful work and should be encouraged to contribute to the usefulness of what is being done.

Workers are asked to do the best they can do.

Managers guide the process of helping workers learn to continually evaluate their work. Then, based on this ongoing self-evaluation, managers encourage workers to improve the quality of what they do.

Quality work always feels good.

From George Sanfacon

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1. Introduction - Why coach ?

Coaching is the most effective way we have as leaders of improving the quality of our people's work, building relationships and motivating them. All it requires is skill, time and willingness to work with our people. There are several stages for effective performance improvement:

- **Setting Clear Goals**
- **Gap Analysis**
- **Coaching**
- **Development Planning**

2. Setting Clear Goals

Setting specific and clear targets (Yale study) leads to better performance. As the Gallup study showed people work better if they know what they are supposed to do ! . One of the key findings is that high Job Performance leads to high Job Satisfaction - not the other way around. This theory seems to be the most effective of all the motivation theories. In other words **if you want to motivate people start with clear targets.** Other findings:

- Higher goals lead to better task performance than easier goals
- Specific and more difficult goals are better than vague goals
- Feedback is essential if goals are to work
- Goal commitment is necessary for goals to work. This is affected not by participation in goal-setting but by expectancy of success
- Money may encourage spontaneous goal setting and commitment
- Individual differences are not related to goal-setting impact

3. Gap Analysis

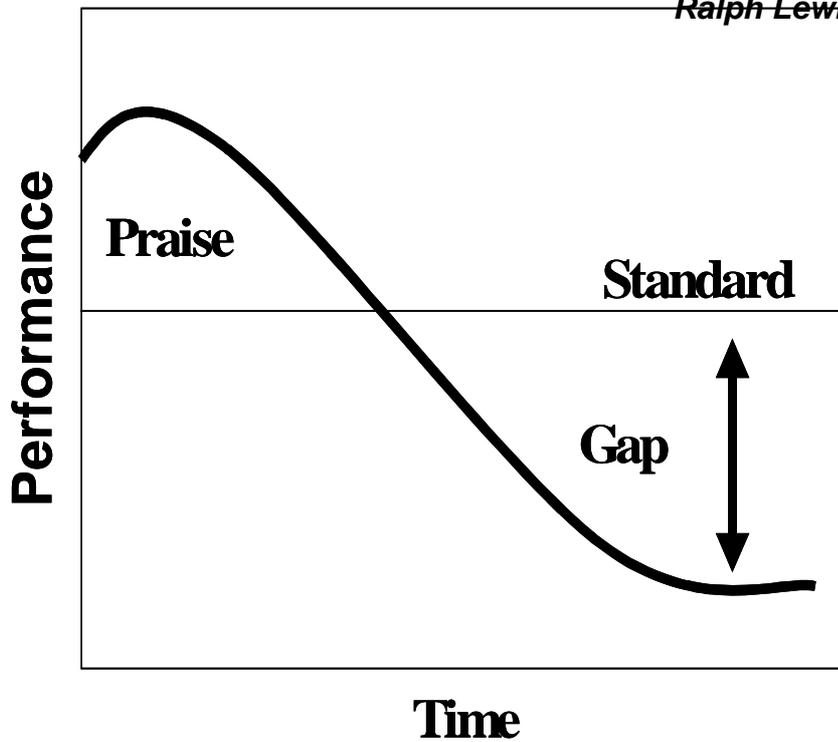
The starting point is the performance of the employee. If there is a gap in present performance then the specific skills and knowledge that are leading to the gap need to be diagnosed. This is often quite complicated to do. There may be a gap because of lack of knowledge for example but it may also be because of motivational issues. Motivational problems or lack of commitment require a different approach. (see section 4)

It is often quite easy to confuse skills. For example a badly-written report may suggest that someone needs better writing skills. However the report may be badly-written because their time management is so bad that they left it to the last minute. You need to question in detail to find out what really are the skills issues. The skills and knowledge needed for the job must be specified as well and used as a checklist for assessing the employee.

The future roles and potential jobs that an employee may be doing must also be considered. Developmental activities that prepare someone for a change in their job or promotion should be started before the actual change.

Process

- Agree the performance standard or competency.
- Agree the facts - these come from the observed behaviours.



- Agree the difference between standards and observed behaviours.
This does not have to be negative - this method should also be used as a way of giving praise and rewards. If it is negative then.....
- Ask and listen for reasons why - there may be factors beyond the control of the individual as discussed earlier.
- Devise a plan (see section on Development Planning) to reduce the gap.

Plans to reduce the GAP should:

- Be specific and clear
- Allow for mutual responsibility
- Focus on strengths
- Allow for continuous improvement
- Have a series of small steps which can be monitored and reinforced as required.

4. Coaching

What is it ?

Coaching is a two-way process in which a leader through direct discussion and guidance builds other's skills and competencies and also their motivation and confidence in order to improve or maintain performance.

It focuses on behaviours not results and is a continuous element in managing performance. Coaching uses everyday workplace tasks as starting points.

Coaching occurs whenever the leader:

- gives positive feedback to reinforce effective behaviour
- provides corrective feedback to change ineffective behaviour
- listens to employees' concerns
- helps others to develop skills or improve confidence or solve problems

Benefits of coaching:

- Improves performance in a positive fashion
- Is continuous
- Develops employees
- Allows more delegation to more competent and confident employees
- Makes work more challenging and meaningful

Barriers to coaching:

- Lack of time - short term pressures
- Lack of skills - knowing how
- Fear of confronting poor performance
- Fear of loss of control of work

Ground rules in coaching:

- Focus on behaviour not the person
- Be descriptive not evaluate
- Be specific and concrete
- Be clear and direct
- Be timely - coach as soon as appropriate
- Focus on one issue at a time only - don't overload
- Be positive - emphasise strengths
- Ask for the employee's views and solutions
- Emphasise **mutual** responsibility

For each session:

- Set and agree specific realistic goals
- Use coaching skills to help the other person develop new behaviours and skills
- Set guidelines for new activities/behaviours
- Authorise and empower the employee
- Summarise and close with clear specific "next steps".

5. Coaching Skills

All coaching discussions should follow four stages.

Stage	Purpose	Process
1 Opening	Putting other person at ease	1 Setting the Scene/Empathy
2 Discussion	Goals - Stating purpose Reality Check Giving/Receiving Information/Feeling	2 Listening 3 Questioning 4 Giving Feedback
3 Contracting	Options Will Do Getting agreement	5 Influencing
4 Closing	Summarising, Ending	6 Summarising and closing

Active Listening

Listening skills are important in all coaching, counselling or other discussion. Firstly in order to understand what the other person is saying, and secondly to make certain that what you have said has been received. Listening also includes non-verbal reception of course and feelings as well as verbal information

Questioning

Non-verbal questioning includes attentive silence or a questioning look. Verbal questions range from reflecting back to specific probing questions. All techniques are helped by interest and a non-judgmental approach.

Open-ended questions Open questions promote discovery and stimulate thinking. They are useful to help the other person start talking about a topic, outline a situation, give a broad description of what happened and how he or she reacted. They are ideal for coaching.

Follow up questions The purpose of follow up questions is to get information, broaden decisions and understand reasons and motivations. Do not over use "why". It causes people to become defensive.

Giving Feedback/Information

Feedback should be helpful to the person receiving it. The "giver" should be clear about the reasons for giving the feedback and what changes are wanted as a result. The receiver should be able to:

- understand the feedback
- accept it
- do something about it

Guidelines

- Give facts not opinions
- Make it specific
- Avoid "loaded" emotional terms
- Try to avoid judgements such as "good", "bad"
- Deal with defences and emotional reactions rather than trying to convince
- Talk about performance and behaviour rather than personality
- Use positive as well as negative feedback.
- Make certain the feedback can be used for improvement

Dealing with Objections/Contradictions

This can be difficult if it causes stress. You can stop this by **listening** and **acknowledging**. This gives you time to consider and because you have paused the other person knows that you have heard, and that you are preparing to deal with it. This calms things down, both you and them - you are not saying you agree just by acknowledging the state of affairs.

Now come back positively, not in a contradictory way but in an accepting and understanding way - "I understand you feel ... and would like you to consider ..."

A lot of criticism stems from seemingly irrational causes. Your role is like that of the lightning conductor, there to take the charge out of the situation. Allow the validity of the objector's perceptions and try to find out more to turn the objection into a positive and clear understanding. Try to end with a contract about future action or outcomes.

Suggestions/Influencing

In coaching discussions the objective is to get the other person to change and develop in certain areas of competency. A lot of people react negatively to advice or suggestions. Often advice and ideas are rejected because the recipient feels no ownership of them and sees this as a threat, or as imposed solutions. Being clear in your own mind exactly what it is you need to get across or how you want to influence the other person is the main guarantee of success. Then being receptive and using others' words and motivations to influence them.

6. The GROW Framework

The GROW framework is an excellent checklist for process in coaching.

- 1 Goals**
With the coach, the coached discusses the areas that they would like coaching help on. By questioning, reflecting and suggestions reach agreement on specific goals and the reasons why they are important and the impact reaching them will make.
- 2 Reality** The coach helps to the coached to look at the reality of their situation, positive and negative factors and their behaviours.
- 3 Options** What can the coached do and how can they do it ? The coach can offer advice (sparingly) but should focus on getting the coached to find as many options as they can themselves.
- 4 Will do's** Of all the options which is the one that the coached will actually do ! Get them to specify their next actions, milestones, etc.

7. Development Planning

The development planning process can be summarised as follows (assuming that gaps in performance and competencies have been clearly identified).

Set development goals

Skills and knowledge competencies should be set as specifically as possible with clear measurable targets. This allows matching of activities with needs more closely and effectively. It also ensures that time and effort is not wasted on development that is peripheral to the needs of the employee or position. Setting clear goals also lets the employees know exactly what is expected of them and encourages them to attain their goals. The situation or task in which they would use their newly acquired competencies should be stated and the positive benefits to them and the performance improvements spelt out.

Consider appropriate development activities, coaching etc..

A whole range of activities should be considered not just training. These can include reading, coaching by their supervisor, working in different areas, modelling (watching other skilled people), home-study programmes, task-forces, and of course internal or external training courses. Some activities will be more suited to particular skills and knowledge than others i.e. communication skills need activities with other people.

It is important to take into account the particular way that the individual prefers to learn i.e. what is their individual learning style. People differ widely in their preferences, some absorb knowledge and skills easily, others have to practice before they can understand what to do. Some can learn in the abstract, others need practical examples. The pace of learning needs to be set in terms of start, intermediate and end dates. These will depend both on the difficulty of the skill or knowledge to be learnt and the ability of the learner. Dates provide a schedule and help break down the learning into chunks, each of which can be measured.

The key is ensuring that learning is finally applied on the job and a review date should be set some time after the end of the development to make certain that this happens.

In the case of training the role of the manager is to support and integrate it through the system of performance management. Hence training should spring directly from clearly identified needs whether in terms of competency or individual motivation. This support can be demonstrated in three stages.

Pre Training

- Complete development plan showing aim of training
- Hold briefing meetings on course objectives, content, format
- Obtain baseline performance data for training evaluation

Training

- State training objectives in terms of work applications
- Visit to emphasise commitment to training
- Have learning and application session reviews
- Have action plan contracts

Post-Training

- Assign training-related projects to implement competencies
- Have participants develop support groups
- Have follow-up training and review days
- Ask previous participants to coach newer participants
- Review programmes with participants
- Have questionnaires to get feedback on training applications

Provide support

Learning new skills or knowledge can be exciting but also anxious. There is often a dip in performance as people try to apply new competencies but don't quite get it right. The stress that this causes them and inevitable mistakes that will result mean that they need support to build their confidence. Positive reinforcement and encouragement is much more helpful in learning and motivation rather than criticism. "Catch them doing something right". "Modelling" is the technical term for watching and working with someone who already has the skills and competencies required. It is a painless way of absorbing knowledge and a very good developmental activity.

Other support includes pre and post briefings and monitoring the impact of the development activity on the individual. Direct support in organisational terms can be things like clerical help, time off, easing the normal requirements of the job, providing materials and space to study. If individuals feel that their normal work is piling up there will be little inducement for them to put time into studying. Finally a note of the costs should be made, not in detail, but simply to give an indication of the cost-benefit effectiveness of the particular development activity chosen. In some cases, i.e. safety, costs have to be allocated, there is no choice. In others costs can be spread over time and different priorities.

Development Planner

A Define competency required in skills or knowledge - be as specific as possible giving clear measurable targets. (Only one competency per sheet).

B Identify the context/task - in which the skill or knowledge is to be applied.

C Results - specify the expected change in performance if the skill or knowledge is applied in the above context. i.e. why this development is required. How is this result to be measured objectively?

D Development activities - what specific activities are going to lead to development and application of the skills and knowledge required? Specify these and state they are the best way to develop these skills.

E Support and Resources - specify what additional support in the form of coaching, modelling, clerical assistance etc. may be required. Also specify resources needed from the organisation to make this happen (including costs).

F Dates - give dates for beginning and end of activities, intermediate check points and review dates. Specify standards used to objectively measure progress.

Development Planner

Name: _____ Date: _____

A Define Competency in terms of skills or knowledge	B Identify context/task	C Identify measures/results
D Development Activities	E Support and Resources Coaching/Modelling	F Dates/Checks Start
		Intermediate
	Other Supports	
	Resources/Costs	
		End/Review