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THE NEED FOR MANAGERS WITH COACHING SKILLS

Managers who effectively harness their coaching skills reap multiple benefits. Their employees are more committed, willing to put in greater effort and are less likely to leave.

Coaching's impact significantly affects people and profits within organizations committed to training managers, guiding performance and developing employees.

Most managers have had some training in coaching people for high performance. Ten years ago, 73% of managers received some form of training, according to BlessingWhite, a global leadership-development firm. But the firm's 2015 report reveals that employees who receive regular feedback through coaching conversations are in the minority.

WHY DON'T MORE MANAGERS COACH?

Managers usually cite lack of time as the main excuse for failing to coach employees, but the real reasons may be different, note John H. Zenger and Kathleen Stinnett in *The Extraordinary Coach: How the Best Leaders Help Others Grow* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2010).

Three common barriers stand in the way:

1. Misconceptions of what coaching is
2. A desire to avoid difficult conversations
3. No clear game plan for initiating and framing coaching conversations

Once they return to the office after training, many managers revert to old habits. Instead of taking time to ask questions and find solutions, they find it easier to explain and provide instructions. Finding a quick fix and moving on is their default response.

THE MANAGER-FIXER

Despite good intentions, the manager-fixer creates numerous problems:

1. Quick fixes don't teach people to think for themselves. When managers explain what needs to be done, some learning may occur, but it isn't necessarily retained. Employee engagement is minimal.
2. When work is challenging, employees will look to their managers for a quick and easy fix. They're denied any sense of ownership or autonomy. When people aren't fully engaged or empowered, their job satisfaction significantly decreases.
3. This leads to a third problem: Managers who fix problems encourage dependency, thereby creating additional work for themselves. Being the hero who comes to the rescue may boost your ego, but you'll become increasingly overwhelmed with work and ultimately create a bottleneck.

THE MANAGER-COACH

Strangely, at most companies, coaching isn't part of what managers are formally expected to do. Even though research makes it clear that employees and job candidates alike value learning and career development above most other aspects of a job, many managers don't see it as an important part of their role. ~ Monique Valcour, "You Can't Be a Great Manager If You're Not a Good Coach" (Harvard Business Review, July 2014)

Many managers believe they lack the necessary time for coaching conversations. Yet, 70% of employee learning and development happens on the job, not through formal training. If line managers are unsupportive or uninvolved, employee growth, engagement and retention are stunted. Let's address the three reasons why managers fail to coach.

1. Misconceptions of What Coaching Is

Skilled managers initiate coaching conversations so their people can explore what they do and how they do it. Coaching expands employee awareness, uncovers better solutions, and allows employees to make and implement sound decisions.

Coaching provides a safe platform for growth. Successful managers consciously choose growth as a priority outcome. They understand that developing people is as important as getting things done.

Let me ask you:

- Are the people on your team engaged and committed or just collecting a pay check?
- Do you have the right people in the right seats on the bus? Are you in the right seat?
- Is the high cost of turnover eating away your organization's bottom-line?
- Are your processes and procedures (or lack thereof) delivering productive and efficient results?
- How comfortable are the members of your senior team managing and leading others?

In today's highly competitive environment, it's no surprise that "what got you here may not get you there."

At Proffitt Management Solutions we are fully committed to providing a unique blend of team and individual development and executive coaching sessions where participants achieve more focus, a sense of purpose, and better results in their leadership roles.

Find out how services such as individual or team coaching and development, motivational and skills workshops, seminars may help you better answer those 5 questions and benefit you...

Coaching isn't instructing, mentoring, counseling, cheerleading, therapy or directing, although there are some similarities. Coaching skills include:

- Clarifying an interaction's outcome and agreeing to a conversation's goal
- Listening to what is—and isn't—said
- Asking non-leading questions to expand awareness
- Exploring possibilities, consequences actions and decisions
- Eliciting a desired future state
- Establishing goals and expectations including stretch goals
- Providing support
- Following up on progress
- Setting accountability agreements

Managers must be non-directive, listen intently and ask the right questions. Coach training emphasizes supporting people, with an eye toward challenging them.

As a manager, you're tasked with bringing out the best in people, including high performance and bottom-line results. When you take up the coaching baton, performance goals must share the stage with employee growth and development.

Many managers struggle to balance direction and support. They're usually afraid of making mistakes, so they revert to telling employees what to do instead of coaching them.

2. A Desire to Avoid Difficult Conversations

Coaching conversations require time and energy, but they're the only way to gain trust, honesty and transparency. If you're unwilling to invest the required time and effort, coaching will inevitably fail. Both parties must be committed to creating a positive relationship.

Managers must be fully present during coaching conversations, which means turning off phones and email alerts during sessions. Keep any promises you make, and be sure to emphasize that you'll maintain confidentiality.

3. No Game Plan for Coaching Conversations

Even after training, many managers have trouble initiating coaching conversations, let alone developing a process that expedites desired results.

Many models exist, but the best are short, simple and easy to employ whenever coaching opportunities arise. Coaching needn't be scheduled as 50-minute sessions. With a solid framework, you can achieve results in as little as 10 minutes.

THE GROW MODEL

One of the original coaching frameworks is the GROW model, created by Graham Alexander, Alan Fine and Sir John Whitmore.

G	Goal	The Goal is where the client wants to be. It must be clearly defined so people know when they've achieved it.
R	Reality	The Current Reality is where the client is now. What are the issues and challenges? How far away is Goal achievement?
O	Obstacles	What Obstacles are stopping the client from reaching the Goal?
	Options	Once Obstacles are identified, the client finds Options to deal with them and make progress.
W	Way Forward	The Options are converted into the Way Forward—action steps that map the way to reach the Goal.

FUEL COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Zenger and Stinnett suggest using the FUEL model in The Extraordinary Coach:

- **F** = Frame the Conversation. Set the context by agreeing on the discussion's purpose, process and desired outcomes.
- **U** = Understand the Current State. Explore the current state from the coachee's point of view. Expand the coachee's awareness of the situation to determine the real coaching issue.
- **E** = Explore the Desired State. Articulate your vision of success in this scenario. Explore multiple alternative paths before prioritizing methods of achieving this vision.

- **L = Lay Out a Success Plan.** Identify the specific, time-bounded action steps to be taken to achieve the desired results. Determine milestones for follow-up and accountability.

FACE THE COACHING FACTS

Other experts assert that being directive is an important coaching component. While people enjoy receiving their managers' support, they also want to be challenged, note John Blakey and Ian Day in *Challenging Coaching: Going Beyond Traditional Coaching to Face the FACTS* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2012).

Blakey and Day developed the FACTS coaching model from frontline observations:

- **F = Feedback:** How can coaches provide challenging feedback that informs and inspires? How can we ensure that praise and recognition for a job well done are balanced with honest feedback on mistakes, learning and failures?
- **A = Accountability:** How does a coach hold people accountable for commitments without blame or shame? How can accountability be extended from personal commitments to alignment with the values, strategy and ethos of the wider organization?
- **C = Courageous Goals:** How does a coach move beyond incremental goal-setting models to those that engage the right-brain attributes of courage, excitement, inspiration and transformation? Which models and concepts help structure coaching conversations and provide a practical road map?
- **T = Tension:** When is tension constructive? How can coaches practice creating and holding tension without risking burnout in key performers? How can the tension in a conversation be calibrated and dynamically adjusted to ensure peak performance? When does tension go too far and damage the underlying relationships?
- **S = Systems Thinking:** How can a coach stay sensitive to "big-picture" issues like ethics, diversity and the environment without losing focus on bottomline results? What can be learned from the world of systems thinking that enables the coach to be a positive agent of change for the wider organization?

What is the role of intuition in guiding interventions that reach beyond the immediate coachee and touch on deeper organizational change?

The FACTS approach requires you to master core coaching skills (intent listening, asking vital questions). You must also achieve a firm foundation of trust and respect with your employees. The FACTS approach is a launch pad for high performance and change.

7 POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Managers who avoid coaching often struggle with starting a coaching conversation. In the absence of deep, hour-long coaching sessions, you can use key questions to realize change and growth.

Michael Bungay Stanier shares seven core questions to open coaching conversations in *The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever* (Box of Crayons Press, 2016).

1. What's on your mind?
2. What else?
3. What's the real challenge here for you?
4. What do you want?
5. How can I help?
6. If you're saying "yes" to this, to what are you saying "no"?
7. What was most useful for you?

Managers who effectively use their coaching skills will boost team performance and foster employee growth and development. You can achieve stellar results if you lose your fear of initiating coaching conversations. With a simple coaching framework and powerful questions, you'll enjoy coaching conversations that are short, simple and provocative.