

The Coaching Playbook

Your Must-Have Game Plan for
Maximizing Employee Performance



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For Your Company to Really Tackle the Marketplace, You'll Need Your Employees to be Peak Performers.

But how can you ensure that everyone from seasoned veterans to new hires reach their full potential?

By offering coaching. Coaching for professionals is often misunderstood for what it really means, but its benefits are undeniable. Over 70% of employees who received coaching saw an increase in work performance, relationships, and communication skills, and 80% reported having more self-confidence.¹

¹ No author. "The Benefits of Coaching." Outstand.org. Date published: March 28, 2013.
Date accessed: March 30, 2015. <http://www.outstand.org/index.php/2013/03/the-benefits-of-coaching>

It's no wonder that over 51% of companies now consider coaching "crucial to their strategy," and that 86% felt they recouped their investment.¹

A winning coaching plan involves asking four questions:

- 1** **What is coaching?**
- 2** **Who can be a coach?**
- 3** **How do you coach?**
- 4** **What are the benefits of coaching?**

The coach is the person who guides the journey of professional development, and we'll refer to who they work with as their student or learner. Learn more about the world of coaching, how it can help your employees realize their potential, and the positive impact it can have on your bottom line.

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1

What is Coaching?



Coaching is an umbrella term for the process of developing people's skills and abilities, boosting their performance, and dealing with issues and challenges before they become major problems.² The meaning of coaching has evolved over the past few decades. Employees used to view coaching as punishment, but now, many see it as an essential part of making a bigger impact at their company.

Coaching
develops people's skills and
abilities, boosts performance, and deals with
challenges before they become major problems.²

² No author. "What is Coaching?" MindTools. No date published. Date accessed: March 27, 2015. http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_15.htm

Coaching Categories

Coaching can work for any employee of your organization, and a study by Bersin & Associates notes that coaching is typically broken down into three categories and goals:³

Executive Coaching



Leadership Coaching



Performance Coaching



The more senior the employee, the more likely they are to be coached by someone outside the organization. Lower-level colleagues will usually be coached by their direct superior. Coaching should be thought of as flexible – the most important part is that everyone agrees on the goals and process before it begins.

³ Garr, Stacia. "High Impact Performance Management." Bersin & Assoc. Date published: Nov. 2011. Date accessed: March 22, 2015.

Coaching Relationships

Everyone aims for success, and coaching can be the rising tide that lifts all boats. Coaching is about creating and managing a bond built around professional development. Discover the different types of coaching/learner relationships, and how they foster growth:

Manager/employee relationships

Managers know their own employees better than anyone, so they might be the best coaches. But because they can strongly influence their employees' careers, the learner may not be as honest with criticisms.

Third parties/ employee relationships

A different employee may offer a different perspective, and students might be more open without their manager involved. However, the coach may know less about the employee, which could slow down the process.

Outside coaching

This can present itself in two ways: 1) outside coaches train managers with techniques they can adapt to their own employees, or 2) they can do direct, one-on-one coaching with employees.

Coaching is all about developing skills and performance, but it's not a process that should be taken lightly. Decide which coaching style makes sense for your employees, then determine where it should come from.

2

Who Can Be a Coach?



Anyone can be a coach, you just need to make sure they have the necessary skills to ensure a successful experience for both parties. A coach may be asked to put on different hats to help maximize your employees' talents. Coaches will also need to have a strategy in place. Their leadership can come in a wide variety of styles, and each one should be implemented strategically to foster your team's growth.

There are six coaching personas⁴ – each benefit your employees differently.

⁴ Batista, Ed. "Keys to Coaching Your Employees." Harvard Business Review. Date published: Sept. 10, 2014. Date accessed: March 25, 2015. <https://hbr.org/2014/09/coaching-your-employees>

Coaching Personas

The Harvard Business Review found there are six types of coaching personas.⁵ Determine which type is most appropriate for your employees to gain the desired outcome:



Expert

Their value comes from advanced knowledge in a specific area. Experts' authority comes from being the smartest person in the room, but they can be devalued if they no longer carry that title.



Trainer

They can look at your employee's job performance and show them how to do it better. Trainers may not be the best coaches if what needs improvement isn't job-related.



Evangelist

These leaders spread a message and can rally people to a cause. You should note that people are motivated differently. Trying to inspire a team with one message may not work on everyone.



Coach

In this role, a coach will ask questions that guide employees down a path of discovering answers for themselves.



Mentor

They value long-term growth over immediate performance. Mentors can offer granular or "big picture" career advice. They value long-term growth over immediate performance.



Motivator

This persona helps others identify their goals and what they want to achieve. They may not be an expert in any particular field, so they likely can't help an employee in rolling out a new product.

⁵ Batista, Ed. "Keys to Coaching Your Employees." Harvard Business Review. Date published: Sept. 10, 2014. Date accessed: March 25, 2015. <https://hbr.org/2014/09/coaching-your-employees>

Does Your Coach Have a Playbook?

You'll want your coaches to demonstrate their plan for offering the strongest return on your investment. There are no universal standards for what makes a good coach, but Forbes notes coaches should have a 5-part strategy: ⁷

Clarity about the process

A true coach shows you how they work, helps employees define their challenges, and helps them visualize their future. They teach new behaviors, and show students how the skills they learn will help in their job. Be wary of coaches who don't offer much substance in their game plan.

Seeks different viewpoints

Coaches will ask their students questions, but there are two sides to every story. A coach should ask those same questions to their student's colleagues to get a complete and consistent view of their goals and challenges.

Emphasizes real change

Great coaches should be more than a sounding board. They need to teach new skills or change someone's behavior. Occasionally being a therapist is fine, and even has some merit, but that shouldn't be the foundation of coaching.

Has proven successes

Coaches should be able to point to past successes as proof of their own abilities. First-time coaches need to lay out a comprehensive strategy to help your employees.

Defines confidentiality

Trust is the foundation of coaching, so confidentiality needs to be established early, and all parties need to agree on what can or can't be shared. If a coach is vague in defining confidentiality, or breaks it, end the relationship immediately.

With the proper training, anyone can coach. Even then, coaches must create an environment that encourages communication. Coaches can take on several forms, so stakeholders must balance that with the goals of employees. So once this is sorted out, what's the right way to coach?

⁷ Anderson, Erika. "5 Things To Look For When Choosing An Executive Coach." Forbes. Date published: Aug. 15, 2013. Date accessed: March 30, 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikaandersen/2013/08/15/5-things-to-look-for-when-choosing-an-executive-coach/>

Must-Have Coaching Skill Sets

In addition to the above, coaches should be able to offer intangible skills that enable employees to achieve a higher level of success. Whether a coach is “coaching your coaches,” or if a manager is coaching a more junior colleague, they should be able to:¹⁰

Listen actively

Employees need to know that when discussing career aspirations and challenges, their coach is as invested in their success as they are. By being an active listener, the coach will be able to fully internalize and understand employees’ goals and offer meaningful solutions for impactful growth. Part of listening actively is not checking e-mails, not looking at a cell phone, or doing anything else that distracts from the one-on-one element.

Reinforce positive behaviors

A quality coach should reward employees when they’ve made the right move or decision, rather than punish them for the wrong one. By rewarding correct choices, the employee will display better performance-related behaviors as an instinct, rather than as something they have to think about doing before acting.

Ask open-ended questions

Asking “yes/no” questions, or ones that similarly offer a limited number of responses, are risky because employees have to choose best-fit answers that may not paint the whole picture. Instead, a good coach will use open-ended question, such as “How do you feel when...” or “What do you think is...” This enables the employee to provide detailed, candid answers, rather than be pigeon-holed into responses that may not present the most accurate information.

Coaches
should listen actively, reinforce
positive behaviors, and ask open-ended questions.⁷

3

How Do You Coach?



There are many ways to coach employees, but to get the most effective results, employees should be paired with mentors whose style is the best possible fit for their personality, goals, and challenges.

Best practice –
coaching is fluid and differs based
on desired goals.

How to Coach

How do coaches communicate?

Before beginning any type of coaching, all parties should agree on when and how the coach and employee will communicate. Will it happen in-person? Via phone? E-mail? A mix of those? Coaching is fluid, and it differs in each case, so the right answer is the one that everyone is comfortable with.

When do you coach?

Real coaching occurs over a long period of time. The process can be set up at scheduled intervals, on an as-needed basis, or even a combination of both. Similar to other aspects of coaching, the right answer is what the coach and employee agree on, and how the desired results will drive the student's and company's goals. Coaching can continue after the development period ends to reinforce the lessons learned.

Coach with goals in mind

Before starting a coaching relationship, the coach and student should agree on the purpose of their interactions. This not only helps determine what kind of coach persona is the best fit, but also how coaching will be implemented. All parties need to agree on goals, expectations, timelines, and more. Your employees need to know what the end looks like before they start the journey.

The right coaching style is the one where all parties agree on the desired outcomes, as well as when and how it should occur, and whether it should be done in-person, electronically, or both. Coaching has clear benefits not just to recipients, but also to a company's bottom line.

4

What are the Bottom Line Benefits of Coaching?



For all the talk about how coaching works and what it means to employees, what ultimately matters is whether your company stands to benefit from it. A well-coached employee may feel more positive than ever about their career future, but if that doesn't translate into stronger revenues, then companies would be understandably hesitant to spend further resources on it. The good news is that coaching has tangible benefits to both companies and all levels of employees.

Coaching
results in 22% increase
in bottom line profitability.⁸

⁸ No author. "Return on Investment." PCI. No date published.

Coaching Benefits

How coaching benefits companies

Companies who invested in coaching enjoyed a ROI that included: a 48% increase in organizational strength, a 39% increase in customer service, a 34% reduction in customer complaints, a 32% higher retention rate among executives, a 22% increase in bottom line profitability⁸ and 53% increase in productivity.

How coaching benefits executives

Executives also saw a positive impact: 67% improvement in teamwork, 61% increase in job satisfaction, a 52% reduction in conflict, 44% greater organizational commitment, and a 37% stronger relationship with clients. 71% noted better relationships with their supervisor, and a 63% better relationship with peers.⁹

How coaching benefits employees as a whole

In one study, 43% of employees saw an increase in motivation, 50% enjoyed a stronger working relationship with their team, 47% found a greater ability to see other perspectives, 50% acquired a new skill or improved an existing one, 43% reported an increase in work life clarity, and 43% improved their performance.¹⁰

Coaching led to
a 53% increase in productivity
and 22% higher profits.

⁸ No author. "Return on Investment." PCI. No date published. Date accessed: March 30, 2015. <http://www.performancecoachinginternational.com/resources/roi.php>

⁹ No author. "Return on Investment." PCI. No date published. Date accessed: March 30, 2015. <http://www.performancecoachinginternational.com/resources/roi.php>

¹⁰ Marber, Julie. "Are There Any Tangible Benefits to Coaching?" Coach Federation. Date published: Feb. 2007.

Date accessed: March 30, 2015. <http://www.coachfederation.org/files/includes/docs/037WhatarethebenefitsofcoachingSummaryFeb07.pdf>

The Writing is on the Wall

Coaching has definitive, measurable benefits to companies, executives, and employees, and they range from a stronger bottom line to better job performance, higher retention rates, and a happier staff. Simply put, coaching works.

Coaching is all about maximizing performance, regardless of whether it's a superstar looking to reach greater heights, a new hire wanting to start off on the right foot, or even a struggling employee who needs to improve. Anyone can be a coach, as long as they have certain intangible skills and receive the proper training. The company, coach, and employee need to agree on what to improve, how to do it, and how to define success. As long as everyone is on the same page and dedicated to professional development, the end result will be employees, and a bottom line, that reach their potential.



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smb.cornerstoneondemand.com

Stay connected:



North America Global HQ
1601 Cloverfield Blvd.
Suite 600 South
Santa Monica, CA 90404
888-365-CSOD

Europe, Middle East,
Africa (EMEA)
4 Coleman Street
London, EC2R 5AR
+44 (0) 203 700 2900

Asia Pacific Japan (APJ)
Level 1, North
29 Union St.
Auckland 1010
Australia: +61 (2) 8667 3178
New Zealand: +64 9 968 2133