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Employee Coaching ~ A Tool for Success

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What can make the difference between a high-performing team and a low-performing team? Quite often, it's the coaching style of the manager....assuming the manager coaches at all. Employee issues often rear their ugly heads when an organization lacks managers who have effective coaching styles that bring out the best in their most valuable resource – their human resources. Admittedly, we all have too much to do these days often with very limited resources at our fingertips; for those reasons alone, effectively coaching employees is even that much more critical. Providing upfront guidance, giving balanced feedback consistently, providing timely assessment of results, and rewarding high performers are fundamental management responsibilities that can make the difference between a high-performing team and a low-performing team.

Consider the performance management philosophy of your organization as an example of a “process” that can either support or hinder effective coaching – a critical part of performance management. Is your performance management approach one that takes place “once a year” ~ the dreaded review period during which a manager simply “talks at” an employee and the employee simply “hears” what he or she often disagrees with? Or is it instead an ongoing communication “process” involving a partnership between both the employee and the manager? Where objectives are agreed to in advance of the review period? Where barriers or constraints to performance are identified upfront? Where clearly defined measurements are established? Where, come the “formal” review period, there are no surprises for anyone simply because two-way communication and effective coaching occurred throughout the entire year?

Employee coaching (a key component of a performance management process) is not something that happens once a year. It's not about completing forms. Rather, it is an ongoing communication process that occurs consistently, timely, and throughout the employment relationship. In my many years in human resources leadership roles, I was always amazed at the number of times that managers would ask me “Can I go ahead and talk to my employee about X or should I wait until the review process in a month?” My counsel was always the same: “You should be talking to your employees on a regular basis. Have a conversation with them – especially if it is while an issue is causing problems...but even more so if it is an opportunity to recognize their positive contributions to the team.”



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Coaching and managing performance is not something we do “to” employees but rather should be viewed as a tool to help others succeed. When was the last time you engaged in meaningful, two-way conversation with your employees? Remember....the road toward a high-performance team starts at a very simple place – a conversation.

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