THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COACHING, MANAGING AND TRAINING

As companies continue to seek competitive advantage during difficult times, management coaching has become de rigueur. According to a survey by the American Management Association, over 50 percent of companies have management coaching programs in place and another 37 percent plan to implement them in the future. Unfortunately, the term "management coaching" has spawned a variety of definitions, confusing and blurring the true distinctions between coaching, managing, and training. While there are commonalities between these functions, there are some important differences worth noting.

Coaching is Not Training

Many people think of coaching and training synonymously. After all, both activities involve imparting knowledge, giving corrective feedback, and demonstrating patience. However, training emphasizes skill acquisition. It enables a participant to develop a "mental map" for a new procedure, behavior, or process.

Coaching, on the other hand, involves the *application* of training. Coaching takes the "mental map" and transfers it into one's "mental muscles." In this sense, coaching follows training because it requires a participant to apply lessons learned in the classroom to one's daily life on the job.

Coaching is Not Management

Many companies these days are trying to equip their managers to become in-house coaches. Certainly, there are some advantages to this approach, but coaching is not management. Confusion between these two activities occurs because there is some overlap between them. Coaching and management both require organization and follow-up skills. Both activities chart milestones and monitor progress. And, most importantly, both are grounded in a sense of fairness and honesty.

However, management, by its very nature, is an evaluative and judgmental process. It requires direction setting, criticism, and a laser-like focus on company goals. In addition, management relies on the concept of accountability to the company.

Coaching, by contrast, is a non-evaluative and a non-judgmental process that focuses on the goals of the participant rather than the goals of the company. There is no performance appraisal in coaching. It is a purely voluntary endeavor that relies on a person's commitment and objectivity. In other words, coaching hinges on the "coachability" of the participant.

Relationship Between Coaching, Managing, and Training

What Coaching Is

If coaching is not training and it is not management, what makes it distinctive? Fundamentally, coaching is a process of encouragement. By using tools such as praise and sincere caring, coaches motivate participants to achieve more. By knowing when to talk and when to listen, coaches help participants build confidence, problem solving skills and self-awareness. By displaying enthusiasm, coaches inspire participants to give extra effort and overcome setbacks.

There are two other ingredients in successful coaching: advice giving and reflection. Through the judicious use of advice before problems arise, coaches help participants avoid spinning their wheels or getting stuck on plateaus. By reflection and serving as a sounding board, coaches help participants clarify thinking, make decisions, and take action.

The Common Foundation

Before coaching, managing, or training can begin, several preconditions must be met. Perhaps the most important of these is the assessment of a participant's strengths and weaknesses. It is impossible to know where to begin training, coaching, or managing without knowing an individual's assets, vulnerabilities, and coachability. The best assessment approaches for these qualities use tools that benchmark an individual to an appropriate peer group.

PSP Metrics provides assessment services which can be custom-tailored to each company's needs and requirements for the purpose of managing, coaching, or training high potential people. By beginning with a sound assessment process, companies can select the right people to develop and can do so in a cost effective manner. Utilizing careful assessment, targeted training, accountable management, and inspirational coaching, companies gain an important competitive advantage during difficult times.

WHAT'S ON YOUR LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD?

It is commonplace in today's companies to have dashboard metrics on how the business is functioning, especially for operations and financial data. There are also metrics for human capital data such as number of employee hours, revenue per employee, lost time and safety incidents. The challenge of a leadership dashboard is that leadership metrics do not lend themselves readily to numerical data and charts and are not easily tracked. However, we do ourselves and our organizations a disservice if we do not focus on leadership metrics as frequently as financial and operations metrics, as they are inescapingly linked together.

But what should be the focal points on a leadership dashboard and how do you track them? This is the key question you must ask yourself as a leader because what you prioritize and focus on as a leader is what will get done. As Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric, states, "Every leader needs to clearly explain the top three things the organization is working on. If you can't, then you are not leading well." So, explaining objectives and giving feedback on key result areas (KRAs) should be on your leadership dashboard.

Communications also would to be a high priority for anyone's leadership dashboard. Leadership places a premium on communications. Research shows that successful leaders spend 70% of their time in some form of communications, including listening to others, following up on projects, sharing information, shaping the discourse, giving feedback, building relationships, promoting teamwork, removing obstacles, teaching, coaching, and simply asking for help in reaching goals. Specific reminders on communications should be on your dashboard.

What else is important enough to be on your leadership dashboard? Questions to ask are: What issue could hurt you if you ignore it? Could neglecting this issue ruin your chances of achieving your goals? Oftentimes, these are difficult questions to answer in advance, especially on your own. This is why smart leaders welcome 360 feedback surveys and standardized assessments to increase their self-awareness of potential blind spots or areas they have neglected because of other priorities. These blind spots and neglected areas can be addressed through self-development activities and tracked via your dashboard.

For another item on your leadership dashboard, consider self-management. Start with your health, and include exercise, nutrition, special interests, and overall work/life balance for family and personal life on your dashboard. Don't forget to include time for professional development activities. If you don't re-fuel your engine regularly, you may find that you are "running on empty" or have failed to "charge your battery."

Your leadership dashboard also should have warning lights for important areas such as employee morale, safety, and workplace conflict that alert you to potential problem areas.

Employee engagement survey results can alert you to issues or problems in particular work areas that need to be included in your leadership dashboard. There could be other gauges and warning lights on your dashboard for such areas as networking with peers and customers, delegation, or personal developmental areas that are important to you such as controlling your emotions, being more empathetic, practicing active listening, or being more clear and direct in your expectations.

The placement of information on your personal leadership dashboard will vary depending on the importance of particular issues as well as other demands at any given time. Your personal leadership dashboard will provide you with the means of gauging your effectiveness as a leader. When you utilize your personal leadership dashboard metrics for making adjustments and reminding you to follow through, you have a much greater chance of reaching your destination and not finding yourself off track or derailed.

Mary Tyler, Director of Purchasing for a Midwest manufacturing company, received feedback on her 360 survey that she needed to improve her communications with her internal customers and her direct reports. As a result, Communications became a high priority on her Leadership Dashboard. Specific behavioral actions were written into her Dashboard, such as asking for input on decisions and active listening when in conversation.

Networking with key customers was also placed on her Dashboard. Mary reviewed her Dashboard daily as a reminder and rated herself weekly on how she was using her new behavior actions to monitor her progress. Her Leadership Dashboard software enables her to send out quarterly emails to her internal customers and direct reports to gather feedback on her progress. The Dashboard allows Mary to monitor the progress she is making.

WHAT'S NEW @ PSP

❖ Launched an Executive Coaching Program for finance executives at a large family-owned business.

❖ Designed a customized 360 Survey for IT managers at a major electric power company.

❖ Implemented a new plant employee opinion survey for a large chemical manufacturing facility in the southeast.

❖ Created a new behavioral test utilizing our paired comparison software. This test reduces falsification and also reduces the time for completion.

❖ Developed a screening test for Maintenance Technicians in a large rail transportation company.

❖ Customized a Supervisory Development assessment tool for a regional natural gas provider.

❖ Updated new position benchmarks for a variety of positions in finance, engineering, supply chain, production, maintenance and sales.

❖ Currently working with software developers to create a Leadership Dashboard desktop application that would enhance self-monitoring for employee leadership development goals.

❖ Upgraded our Motivator 360 software to provide easier-to-understand results and better graphics.

RESOURCES FOR LEADERS

Axzo Press offers a handy workbook titled *Coaching Skills for Leaders* which is designed to give users a complete understanding of coaching techniques in the shortest amount of time. It can be used in a group setting or for self-study.

In its third edition, *Masterful Coaching* by Robert Hargrove gives an in-depth look at the coaching process and demonstrates how to become a Masterful Coach by way of 12 results-oriented Coaching Conversations.
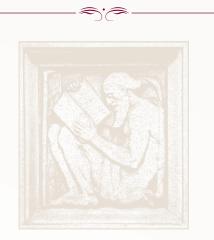
Coaching People, part of the Harvard Business Review Pocket Mentor series, provides a concise overview of the elements of coaching along with ready-to-use ideas to get you started right away. It is available in paperback or as a PDF download from hbr.org.

Are you wondering how well your coaching skills measure up? Take Harvard Business Review's interactive quiz: *Test Yourself: How's Your Coaching?* (http://hbr.org/web/tools/2008/12/coaching) to see where your strengths and weaknesses lie.

If you are ready to take your coaching to the next level, try one of these self-study courses to refine and strengthen your skills:

Coaching: Harvard ManageMentor Online Module (http://hbr.org/harvardmanagementor) This interactive self-study course provides up-to-date information, exercises, real-life examples and downloadable tools. A one-time purchase gives you access to the course for a full year.

Coaching for High Performance from the American Management Association (www.amaselfstudy.org) outlines a 7-step process for managers to use to help their staff achieve success in their jobs and stretch themselves to meet new challenges in the future.

For recommendations on training resources on any management topic, contact PSP directly.

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