
Why Leaders must Coach

We live in a fast-paced, ever changing, complex world. As leaders we are constantly looking for more effective, efficient, and productive ways to do our work and that of those we lead. You probably have read the statistics that the Gallup organization published about the percentage of non-engaged and actively disengaged employees (<http://www.gallup.com/consulting/52/Employee-Engagement.aspx>).

The cost is staggering. Even with jobs in jeopardy during tough economic times, employee engagement has not significantly increased and the reasons for the lack of engagement have not changed. Leadership is still the key but a specific style of leading is needed.

Thus, the basis for the assertion that leaders must coach. Here are 5 researched-backed reasons:

- The leader's sphere of influence significantly increases as a leader-coach
- Coaching raises the level of personal responsibility and initiative in your employees
- Coaching inspires creativity and innovation as employees "tap" into their individual talents
- Employees become problem solvers instead of handing them off to the leader
- Employees are more collaborative and supportive in a coaching environment

The next part of the assertion that leaders must coach answers the WIIFM (what's in it for me) as a leader:

- With a larger sphere of influence, a leader can ask more from employees
- The leader does not have to micromanage because employees are self-motivated
- A leader-coach has more time to be creative and think strategically
- The leader is able to grow in their area of expertise, extend their networks, and work on their own personal development
- Because employees are more engaged they stay with the organization. The leader's energy shifts from being frustrated about poor performance and low productivity to growing the current employees and the next great idea.

So, why is it that leaders do not coach?

- Actually many leaders think that they do coach. They confuse coaching with giving directives, training/informing and/or performance correction or discipline. Many have never been exposed to the concept that coaching is not something that you "do" but more about "being".
- There is the misconception that coaching takes too much time. Research continues to prove that leader-coaches' employees are more productive. What is true is that it does take time to build a "coaching environment".
- Coaching skills and confidence are lacking for many leaders who desire to create a coaching environment.
- Sometimes leaders "try" coaching expecting to get a quick fix they want. When that doesn't happen, they decide coaching doesn't work.
- Many leaders do not think they need to change or adjust any of their behaviors to become a leader-coach.

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How can a leader become a leader-coach?

- Develop excellent listening skills. Leader-coaches listen with the intention to fully understand others rather than to direct or coerce. They believe that others have abundant knowledge and wisdom to make meaningful contributions to the work of the organization. They know how to ask the probing questions which enable others to contribute to the success of their personal performance as well as to the organization.
- Expand the sphere of trust. Leader-coaches are trusting of others, and they are trustworthy. Leader coaches develop trust by letting others see them for who they really are, being unconditionally constructive in their communications, admitting their own mistakes, accepting the mistakes of others, and demonstrating genuine interest in other people.
- Seek to grow as a leader-coach by becoming more skilled in the “art of coaching” and the practice of coaching. MSBCoach (www.msbcoach.com) offers an intensive coaching workshop that will strengthen your skills and give you additional tools to become a strong leader-coach.

The Gallup research asserts that engaged organizations have 3.9 times the earnings per share growth rate compared to those organizations within the same industry that have lower engagement. There are many things that can be concluded from the study, but perhaps most significant is that a leader who coaches can impact the level of engagement as well as the bottom line.

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