



Coaching for Performance – The Challenge:

You're in The Big Leagues Now: Coaching for Performance.

This is a great opportunity to practice your influence skills! Try the following:

Most of us got our first definition of "coaching" from playing team sports as youngsters. The problem is, as a professional manager, you're playing in the big leagues now with a team of competent, accomplished players. Coaching for work performance is one of the most critical roles that managers face today. The rules have changed since your baseball and soccer days and, more important, there is much more at stake than a trophy gathering dust in your den.

After working with over 3,000 scientific managers, I would like to offer some tips for getting real performance from your adult team. Here's what to do:

Step One: Tell them where you expect them to "hit the ball". Make your expectations clear. Be specific and use concise descriptions of observed behaviors when giving feedback. Sometimes, poor performance is due to unclear or even uncommunicated expectations.

Step Two: Tell them like it is. Because coaching is uncomfortable for many managers, we have a tendency to hint at the problem, "You may want to read the latest issue of Science" instead of "You are not current with your journal reading." Even worse, sometimes we say so much that the message is unclear to the listener. Direct, clear communication that states the specific behavior that has been observed is always best.

Step Three: No excuses! Many managers view coaching as confrontational and as a result, they often take personal responsibility for the "missed" expectation. They may even provide excuses, "I'm sure you've been so busy with the projects I've handed you that you haven't had time to keep up with your journal reading." Use this opportunity to clarify expectations.

Step Four: "Let me give you the answer". All managers are pressed for time and, we're paid to have all the answers, aren't we? No. When we assume we know why the team member has not performed appropriately and then tell them how to fix the problem, we're talking to ourselves. Without dialogue, we may miss what the real problem is for the team member and never get the chance to fix what's really wrong.

Step Five: Attitude. Attitude. Attitude. If location, location, location is the key to real estate success, attitude is the key to good coaching. A great coach helps his/her employee to see things that he/she hadn't seen before, offers a different perspective, inspires him/her to do more and be more, and facilitates problem solving. It's not about crying "foul!". It is about identifying the challenge and then collaboratively solving it.

As youngsters, our coaches were dedicated to building both self esteem and performance. As adult managers, our role is very much the same, but the techniques are different. Use these tips and watch your team take the pennant!



Team Building Tip:

Identify an activity that your team can do together to let them get to know one another as “people”. You might go on a hike together in the mountains, take a sea kayaking tour or prepare and consume a dinner together. It is important to begin building a foundation of trust at the very beginning of your teaming relationship.