

Coaching for Performance

Coaching occurs when a manager/supervisor provides feedback to an employee for the purpose of improving performance. It can be used when an employee is meeting expectations. It can also be used when an employee is performing well but is capable of doing even more. Coaching can include providing people with direction, guiding them in how to master new skills, procedures, or tasks and helping them meet performance goals, etc.

Through coaching, managers/supervisors free up their own time, improve their employee's performance and enhance the productivity of their department and agency.



Deciding When and How to Coach

Reason for Coaching	Actions to Take
Building Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up opportunities for new skills to be learned and practiced. • Break up large-scale tasks into smaller ones, gradually introducing new skills. • Before starting a new project or taking a training program, coach employees to identify performance targets they want to achieve. • At the end of each project or deliverable, talk to your employees about what they learned and what new skills they developed.
Work Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link coaching sessions with progress reports/status checks throughout the year. • Discuss potential barriers to work success. • Act as a sounding board for potential solutions. Help employee think through the pros' and cons' of each solution.
Solving Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage employees to define the problem and come up with possible solutions. • Act as a sounding board for their potential solutions. Help them think through the pros' and cons'. • Remain sympathetic to the employee's difficulties, while encouraging them to continue dealing with the problem.
Developing Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the employee's career goals. • Discuss steps to help the employee close the gap between where they are now and where they want to be. • Try to identify some work projects or responsibilities that could challenge the employee and develop their potential.

Reason for Coaching	Actions to Take
Overcoming Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help employee think through the others' perspectives. • Focus the discussion on results rather than personalities. • Act as a sounding board for potential solutions. Help the employee think through the various ways to resolve the conflict.
Remotivating Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the employee's needs and aspirations and link these to the performance goals. • Help the employee see the link between their work and the overall agency and State goals. • Ask the employee what type of recognition motivates them, and then respond accordingly. • Let the employee know you notice the good work they've done.

When meeting with an employee for coaching purposes:

1. Be clear on the reason for the coaching session: What are the goals? Is it to help the employee attain their career goals? Is it to help the employee perform better in their current role? Etc. This is your starting point.
2. Get to know the person you are going to coach. The more you know about their vision, objectives, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses, the better able you will be to offer performance improvement ideas.
3. Coaching is not one-sided. It is a give-and-take sharing of ideas and information. Provide a structure overall, but then stand back. Answer questions or be a cheerleader, as needed.
4. Lead but don't give the answers; give direction. Try to provide information which the person can use to chart the next course of action.
5. Don't just ask, "Why?" Probe deeper. Instead ask "What got in your way and how can you deal with it next time?"
6. Avoid negatives such as "I don't think..." and "You shouldn't..." Instead encourage and use phrases like "What if we tried to..." or "Maybe you could..." or "another option might be..."
7. Realize a coach never has all the answers. If you don't know the answer, admit it. Find the answer and provide it at the next coaching session.
8. Recognize progress, no matter how small. Rewarding small efforts inspires bigger efforts. Provide encouragement and support each step along the way, giving feedback to help build upon each success, no matter how small.
9. Give feedback at the end of each session. Make suggestions for improvement. Ask the employee to list two or three of the most important things he or she has learned. This will reinforce learning and help build the employee's satisfaction with the learning process. Ask for feedback on your coaching skills as well.