

Finding Balance: Managing and Coaching

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In the modern world of management, the value of coaching has been recognized as a way to add value to a business. Coaching can be utilized to increase job satisfaction and employee engagement, subsequently reducing employee turnover, increasing return on investment (directly and indirectly), and ultimately providing a better service to clients.

Gallup American Workplace Survey 2013:

- 147% higher earnings per share for companies with average 9.3 engaged employees for every 1 actively disengaged employee
- “When organizations successfully engage their customers and their employees, they experience a 240% boost in performance-related business outcomes compared with an organization with neither engaged employees nor engaged customers.”
- Managers who focus on the strengths of their employees can essentially eliminate actively disengaged employees

Most of us work for small businesses where one person wears many hats and there is room to argue that even within larger organizations, it is important that everybody grasp some of the important elements of both management and coaching. At Dove, our managers all spend a majority of their time working on the floor with colleagues that have training similar to their own. This gives them a chance to shine, leading by example, and a chance to identify problems first hand. It gives them immediate work experience with those that they supervise which can be helpful for feedback and for training.

One could argue that even within that framework on a narrower, day to day level there is room for every staff member to practice their management and coaching skills. Veterinarians provide to technicians orders for diagnostic testing and treatments, technicians utilize assistants to complete those tasks, and assistants generally have their own duties to balance with the demands of veterinarians and technicians. In each of these situations, individuals may find themselves in a situation where they need to provide some degree of management or coaching to one another. Coaching is particularly valuable in situations where employees are experienced, educated, and/or well-trained which is often the case in our practices.

Managing: What is it?

Definition: Wikipedia - organization and coordination of the activities of an enterprise in accordance with certain policies and in achievement of clearly defined objectives.

Primary functions of management:

- **Forecasting** involves assessing markets and estimating the general direction that a business is expected to follow in the future as well as potentially looking into markets for growth.
- **Planning** looks at the organization in the short and long term, generating action plans to reach goals.
- **Organizing** breaks down plans to determine the appropriate individuals and resources needed to bring about their completion.
- **Commanding** involves direct action, dictating the correct action to be taken for an individual situation and getting people to do it.
- **Controlling** involves monitoring the progress of a business and checking that progress against organizational plans.
- **Coordinating** or communicating involves the spread of information throughout an organization.

Necessary skills:

- **Interpersonal skills** to communicate and delegate
- **Conceptual abilities** to analyze data and situations
- **Diagnostic skills** to assess responses to a situation
- **Technical expertise** in the area being managed is helpful
- **Project management skills** aid in complete planning and oversight
- **Political abilities** used to build a base and establish connections

When managing misses its mark:

- Micromanagement occurs when managers involve themselves with controlling every step of processes rather than a goal oriented approach and can lead to resentment, impairment of team function, and stagnation of processes within the workplace. It is noteworthy that micromanagement IS a part of training so it is not completely without a place in modern business but taken outside of the realm of training it quickly proves toxic.
- Top heavy management systems can lead to staff members actually getting more attention than they need. This reduces autonomy and decreases the individual's ability to trouble shoot and solve problems on their own because they are unaccustomed to being empowered and thinking on their feet. On the other end of the spectrum, spreading a manager too thinly over a number of employees can lead to a lack of support and structure.
- When management narrows its focus too specifically, it can lead to a decrease in organizational change and innovation, limiting growth and decreasing survivability in an ever changing world. Creating a mission or goal that is too broad will make it difficult for employees to grasp their importance to the mission or develop a plan for attaining the goal.
- Any time that management loses sight of the human factor when creating projects or policies, they are setting themselves up for failure. Projects should have well defined parameters but should also take into account the skills and flexibility of the people that will do the work.

Situations

Obviously, there are overarching times that every business requires management. This includes all of the higher level business development: business plan, financing the business, legal structure, mission, long and short-term goals, marketing, competitive analysis, business development, and many more. However, there are also day to day situations when management skills are important and those are the situations focused on here.

- **Emergent situations:** This is the no-brainer time for somebody to step up and manage the situation. During these times, when a lot of people around may well have all of the skills necessary for all of the tasks at hand, they need coordination to get everything that needs to be done completed in a timely fashion. CPR is the perfect on the floor example of this, there needs to be one person coordinating everybody's efforts efficiently to get everything done as quickly as possible. This is a time to tell people what to do but remember that more than one cook in the kitchen at the same time is going to make a mess!
- **Inexperience:** In the event that an employee has no experience in a task or procedure at all, management style guidance is helpful. Make sure to provide the employee with specific instructions, guidelines, and examples where necessary to set them up to succeed at the task in question and give feedback where needed. Some tasks lend themselves more easily than others to perfection so make sure to recognize where things are going right. For example, a technician may get everything set up and prepared correctly for placement of an IV catheter but not hit the vein on the first try. Make sure to comment upon the things that are going well and not to simply focus on failures.
- **Confidence:** For an employee with poor confidence that they will be able to complete a task, it is okay to ask a few questions to help guide you into whether this task may require management or simple coaching. A person may have less confidence because they are in a new position, have new responsibilities, or this is a new procedure and they simply need more time and confidence before coaching will be an appropriate form of support.

Coaching: What is it?

Definition: Wikipedia – training or development process through which an individual is supported while achieving a specific personal or professional competence result or goal.

Primary functions of a coach:

- **Situational awareness** is a complex concept that brings together an awareness of environment and the impact of individuals as well as teams on each other and on the end goal.
- **Guidance** is provided through exploration of self-awareness and self-realization.
- **Support** employees, maintaining and enhancing their self-esteem without removing responsibility for their actions.
- **Partnership** with employees to build your team and your organization.

- **Challenge** employees to excel and grow.
- **Facilitation** of processes throughout the business.
- **Long-term improvement** of employees, team, and organization.

Necessary skills:

- **Good questions** are the primary tool of the workplace coach
- **Listening** skills are critical
- **Reflecting** information back to the coachee
- **Awareness** of both the needs of employees and the organization
- **Technical expertise** in the area being coached is helpful

When coaching misses its mark:

- When you first attempt to introduce coaching into your workplace, there can be some resistance by tenured or skeptical employees. It is okay to tell them that you would like to try coaching to work through a problem and ask their permission to proceed. If they are unwilling to consider this option then you are probably just tapping the tip of the iceberg of problems with this employee but if you ask and they give you permission, you can anticipate improved compliance.
- If the coachee does not have adequate skills or appropriate resources to complete the task in question, then coaching will not be successful. Instead it may be necessary to spend more time on training/managing first or look more deeply into the lack of resources.
- Coaching is a time intensive process on the part of the coach and the coachee. It is not productive to try to coach somebody when one or the other is distracted or short on time and it is not productive to try to coach somebody at a time when rapid results are necessary.
- Coaching is a terrible idea if the coach is not ready!! Before you start, try to work on the basic skills listed above with friends or family that will be willing to support you in your search to improve. Once you have basic grasp on the skills, things will flow more smoothly. Because coaching is a very focused activity, it is also not good to have coaching sessions when the coach is stressed out, angry, or emotional about the topic. Either work on getting your emotions under control or seek assistance from a less involved party.
- Under no circumstances, should coaching allow anybody to shrug off responsibility and accountability. Just because you are not managing/telling people what to do and instead working together to find a solution does not mean that the individual loses their accountability. Consistency and follow up are critical for coaching relationships to be productive in all facets of the workplace.

Situations

There are quite a few situations where you will find coaching helpful but some will provide more value than just the coaching alone. Here are a few examples where coaching can really shine.

- One of the best coaching opportunities arises when an employee brings a coach a problem for which the employee has all of the knowledge they need to solve the problem on their own. There might be a couple of reasons why the employee does not work it out on their own with the two most common being that they lack confidence or empowerment to accept their own judgment or that they are used to somebody else making the decision for them. With a few well aimed questions in this situation, you can quickly and easily boost the employee's confidence and empowerment and lead them to understand that you trust their judgment.
- In a situation where a seasoned employee has developed an undesirable habit, coaching can be a little more challenging but can be very rewarding. This may require a combination of feedback and opportunities for self-discovery and self-awareness but ultimately can prove much more effective than traditional management practices.
- When a new employee joins the team or a current team member learns new skills, coaching can be quite valuable in applying new information or guiding the coachee. Strong coaching when new employees join the team or when new skills are learned will help shape the addition of those tools to your team's toolbox.
- Do not forget the powers of positive feedback on desirable work habits and good performance. Whether a team member is making improvement through your coaching or whether they are just doing a great job on their own, tell them!

How to improve?

One word: Practice.

The only way to really explore the values of coaching versus management in your own day to day work is to practice with them. Whether you are managing or coaching employees or a team of individuals, there will always be a place for both practices though the more you practice coaching, the less you will likely find a need to manage. As you become more adept at asking the right questions and seeing the effect that has on your team, you will see confident, empowered, and engaged employees begin to grow into your business as well.