

Observing and measuring performance - Keys to effective coaching

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley

If you are truly dedicated to helping those you supervise to improve their performance and productivity – it helps to actually watch them in action. Just as a professional coaches in the athletic arena use on site observation and film replays. **This allows them to isolate and work on specific areas, techniques or skills**

In the business world these 'instant replays' can at times be filtered or edited by the people reporting them to the coach/manager. It is difficult to know how well they are doing without observing or tracking their performance. Better systems and better information can lead to a better result and better coaching.

Over the years, one of my bigger challenges as a manager was to work with those who I supervised to train them to be more productive on the job. I've had a fair amount of challenge as a small business owner and as a manager for larger firms in helping my employees succeed.

Long before coaching became a 'buzz' word I found myself using some of these techniques in coaching my staff, in helping them set goals for learning and in moving their skill sets up the ladder so they could be promoted. Back in the 70's I was hired to open a Big Boy's franchise in Edmonton Center. A year or so later I was asked to go to Calgary and assist the franchiser there in re-energizing his staff. After my departure my two assistants were promoted, 1) one to take over my store and 2) the second one to take over the store in the east side of the city. Their skills had been honed and they had the chance to shine.

I had that same opportunity when I was hired as part of the management team to open the first two Home Depots in BC. Several of my staff were tapped to move up into management. Coaching as part of the training and motivational process works very well.

It works well in the association market in the management of volunteers too. I could tell you several success stories of boards and those who man them who responded well to coaching techniques.

One recent one was during my term as President of CAPS-BC. (1999-2000) We had a challenge in that we had a nil bank balance, low membership and low energy in our meetings. It took creating a motivated team to make it happen and to reverse the process. It took a coach to call the plays, help set the goals, and continue helping our volunteer leaders grow to take on their respective roles and to serve our membership.

Did it work? You bet it did! At the end of my term, we had tripled out membership, had a healthy bank account, a reasonable budget for the next year, a 2-year succession of leaders (both succeeding presidents have done an awesome job), a healthy, fully active

board, the next year's meetings already booked and a very relieved Immediate Past President.

Our national association recognized our growth in 2000 by awarding us Chapter of the Year and our National President awarded me a special CAPS President's Award 'for my energetic contribution to the advancement of CAPS and my living example of the power of one. **Yes, Coaching works!**

Successful managers (coaches) **look at both the results and the process** to find areas where they can assist their employee's fine tune or tweak their skills for enhanced performance and productivity.

Performance observation and measurements must be done on a regular, recurring basis to offer ongoing validity in your coaching efforts. A little feedback and instruction closer to the activity is the most effective. Performance reviews, as done in most businesses once or twice a year, are not effective and can at times be counter-productive.

Learning how to observe your employees without making them feel intimidated or uncomfortable is a skill you'll need to acquire as you evolve your coaching expertise.

Coaches Donna Berry, Charles Cadwell and Joe Fehrman suggest these tips for observation. I include them here for your consideration as you plan your coaching efforts.

How to Observe

- Observe process used
- Observe end result
- Explain why you are observing (to help them improve!)
- Don't interrupt work flow
- Ask questions to verify your understanding
- Watch operation several times
- Make notes for discussion
- Compare observations with any written (or 'normal') procedures
- Observe other employees for comparison purposes
- Be aware of your influence on the employee's performance (remember how you felt when someone was watching you do something and take that into account)

Helping your employees to grow will require work on your part to observe their performance, design systems to help measure their performance and to allow you to give them the positive, helpful feedback they need.

It is hard work! But, your investment in their growth will pay dividends in the future. Dividends in increased performance, improved morale and team building, and enhanced productivity.

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