

## **Leadership Matters**

I read an article the other day that was an interview with legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden. It discussed how coaching for sports is similar to coaching people in the work place. Wooden said, "Every one of us is different. We are similar in so many respects, but we are not identical. The person in leadership must carefully analyze everyone under his supervision to the best of his ability."

Traditionally, most managers have not looked at each of their employees carefully and coached each one appropriately. However, without the motivation, support and coaching from managers that help an individual to develop and grow, performance suffers. Yet, effectively coaching team members is one area in which new - and even seasoned - managers are given very little training.

### **Coaching Helps Jump Start Performance**

Coaching not only helps employees develop, but it also helps improve performance. Providing employees early coaching helps your managers to assess employees' bench strength, their progress and to find out who still needs help. But, even more than that, it helps encourage employee decision-making, creativity and it helps increase employee skills.

Coaches put emphasis on practice and normally determine who is going to play based on how the individual practices because how they practice usually determines how they will actually perform. The problem is, how do you learn to become a good coach who can consistently reinforce the skills a team member already has and at the same time help the individual get a better grasp on new skills?

### **There's Nothing Wrong with Having Well-Coached Players on the Team**

Getting back to Coach Wooden, he basically said that being accused of "not having much depth" on the team never bothered him. He was more interested in having a team of players working hard on the fundamentals. It was important to have them well-trained and working together. That is why it is important for your employees to have managers with the mind-set of developing and coaching. They will increase the skills and capabilities of every member on the team.

So, if you are going to invest time, money and resources in training and developing employees, why not focus on programs that lead to true behavior change and performance improvement? Teaching your managers effective coaching skills is one of the best ways to get a great return on your training investment. Your team scores. . . and so do you.

### **How Do You Get The Ball Rolling?**

By teaching managers to effectively recognize and handle "coaching moments" - so that individuals make learning decisions themselves. A coaching intervention is a training and development technique that maximizes on-the-job behavior. This is a

different approach which changes behavior and ups the score on performance by meeting two key objectives:

- First, it provides managers with skills and strategies to guide their people through a learning process that includes tactics to help them “before”, “during” and “after” training. That way you can ensure that behaviour change is made.
- And secondly, it provide managers with a “coaching moments” model to help their team gain understanding and insight about their actions. This way, self-awareness with opportunities to learn and improve is supported.

***"A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are." Ara Parasheghian***

Mike Slinger ([www.go-prism.com](http://www.go-prism.com)) is an employee relations consultant based in Barrie, Ontario. He focuses his practice on Employee Engagement.

Copyright of Mike Slinger, 2007.