

Transforming Managers Into Coaches

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How are managers transformed into coaches? First, companies develop their managers' skills, and then they develop the skills of their employees. Coaching skills do not come naturally to most people. Managers need to become proficient in areas such as effective communication, goal-setting, interpersonal skills, and effective team management.

"Coaching involves telling employees what the expected outcomes look like."

Use athletic coaches as a model

To develop their employees' skills, managers can model the approach used by athletic coaches. Players are required to have a minimum skill level. The coach and player set clear performance goals. The coach watches the player on the field, provides corrective feedback, and fine-tunes their performance. New goals are set as existing goals are met. This cycle continues as the athlete becomes more proficient.

Nail the basics

When the same principles are applied to the business environment, a manager-coach first determines the employees' skill levels to ensure the basic skills are in place. They set goals and describe desired behaviours. The manager then watches the employees do the job, or monitors the outcome of their work, and provides feedback for fine-tuning. With this new information, employees become even better at what they do.

Create a clear picture

A basketball coach can tell a player not only that the ball must go through the hoop, but also how to make it happen. Frequently though, managers are unclear as to exactly what they expect and how to accomplish it. They identify vague goals and assume they are understood. It is left up to the employee to interpret what needs to be done and what behaviours are most appropriate. Coaching involves telling employees what the expected outcomes look like. This form of coaching takes time; managers have to believe it is a priority and make a commitment to set aside the time needed.

Coach current and future stars

The stars in our organizations should not be excluded from this process because of their perceived star status. Top-athletes perform with and need a coach, even though they are among the best at what they do. No athlete competes without a coach and managers to stay at the top of his or her field, and neither do employees. Moving from manager to coach is no magical transformation. It starts when managers apply the basics of determining skill levels, setting goals and providing specific feedback. With the basics under their belts, managers have the confidence to continue to improve by further develop their coaching skills.

