



Coaching for Success

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Managing the activity department involves working with and through people. Most of the people that we depend upon to help meet the needs of the residents do not have prior “activity” knowledge or experience. It is our responsibility to provide a successful environment to learn or improve skills, enable others to make decisions, provide feedback for better performance and encourage growth with added responsibilities. This developmental approach to management can be used with activity department employees, volunteers, service learning students, activity interns or other staff members working under our direction. This collaborative style of managing, called coaching, became popular in the 1980’s. Rather than using an authoritarian approach in which decisions are made at the top, coaching develops good employees using a continual process of learning, growth and increased responsibility. Through coaching, others are empowered to act and think for themselves. The coach facilitates learning, helps remove roadblocks, and obtains necessary resources for the employee or volunteer to take on increasingly more challenging tasks.

The most common barrier to successful coaching is time. However, most management coaches confirm that by putting in the time to coach, time is saved later. The result is more self-management and higher performance. The benefits of coaching are numerous.

- Improved job performance: from good to exceptional
- Increased employee retention
- Increased job satisfaction and motivation
- Improved relationships
- Higher self-esteem

Being a developmental manager or coach requires specific skills in interpersonal communication and problem solving. A genuine interest in the growth of others is an important attribute of a successful coach.

Assess your strengths as a coach using the following checklist. For each statement, identify a specific example of an effective coaching approach that you have used.

1. I genuinely derive satisfaction from helping others grow.
2. I believe that coaching and developing staff is a primary responsibility of my job.
3. I consistently look for the potential in the employees that I manage.
4. I set high expectations for each person and clearly communicate these.
5. I look for and create opportunities to utilize the strengths of each person.
6. I accurately identify underlying issues and the root causes of problems.
7. I use mistakes as a learning opportunity and reflect on the experience to facilitate personal awareness and growth with the employee.
8. I look for ways to solve problems by addressing the task, not the person. I understand the different perspectives of the issue. I ask good questions.
9. I give constructive feedback and express myself in a direct, positive and confident way.
10. I listen with openness (non-judgmental), use active listening techniques and encourage dialogue. I take the time to listen.

After assessing your strengths as a coach, identify any of the following barriers that may prevent you from being as effective as possible. Have you ever said or thought any of these statements? Each indicates an obstacle for an effective coaching approach.

“I’m always behind, I don’t have time to coach. That’s her job!”



“I don’t schedule regular communication time to follow up with my employees, we see each other all the time.”

“If I teach my staff and give them added responsibilities, it may threaten my position.”

“I have to check on every little thing, I’m better off doing it myself.”

“I give my staff a detailed list of duties. I expect them to figure it out.”

“They get all the training they need at orientation, the handbook includes the information that is needed. The pace here is very hectic.”

“At our weekly meeting, I go over the schedule for the week and I discuss any issues to be addressed.”

“I think she would be good, she has potential, but I don’t have time to train her. I need someone who already knows the job.”

Time and commitment are required to effectively guide, direct and support the ongoing responsibilities of our employees. A developmental manager, or coach, makes a commitment to spend time to develop a personal relationship, show genuine interest in the growth of the individual and use daily opportunities for learning through constructive feedback. Coaching challenges both you and your staff to grow.

Additional resources: *The Leader-Manager*, W.D. Hitt. *Coaching and Mentoring for Dummies*, M. Brounstein. *Coaching for Improved Performance*, R. Nitschke