

leadership instalments

Building a Coaching Relationship

By Dan Gaynor

Coaching contributes to team development by turning raw talent into skill and it builds relationships, but to get it off to a fast start it should be introduced properly.

By its very nature coaching requires you to talk about strengths and shortcomings and this takes a little getting used to. You'll be better off if you acknowledge this and talk about it. I recommend a conversation dedicated to building the relationship first. If you are coaching today, but it's not working out well, the same conversation can turn things around. Cover five points and you'll be well on your way:

Describe the potential. When you describe the potential you see in people or teams they will want to prove you right. This builds motivation. Help others see that developing their talent is one of your key roles. To become a good coach you must mean it. Help them see that as their skills grow they'll have more success and get more opportunities, and the team's performance will improve.

Describe what you'll be doing and how they are likely to feel. This helps people prepare. Describe the way you will be working with them to observe their skills and make suggestions to help them improve, and that they'll need to get comfortable accepting and working on the suggestions you make. Help them see that to benefit from coaching you'll both have to get comfortable in your roles. This only comes with practice. Diminish the anxiety they may be feeling by acknowledging it. Tell them that in the early weeks you'll be refining the process and that you'll be open to their ideas and feedback. Invite them into the process. Coaching works best when it is collaborative.

Describe what you want from them. If you're a good leader your team will want to support you. You just have to tell them how. Offering suggestions about what you would like them to bring to the relationship gives them direction and helps them build the right habits from the start. I reaffirm the value of coaching and

For other Leadership Instalments articles go to:
www.gaynorconsulting.com



practice to professional development. Tell them that you want them to give every exercise their best shot and that you won't ask more of them than this.

Then invite questions, suggestion and comments. This affirms the collaborative approach you want to take to coaching right from the start. When you hear a reasonable suggestion, include it. The only one you cannot accept is one to avoid the coaching.

Finally, don't coach as part of the first meeting. If you are invited to coach right away, if someone says, "what do you want to work on?" respond that you simply wanted to talk about how and why you will be coaching – there will be lots of time for it in the weeks to come. If you coach during this meeting, they may think you were just setting them up for what you really wanted to talk about – the problem – even if there isn't one. You could break the trust that is essential to effective coaching. Wait a week or two to hold the first session. Start with something simple to build confidence and do lots of encouraging.

Build the coaching relationship skillfully and your efforts will gain traction much more quickly. You'll see skills and confidence grow as you build a stronger more motivated team.

Discussion Questions:

1. How much time are you spending on coaching today?
2. Is there one member of your team you'd like to start coaching with?
3. What are the issues your team will be thinking about if you start to spend more time on coaching, how will you speak to them?

For more about coaching see our e-book or call to arrange a workshop.

Dan Gaynor can be contacted at:
403.880.1780