

## **Ensuring Employee Success With Performance Coaching** **©copyright by Robert (Bob) W. Lucas**

The successful supervisor or manager recognizes the need for effective performance feedback and systematically follows through in providing it. By doing so, they help guarantee their own success and that of their employees. To help make their your efforts easier, try using the following eight-phase "Coaching Process Model (CPM)."

Notice as you explore the model that one common element interwoven throughout all eight phases is "feedback." Feedback is a crucial aspect in any supervisor-employee interaction and should *never* be omitted.

**PHASE 1 - Establish Goals.** The beginning of any success story starts with a vision or goal. Improving employee performance is no different. To ensure that desired results are accomplished, you need to work **with** your employees to establish reasonable, attainable goals. Before setting these goals, you should consider:

- Your employee's ability, knowledge, skills, and motivation to succeed.
- Factors which can be used to measure the employee's progress or success (Time, money, quantity, or quality).
- Exactly what the employee is expected to accomplish.
- A specific desired completion date.

It is better for you and the employee to set lower, attainable goals rather than higher ones which cannot be reached. That could lead to frustration, lowered morale and ultimately, failure. Small successes can lead to larger ones at a later date after the employee's knowledge, skill and attitude levels have grown.

**PHASE 2 - Collect Performance Data.** For you to adequately evaluate your employee's performance, you must observe their on-the-job behavior. You should gather all available information to ensure that you make a fair and thorough analysis of performance. Some common methods of gathering data include:

- Customer surveys
- Personal observation
- Interviews (Peers/employee/other supervisors)
- Performance appraisals
- Reports
- Self-assessment questionnaires

**PHASE 3 - Analyze Performance.** Once all the data has been collected on an employee's performance, you should evaluate it in order to determine in which areas the employee is deficient, meeting, or exceeding expectations. Any deficiencies or "performance gaps" found are addressed in Phase 4 of the CPM.

To ensure fairness and accuracy, you must consider any factors which may be influencing the employee's behavior. Some possible contributors are:

- Supervisory coaching (or lack of it);
- Employee knowledge or skills;
- Employee disabilities;
- Changes in the workplace/organization (structure, policies, procedures, personnel, technology);
- Customers;
- Special projects or assignments completed.

**PHASE 4 - Review and Modify Performance Goals, as needed.** During this phase of the CPM, deficits between actual and desired performance which were identified in Phase 3 are addressed during a meeting with the employee. Specific employee performance feedback should be provided and solicited, then goals redirected, as necessary to allow future on-the-job success.

A simple technique for developing a performance goal is to ensure that is:

- Realistic and attainable in terms of the employee's ability, skills, available time, and desires.
- Measurable by factors such as, time, money, quantity, or quality.
- Specific in defining exactly what performance is expected.
- Focused with a specific target date for completion.

**PHASE 5 - Identify Developmental Resources.** Based on the employee's deficiency, and available resources, you must identify techniques to assist your employee in improving. Some developmental options are:

- | <b>On the Job</b>                           | <b>Off the Job</b>                  |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| • One-on-one supervisor coaching            | • College courses                   |
| • Job rotation                              | • Professional seminars             |
| • Job enrichment                            | • Professional organizations        |
| • Role plays                                | • Networking                        |
| • Case studies                              | • Professional certificate programs |
| • Computer assisted instruction (CAI)       | • Field trips                       |
| • Programmed instruction (Textbook courses) | • Correspondence courses            |
| • Lectures                                  | • Research/writing assignments      |
| • Organizational sponsored training         | • Benchmarking                      |
| • In-basket exercises                       |                                     |
| • Special projects/assignments              |                                     |
| • Reference material review                 |                                     |
| • Mentoring                                 |                                     |

**PHASE 6 - Develop an Action Plan.** Once you and your employee has developed goals, resources, and developmental needs, work together to jointly establish an action plan.

However, before beginning this effort you must *both* commit to follow through. Then, as part of your action plan consider:

- What is the employee doing right? What needs to be improved?
- What specific knowledge, skills or attitudes need to be addressed?
- What are current goal levels? Do they need to change?
- What resources, strategies and actions will be used to improve performance?
- When will you and the employee get together to review their progress?
- When must tasks be completed?

**PHASE 7 - Implement Strategies.** With an action plan established, you should follow up to ensure that the employee has everything they need to achieve their goals. Part of their success will depend on you:

- Defining the specific skill level desired of the employee.
- Demonstrating or modeling the desired behavior.
- Soliciting employee feedback to ensure understanding of the task.
- Watching the employee perform or repeat the demonstrated task.
- Providing positive feedback on portions of the task successfully completed and constructive criticism or suggestions for improvement on those areas not completely done right.
- Modifying training activities and re-demonstrating, as necessary, in order for the employee to grasp the task concepts and perform it correctly.

**PHASE 8 - Evaluate Performance.** In the final phase of the CPM, you should use identified measures and standards to assess your employee's performance. If complete success was not attained, a discussion with the employee should be held to determine the reason. If the employee achieved their goal(s), provide positive feedback, then start the process over in order to continue to strengthen the employee's abilities.

Performance coaching is time consuming and may not be easy for you, but it is one of the most vital roles you play as a supervisor. If you use and master the coaching techniques outlined in the Coaching Process Model, you will have greater successes in improving employee performance.

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