

THE BENEFITS OF PERFORMANCE COACHING

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One of the biggest mistakes that supervisors make is failing to coach employees on a regular basis. Coaching is time consuming, requires additional communication and feedback skills, and adds additional responsibility to the job of a supervisor, but in the long run, the benefits outweigh any drawbacks. As I tell supervisors and managers in training programs, if you fail to coach now, you WILL have to counsel negative performance in the future. The latter normally takes much more time and effort, cannot be avoided and ultimately is not a pleasant task.

Take a few minutes to think about all the benefits that can be gained from effectively coaching employees. If you are like most supervisors, you can probably come up with quite a few easily. Let's take a look at a few of the more common benefits.

Benefit 1 - Reduced costs and turnover. Employees who aren't happy often leave an organization. Many times, their departure occurs only after they have caused severe morale and productivity problems. One disgruntled employee can create havoc among fellow employees, especially if the departing employee has been the work unit's "informal leader" and has a strong peer following. Even if supporters do not leave too, they can create more challenges once the problem employee has left.

Benefit 2 - Improved quality and quantity of work. By helping develop employee knowledge, skills, and attitudes through ongoing coaching and training, the supervisor can enhance the overall effectiveness of employees and the organization.

Benefit 3 - Enhanced employee potential. Through an on-going process of imparting up to date information, role modeling, and demonstrating support, supervisors can function as a valuable resource for employees.

Benefit 4 - Improved employee problem-solving ability. A primary goal of any supervisor should be to develop their employees to a point where the employee can assume the supervisor's job (either when the supervisor is away from the workplace or moves on to other responsibilities). By doing this, the supervisor becomes known as a strong leader and increases his or her own promotion potential while making their employees a more valuable resource within the work unit.

Benefit 5 - Increased likelihood that performance goals will be reached. For employees to attain the performance goals that you have set with them, they need continuing feedback and reinforcement. Supervisors who make assumptions that employees know how they are doing toward goal attainment are setting up a situation for failure. By communicating regularly, you can stay abreast of employee progress and also head off potential problems before situations get out of control.

Benefit 6 - Enriched transfer of training. It is estimated that U.S. organizations spend approximately \$300 billion dollars annually on employee training. Unfortunately, many of

those dollars are lost because supervisory personnel do not set up a learning environment and reinforce key elements of training received. To maximize return on investment, supervisors should take the following coaching initiatives:

- Prior to employees attending a training session, sit down to discuss knowledge, skill or attitude deficits that the employee currently has.
- Next, select a training program which has objectives, information, materials, and activities which will address the employee's needs.
- The supervisor and employee should discuss specific issues or information that should be focused on during the training.
- Immediately following the training, the supervisor should schedule time to sit down with the employee to review key elements of the training.
- As part of the post-session review, the employee and supervisor should jointly develop an action plan to implement what was learned in training.
- Additional dates should be scheduled to reinforce and review progress.
- There should also be comments concerning pre and post training performance on the employee's performance appraisal.

Benefit 7 - Improved supervisor/employee communication. By sitting down face-to-face and talking on a regular basis, employees and supervisors can share expectations and reduce misunderstandings. They can also develop a more sound interpersonal relationship which can strengthen workplace ties.

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