

Coaching Workers to Peak Performance

An Overview of Employee Performance Coaching:

Coaching boosts productivity, enhances skills and helps employees reach their full potential.

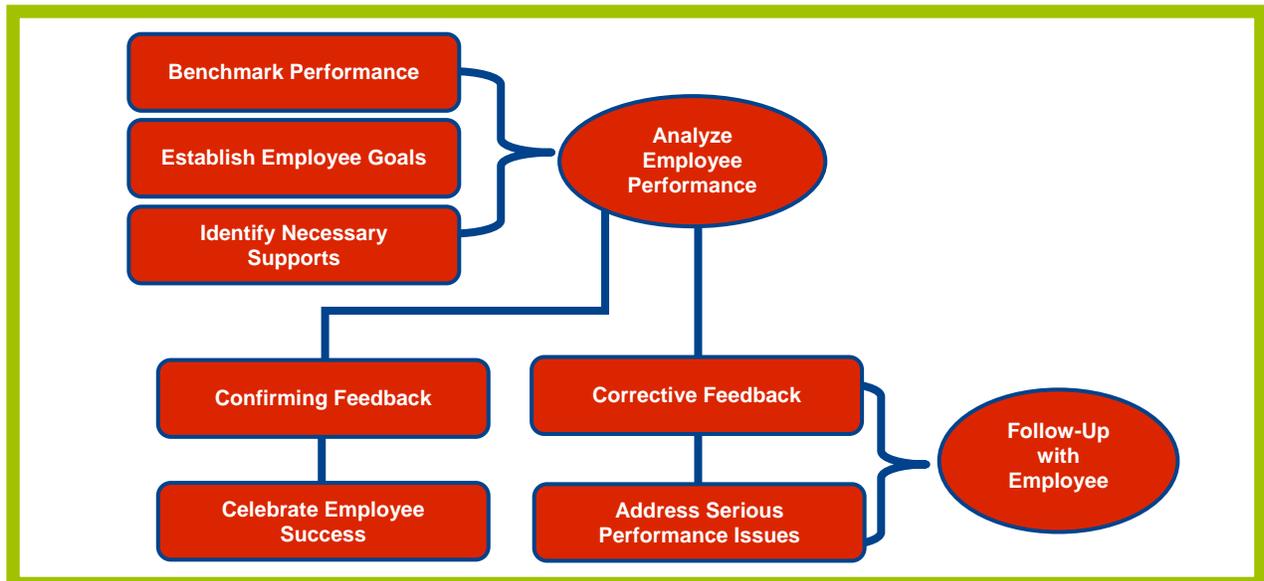
Don't let your authority get in the way of coaching—remember that your expectations might differ from your employee's. Discuss the process with the employee and remember:

The employee is the player, you are the coach – Explain the coaching process, stressing your individual roles and the need for you both to contribute ideas and effort.

Every interaction is an opportunity to coach – Every interaction you have with an employee is an opportunity for coaching – a chance for you to reinforce expectations, analyze performance results or provide feedback.

Players excel when coaches believe in them – Encourage employees to share their interests with you and visibly demonstrate your confidence in their ability to achieve goals.

The Performance Coaching Process:



Sponsored by:



Developed by:



With funding from:



Employee Coaching Toolkit – Essential Techniques:

Benchmark Performance:

To coach employees to peak performance, you must first set the benchmark – the performance goal or expectation. Watch your best employees to see how they pursue organizational goals, and then establish performance standards to guide other employees.

Establishing Employee Goals:

Work with each employee to assess how they currently perform in relation to the benchmark – then develop plans to help them improve. When you involve employees in setting goals, they will be more interested in achieving them.

“People rise to the challenge when it is their challenge”

— Belasco & Sayer, *The Flight of the Buffalo*

Identifying Necessary Supports:

Provide the resources and work environment required for success, including:

- Tools and equipment.
- Training.
- Instructions and background information.
- Adequate time.

New employees can observe or work with more experienced employees to gain confidence before attempting tasks on their own.

Analyze Employee Performance:

Before you discuss performance with your employees, you must have a clear picture of how they perform in relation to your expectations.

Be objective and thorough when assessing performance information – acting on wrong or incomplete information can damage trust. The more often you gather performance information, the more reliable your analysis will be.

To provide relevant feedback, you can gather information about the employee’s performance through:

- Direct observation.
- Communication with the employee or those around the employee.
- Work-related documentation.

Deliver Feedback:

Confirming feedback is a simple way to recognize employees who meet or exceed expectations. Strong performers are more motivated when their work is recognized and appreciated.

Provide corrective feedback when performance does not meet expectations, but don't criticize or punish employees. Use this method when the problem is not serious and can be easily corrected.

See the Employee Feedback module for detailed information on delivering feedback.

Celebrate Employee Success:

Recognize employees when they achieve goals. For most people, job satisfaction and motivation comes from knowing that their work is appreciated and valued.

Provide recognition in a variety of ways, from simple verbal praise in the form of confirming feedback, to more concrete recognition including challenging assignments, financial and non-monetary rewards.

Conducting a Coaching Session

As employees work to improve their performance, there will be times when you need to discuss their progress. These coaching sessions work best when you:

Prepare:	Conduct:	Follow-Up:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review performance analysis information to make sure that you have the facts about the situation.• Select the appropriate time & place for the discussion – allow adequate time and a private location.• Think about questions you can ask to involve the employee in the discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the performance gap – outline the benchmark, your analysis of the employee's current performance and the consequences if the gap is not closed.• Ask the employee to explain his or her perspective. Be open to what you hear and be prepared to revise the objective if you learn about something unexpected.• Work with the employee to identify the potential causes of the gap and to develop solutions to close it.• Express your confidence in the employee's ability to close the gap and thank him or her for committing to improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up with the employee at the agreed upon time. This demonstrates that you are committed to his or her success and the result. A good question to ask is <i>"Are we getting the result we expected?"</i>• Reinforce the employee's performance improvement efforts using confirming feedback techniques.

Game Plan for Effective Coaching

Know the Playing Field

Set realistic goals and discuss them with the employee. Talk about the gap between the employee's current performance and the effort required to achieve the benchmark.

Inform your Employees

Make sure employees understand your company strategy and big picture goals. If employees understand how their jobs contribute, they will be more committed to strong performance.

Provide Training

Ongoing training is essential for success. The best learning often happens on the job. Commit to mentoring to improve employee skills and knowledge.

Let Employees Call the Plays

Strong employees like to have control over their work. Allow employees to use their job knowledge and experience to determine the best approach to achieving the goal.

Treat Them Like Winners When They Win and When They Lose

Keep in mind that learning is a continuous process – use mistakes as a chance to discuss how to handle future situations more effectively.

Checklist for Diagnosing Performance Issues

Performance issues can be complicated – to understand what is going on you have to look for the root cause.

Sometimes performance issues are a result of how you have coached the employee – be sure that your approach has not contributed to the problem.

Use the following checklist:

- ✓ Is the employee aware of the expected results of the project?
- ✓ Does the employee understand how those results are measured?
- ✓ Is the importance of the project clear to the employee?
- ✓ Is the employee aware that a problem exists?
- ✓ Does the employee understand the consequences of the problem?
- ✓ Did you provide the employee with the necessary resources, tools and supports?
- ✓ Does the employee have the knowledge and skills required to complete the project?
- ✓ Did you involve the employee in establishing performance expectations?

In some cases, you may learn that a personal problem is causing an employee's performance issue. Your responsibility in these cases is to encourage the employee to seek external assistance.