

Helping Managers Coach Their Teams to Greater Career Success

By DIANNA BOOHER MARCH 31, 2020



Millennials aren't the only generation that demands frequent feedback and expects to advance quickly up the career ladder. In fact, HR typically sets this expectation during the recruiting and job interview process. It's a rare recruiter who doesn't tout "career advancement opportunities" with the organization. It's also rare that the HR representative or hiring manager misses a chance to dangle that "advancement" carrot during the interview.

So what are you doing to meet that expectation of career growth? Hopefully, you're equipping your managers to take on the role of coach for their direct reports.

How?

Train managers in coaching techniques

You don't go to your family physician and expect her to repair the mitral valve problem in your heart simply because she has a medical degree. You seek out a specialist. Neither should you expect the typical manager or supervisor to know how to coach team members simply because they communicate reasonably well on everyday projects and meet their numbers.

Coaching is a specialized skill and a specific mindset. You have to provide the necessary training for excellent coaching.

Additionally, model what good coaching conversations look like as you yourself talk with managers in routine one-on-one situations.

Suggest the mentoring moment

Communicating to managers and supervisors that they're responsible for coaching their employees is often like pouring gasoline on a fire. In their day-to-day tasks, they're running around putting out crisis fires and pressing to meet urgent deadlines. Adding this one extra "responsibility" to their shoulders feels like something "nice to do"—but too often gets relegated to the bottom of their priority lists.

Why? They consider it "just one more thing" that adds to the length of an already jam-packed day.

But what if you could convince your managers and supervisors that coaching is not necessarily time-consuming? What if they understood that coaching could be completed in less than a few seconds or minutes?

Here's how: Introduce the "mentoring moment." Make managers aware of how to find these "mentoring moments" by giving them specific examples of what those quick-but-high-impact "sessions" could look like:

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Example #1

Manager Lester has a call scheduled with a key supplier to negotiate a lower price in exchange for a larger volume purchase. As he passes the workstation of top performer Julianna, Lester might issue an invitation to monitor the call: "At 10:00, I have a call scheduled with XYZ vendor. I expect it to be a tough conversation where we'll have to offer some flexibility. If you're available at 10:00, why don't you step into my office and listen to the call." Then after the call, Lester debriefs Julianna on the "why" behind his newly negotiated deal. Julianna will understand that her manager values her work and is investing in her knowledge bank for the future.

Example #2

Carlos catches manager Susan on her way to the cafeteria and asks “a quick question.” Instead of simply providing that brief answer, Susan uses the opportunity to coach: “I’m headed to lunch. Why don’t you walk along with me, and let me explain the bigger goal here with the data we’re collecting.” Once again, the employee adds to his knowledge base without the manager having to add minutes to her day.

Mentoring moments reflect a mindset. Managers don’t need specific skills for this kind of informal coaching conversation. These conversations come naturally. The managers simply need models and ideas that make them aware of opportunities.

Reward managers who coach

Finally, supervisors may need a nudge. They truly may be walking around with their head in a cloud of problems, talking to themselves rather than their team. So to motivate the manager to think about mentoring moments, provide incentives.

- Pass on to the manager any favorable feedback you hear from their team members.
- Make sure that any formal appraisals of their own performance include their track record for coaching.
- Track how many of their direct reports get promoted, as well as how many leave the organization while under their supervision.
- Consider their value to the organization because of their coaching for career growth.
- Reward them with bonuses—or even visibility for their success—based on their coaching record.

The rewarded manager repeats the performance.

Managers who coach their employees recruit and grow top performers, reduce turnover, and improve morale.



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Dianna Booher’s latest books include *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*; *Communicate Like a Leader*; *What MORE Can I Say?*; *Creating Personal Presence: and Communicate With Confidence*. She’s the bestselling author of 48 books, published in 61 foreign editions. Dianna helps organizations communicate clearly and leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence. National Media such as *Good Morning America*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, *FOX*, *CNN*, *NPR*, and *Entrepreneur* have interviewed her for opinions on workplace communication issues. She blogs for *Forbes*, *Microsoft*, and *The CEO Magazine*.

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