

10 Reasons to Manage as a Coach

The Management Attribute Most Desired by Employees

by Mike Hawkins
mike@alpinelink.com



Relationships between employees and managers take many forms. Some are collaborative while others are competitive. Some are vibrant while others are antagonistic. There are managers and employees who have great respect for each other and work closely together like partners who help each other out. Others hardly see each other or wish they never saw each other.

The nature of employee-manager relationships depend on factors related to the manager, employee, and organization. An organization's culture, HR policies, and HR systems have an impact. The manager's leadership style, span of responsibility, and leadership competence have an impact. The employee's level of performance, skill level, role, and attitude have an impact. But more than any other factor, it is managers and their leadership style that most determine the nature of the relationship.

Some managers operate as "super-contributors" who are individual contributors with a higher level of responsibility. They often have a peer level relationship with their employees. Some act like military commanders who tell their people where to go and what to do. They have an authoritarian relationship with their employees. Some act as charismatic politicians who like to make promises and strive for popularity. They have a superficial relationship with their employees. Some managers are disengaged and not materially involved in managing or leading at all. They have no relationship with their employees.

The most effective relationship and approach a manager can employ is akin to a coach working with an athlete. It is a coaching style of management that utilizes coaching best practices. It is a style that inspires people to be their best. Managers as coaches not only hold their employees accountable, they encourage and enable their employees. They help their employees develop and improve their skills. They establish a nurturing and motivating relationship with their employees.

Here are ten reasons why managers should lead as coaches and develop a coaching approach to leadership:

1. Managers spend weeks if not months recruiting, interviewing, and hiring top talent to put on their team. Employees are their most important assets. Employees are worth the investment.
2. Coaching improves employee performance. Studies find that employees who receive coaching perform up to 200 percent higher than employees who don't.
3. Surveys find the top attribute most desired by employees in their manager is an ability to coach. Employees want individualized help in improving their skills.
4. Annual performance reviews are pathetically insufficient to helping employees become top performers. Annual reviews are not a substitute for continually working with employees on their professional development.
5. Manager conversations with employees about sales forecasts, budgets, project status, and other operational issues don't get to the root issues that prevent top performance and are most deserving of discussion.
6. Practicing and honing basic skills are what differentiate good performers from top performers. Yet employees don't regularly practice and work on their skills without the exhortation and attention that comes with coaching.
7. No one is successful on their own. Top performers are part of an ecosystem. It is the help, encouragement, advice, facilitation, and enablement from others and in particular from their manager that enables their top performance.
8. A primary reason that top performers join an organization and subsequently stay with an organization is the potential for professional growth. Top performers place great value on learning and development.



10 Reasons to Manage as a Coach

The Management Attribute Most Desired by Employees

9. When successful people are asked about the aspects of their career that most enabled their success, they consistently mention a mentor, athletic coach, or boss who took the time to work with them individually on their development.
10. Studies find that over three-fourths of organizations have a skills shortfall that will prevent them from reaching their goals. Helping to improve people's skills has to be a manager's top priority.

Consider your relationship with your employees or boss. Think about how your relationship could be improved through coaching. Talk to your boss or your employee about improving a skill or leveraging a talent through coaching. The time you invest in it will pay huge dividends in improved performance and relationship.

In next month's article, I'll highlight the five coaching areas that most impact athletic and employee performance.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corporation (www.alpinelink.com), a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

For other articles on reaching your peak potential, visit www.alpinelink.com/Leadership_Sales_Management_Consulting_Papers_Tools_Templates.aspx.