



10 Steps to Leading as a Coach

The Management Attribute Most Desired by Employees

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As an avid skier, mountain biker, and outdoor enthusiast, I'm always looking for pointers on how to improve my athletic ability. I find that regardless of the sport, there are five capabilities that consistently determine athletic performance. Whether an individual or team sport, mechanized or human powered sport, or indoor or outdoor sport, improving performance comes down to five qualities. They are:

- Technique
- Mental Fitness
- Physical Fitness
- Equipment
- Teamwork

As professional athletes know best, if you don't use the correct technique, have the proper frame of mind, maintain physically fitness, employ the right equipment, and leverage the help of others, you don't win.

These same five qualities enable top performers at work too. Top performing professionals are skilled and technically competent. They are positive and mentally acute. They are energetic and physically fit. They have enabling tools and equipment. They leverage the support and help of others around them.

It should be no surprise that great leaders, like great coaches, emphasize these five qualities. They help their people develop skills and leverage strengths. They encourage and exhort their people to believe in themselves and develop a can-do attitude. They have their people practice, build strength, and cultivate endurance. They equip their people with resources, tools, and processes that enable high productivity and quality of execution. They foster collaboration and teamwork.

To lead like a coach, here are ten steps of good coaching to employ as you help develop and enable people in these five areas:

1. Understanding - Get to know the person you are coaching including their strengths and their development needs. Understand the ecosystem in which they operate. No one succeeds or fails on their own.

2. Goals - Explore the person's ambitions and goals. Discuss the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to reach their goals. Jointly create an individualized coaching agenda that targets the specific skills to be developed.

3. Mindset - Cultivate the person's mental fitness. Develop their eagerness to develop. Motivate and encourage them. Create an improvement mindset. Attitude comes before aptitude.

4. Awareness – Investigate any obstacles preventing their desired behaviors. Ask questions to uncover root causes. Observe them in action to facilitate deeper understanding. Establish awareness of any habits that need to be changed.

5. Solutions - Discuss the alternative solutions available to building their desired skills and behaviors. Evaluate the different options. Take into consideration the time, energy, and resources required. Agree on a solution and plan of action.



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6. Incremental steps - In developing new behaviors, start with the basics. Review and practice the basics before moving into more advanced capabilities. Break goals down into incremental milestones. Practice and make progress in small steps.

7. Resources – Engage others in the process of providing them with encouragement and support. Provide any enabling equipment, tools, systems, or processes needed to facilitate continued development and proper execution.

8. Opportunity – Move the person from practice to production. Move them from building knowledge and methods to putting them into application. Put them into the game. Give them assignments without the “training wheels”.

9. Feedback - Monitor their performance and progress. Provide candid feedback. Encourage, praise, and recognize their efforts. Constructively critique them where they need to improve.

10. Reinforcement - Continue reinforcing their desired behaviors. Help them practice and refine their technique. Facilitate ongoing adjustments as needs change. Challenge and exhort them to continually develop. Build and maintain their confidence.

Follow these essential steps of good coaching and watch the performance of your people take off.

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.

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