

## Putting the Conditions in Place for Successful Coaching

Summer is winding down. As Canadians, we relish the relaxation of summertime after a long winter. With that, however, comes an impact on productivity. It isn't unusual to see phrases such as, "the expected negative impact of summer vacations" when a company explains its quarterly performance. In the fall, we recharge and start an unofficial "new year". Thoughts may turn to new performance management ideas or managers may decide they need the HR Department's help to "get some formal coaching" for an employee. For coaching to be successful, however, certain conditions must be in place.

Coaching is about encouraging change. A coach's role – whether that coach is the direct manager or an external person - is to help the coached person recognize and act on the real choices available to him by seeing the potential and limitations of his thoughts and skills. As the coached person changes, his manager will need to support that change.

With that in mind, you can ask yourself, "Are the conditions in place for coaching to succeed?" Consider these 3 key conditions:

*Condition 1 – Goals are stated and resources are in place to promote success:* The manager has confirmed that expectations or goals are communicated and understood, and the person is appropriately equipped with the resources, information and responsibility needed for the job. Consider the situation where coaching was provided for a person where the system prevented her from accessing required data in a timely manner. While she benefited from coaching to a certain degree, her core performance continued to be hampered by the limitations in resources.

*Condition 2 – The skill, knowledge or capability is present:* The person has the capability or training for the job's demands and has had opportunity to practice and apply the required skills or knowledge. Under such conditions, coaching can benefit those who are seeking to understand and apply their knowledge to the situation. Sometimes, though, a person's aptitude or personal style may limit the fit with a job, where no amount of coaching would lead to a permanent change. Think of the person who was perfectly competent in an inside sales role, but when he moved to an external sales role, his interpersonal style caused a barrier that was difficult to overcome.

*Condition 3 – Both the individual and that person's manager is willing to grow:* As with any change, coaching is most successful where there is support. The manager must provide time for the individual to participate in the coaching process and support that person as she applies and experiments with the results. Even with such support, the success of coaching ultimately rests with the person being coached. She needs to be willing to participate in active reflection and be committed to learning different approaches and trying new practices. This is more likely if the coached person believes that the manager is sincere in supporting growth, rather than using coaching, for instance, as a way to gather data for disciplinary action. If conditions 1 and 2 have been met, the chance of an individual believing in the manager's support will be much higher.

Coaching can be a powerful mechanism to support performance and productivity enhancement. The manager who chooses to offer coaching, either by being a coach or by using external coaching, is best served if the 3 conditions above are considered as part of the overall solution.

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