

## Talent Management Perspectives

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### I Hate Coaching Employees!

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"I hate coaching employees! They take so much out of my day and waste my time. Why can't they understand this? It's so simple. I can explain it 10 times, and they still don't get it. Boy, are they thick! Where did they get this one?"

Sound familiar? Well, sometimes trying to coach employees can be challenging. This is especially true if the talent manager believes coaching merely means showing another employee how to do something. The difficulty usually is not the employee, but rather in the manager's understanding of what is required to be an effective coach.

Like other duties, coaching requires specific competencies. Think about the following change in our society.

Computers have greatly reduced our patience in waiting for information. Thirty years ago, it would take five to seven minutes for someone to retrieve information from a folder in a file cabinet, but nobody had a problem waiting. Today, if the computer takes 10 seconds to retrieve data from a system 1,000 miles away, we tend to think it is taking all day to service our request.

We become frustrated, angry, irritated and may click "Ctrl, Alt, Delete," to end the task because we feel the computer is hung up. In reality, the computer is just taking a bit longer to process our request because it has 100 million other customer requests in the queue before ours.

This instant-response mentality also might be the root cause of our impatience in other situations, such as waiting in line for a sales clerk, waiting an hour at a restaurant for a table on a Friday or Saturday night or, in our professional lives, waiting for an employee to catch on to what we are trying to explain.


Coaching involves patience and understanding. It requires that we perceive an employee's difficulty in comprehending what we are trying to convey. To be a professional coach, you must think back to a time when you had to learn a new process or task yourself. How did you feel about not getting it the first time? Were you nervous or unsure of yourself as you entered into the learning process? Did the coach appear to be irritated when you didn't catch on immediately?

Professional coaches go slowly and are patient. They move in slow motion, shifting down from their normal 90 mph speed, to 2 mph so the employee can comprehend the task or concept being explained.

Professional coaches are patient, empathetic, resourceful, kind, understanding and focused on maintaining the employee's self-esteem. Coaches know it may take several attempts before a trainee understands what they are trying to demonstrate or communicate. Further, professional coaches employ different approaches to effectively transfer information. A professional coach is creative and thinks out of the box, or uses analogies the trainee can relate to everyday life.

Good listening skills are extremely important in the coaching environment. A professional coach listens carefully to employees' questions to pinpoint the specific areas in which the trainee is experiencing difficulty. They chunk information and ask questions at key points to ascertain an employee's level of understanding. These periodic checkups allow the coach to correct any confusion or lack of understanding prior to proceeding with additional information. The coach approaches the task at hand in a slow and systematic manner and is aware of where the employee is in the learning process.

A good coach has his or her finger on the employee's pulse and an eye on the person's body language. A professional coach proceeds slowly and cautiously, maintaining the employee's self-esteem and providing the person with opportunities to stop and ask questions.

There's really only one thing talent managers need to do on a continuous basis when coaching: Ask, "How would I feel if I was the one learning something brand new?" Now you get it, coach. 

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