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Coach Your Staff to Greater Productivity

“The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority” ~ Kenneth Blanchard

Managers must be assertive and resourceful in finding ways to be successful in this era of operational downsizing and rapidly shrinking resources. For this reason, it is important for managers to maximize the skills and talents of employees through effective coaching.

So how can coaching contribute significantly to staff performance and productivity, enabling an organization to operate at optimal levels?

- Managers build the knowledge, skill set, and confidence of employees through targeted coaching, not replacing formal training, but supplementing it by targeting performance areas that require improvement.
- Coaching can play an important role in preparing staff to advance to more complex positions having greater responsibility. Organizations must remain ahead of the curve in regard to succession strategies, and on-the-job coaching is a critical way to achieve this goal.
- The process of coaching can reveal a variety of workplace issues that may be hidden from view. A few of these issues include: 1) the general lack of institutional knowledge and skill by staff needed in completing more complex tasks and 2) motivation problems.
- Unlike the traditional command and control approach to management, managers who coach require staff to assume more responsibility for their work, while providing non-judgmental guidance and support. This builds confidence and enthusiasm among staff.

“Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.” ~ Timothy Gallwey

It seems clear that coaching can provide many benefits to workplace environments and staff performance. However, coaching does not often come naturally to managers because it requires a more methodical approach to supervision, along with a potential change in attitude about superior/subordinate relationships. Here are a few things managers need to consider.

- Coaching is most successful when the focus is more on skill development, and less on systematic task completion. While it is clear that work tasks must be performed in a consistent and recognizable fashion, there is more than one way to accomplish this goal.
- Managers must have established an environment of trust and support within the workplace before initiating a coaching process. In addition, managers must take the time to establish processes and parameters to the coaching relationship, including times of crisis or other situations when more autocratic, swift decisions must be made.
- The coaching approach needs to effectively match with staff capabilities. For example, management-level or experienced staff can be given more latitude in completing tasks, while younger, inexperienced employees will probably need hand-holding and task or process repetition.

Remember, a successful coaching relationship has the best chance to succeed if it is non-judgmental, has clear parameters, and is based on an environment of cooperation and trust.

“Our chief want in life is someone who will make us do what we can.” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson