



# THE SOURCE

## "Who me? Coach?"

by [Ann Evangelista, Psy.D., MBA](#)



If you have even glanced at the business press in the past several years, you are familiar with the proliferation of the term “coaching” in relation to performance management. A Google search of the words “coach” and “business” together yields a whopping 78.8 million hits. Harvard Business Review, that bastion of business learning, first mentioned “coaching” in the performance review process in 1965<sup>1</sup>. Currently, it is ‘vogue’ to invoke the concept of ‘coach’ in virtually all aspects of life: there are executive coaches, performance coaches, life coaches, sport coaches, spiritual coaches, and the list goes on. But for many, the concept of ‘coach’ exists more as a nostalgic concept associated with little league baseball than a relevant element in today’s working and living environments.

The reason why so many people and organizations pursue coaching is simple: using the power of the human relationship, individuals and teams are taught, using a variety of methods, how to become better in a particular goal area. By way of a useful definition, “Coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, any time we are helping others learn in an effort to become more productive, efficient, stronger, or better, we are coaching. During several moments throughout a day, we may find ourselves on the giving, or receiving, end of a “coachable moment.” When these moments and activities are planned, shared, and mutually pursued, there can be tremendous gain both for the individual and the organization. But, as a leader, how do we do this?

At TalentQuest, we believe in the power of coaching to achieve peak performance. Our consultants provide coaching services in the form of executive coaching, team development, and skill development. Yet, we also recognize that coaches are often most effective when they ‘live’ in the same environment as their coachees. As an external coach, there is only so much one can do ‘from a distance.’ By way of example, Bill Belichick, coach of the record-busting New England Patriots (3 Super Bowls in 4 years), spends every day on the field with his players. Despite the seasoning of some of his

veterans like Tom Brady, each of his players needs his insight, objectivity, and focus to grow and perform better both as an individual and as a team.

If you are a manager or leader aspiring to peak performance, then you, too, are tasked with being a coach. The individuals in your organization will not improve without your guidance, input and feedback. This does not have to be a daunting task; instead, it is a simple process that can yield superlative results. In order to coach for Peak Performance, we offer the following:

**Use the *Coaching for Peak Performance* model:**

**Vision** – Identify the individual’s goals and objectives and establish an action plan to achieve those goals. Work with the individual to recognize concrete, observable behaviors to change.

**Fast-Forward** – Determine when and how the behaviors will be practiced, what obstacles might arise, and how to manage those obstacles effectively.

**Game Plan** – Plan alternatives with the individual to optimize opportunities for success.

**Execute** – Devise a plan with the individual to establish when and how to execute the new behaviors, and review progress regularly.

**Review** – After the individual tries the host of new behaviors, review the various successes, challenges, and unforeseen obstacles with him/her. Mutually plan where and how to approach things differently. The sooner the review steps can be conducted after the behaviors are executed, the greater the ‘real time’ learning impact.

**Provide consistent, constructive feedback.** Coaching cannot be truly effective without regular feedback. Make observations of the individual’s progress, but also note areas where performance still needs work. Supplement the feedback with concrete tools and tips to increase success. Balance criticism with praise; both are essential to helping the individual learn and grow.

**Make coaching a core component of performance management activities.** Coaching is not a ‘point in time’ activity, but rather an ongoing process between you and your team member that focuses on building his/her capabilities. Think ‘video,’ rather than ‘snapshot’ in regards to helping manage performance.

**Establish- and prioritize- “Buy in.”** Coaching should be a process in which both you and the team member are equally invested – and accountable. Make sure that your own goals incorporate your coaching efforts to keep you focused and true to your commitments.

Coaching does not have to be a ‘lofty’ concept relegated to the executive suite or the football field. As a planful, focused performance management activity, it can energize your team and optimize your efforts toward peak performance.

We value your feedback and perspectives. For comments and additional questions, please contact Ann Evangelista at [aeangelista@talentquest.com](mailto:aeangelista@talentquest.com).

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<sup>1</sup> Meyer, Kaye & French (1965). Split Roles in Performance Appraisal, Harvard Business Review,

<sup>2</sup> Peterson & Hicks (1996). Leader as Coach: Strategies for Coaching and Developing Others, Personnel Decisions International.

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