

Coaching for Peak Performance

“Who me??? A coach???”



If you have so much as glanced at a business publication in recent years, you are familiar with the proliferation of the term “coaching” as it relates to performance management. In fact, a Google search of “coach + business” yields a whopping 155 million hits! Harvard Business Review first mentioned “coaching” in the performance review process in 1965¹. Today it is en vogue to invoke the concept in virtually all aspects of life: there are executive coaches, performance coaches, life coaches, sport coaches, spiritual coaches, etc. But for many, the concept exists more as a nostalgic concept associated with little league baseball than a relevant element in today’s working and living environments.

The reason so many people and organizations pursue coaching is simple: using the power of the human relationship to become better in a particular 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. ² 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.’

Once perceived as a tool to help correct deficits in performance, coaching has become widely used to support top producers and high potentials. Many organizations rely on leadership coaching programs to hone the skills of individuals who have been identified as future leaders. Coaching provides feedback and guidance in “real-time”, developing leaders in the context of their current positions, without taking them away from their day-to-day responsibilities. In business coaching, these consultative executive services provide individuals with the tangible takeaways they need to drive optimal results.

If you are a manager or leader aspiring to peak performance, then you are 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.

Coaching for Peak Performance (continued)

Coaching does not have to be a lofty concept relegated to the executive suite or the football field. As a carefully planned and focused performance management activity, it can energize your team and optimize your efforts toward peak performance. Below are excerpts from TalentQuest's Coaching for Peak Performance model to help you get started.

- **Agree on a 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.
- **Develop a Game Plan:** Plan alternatives with the individual to optimize opportunities for success.
- **Execute:** Devise a plan establishing when and how to execute new behaviors and review progress regularly.
- **Replay and Review:** After the individual tries the host of new behaviors, replay and discuss 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.

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

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



TalentQuest has been bolstering organizational performance and advancing leadership for more than 35 years by blending the art of consulting with the science of technology. Our consultants and organizational psychologists deliver fully-integrated Human Capital Management consulting and Talent Management solutions that span the entire employee lifecycle – from talent selection to leadership succession – enabling organizations to maximize the value of their investment in people.