

# Messenger

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## Coaching for Success

There are many times when managers find themselves with the need to coach an employee to improve his performance. Coaching not only improves upon a person's current skills, but, if done in an encouraging way, will show your employee that you care about him and the job he's doing in the company.

Before we look at tips for a coaching session, let's take a glance at a few characteristics a successful coach should possess. The goal of a good coach is to create positive behavioral changes. He will suggest changes that are agreed upon by both the supervisor and employee. Each session must demonstrate respect. Don't dwell on past mistakes. Keep the session present and future oriented. The session should focus on problems, not on attacking the employee. The coach should remain as objective as possible. Finally, remember to examine only one area of concern at a time. Don't overload the employee with more than one area to improve.



When planning a coaching session, here are some questions to ask yourself. Answering these prior to the session will help guide it in a productive direction.

### 1. Am I looking at this situation in a balanced and objective way?

Leave all bias at the door. Regardless of your personal feelings toward the person or situation, your goal is on how to make improvements.

### 2. Am I able to state the real problem?

Unless you get to the root of the problem, any solution is just going to be a temporary fix. You might see improvements for awhile, but, more than likely, the problem will arise again. Digging down to the root cause will let you find a solution that will create a permanent change.

### 3. What are my expectations in coaching this person?

Knowing the desired end result will solve a lot of ambiguity and give direction.

### 4. What barriers do I anticipate?

Will you face personality conflicts with this person? Is this a person who doesn't take criticism well? Understanding the personality style of the person you'll be working with will help you avoid unneeded tension and conflict.

### 5. Am I documenting each session?

Document, document, document! I can't emphasize this enough. Take detailed notes of each session to be filed away. Also, give a copy of the notes to the employee. This helps alleviate possible miscommunication and also assists all parties

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*Failures are like skinned knees--painful,  
but superficial.  
H. Ross Perot  
Business Executive*

## Important PMP® Exam Information!

PMI® has approved the PMBOK® Guide - 5<sup>th</sup> edition. The 5<sup>th</sup> edition will be released January 2013. The exam is tentatively scheduled to change July 2013. Make plans now to take our PMP® Exam Prep Boot Camp and schedule your test with PMI® before these changes go into effect! Visit our website for our Boot Camp schedule.

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remember what was discussed and the action plans to be taken. It is also a good idea to give the employee's immediate supervisor a copy of all documentation.

### 6. Am I prepared for what the employee will say during each session?

Think through how the employee might respond to the situation. Be prepared for any concerns or objections he might have.

### 7. What does the end look like?

Having objective criteria that needs to be met will help keep everyone on track with the progress. It also details success factors for which to strive.

When you begin the coaching session, here are some tips you should remember.

#### ***Clearly define their present work performance***

It's possible that your employee may not realize that his current behavior is unacceptable. Give specific situations where performance was subpar.

#### ***Increase contact with the employee to get across the seriousness of their behavior***

In most cases, one meeting isn't going to be enough to achieve the full and desired results. Schedule regular sessions to ensure that behaviors are

changing. Staying on top of the sessions will show the employee that this is important to the company.

#### ***Have an agenda***

Be prepared for each session. You must do your part to observe if/how the employee's performance is improving. Know how you are going to encourage and challenge him. Not only will this show the employee that you're serious about this, but it will also cut down on wasted time having meetings with no purpose.



#### ***Point out good and bad***

Everyone loves to hear how that are improving or where they excel. In each meeting, make sure that you have several positive comments to give. Criticism is often easier to handle if the employee knows that he is doing some things right. Even when discussing the areas which need improvement, stay positive and upbeat.

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***A pat on the back, though only a few vertebrae removed from a kick in the pants, is miles ahead in results.***

***Author Unknown***

# The Mathis Group's Messenger

## ***Public Agile Project Management Class!***

Be watching next month for the dates of our *Agile Project Management class*. This 2-day course is worth 13 PDUs and will be held in St. Louis.

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### ***Give assignments***

Give specific tasks or behavior modifications that should be met before your next meeting. Make sure the employee understands and agrees with the action plan. Gaining input and buy-in from the employee will help realize results quicker.

When discussing unsatisfactory performance, give exact dates and times. Don't say "do you remember that time a few weeks ago when you did. . ." More than likely, he's not going to have a clue what you're talking about. Don't nitpick the little things; focus on the behavior that needs to be changed. Point out specifically what must be done to change. Most importantly, make sure he knows how to change. If he doesn't know how to make the change happen, you can guarantee failure.

If you can calmly and objectively explain why a change needs to be made, more than likely the employee will have a positive response to your suggestions. Gaining employee input instead of making demands will aid in his acceptance of the changes. Help him get excited about improving.

It's tempting to say that if you follow all of these suggestions, that every coaching session will go without a hitch. Realistically, however, we know that's not the case. You are going to run into those people who aren't exactly thrilled to hear they need

to change the way they're doing something. So how can you disagree agreeably?

- Respect others' ideas
- Listen and support first
- Ask questions
- Be specific and constructive
- Disagree non-judgmentally
- Offer another solution

Helping employees improve their behavior and performance will not only enhance the company, but can also boost employee morale. When employees know that their hard work is on target and appreciated, they will continually strive to keep the standard high.



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