



## **Coaching Change**

By Marshall Goldsmith

Executive coaching is one tool in performance appraisal, compensation, and promotion that reinforces positive behavioral change.

Most leaders preach teamwork, but often excuse themselves from its practice – and fail to hold people accountable for living this value. This invites cynicism, undermines credibility, and saps vitality. Employees rate their manager’s ability to “effectively deal with people who undermine teamwork” dead last among 92 elements of effective leadership.

Leaders often fear confronting people about poor teamwork, but people highly value honest feedback. Use 360-degree feedback to align corporate values and individual behavior. Such feedback allows you to practice consultative coaching.

If certain conditions prevail, behavioral coaching may be a waste of time.

- The person you’re coaching is not making a sincere effort to change.
- The person has been written off by the company.
- The person lacks intelligence or skills to do the job.
- The organization has the wrong mission (coaching is a “how to get there” process, not a “where to go” process).

### **Getting Started**

Here are eight steps for coaching change.

- 1. Identify desired attributes for the manager you are coaching.**  
Once you determine the behavioral characteristics of a successful manager in a given position, ask that manager if he or she agrees that these are the right behaviors. Securing agreement will boost commitment.
- 2. Determine who can provide meaningful feedback.** Key stakeholders may include direct reports, peers, customers, suppliers, or members of the management team. Strive for a mix that does not stack the deck for or against the manager.
- 3. Collect feedback.** Assessment is often best handled in an anonymous survey, compiled into a summary report and given directly to the manager.
- 4. Analyze results.** Talk with managers about the results of the feedback—discuss key strengths and areas of improvement.

5. **Develop an action plan.** The most helpful – and appreciated – outcome of any assessment is specific advice. Develop “alternatives to consider” rather than mandates. Focus on key behaviors and develop action steps to improve each.
6. **Have the manager respond to stakeholders.** The manager should talk with the review team and collect suggestions on how to improve in key areas.
7. **Develop an ongoing follow-up process.** Within months, survey the original review team, asking whether the manager has become more or less effective.
8. **Review results and start again.** If the manager takes the process seriously, stakeholders invariably report improvement. Build on that success by repeating the process quarterly for one year.

### **Moving Beyond the Basics**

Managers who want to improve, talk to people about ways to improve, solicit feedback, and develop a rigorous follow-up plan, will almost always improve.

By becoming an effective coach, you become a more credible leader and an active agent of change. By measuring others on the behaviors and attributes you say you value, you cement the bonds of leadership. And by having others follow through on their progress toward goals, you help create a more responsive, positive, and cohesive organization.