

Business Boomerang ~

Creating business practices that bring back valuable benefits

The Coaching Connection

By Jerry Browning

Keeping employees engaged and performance high amidst uncertainty is a struggle. Four years ago, I partnered with the Human Resources staff after the company had recently downsized twice and was now experiencing growth in a new product line. Performance was radically important as resources were scarce and competition fierce. They needed to marshal strengths to move quickly into the new product line. One manager said what others were thinking, “Everyone is still waiting for the ‘next shoe to fall’ and see if they are the next one to be let go.”

The goals included increasing productivity and retaining current employees. They wanted to develop an internal coaching program as one of their ongoing solutions for performance. It also seemed coaching would help to develop, grow and retain talent and to correct, align and evaluate under performers. The question loomed as to whether this was the time to do that.

The staff worked to train managers and supervisors throughout the company. They created processes for their coaching models. We also created tracking methods for the coaching itself to gain feedback from those doing and receiving the coaching. Additionally, key performance and profitability indicators were measured.

Our manager who often says what we are all thinking asked, “Will all this effort help bring the results needed, and in time?” Some expected results did occur quickly. We also got some surprises that included a few things we had all hoped for but could not guarantee. We expected and found the following:

- Coaching takes work
- Coaching does not always come naturally
- Coaching can provide consistency of action throughout the organization
- Coaching helps create ways of measuring things that are difficult to measure
- Coaching sets the stage for more frequent manager–supervisor-associate conversations

Other outcomes continue to be discovered as coaching becomes a stronger part of this company’s culture and operations. Here are some of those findings, which included some surprises:

- Coaching can increase efficiency of associates
- While at first managers reported that the coaching was taking up more time, after just six months managers reported that it saves them time
- Coaching is now seen as development not just correction
- It has helped increase problem-solving skills
- Managers and Supervisors report having learned how to better understand and talk to associates
- Succession development is easier
- Performance reviews are becoming more positive for everyone
- Stress has been reduced

This company reports a healthy ROI on developing coaching throughout the company. The most dramatic increases in productivity were seen within eighteen months of starting the coaching program. Goals of profitability and talent retention were surpassed in the second year and continue to soar.

Many companies are utilizing coaching to bring relief and results. How are you using coaching in your organization?