

Coaching As A Mentoring Tool



Small businesses and corporations are in the middle of dramatic changes. In the face of these changes, business executives are rethinking their managerial practices and designing themselves. For example, traditional management

structures are being replaced with something new that is just now emerging. At the heart of all these changes, our companies are being driven to go from being *task-driven* to *learning-driven*.

Clearly, OD practitioners are in the middle of all this; we need to help our clients deal with these transitions. One way we are helping is by showing them that management style is one of the emerging technologies that will help them work successfully in the new era. The intention of these articles is to educate OD practitioners on coaching as an aspect of management style so that you, in turn, can do the same for your clients.

Our Shifting Mindset

The definition of **coach**, according to the *Random House College Dictionary*, is (1) *a person who trains an athlete or a team of athletes*; (2) *a private tutor who prepares a student for an examination*; (3) *a person who instructs an actor or singer*; (4) *to give instruction or advice to in the capacity of a coach*; (5) *from the Hungarian word referring to tutoring or instruction*. Likewise, **managing** is defined as: (1) *to bring about; succeed in accomplishing*; (2) *to have charge of or responsibility for*; (3) *to dominate or influence (a person) by tact or artifice*; (4) *to handle, direct, govern, or control in action or use*.

A **manager** is: (1) *a person who manages*; (2) *a person charged with the control or direction of an institute, business or the like*.

As these definitions suggest, managing is about getting things done. It is our traditional mode of directing things in a traditional hierarchy (see Diagram 1). In it, the manager is the focal point. Everyone else is basically around to do the manager's work. The name of the game is to do what the manager tells you to do the way he/she tells you to do it. This relationship is modeled as a triangle, with managers towards the top and everyone else below.

Some of the beliefs, which justify the rationality of this design, are the following:

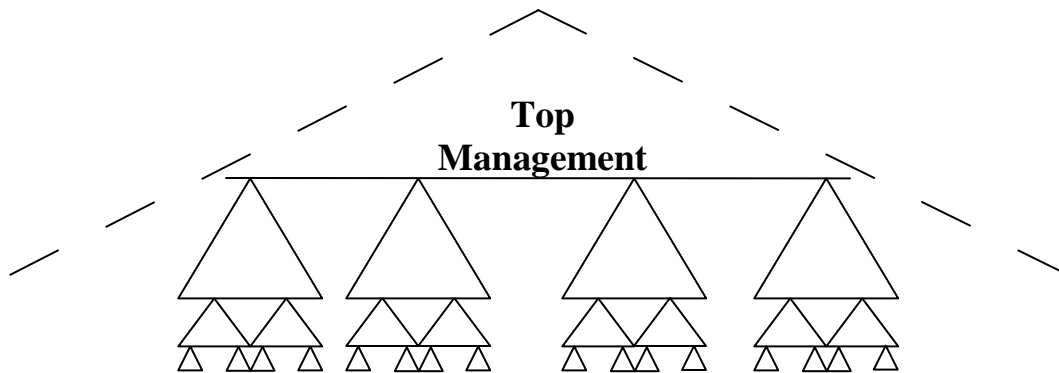
- Knowledge flows up; the higher up you are in the organization, the more you know
- Compensation flows up
- Power flows up

The goal in our work culture is to become a manager. Generally, remaining at a lower level is demeaning and has negative connotations. The higher up you are the better you are. Better is meant here in a superior sense so that in this model managers are literally superior people. Problems flow down. Whatever problems are at the top are passed down to those below for solution, fault and/or blame. Many of these beliefs have become unconscious and unexamined. They automatically come with the territory of our work, lives, and culture.

It is clear that many of these principles ought to be, and are being, seriously questioned.

**This article was published in the
Industrial Launderer
"Getting Enough"**

Diagram 1



Corporate Ladder

- Inhibits Potential
- Inaccurate Communication
- Information/Results are Pushed Up
- Victimizes (to win – someone must lose)
- Slows Corporate Responses
- Instruction Flows Down
- Management Driven
- Promotes Mediocrity

– Most companies want to promote interaction and exchange but are unwilling to give up control.

– As a company succeeds, it often invests profits into another layer of management.

– While this elevates some, it places greater stress on the lower layers.

– Upper layers dangle carrots to those below to perform in hopes of climbing the ladder.

– Creates a self-serving environment.

– Stepping out of assigned roles to problem-solve is discouraged.

– Cautious organizational movement is favored over risk-taking.

Adapted from material developed by Mike Murphy, CEO, Comfortex, Winona, MN

The “Coaching” Model vs. The “Management” Model

Metaphorically, coaching revolves around the concept of a game. Games tend to be seen as fun, and in their best light, not tied to survival. One can be passionate about playing as it relates to survival. In the traditional way of managing, we work because we must. In sports, one plays because he/she wants to. Both players and coaches are vital to the outcome of the game; coaches are a resource to the game. Serious teams, of course, need a coach;

even serious athletes at the top of their game will employ a coach. Why? Because, to excel, the perspective, knowledge, and skill of the coach is not only appreciated but required.

In sports, there is always a notion that you have to develop yourself in order to be competitive. The coach is instrumental and vital to that development. This is in strong contrast to business, where managers are seldom seen as resources. In fact, many employees see their bosses as

impediments to maximizing individual potential.

In sports, the coach never goes on the actual playing field. The purpose of the coach is to continually enhance the effectiveness of the players who are on the field. Coaches stand on the sidelines. When applied to business, some of the notions that will come with this model are the following: ultimately the front line employee has the most power (because he/she is closest to the customer – either external or internal); problems are shared; knowledge and authority are also shared. At present, you can see these trends emerging where front line employees, at least in the better organizations, are getting unprecedented amounts of training education.

One of the reasons a coach is useful during a game is that he/she is not actually embroiled in the action. The coach has a perspective which is different from those on the field or those spectators in the viewing stands. He/she is not there to play, like the athlete, or be entertained, like the spectators. The coach is there to influence the players so that the ball is moved most effectively in the right direction. This sideline perspective often proves to be the winning edge. In business, managers could be used for their perspective and experience.

In order for a manager to become a coach, he/she has to give the employee the responsibility and accountability for

the outcome of the game. In order for employees to become players, they need themselves as the determinates in the outcome and see their managers as resources. The players must own the outcome.

Rethinking Managerial Practices

Who determines the fate of our organizations? If one believes in the notion of rugged individualism and a “can do” spirit, one would say that

CEOs, presidents, and managers are responsible for whatever

happens. However, as the world in which we live in

becomes more complex, a new perspective is

needed. The buy-in groups of people, not

individuals, will be essential in moving

ahead in business. From this vantage

point, one can see that the followers determine

the fate of leaders. The Eastern Airlines

employees did not buy in and support their CEO,

Frank Lorenzo. However, with Ford Motor’s President

Donald Peterson, they did. Clearly, the Iraqi army did not

buy into Sadaam Hussein’s plans when the going got tough. The Russians

did not support the coup in the fall of 1991. There is example after example in

which fate and/or success of the enterprise is related to what the people

who are on the field decide to do.

The rethinking which we are suggesting is that top managers shift

attention off themselves, seeing their jobs as one of the developing players. Employees also have to rethink their

In order for a manager to become a coach, he/she has to give the employee the responsibility and accountability for the outcome of the game.

In order for the employees to become players, they need to see themselves as the determinants in the outcome and see their managers as resources

roles. It is very easy to see oneself as just a cog in the wheel. It's more difficult to consider yourself as a major determinant of where the business is going. When one sees oneself as a critical element, a partnership with management can be established where each view the other as a resource, playing a common game with a common goal. Within this partnership, innovation and speed can occur on the field.

Looking at the sports model, a good coach is one whose players (employees) are clearly skilled at their playing positions than the coach (manager) is. The coach is hired by the players and used by them to enhance their ability to do a good job, because they have invested themselves in the game and in doing well. A useful coach stands for excellence and attracts people who want to be excellent.

Translate this to business life the focus shifts to the employees and on having these employees be effective in jobs throughout the company. The managers are there to enroll and empower employees. This is radically different from telling people what to do. In coach-player model, there is an element of game. People participate because they want to, because they enjoy it. When people are at work because they want to be, and are doing what they want to be doing, coaching becomes useful.

Coaching Is an Art, Not a Science

While the structure of the coaching has been discussed, little has been said about

the actual process of effective coaching.

How does one function as an effective coach? What skills and abilities does one need to have? Can coaching be taught in the same way as we teach science and technology? Or, is coaching more like an art, which can be expressed, but never formalized into a general set of rules or procedures?

We take the position that coaching is a more performing art than a structured technology. We have already acknowledged that coaches often make use of rules, techniques, and other methodologies when they are needed. At the heart of the process of coaching lies a more fundamental, non-structured responsiveness, which results in uniquely human expressions such as: compassion, leadership, creativity, wisdom, vision, and commitment. These qualities cannot be pretended; they must come from the soul.

In a similar illustration, professional dancers, athletes and other artistic performers need certain basic skills and abilities to reach a high level of professional performance. However, the source of their actions and behaviors is not merely those skills themselves, but skills embodied in a deeper and richer expression of human capability. So, too, a human being does not perform coaching as a simple product of learned skills and behaviors. Much more is required for successful coaching.



When one sees oneself as a critical element, a partnership with management can be established where each view the other as a resource, playing a common game with a common goal.

Extraordinary Coaching

Extraordinary coaching is brought about by fusing the uniquely human characteristics mentioned above with the experience and perceptiveness useful to the overall game plan already residing within the coach. An extraordinary coach will be one who truly measures his or her accomplishment by the performance of their employees (the players). This approach not only yields superior results, it establishes a foundation for an ongoing flow of future coaches who understand the power of coordinating and propelling players' potential.

Certain observations can be made about the ingredients which set the stage for extraordinary coaching:

1. The player needs to volunteer for and be eager for the relationship with the coach.
2. The coach always leaves the exit door open; players can terminate the coaching relationship. This is different than leaving the managerial relationship and does not necessarily mean leaving the company.
3. Coached organizations must be made of volunteers and people who love to play.
4. The coach never has permission to develop people into anything they have not asked him/her to develop.
5. Coaches develop capabilities; they do not get tasks accomplished. Managers focus on the task, but coaches use the task as a metaphor

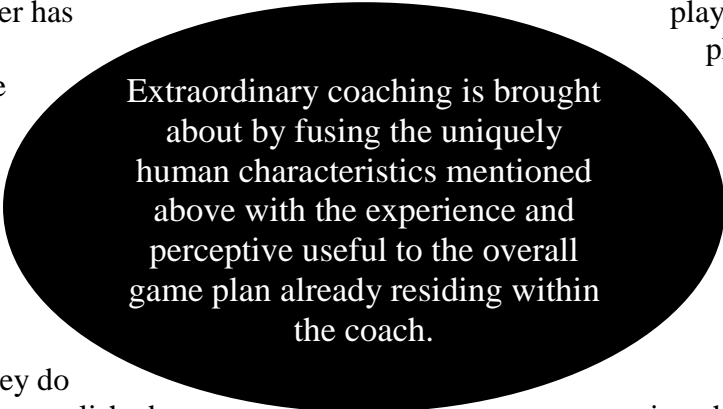
for development. They get the tasks accomplished, but use it to develop people.

6. Coaches manage both the context and the resource constraints. Coaches manipulate the time and resources available to make the task at hand an all-consuming challenge.
7. The game to coach sets up pulls players far beyond their belief of what they can do – and far beyond any realistic assessment of what they do. Goals are plucked for the domain of possibility and are not kept realistic.
8. The magic of coaching is in the coach's belief in and commitment to achieving the impossible and having players step up to bat and accomplish this.

Are You Coaching?

The following are questions either a manager or a consultant could ask to see whether or not extraordinary coaching was taking place.

1. Would people around you say that your team gets extraordinary results (enables the production of results beyond business as usual)?
2. Is there evidence that you are someone who develops great players? By a great player, we mean people who are able to make things happen far beyond what one might expect given history and past predictions of your organization?



Extraordinary coaching is brought about by fusing the uniquely human characteristics mentioned above with the experience and perceptiveness useful to the overall game plan already residing within the coach.

3. Do you consistently demonstrate the ability to bring the capabilities or possibilities of co-workers to a more advanced or effective state? The coach does this with whomever he or she directly or indirectly interfaces in the organization. The coach develops people in a 360-degree circle.... above, below, and laterally within the organization.
4. Do your commitments and sphere of influence go beyond traditional business channels and relationships? The coach does not get entrapped by his or her position in the organization. The person uses influences and coaching to move the ball wherever he/she moves within the organization.
5. Are you a person who presents himself/herself for coaching? Are *you* coach able?
6. Do you take on projects which require self development?

Answers to those questions should provide a sense of whether or not extraordinary coaching is taking place. Be tough, however, and differentiate between coaching activities and management activities. All too often, you find executives claiming to coach, but really managing.

Conclusion

Managing and coaching are different systems of human interaction. Both are necessary for **successful organizational** life. In managing, one tends to make decisions based on established directions, emphasizing supported by intuition, acting in the present based on the past, and emphasizing knowledge. In coaching, one needs to make decisions based on an envisioned future. A coach emphasizes intuition supported

by reason, belief and commitment in others, and acting toward the future based on the present.

As a style, coaching is a new development. Because of the changes and pressures which are overwhelming business, it will be a predominate management style in the future. Managers and team leaders who are going to be successful need to invest themselves in this and become extraordinarily proficient at it.

All employees in business need to shift from becoming victims to being players. The view that works is a “have to” needs to be redirected to work as a “privilege” and a growth path. Once people come to work in order to grow, develop, and learn, as well as to make a living, then the transition from managing to coaching will be a relatively simple and profoundly beneficial thing to do.

Bruce Hodes is the President of Contextual Management Institute (CMI), working with business executives and teams in the area of team building, strategic business planning, and team implementation and cultural shifts. He coaches growth-oriented companies that are creating profitable, potent, nurturing, and quality-oriented cultures in the 90s.

For more information contact:

Bruce Hodes

CMI

711 South Boulevard Suite 10

Oak Park, IL 60302

Phone: 708/383-7970

Fax: 708/383-0819

E-mail: bhodes@cmiteamwork.com

Web site: www.cmiteamwork.com