

A brass whistle hanging from a chain on a chalkboard background. The whistle is made of brass and has a circular opening on the side. The words "MADE IN ENGLAND" are engraved on the bottom part of the whistle. The chain is made of metal links and is attached to a ring at the top.

# Management

**How to  
Increase  
Productivity,  
Satisfaction,  
Retention, and  
Profitability**

by Jo Smith

# by Coaching

**C**LIENTS are waiting in the lobby when the receptionist arrives at 9:05. Secretaries fail to share information that will help them be more efficient and effective. Attorneys fail to share contacts that will help colleagues bring in a new client. A bookkeeper resigns or is terminated. An associate leaves for another firm. Shareholders grumble. Is this a bad day? Or is this a bad year? If these events occur more than occasionally, they are signs of disengaged, dissatisfied workers for which management by coaching can be a powerful cure.

On the other hand, if your department and firm are healthy and operating smoothly, 1) you're probably already coaching, whether you know it or not, and 2) you can further improve satisfaction, effectiveness, and profitability by coaching more deliberately.

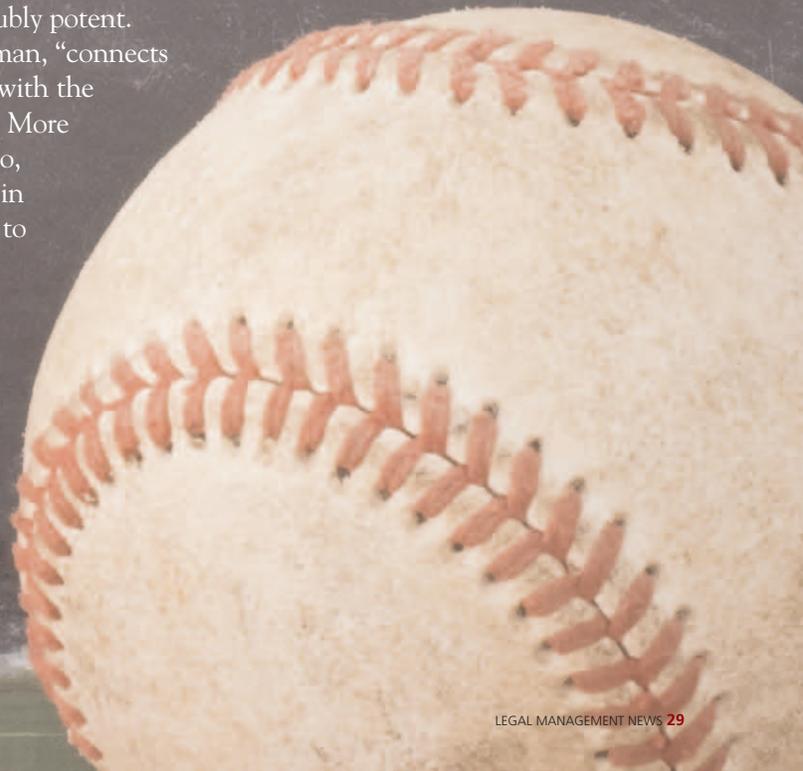
What is management by coaching? Fundamentally, it is management by aligning your employees' interests, strengths, skills, passions, desires, and goals with the needs of your department and organization. Simply stated, it requires that you, as a manager, first know what your department and organization need and, second, you

know what your employees want. It would be a mistake – one many employers make – to hastily conclude that your employees want a paycheck and leave it at that. Your opportunity to manage extraordinary performance lies in your ability to learn what each of your employees wants in that inner place that drives them to excel regardless of time clocks, performance reviews, or year-end bonuses and align their desires with your firm's vision, culture, and needs.

Why should coaching be one of your primary management tools? Daniel Goleman, bestselling author of *Primal Leadership*, identifies six styles of leadership and reports that the best leaders “skillfully switch between the various styles depending on the situation.” He rates only the Visionary style more highly than Coaching for overall positive impact. Together they are doubly potent. Coaching, says Goleman, “connects what a person wants with the organization's goals”. More than seventy years ago, Dale Carnegie wrote in his still popular *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, “There is only one

way . . . to get anyone to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it.” We understand now that we can't make anyone want to do anything. It remains true, however, that people do what they want [choose] to do and one of a manager's greatest opportunities for excellence is to help employees achieve what they want while simultaneously meeting the needs of the organization. When you can match your employees' desires and capabilities with your firm's needs and opportunities, productivity, job satisfaction, retention, client satisfaction, business growth, and profits will rise dramatically. Management by coaching is one of the most powerful tools you can use to achieve these results.

How can you coach deliberately to manage

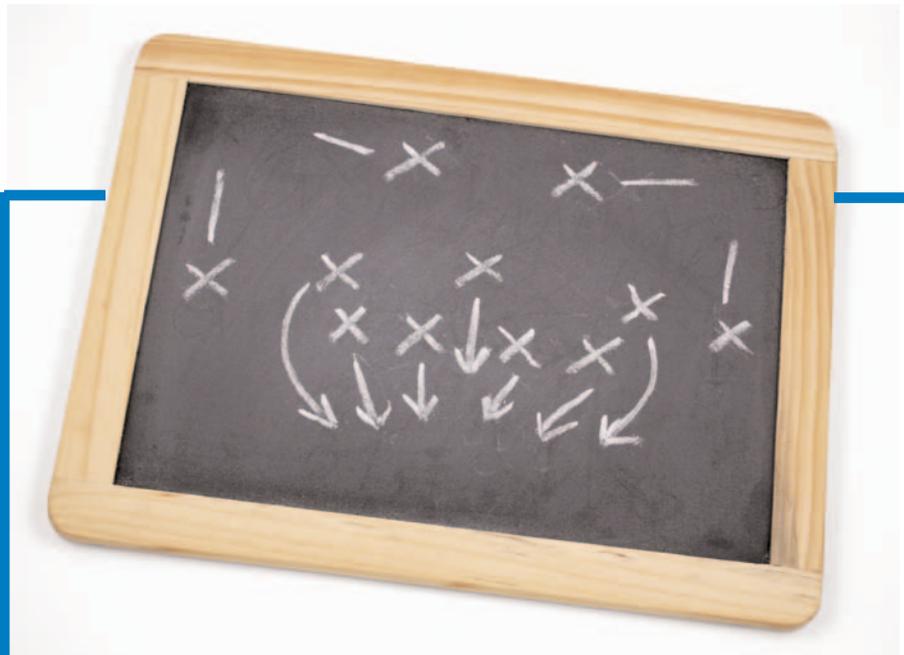


more powerfully and effectively? The two most effective coaching tools are powerful questioning and active listening, followed closely by strategizing. Powerful questions can be thought-provoking, probing, intuitive, open-ended, sometimes rhetorical. Thoughtful, well-crafted questions can cause a shift in perspective. Focused, goal-setting questions can help employees build action plans. The process of asking, listening, commenting, suggesting, and advising, rather than telling, builds commitment and successful follow-through builds confidence and pride.

This does not mean that managers should not provide direction, instruction, information or advice. An effective manager does all of the above, but also invests time and energy helping employees discover solutions independently and stretch their abilities appropriately, because they know that's how people learn best and grow the most. The wise manager also knows that he or she does not have all of the answers and that part of the manager's job is to facilitate the evolution of best practices, using everyone's best abilities.

Following are two case studies, with names and locations changed for confidentiality.

Case Study #1: A global consulting firm recruited David to manage the professional consultants and staff of its San Francisco office. At the time of his hire, the office was performing significantly below its financial targets, employees were discouraged, and upper management was looking for solutions. The newly-hired manager employed management by coaching to turn office performance around. Early in his assignment David asked every employee to write a description of their ideal job, including the hours they wanted to work, clients they



## Coaching Tips for Managers

**Care.** Successful coaching begins with genuine caring.

**Welcome.** Have an open door policy whenever possible, in addition to scheduling private meetings for employees' questions, ideas, problems, and candid conversations.

**Observe.** Pay attention to what your employees do well and acknowledge them for those skills and behaviors.

**Question.** Ask about their work as it relates to them. What do you like most about your work? What do you need to have or learn in order to do your job better? Where would you like your job to lead?

**Listen.** Remain quiet and resist the urge to offer solutions or advice too quickly. Allow them to discover their own answers and encourage them to suggest their own solutions before offering yours. When appropriate, allow them to make their own mistakes.

**Support.** Help your employees achieve their own goals and those of the firm by asking about their progress, acknowledging their accomplishments, providing training, assigning work that appropriately challenges their abilities, holding them accountable to their commitments, and helping them learn from their mistakes.

**Celebrate.** Everyone benefits from good coaching, including the coach – perhaps especially the coach.

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wanted to work with, knowledge they wanted to use, skills they wanted to develop and any other factors that would make their job ideal, by their own definition.

During the next two weeks, David met privately with each employee to learn about their background, their career path, their dreams and aspirations. He learned about their favorite work and their not-so-favorite work. He reviewed with them the ideal job descriptions they had written, telling them that while he probably could not make their jobs exactly what they wanted, he would do everything with-

that's only part of the story. Client satisfaction also soared, as did profit margins, and less than one year from David's hire, the office easily and significantly surpassed every one of its financial measures.

**Case Study #2:** A professional services firm in Denver was experiencing challenges that began on one of its functional support teams and was quickly spreading to the remaining four teams. Though work was continuing in a timely manner, the workplace environment had become unpleasant and top management was concerned that quality would soon be

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in his power to help them achieve their ideal job while meeting the needs of the firm, the office, and the clients.

David committed to matching the abilities and wants of his staff to the needs of his company and clients; in a very short time the great majority of everyone's work fit into their job preferences. Attitudes improved immediately, people thrived doing what they did best and liked most, and everyone was willing to accept some less-satisfying work among their responsibilities as well as to help out wherever there were critical or unexpected needs.

Employee satisfaction ratings soared and turnover became miniscule, but

affected. They brought in a consultant who assessed the situation by interviewing top management and several members of each team. She recommended a combination of coaching and training.

Each team completed individual training, using a personal strengths profile to better understand individual strengths and communication. The consultant worked with each team manager and provided them with coaching guidelines for their teams. She provided additional coaching and recommended supervisory training for the manager whose team initially experienced dysfunction.

Two years after the coaching and

training intervention, the managers continue to use the coaching guidelines and frequently refer to quick tips provided for each employee. The managers and employees report greater understanding and cooperation amongst themselves, with minimal turnover, and top management is grateful that work quality remains excellent.

What resources can help you manage by coaching? Marcus Buckingham has written several practical books about strength-based management. *Primal Leadership* by Daniel Goleman, provides insights into leadership, particularly as it relates to emotional intelligence. *Masterful Coaching* by Robert Hargrove, "provides specific strategies for transforming yourself into a leader, coach, and mentor." Personality profiles can be very helpful. PREP Personal Strengths Inventories provide ease of use, accuracy, and useful feedback. Extensive coursework is available through Coach U and similar coaching schools. An executive or business coach can be powerful in your own professional and coaching development. **LVN**



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