

Eli's Rehab Report

Staffing Strategies: Surge Forward With Effective Coaching -- 4 Sure-Fire Tips Show You How

Tip: Ask employees to keep a regular journal of their progress toward development goals.

Achieving an organizational culture of continuous improvement requires a strong coaching model that employees buy into. It is time to step up your employee coaching a notch. Read on for tips to improve your coaching program.

1. Tie Coaching to Organizational Goals

Focus coaching on what really matters to your organization. In other words, align employees' performance goals with your organization's "key cultural attributes." If you want to be effective at coaching, you must start out with a solid structure that includes a game plan for achieving your "core pillars."

Example: A core pillar at all hospitals and skilled nursing facilities is improving patient safety. To achieve this organizational goal, start by considering how an individual department, such as nursing, contributes. Then, nursing managers should help employees align their individual performance objectives with specific ways that they can contribute to departmental goals, which in turn advance the organizational safety goal.

Key: Coaching success is all about teamwork and understanding how each person can impact the overall objective.

Consider this baseball analogy: If you want to coach a team to win, you don't criticize someone for being a bad batter; instead, you find out how you can improve that batter's skill so he can help the team be the best it can be.

In the hospital or SNF setting, focus on providing employees with the knowledge and skills they need to identify safety issues as well as tips on how to prevent these issues from occurring again in the future. And doing this will lead to a safer environment and higher safety ratings on surveys.

2. Use a Tool to Keep Coaching on Track

It's difficult to gain ground on organizational objectives without a way to track individual employee's progress. Performance tracking tools make it easy for managers and HR professionals to report on information such as skill and competency requirements, development plans, and performance review results. Moreover, a robust tracking system can help you attach action items to rectify skill gaps a manager identifies during reviews.

3. Make Coaching Participatory

Keep in mind that coaching is ineffective if the employee is reluctant to participate. Coaching needs to be something that the individual wants -- if people don't buy into it, you can't coach. Most of the time, individuals recognize that there are things obstructing their performance and they are not accomplishing what they want to accomplish.

Engage employees in the process by mutually agreeing on the areas where they need coaching. When you mutually decide what needs to be worked on, define expected outcomes and the time line for achieving them.

Ask the employee, "Where do you want to be in two months in this performance area?" This way, you can assess the success of coaching against jointly defined outcomes, which gives both the manager and employee a mutual basis for evaluating how development is progressing.

Important: Coaching needs to be about building independence. You want independent people, you don't want dependent people. Enable people to coach themselves and not have them be dependent on managers.

Informal works best: Most of the time employees are more receptive to informal coaching environments. Don't think that coaching needs to be a formal sit-down meeting. Instead, walk around with people as they work and provide them with insights.

4. Close the Coaching Loop

If you don't follow up on coaching goals, you risk making little progress. Put a premium on coaching frequency. Try to revisit development priorities no less than twice a year. Some organizations see good results with a quarterly review process. You need to make sure the employee's goals continue to align with departmental and organizational objectives and that she is still on the right track.

Regular follow-ups also ensure that coaching -- and the manager -- are taken seriously. If a manager gives a goal to improve performance, checking in on that communicates that the development plan isn't just lip service.

Idea: Consider asking employees and managers to keep a journal of ways they are improving on a regular basis. Since performance reviews only occur once or twice a year, keeping notes such as these, which talent management software can help facilitate, provides an accurate guide for giving feedback.

Recap: Achieve coaching success by aligning departmental and individual goals to priorities that the CEO has set for the organization. Make sure these goals are measurable and that you have clearly defined the competencies for each. Consider tying specific, standardized development tips to each competency to close any skill gaps.