



Coaching Made Clear

The DRAW model provides the right approach

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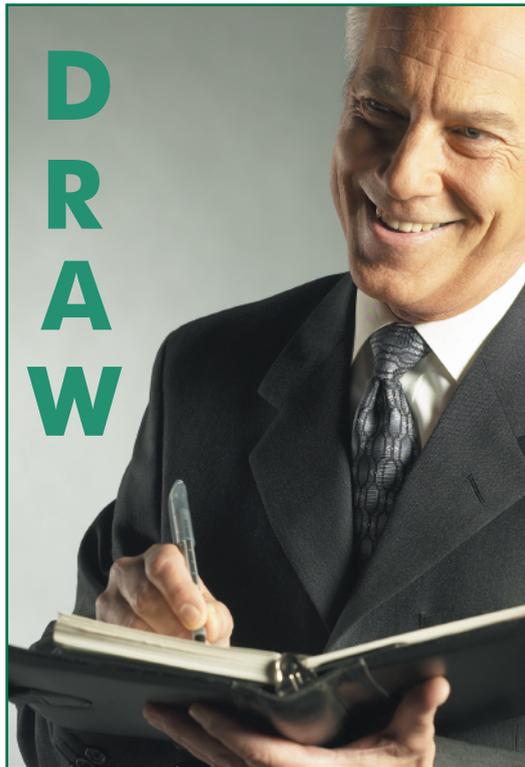
Every leader I know looks for ways to drive performance. They want to engage people at significant levels, to get everyone involved in making strategy come to life.

For as many leaders who are searching there are ten theorists pontificating about the latest and greatest leadership techniques. Let's ditch the theories and get down to brass tacks leadership competency. The single competency that will maximize human potential, performance and productivity is not a secret shrouded in the myth and lore of management theories. In fact, it is the most basic, core competency that encompasses all of the essential skills required to lead purposefully and with passion. That competency is coaching. Yes, coaching. It is the least used, yet most useful of all leadership competencies. (Adapted from "Leadership That Gets Results," authored by Daniel Goleman, published in *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, 2000.)

This article explores the distinctions between coaching, counseling and mentoring. We will then identify the five coaching proficiencies required to integrate coaching into your management repertoire. Finally, we will review the DRAW[®] coaching model. This clear, concise, collaborative process allows both the coach and the coached to approach the process with clarity of intent. Both parties will share an understanding of the rationale behind the coaching, the intended outcomes and the framework for action. It is a simple, effective, jargon-free approach that you will be able to use repeatedly.

Coaching, Counseling and Mentoring

Before getting to the specifics of skillful coaching, let's define the basics and make distinctions between coaching, counseling and mentoring. Coaching is the intentional, consistent, collaborative process that leaders use to target and tap potential, whether that



potential is latent or obvious. Once the potential is identified coaching is then used to create opportunities for developmental growth. It is a critical component of the performance management process that entails behavioral observations followed by specific, timely feedback to reinforce positive aspects and correct negative aspects. Expert coaching links behavior, both that of the coached and the coach, to corporate mission and values. It enables people throughout the enterprise to master norms of behavior reflective of the very best in the corporate culture.

Managers mistakenly use coaching only when there are problem behaviors. The most influential coaching acknowledges the best and requires even more of it. Expert coaches see buried talent and then mine it for the good of the individual and the organization. They understand their respon-

sibility to acknowledge inconsistent, lackluster performance and other deviations; however, they do not dwell on the shortfalls. Instead they work to redirect behavior and to teach people how to play to their strengths. This is an important concept. When we teach people how to play to their strengths we are teaching them how to be confident in themselves and their abilities. We are teaching them how to do thorough self-assessments and identify their aptitudes.

Coaches inspire greater performance by helping people seek developmental assignments that offer them opportunities to learn more about the business, the industry and their particular areas of interest. Coaches also help those they coach by identifying projects, work assignments and other substantive experiences that provide significant learning. In other words, they don't engage in one-way conversations that just hype and inspire, they guide people toward experiences that contribute to both their individual progress and the progress of the business unit.

Counseling, another component of the performance manage-

ment process, uses communication that focuses on corrective action for recent behaviors inconsistent with corporate standards. It is used after consistent coaching has failed to produce the desired results. This is generally viewed as a corrective or punitive management action. This intervention should be thoroughly documented. It often involves formal reprimands or formal warnings.

Mentoring differs from both coaching and counseling. It can be either a formal or an informal process by which strong personal relationships are used to promote career enhancement, long-term personal and professional development. Mentoring does not have to be used in combination with coaching or counseling, though a mentoring relationship may evolve from either. A mentor/protégé relationship requires interest and commitment from both people. This voluntary bond is often used to show novices the ropes, to prepare people for career success or to have mutually beneficial companionship on the climb up the ladder. These distinctions between terms make it evident that they are not synonyms.

The Five Proficiencies

There are five proficiencies every potential coach has to build before adding coaching to his or her leadership toolbox. They are: confidence, competence, candor, commitment and clarity.

Confidence — It is impossible to coach another person when you are unsure of yourself. Before even considering introducing coaching as part of your modus operandi conduct an honest assessment of yourself, your skills, your strengths and your weaknesses. Being completely honest with you about you leads you to find sources of pride. This evaluation enables you to identify significant accomplishments. Use these accomplishments to then examine what you can share with anyone you have the opportunity to coach. Understanding your accomplishments and being real about your track record gives you boasting rights. Not cocky, arrogant boasting; instead, the quiet, confident boasting that allows you to discuss your successes.

Competence — Being able to present a good facade is far less important than having deep, substantive knowledge of your business, your industry and the metrics that determine success or failure for your company. In order to coach you have to be on your own perpetual learning voyage. Constantly gathering and synthesizing new information makes you more valuable and more interesting as a coach. High levels of competence add to your credibility throughout the coaching relationship. Think about it, you would not want to be coached by someone who was getting by on that old axiom “Fake it ’til you make it.”

The process of building competence is never-ending. It requires

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you to read industry and business publications. It also requires active participation in trade and professional associations because they provide limitless information about your particular industry. Strong coaches do not simply recycle the same old stuff, instead they continuously seek and integrate fresh data.

Candor — While confidence and competence are integral proficiencies for a coach, they have to be translated into purposeful

action. That action is demonstrated through candor. Having the courage to tell the truth makes a coach more valuable. Coaches who talk straight, without ambiguity, are far more likely to forge strong relationships. These coaches can deliver bad news, identify deficiencies and provide difficult feedback. Coaching is not about just giving praise; it also involves constructive criticism and constructive conflict. Candor does not have to be harsh or hurtful. It should be tempered with genuine concern for the individual. Coaching revolves around honoring the human element. That emphasis on individuals as whole people calls for caring candor. This kind of candor never seeks to wound. Instead, it seeks to assist people on the rough patches along their developmental path.

Commitment — This is best demonstrated in deeds, not words. Coaches show commitment by paying attention, real attention, to the work their partners in the process are doing. This commitment is also evident when coaches consistently adhere to high standards as role models. Of course, there will be slips but those slips cannot result in a downhill slide. Everyone you coach will look to you for leadership by example.

Commitment is shown when coaches stay the course and understand that coaching is an ongoing process. This particular type of work requires consistent contact characterized by clear communication. It will not produce worthwhile results if it is approached as a hit or miss happenstance. The best way to show your commitment to people, to the work and to the company is not by talking about it but by being about it.

Clarity — Before coaching, be clear about several things; the first is intent in entering a coaching relationship. If you enter the relationship because you read this article and thought it was a good thing to do you should probably wait until you find a more compelling reason. If you begin coaching because you have been coached and see the value in developing people through this type of process, great! If you begin coaching because you understand the ways in which it fosters both individual and organizational capacity building, great! If you are doing it to feed your ego or to impress your boss, don't even bother.

Just as you must have clarity of intent, you must be willing to build mutual clarity with anyone you are coaching. Know what they

want and need from the relationship so you can collaborate with them to make those things happen.

It is also important that you be very clear about the fact that coaching is a developmental not an evaluative relationship. Certainly, you will evaluate performance, progress and process, but your intent in each coaching session is not to evaluate but to help people grapple with their issues and ultimately reach the next level of proficiency. This distinction between evaluation and development can become blurred because there will be times when, as manager, you will be responsible for evaluations. Have conversations so that the distinction is clear. Help people comprehend the difference between formal evaluations, counseling sessions and ongoing coaching. Until you build trust there may be some suspicion that coaching is just another way to gather data that will be used in performance appraisals. In fact, coaching is the performance management tool that reduces the anxiety and stress associated with evaluations. Bridges are already built so that communication about issues is the norm.

The DRAW Coaching Model

The DRAW model is designed with the truest intentions of coaching in mind, to draw the best from people so they can forge a meaningful career path paved with interesting work, thought-provoking assignments and mutually beneficial relationships. This model is designed on the principles of continuous quality improvement. Individuals and organizations must be willing to examine the mechanics, rationale and execution of their work. It is through this examination that they gain the insight to refine every aspect of how they do what they do. This is an ongoing quest for improvement. It requires a commitment to reflect, regroup and refine.

The model, collaborative at its core, requires the aforementioned commitment to ensure success. Coaches who use the model understand that it only bears fruit when consistently implemented with patience and dedication. This is a dedication to both individuals and the larger organization.

The model has four components that can be adapted to most people and most organizational situations. Those components are as follows: Distinguish & Define; Relate & Route; Address & Assess; Work & Weigh.

In the initial phase, Distinguish & Define, the coach identifies who will be coached, what specific areas require attention and the rationale. This first phase provides a framework for assessment. Not only will the coach be assessing the person (or people) he (or she) intends to coach, but he will also be conducting a self-assessment to determine what unique coaching skills he is bringing to

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the process. This is also the time for an honest reality check on thoughts, feelings, biases and assumptions about the people receiving the coaching. None of us are total blank slates. We have predispositions that color every interaction. Coaches need to invest time reflecting on these predispositions so that they do not get in the way.

Just as this initial phase allows you to sketch the who, what and why of coaching, it also

allows you to partner with the people who will be coached to define parameters and particulars that will shape your relationships. As people evolve so, too, will these parameters. The two of you may choose an informal relationship characterized by meetings held over lunch off-site. Or, you may opt for weekly meetings designed to evaluate projects and problems. Whatever your structure, it needs to meet the needs of the coach and the coached.

If you are thinking about implementing coaching as a general part of your management repertoire, as opposed to using it with specific people and targeted projects, you may use this initial phase to specify your particular approach to this form of staff development. Use it to create a barometer for yourself. Use it to formulate an approach that will enable you to integrate coaching into every interaction.

The next phase, Relate & Route, allows you and the other person to begin building bridges with each other. The more you can relate as human beings, the better your relationship will be. This need not be a formal process where you ask 20 prying questions. Instead, this is the time to talk about whatever comes to mind. This phase presents a chance to get acquainted, to talk about the work and the world. The process of relating will continue throughout the relationship. As you know each other better you will begin relating on deeper levels. This is the time when each of you will make the initial steps to build trust.

You may also find yourselves testing each other to decide whether or not confidences will be safe. Coaching relationships build and become strengthened over periods of time. Be clear about one vital point: coaches must be trustworthy. The relationship is doomed if you are unable to keep confidences, to refrain from gossip and to be truthful.

In addition to the testing and trying mentioned above, you will also be testing the boundaries of candor. Both you the coach and the coached will begin figuring out how frank you can be with each other. In infancy your relationship will not allow you to put everything on the line. You will take small steps and see just how much candid information you can each tolerate.

As you move to routing you will partner to decide on a developmental course. For instance, if you are coaching an employee who wants to consider lateral learning across the organization, the two

of you will begin looking at potential assignments that foster cross-departmental learning. Or, if you are working with an employee who is trying to refine his or her technical skills, you will decide which technical proficiencies are essential and how best to begin building them.

It is essential that you refrain from providing direction at this stage of the process. It is not your career. It is not your life. Encourage the other person to take the lead on thinking and planning for his or her own development. This gives the individual complete ownership and continues to keep the relationship developmental not evaluative. Of course, you will share your insights and provide some guidance. This is why you are the coach.

You are responsible for making sure developmental objectives support both the strategic intent and the operational goals of the business. Have conversations about the link between their development and the guiding strategies of the enterprise. These two things should be synchronized. It is pointless to have an employee working on developing his or her abilities to provide technical support on machinery that you are not planning to produce, sell or service five years from now. If the enterprise is moving in a set direction, employees should be developing skills to support, sustain and supplement that move. As coach, your guidance will help route people in the right direction. As coach you are also charged with being sure that every effort supports the mission, vision and strategies of the company.

The routing phase may call on you to help guide the coached to projects or assignments that will support their ongoing learning. You may guide them to training, education or other forms of information gathering. You may consider helping them get assigned to task forces, teams or committees working on projects aligned with the needs of your business unit and their interests.

Moving to Address & Assess, this is the litmus test. You will discuss how well developmental efforts are progressing. You will both give your opinions on successes and failures to date. Be certain to pay close attention to success. A by-product of coaching is confidence building. By emphasizing successes we teach people to play to their strengths and build on their best. Addressing progress only works when both the coach and the coached are in close contact. Both must be observant so that their discussions are worthwhile. They must both be able to reflect. Awareness is critical. Without awareness you will have nothing to address or assess.

Speaking of assessment, this is the time to determine whether both you and the person you are coaching are on the right track. In addition to assessing progress and projects, this is also the time to assess the relationship. Is it working for both of you? What are the

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mid-course corrections that need to happen? These may be corrections in processes, projects, relationships, communication or contact. Additionally, you will both need to assess possibilities of future work. You will also need to assess moving to the next level of skill development.

Lastly, the Work & Weigh phase. Having used the prior phase to make corrections and refine connections, you now get to continue with the work. This is clearly a cyclical model that has both parties checking in regularly, communicating frequently and working purposefully.

Once again, you both have opportunities to weigh whether the developmental work is progressing, whether the work is meaningful and whether the relationship is working for both of you. You will also need to weigh whether the work is truly consistent with larger organizational goals. Again, you have the opportunity to make mid-course corrections to make sure each element of the coached person's developmental work is synchronized with the strategic intent of the larger organization and your specific business unit.

Summary

Coaching is a never-ending process. However, you may not continue to be the coach. As people grow and develop they need coaches who can challenge them to move to the next level, the next challenge. Ultimately you want all of the people you coach to grow to their fullest potential; even when that means they have outgrown you.

As the DRAW model helps you both develop insights into the work, it will also help you both develop insights into when to move to more difficult assignments. You will both know when it is time for another coach to emerge. You will also determine when the coached can transition and begin coaching the next crop of talent. Keeping the coaching cycle going creates a learning loop in the organization. It also create the capacity for reflection into individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as organizational strengths and weaknesses.

One more interesting observation, coaches who have been in successful coaching relationships make better coaches. They are able to use models like the one presented herein because they have not just read about the benefits, but experienced them. These people also know that coaching isn't a project, a fad or a trend. It is a way of maximizing human potential. It is a method for both recruiting and retaining the best talent. It will help your company become an employer of choice.

By way of review, while coaching, counseling and mentoring are connected concepts, they are not synonymous nor are they interchangeable functions. Each serves a different purpose for managers. Coaching is the developmental performance management

process that focuses on continuous performance improvement. Counseling, another performance management tool, seeks to correct inconsistent or potentially damaging behavior. Mentoring, whether formal or informal, is a relational opportunity for individual development. Coaching requires a special set of proficiencies. They all revolve around the ability to analyze behavior and discuss it in non-threatening yet frank terms. Again those proficiencies are: confidence, competence, candor, commitment and clarity.

Before beginning a coaching relationship or using coaching techniques as a management tool, work to develop each of these core proficiencies. Once the proficiencies are developed, you can begin using the DRAW model to bring out the very best in people. While the model is presented in a linear format, in fact it is a cyclical continuous improvement model built on reflection and responsiveness. That is responsiveness both to the individual's

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progress and to the needs of the organization. Whether using the model as a tool for building relationships with particularly talented people, redirecting the energy of marginal people or an enhancement of your unique management style, use it consistently so that you can develop mastery. Once you have mastered the model you will be able to adapt it so that it is exactly what you need. This model — the entire art of coaching —

will help you draw out the very best in people. ■

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