

Should You Be Managing or Should You Be Coaching?

By Dr. Jan Ferri-Reed

Do you think of yourself more as a manager or as a Coach? Knowing when to manage your employees and when to coach them may spell the difference between a workplace that's wallowing in frustration or one that's bursting with enthusiasm. The trick is to know when to wear the "manager" cap and when to wear the "coach" cap.

The classic definition of a manager is someone who "tells employees what to do in order to get things done." But that definition of managing only goes so far. After all, we don't get things done by simply telling our people what to do and when to do it. We also have to tell them how to do the work and why.

Effective managers take time to make sure their workers not only have the necessary skills, but also make sure they understand their role and how it affects the entire organization. Managing is focused upon what we do; setting goals, assigning tasks and evaluating results. Coaching, in contrast, is focused upon how and why we do those things. When your employees understand that difference it could also make a huge difference in their motivation as well as in the outcome

But remember that there is a fundamental difference between coaching and managing. Managing is focused upon outcomes and involves giving specific assignments, directing efforts and evaluating results. Coaching is about teaching and building skills, developing capabilities and building competence. Employees who have been managed know what to do and when. Employees that have been coached understand the "how" and "why" of an assignment.

To look at the difference another way, consider a sports analogy. Professional baseball teams have a single manager who runs the whole team and coaches who work with individual players. The manager makes overall decisions about which players start at each position, prepare a batting lineup, and make key decisions about game time strategy and what's happening on the field. Each coach's primary roles is to work with the players between games to develop their skills, maintain proper conditioning and anticipate game time strategies.

In business a manager's tasks include mundane things like budgeting, scheduling, tracking results and writing reports. While many of these tasks involve employees they are really more about making sure the department has the resources needed to function successfully. A coach's task in business is to make sure employees understand the bigger picture, acquire the skills necessary for growth and learn how to adapt and grow within their position.

Certainly there are many challenges a manager faces that demand formal, structured discussions like performance appraisals or disciplinary interventions. But a manager's primary function is also to develop his or her employees' capabilities so they add value to the organization. For that each executive needs to switch caps, from manager to coach!

ABOUT JAN:

Jan is a seasoned consultant and President of KEYGroup®, a 35-year international speaking, training, coaching and assessment firm and co-author of ***Keeping the Millennials: Why Companies are Losing Billions in Turnover to This Generation and What To Do About It***, and the author of ***Millennials 2.0: Empowering Generation Y***. Jan's work focuses on creating productive workplaces and retaining talent while increasing the bottom line.

Publications and media that have called on Jan and KEYGroup® for advice and guidance include Industry Week, TIME, Diversity Executive, NPR and Forbes, to name a few.

