

## Topic Thirteen – Keys to Coaching Success



## Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback – Learning Series

We are pleased to bring you **“Keys to Coaching Success;”** the thirteenth and final topic in a series of communications that discuss the value that coaching brings to your management practice and team leadership. The content presented will provide an overview and summary of the most critical and challenging keys to coaching success presented directly and indirectly in the previous topics. It also includes a **“Keys to Coaching Success Job Aid”** provided as a handy reference.

To reference previous topics, please click on the Coaching Series Home link located in the Quick Links section of this web page.

Thanks for all you do.

### **Overview Keys to Coaching Success:**

Coaching is challenging, and it should be. Coaching is a critical component of the function of managing people. Coaching is the vehicle through which managers will communicate feedback and employees will develop their skills and careers.

New and experienced coaches will struggle from time to time as they develop and hone their coaching approach. To support you in this role, a number of topics have been presented in this series, from planning for coaching to responding to resistance.

In this topic, the keys to success presented in this series – mentioned directly and referred to indirectly -- are summarized for you. Use these guidelines to help you turn common coaching challenges into the keys to coaching success.

### **Benefits of Coaching Success:**

By implementing the keys to success presented in this topic, the following benefits can be recognized:

- Coaching becomes a collaborative process and an integral part of the way you do work
- Employees have the information they need to develop their skills and careers
- Employees are honest and open with their coaches and coaches are aware of what’s really going on in a given situation

Employees trust their coach and, in turn, feel comfortable asking questions, taking risks and making mistakes

### **Keys to Coaching Success:**

Outlined below are some keys to coaching success:

**Do more than “check” coaching off your list:** As a Manager/supervisor and an employee of the Commonwealth, you are asked to do a tremendous amount every day. Sometimes when things come around that seem to be in competition with the time you have to do what is already on your plate, the temptation can be to just do what is required and leave it at that. The bad news is that coaching is not something that lends itself well to this approach. The good news is that coaching really is not a new job, but rather part of what you do every day. It is the application of the coaching lens to everything that you do. By creating a collaborative environment where coaching happens, you can embed every aspect of your job with the keys to coaching success without creating more work for you or those around you.

**Remember that coaching isn’t just for performance problems:** Often, the idea that someone “needs coaching” is seen as code to communicate that something is broken or wrong with that person or situation. If you apply coaching techniques and principles to your high-performers and smooth working situations, you will find that these methods help to propel you and others to higher levels of performance.

**Ask more open-ended questions:** One of the challenges in developing a coaching approach, rather than just applying what you need to in order to get by, is that conversations might take quite a bit longer in the beginning. Using yes/no or leading questions are more efficient in the short term, but they are unlikely to uncover what is really going on in any given situation. This can often lead to problems in the long term. Asking leading questions is also not true coaching, but more like convincing people to see things from your point of view. It can be a struggle to frame the questions appropriately, and this is where some advance planning before the conversation can help you. As you get more comfortable with this approach, the open-ended questions will come naturally and it will not take you as long to prepare. Another challenge can be that open-ended questions uncover issues you may not feel prepared to deal with – emotional issues, or more complex underlying causes to what may seem like a simple problem on the surface. If this happens, take comfort in knowing that identifying these issues more proactively can only help you.

**Allow your employees to find “the answer” for themselves:** Coaching is sometimes seen as being like sports coaching, where you are giving your team members strategies and telling them to go out and try it and come back to tell you how it went. But one of the keys to successful coaching is to remain open to possibilities. If you have come up with the solution on your own, even if you think it is the “best” solution, the employee does not own it. You need to give them the space to make mistakes, to trust people to try things without micromanaging their decisions. Let them think through their options before you launch in and try to tell them what to do.

**Use “what, how and when” instead of “why”:** Often in a coaching conversation or opportunity something comes up that can stop the collaboration in its tracks: the simple act of asking why. Though it seems innocuous, by asking *why* something happened you put the person on the defensive, which runs counter to the collaborative environment that you are trying to create. As long as people are on the defensive, they will not generalize their learning; if they are struggling to answer the question of “why” they are not receptive to new information or guidance from you. To stay in the mode of collaboration, it is better to treat the situation as a bit of a crime scene and investigate it together, asking clue questions such as “what, how and when.” The underlying issue of “why” can be reached as you both come to understand all the other pieces of the puzzle.

#### **Next Steps:**

**Activities:** For a handy reference on the keys to coaching success, use the job aid linked below:

- [Keys to Coaching Success Job Aid](#)

**Coming Next:** Please note that this is the final topic in the series. The next communications you receive will be a Series Conclusion and an invitation to complete a Final Assessment Survey to provide your feedback on the series.