

Managers Look to the Field



When deciding how to get the best performance from employees, managers are looking to the sports arena for inspiration and ideas. Coaches and managers have the same objectives: coaches want to win the game through the efforts of their players; while managers want to see revenues increase through the efforts of their employees.

Since the 1950's, experts have been saying that we need to provide employees with recognition, praise for good performance and a sense of achievement, as well as opportunities for continued growth and work that is enjoyable and meaningful.

Win through coaching

Sports coaches have worked hard to meet these needs in their athletes and managers are now learning that their techniques can be applied in the workplace. The playing field may look different, but the relationship between players and coaches during a season can teach managers a lot about achieving "wins" in their departments.

Despite this, many managers still do not practice coaching. Athletic coaches do not have to be top performers in their sport; their strength lies in developing skills in their athletes. In the world of business, however, managers often come from a technical background where good "doers" become managers because of their strong technical skills. As coaches, managers need to become facilitators and leave their roles as practitioners behind.

Make time for practice

Not only do many managers lack the skills to coach, they also often lack the time necessary to do it effectively. Coaches are allowed to watch post-game films and run practice sessions between games. Managers don't have this luxury. Time spent in meetings, monitoring budgets, and fighting fires can consume a manager's workday.

One survey reported that executives waste at least four full workweeks each year on unnecessary phone calls and spend an average of 29% of each day on the phone. Under these circumstances, coaching can become simply a dream.

Don't leave development up to the players

A final roadblock lies in the assumptions managers make about what drives an employee. They assume that their employees will be self-motivated and take responsibility for their own growth. Athletic coaches, however, do not leave the development of skills up to the players. It is the coach's job to ensure that the improvement of the athlete's performance is the focus of practices, training camps, and preseason competitions.

Managers can show employees their work is appreciated, facilitate their growth within the organization, and help them perform their best through coaching. This is what sports coaches have long been doing for their players and what managers can apply today.