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FROM JIM SIRBASKU'S DESK

Coach Early And Often

In our office, we like to encourage a variation on the electoral theme "Vote early and often." We substitute the word "coach" for "vote," and as opposed to the humor in the voting phrase, we are dead serious. We believe coaching is imperative to improved performance, and that the act of coaching offers a more robust work experience to both employees and managers.

Research bolsters our belief in the value of coaching. Talent management analysts Bersin & Associates discovered the important role coaching plays in a survey of 750 organizations and 55 executives. Bersin wanted to get a feel for the top business problems today, challenges related to talent in our companies, and processes we use to recruit, retain and develop employees.

Their research reveals that performance management is one of the most important things organizations can do for employees, and when we are managing performance, the most effective thing we can do is coach. Among the organizations surveyed, coaching ranks at the top of 22 processes which consistently drive the highest business impact. The results of continuous coaching? Higher levels of engagement, leadership, flexibility and performance.

Companies seeing the biggest value use formal coaching programs and have discovered that the most effective coaching is tailored to the individual. The right kind of coaching determines whether each person fits his/her job; how employees are motivated and how they respond to stress; how a manager can optimize the relationship with the employee; the best role of the employee in a team; and how best to develop the employee's leadership abilities.

Many of our employees already get this. One of the top reasons employees give for leaving a particular workplace is lack of coaching. Don't we owe them a management style that proactively prevents problems (coaching) instead of fixing issues after they occur (performance evaluations)?

Adding coaching to the repertoire of management processes should spark creativity throughout our organizations. Imagine a manager's toolbox labeled "Performance Management." Inside the toolbox is a set of tools you can use continuously to recruit, hire, train and develop workers. Your mission is to help employees grow in all areas on the job. Further, you are to do that in advance of an employee failing. Thus, this toolbox pretty much does away with annual performance evaluations, which everyone dreads and which provide questionable results. Let's put them in the "obsolete" pile.

Inside this—bundled with the coaching tool—are two tools labeled "Why Coach" and "How to Coach." The "Why" tool shows us that daily coaching elicits teamwork and creativity. Just like coaches of sports teams practice to *develop* players so they can go to the next level of play, managers in an office setting can adopt the same strategy.

This kind of coaching, or the "How to Coach" tool, involves:

- examining the employee's thinking style, behavioral attributes and occupational interests to see if he can be successful in the job, based on the characteristics of top performers. If there are gaps between the person and the best profile for the job, these specific areas invite coaching.
- watching how the person responds to the stress and challenges of the job.
- observing how the employee interacts with his or her manager (you); how you relate to each other; whether your styles mesh; how you can best communicate.
- watching how the employee interacts with other team members and what conflicts may occur based on the dynamics of the team; seeing how the employee can best be coached to produce in that environment. If the employee is also a manager, you need to use her management style as a coaching tool. This means you must understand her strengths and weaknesses in the leadership role.

The tools we add to our Performance Management toolbox and how we use them will be the strategies we develop along the way. Undoubtedly, those of us who actively coach will learn new lessons as we do so. Our creativity will develop, too, as we start enjoying the role as the coach of a team headed for a championship title.

Jim Sirbasku, CEO
Profiles International

10 Steps to Effective Coaching

1. Recognize the important differences between coaching and performance reviews.
 2. Teach all that coaching is a standard part of development, not a punitive action.
 3. Listen well, ask questions and speak clearly, using language that everyone understands.
 4. Always focus on the behavior, never on the person.
 5. Know where the manager wants/needs to go. This will help you develop a road map.
 6. Remember that you do not control the process or the manager's behavior.
 7. Be a trustworthy partner and confidante. Do not gossip.
 8. Act as a sounding board when necessary.
 9. Support your partner's self-esteem. Never laugh at fears or worries.
 10. Coaching is a process. Commit your time and patience for the best results.
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CASE STUDY

ProfileXT[®] Helps Healthcare Firm Gain Footing in Selecting Workers

To ensure high productivity and low turnover in the workplace, make sure your employees fit the requirements of their jobs. Sounds simple enough, right?

Yet both employees and employers often flounder in this area. Dazzled by salary or benefits or something else, potential employees cannot always discern if a job is a good match for them. Employers sometimes hire using their best instincts – and make decisions that turn out to be their worst.

A healthcare organization faced just such decision-making uncertainty when it sought to improve the low productivity of its enrollment specialists. Seeking a way to increase the frequency of hiring workers that excelled on the job, the organization turned to the ProfileXT[®].

Participants

The study included 60 enrollment specialists. Leaders administered ProfileXT and evaluated each employee's performance using a five-point scale, with a five being the best rating. The results:

- 13 employees exceeded expectations, rating a four or five.
- Six employees failed to meet expectations, rating a one or two.
- 41 employees met performance expectations, rating a three.

Job Match Pattern

Using a concurrent study format, experts then developed a Job Match Pattern for the position of enrollment specialist. The 13 employees who exceeded expectations helped formulate the pattern.

Leaders then put the Job Match Pattern side-by-side with the 60 enrollment specialists. They reviewed the sample's ProfileXT percent matches, and decided that an overall Job Match Percent of 78 or higher best identified top performing employees. They selected 78 percent as the score to represent a good pairing of employee to the Job Match Pattern.

Results

The study determined that 34 met or exceeded the 78 percent benchmark. Of those:

- Nine of 13 top performers were correctly identified as top performers by the pattern (69 percent).
- Two of six bottom performers were incorrectly identified as top performers by the pattern (33 percent).

The pattern thus differentiated top and bottom performers as delineated by the company's own performance evaluations.

Summary

Using the ProfileXT has allowed the organization to screen enrollment specialist candidates with success. Of the 34 people who either met or exceeded the Job Match Pattern benchmark, only two, or 5.8 percent, were bottom performers. Additionally, approximately 70 percent of the top performers (nine of 13) were included in this group.

Company leaders believe their hiring practices have become more consistent after using the ProfileXT. They face their hiring decisions with more confidence because they know the PXT offers them an objective evaluation of employee attributes. Clearly, using the ProfileXT Job Match Pattern can help improve selection practices.

PRODUCT FOCUS

Is Your Team Lacking a Coach?

Let's say your organization provides assessments that tell employees where they are and where they need to go. That's good; you have given them valuable, clear training. Now you wait for it to take hold. And wait. And wait some more.

You could be waiting a long time to see the changes you'd like unless you follow the training with coaching. An article in *Workforce Magazine* indicates that training alone ups productivity by about 22 percent. But training plus coaching increases the productivity line by a whopping 88 percent! The secret ingredient is a coach who daily makes employees accountable and thus increases their effectiveness.

When you have decided you've waited long enough, it's time to explore Profiles SkillBuilder™, an enhancement that provides the day-to-day, collaborative style of coaching that each employee needs to upgrade his job performance.

SkillBuilder™ is part of the Checkpoint 360° Feedback System™. Although similar systems simply report a participant's strengths and weaknesses and provide suggestions for improvement, SkillBuilder™ was created on the knowledge that the best professional development happens when people are actually performing their jobs.

The SkillBuilder™ process begins with the training/developing need, or the issue that is keeping an employee from performing at his best. From identifying the need, the next step is gaining the employee's personal commitment to reach his development goal. Then we assign a coach/mentor; use the tips and interactive job activities for building skills; look for the "aha" factor – when the coachee shows awareness of what he needs to do and acts accordingly; and, finally, we apply the accountability action plan. At Profiles, we call this the KSS process:

- Keep doing the thing you do well;
- Stop doing the things that interfere with development;
- Start doing things that improve performance.

If you are ready to stop walking in place and begin the coaching process that makes your workforce productive, call us at (254) 751-1644.

STRATEGIES FOR WINNING

Antelope and Chipmunks

Know Your Goals and Focus on Them

Goal setting is a subject to be emphasized early in the development of a business career, and we can't emphasize it enough. We have formed the habit of setting goals daily, weekly, monthly, annually and for the next 10 years! We think you should, too.

A Personal Story from Bud Haney

I learned the power of goal setting early in my career when a mentor asked me to name something I really wanted. I told him I had always dreamed of owning a Cadillac. With his coaching, I learned how to turn my dream into something I could drive. I soon learned the motivational power of visualizing my goals.

I went to the Cadillac dealer's showroom and found a brochure with a picture of the exact model I wanted – a blue convertible. I cut out the picture and made copies, which I pasted in places where I would see them often every day: the bathroom mirror, the refrigerator door, the dashboard of my car and the cover of my appointment calendar. Then I began writing a step-by-step plan for reaching the goal. Looking at the pictures of "My Cadillac" deepened my desire and motivated me to sell harder. When a prospect told me, "I want to think about it," I was motivated to try one, two and three more closing questions. When I felt like quitting for the day, I would make a cold call. I prospected for people I could see on weekends or in the evening. My goal was constantly on my mind. It made me more focused on how I was using my time, and I carefully prioritized my daily tasks to make the most of every minute. I was driven by my desire to be driving "My Cadillac."

In less than a year, I returned to the dealership with cash in hand, and drove away in the car of my dreams. The experience made me a confirmed goal-setter. I learned a process I have repeated thousands of times to achieve other personal and business objectives.

Here is an interesting approach to the subject of goal setting. We present these ideas so you can use them to drive the car of your dreams and obtain all of the other goals important to you, too.

Is your life an antelope hunt or a chipmunk chase?

A former world leader once used an analogy wherein he regarded himself as a lion, the head of a pride, no less. And all of the issues he ever faced were either antelope or chipmunks. Even when a lion is dying of hunger, he won't give chase to any of the many smaller animals, like chipmunks, which gambol nearby, offering a quick and easy snack.

Why? Even if he made the effort and caught one, and there's always an outside chance he'd fail, it simply wouldn't satisfy him. However, even when weakened by hunger to the extent that he can hardly move, when an antelope shimmers into view miles away across open plains, the sight moves the lion to action. In spite of being so weakened that he knows a failed effort could be the end of him, the lion commits to the hunt. If there's even a slight chance of success, he'll give his all because success will fill his belly for weeks to come. The greater reward is worth his all, and so he begins the long process of focused effort which he clearly envisions will end in a successful kill.

A single-minded focus upon clearly defined antelope is what also characterizes most successful businesspeople.

Have you identified your *antelope*? Do you hunt them every day at the expense of less-satisfying chipmunks? Look out across your plans and spot your own *antelope*.

1. Think about your life or your business and write down what you'd like to achieve. Would you like to drive your company sales up to \$10 million or a billion? Write a book? Hike through the Himalayas? On a single piece of paper, write down everything you'd ever like to achieve.

2. Identify the one item on your list you most want to achieve. This is your first antelope – shimmering in the heat of day, miles out on the plain of your life.

3. Focus on this first antelope. Build a clear picture of it in your mind. How will you feel when you catch it? How will it change your life? What will your loved ones say? Get a clear mental picture of exactly how the end of a successful hunt will feel. See it in full color, full detail. As you sight your first antelope and begin, the process of throwing your whole self into an all-or-nothing hunt, you are going to need the energy to keep you in the hunt, even when things become difficult. *That energy is passion.* Fuel your passion: review the mental picture you've built, and capture on paper all of the benefits you'll enjoy once you've run this beauty to ground. Describe every benefit in detail. The more benefits you record, the greater the passion you'll bring to the hunt.

4. If it were easy to catch an antelope, we'd all dine on venison daily! At least we'd enjoy the benefits of achieving major goals daily. Life simply isn't that easy, is it? Obstacles always seem to get in the way. So now write down every obstacle that comes to mind. What's going to stop you from bringing down your antelope? Work out precisely how you will deal with each obstacle. Form a clear strategy to deal with every pitfall you can predict. Doing so will enhance your confidence and vision.

5. Set clear deadlines in writing. Think about the various stages of a successful hunt. What must you do first? How much time will you need? What has to happen next and when will the next stage be complete? Work your way through all of the stages of a successful hunt. Your target deadline is the date at which the last stage of your hunt is complete.

6. Now do it again. Go back to your list and find more antelope, and work them down to the deadline stage. Don't separate out a whole herd. Simply find one or two prime candidates. Later, as you complete one hunt, you can replace it with a new one.

7. Finally, on an index card (or using the software program of your choice), note all of your antelope as succinctly as you can, including your deadlines. Once they're written, see if you can refine them – make them even sharper and more compelling. Keep this information in sight at all times. Read it first thing in the morning and last thing at night. As you start each day, ensure that you have scheduled some actions to take you closer to your antelope. No day should go by without moving you closer to one or all of them.

Don't allow yourself to get distracted by those easier-to-catch chipmunks. Always keep your focus on those more satisfying targets way out on the plains.

****From the book 40 STRATEGIES FOR WINNING IN BUSINESS by Bud Haney and Jim Sirbasku. © S&H Publishing Co., 5205 Lake Shore Drive, Waco, Texas 76710-1732. All rights reserved. Contact S&H Publishing Co., (254) 751-1644, for reprint permission.***

FYI - Changes at Professional Administrative Services, Inc.

I started Professional Administrative Services, Inc. (PASI) in October 2001. My goal was to work with small businesses and to help them through the maze of human resource functions. I believe I have done well and I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey.

That journey has brought me to a place where I am not only growing PASI but am taking on more opportunities to be an advocate for small businesses. I still own and will continue to work PASI. But, in order to answer the needs of the many small business throughout the country, PASI has a new division, the legal name is PASI dba EffortlessHR.

EffortlessHR is a division of PASI and will have it's own identity and staff. I will continue to be a part of both and am proud of how this is all coming together. EffortlessHR is an Internet based program for small business owners to better understand the human resource functions that can make or break their companies. It is your HR solution - just a click away.

I value your input and comments and hope you will look us over and let us know if we are fulfilling your needs. If not, what can we do to work with you? What would make us an even more intregal part of your organization?

Check us out at www.effortlesshr.com. We are going to be live by April 10th as we are currently going through Beta Testing.

Thanks for all your past support and I look forward to a new working relationship with you.

Lola Kakes
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