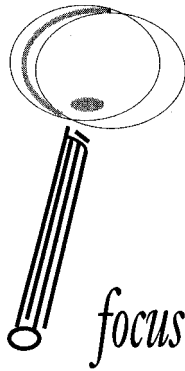


1

The Need for Coaching in the Work Place



Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define *coaching*, *mentoring*, and *training*.
- List three factors to consider when deciding whether a situation calls for coaching.
- Identify how coaching differs from traditional management.
- List four work place factors that can be barriers to top performances for some employees.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS COACHING?

Emily is the accounting manager for a midsize pharmaceutical company in the Northeast. She has a cohesive 14-member staff that works together well as a team. Shane, one of two staffers in accounts receivable, has been consistently falling short of performance expectations in regard to both accuracy and timeliness. Though he has been in the accounting department for several years, he continues to have a higher-than-expected error rate and does not get his balances in on time for month-end reconciling. Although Shane has been trained in the proper procedures and is otherwise a good contributor to the team, his recent slump has also begun to affect his attitude. How should Emily approach this problem? With a good coaching plan, that's how!

If you can identify with Emily's situation, you have picked up the right course. Welcome to the American Management Association's course, *Coaching for Top Performance*. Every day in businesses around the world, managers face performance challenges with their staffs, whether the staff numbers one or one hundred: "How do I get the most out of them without being a slave

driver?" "How can I help my staff internalize the attitudes needed to keep our company competitive?" Increasingly, managers are answering these questions, and others like them, with one word: coaching.

Most of us think of coaching from a sports perspective. A successful coach consistently gets from his or her team performances of which the players may not have known they were capable. The coach does this through a combination of teaching, motivating, and challenging individuals to take their performance higher. This is essentially what a manager is trying to accomplish in the work place: getting the most from his or her team through individual and collective performances; helping the team to reach its full potential. Work place coaching can be defined as "working directly with an employee to improve a specific job-related skill or behavior or the overall performance of the employee." Coaching does not attempt to change the personality of a person, though it is appropriate for coaching to influence an employee's personal style regarding attitude problems and interactions with others.

Coaching Is Not Training Only

Coaching is not training only, though it may involve training. An employee needs training to *gain* specific knowledge and skills in a structured environment (sometimes a classroom). People should be trained when they don't possess a skill or knowledge, such as when new software for a computer system is installed in a company. However, coaching is used when an employee has the knowledge and ability but is not using it fully, or when performance has dropped and expectations are not being met. To go back to the sports analogy, a coach isn't there to help people "make the team." Those people either have raw talent, trained skills, or knowledge-or they don't. Those who don't, don't make the team. Some of them may go out and get training in the specific areas they are lacking, and try to make the team the next year. The coach, though, turns her or his attention to the team (raw talent and all) and tries to bring its members to their full potential.

Coaching Is Not Just Mentoring Either

Coaching is also not mentoring, though, again, in some cases, it involves mentoring. A mentor is a person you want to imitate. This individual is often further along in a career and has attributes you want to emulate. A mentor agrees to "coach" you, though he or she may not be your direct boss. In fact, a mentor doesn't even have to be in the same division or company with you. That's the crucial difference. A coach is the day-to-day boss of the player being coached. The authority exists in their relationship to discipline, unlike that of a mentor. Sometimes a coach is a mentor, someone you want to imitate, but a coach doesn't have to have all the skills he or she is trying to bring out in his players! Many great coaches in sports and the arts didn't have the raw talent to perform a specific skill, but they knew how to bring it out in others: their players or students. Going back to our previous example, Emily does not have the raw skill to crunch the numbers as quickly and accurately

as she wants Shane to do, but that doesn't mean she cannot bring that level of performance out of Shane, or that she has to be a "former player" for Shane to respect her role and input. So, a coach might become a mentor but doesn't necessarily have to be effective.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THIS COURSE

This course offers both the philosophical background and the practical step-by-steps you will need to become a better coach. The assumption here is that you are using some coaching skills already, possibly without even knowing it, but that you want to improve as a coach, so that your staff members will improve their individual and team performances. You are to be congratulated for your initiative and your willingness to grow as a manager. This course will help you develop specific action plans to begin coaching some of your staffers right away. It will also serve as a handy reference for future long-term coaching. Use it as a hands-on workbook.

HOW COACHING DIFFERS FROM TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT

Coaching is on the rise and traditional management is on its way out in today's work place. Quite simply, coaching is proving more effective in handling the innovative and change-filled business challenges that are present in today's world. A traditional manager can be characterized as one having the bulk of the authority (or power), most of the key information (he or she knew what was going on and felt that the workers didn't need to know), and the ultimate responsibility for results. It's not the purpose or intent of this course to deride traditional management. It has been effective in the past, and still is in certain environments, especially the military, or in any organization experiencing a genuine crisis or safety emergency. However, traditional management is met with resistance by today's workforce, which is demanding a larger participative role in making and carrying out the mission of its different work places.

Coaches try to take the best from traditional management—planning, delegation, allocating resources—and to combine them with such skills as facilitation and motivation. Primarily, coaching, unlike traditional management, takes into account the need to get the "employee-player" to buy into the performance goals set before him or her. Instead of dictating the goals to the employee-player, the coach uses motivation and challenges to bring about not only the desired short-term results, but also the type of employee-player who is developing and is ready for the next challenge. This tactic builds a fundamentally different relationship, one where the manager and employee assume two different roles—player and coach—and work together



Exhibit 1-1

Differences Between Coaching and Traditional Management

<i>Coach</i>	<i>Manager</i>
Influences players	Wields authority
Facilitates decisions	Makes decisions
Assists team in dividing and delegating work	Divides and delegates work alone
Motivates players	Directs and orders employees
Gets involved in interaction	Works in isolation
Is team-focused	Is self-focused
Wins with the team	Gets the glory alone

to achieve common purposes. For a further comparison of coaching and traditional management see Exhibit 1-1.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A COACH

You can bring coaching aspects to your total management performance and treat your department like a team. In that setting, you as a coach have several responsibilities:

- Laying out the team's long-term direction, its mission-what it will accomplish and how-its values, and its beliefs
- Offering specific steps or goals the team must accomplish in order to fulfill its mission
- Clarifying the role and function of each player to eliminate confusion as to who is doing what
- Motivating the entire team, encouraging it to realize its full performance potential

This course assumes that you are integrating these responsibilities into your management approach to your department, but that individuals within the department probably need individual coaching. In fact, the previously mentioned four items must be communicated on an individual level too, and that is what this coaching course is all about. Naturally, it's also good to discuss, reinforce, and update your entire department in these four areas on a regular basis.

WHEN IS COACHING NEEDED?

THREE KEY FACTORS

Not everyone in your work place or in your department is a candidate for one-to-one coaching; some staff members will be more amenable to coach-

ing than others. How do you know whom to coach and when, and to what degree of intensity? The three basic factors in choosing coaching situations will be explored in some detail:

1. How significant is the performance area in furthering your department's mission?
2. How much time do you have to give to the coaching project?
3. How coachable is (are) the person (or persons) involved?

The Significance Factor

This is always the key question when assessing any improvement possibility, and it's certainly true in coaching. Is something worth the investment of the time and other resources it will take to correct a problem? In fact, the answer at first is often "I don't know, I'll have to find out." There are many tools available to develop a benchmark for the problem area, to see if you really have a problem worthy of focus. Some of these will be introduced in Chapter 2. You may have heard of the "80/20 rule." It states that 80 percent of work place problems or mistakes come from 20 percent of the possible causes. In total quality management (TQM) the 80/20 rule is also called the Pareto principle. It is named after the statistician Pareto, who first devised the principle. Using certain TQM tools assists in separating work place problems into two categories: the significant few (20 %) and the insignificant many (80%). As a coach, you must put your efforts into the significant few.

Those significant few are likely to meet several of the following criteria:

- Affects the "bottom line"
- Affects productivity
- Significant use of time and resources
- Accuracy (error rate)
- Setting priorities
- Discipline (sometimes)

As an example, Carlos was having a difficult time with the change in product-focus at the software company where he worked. As a sales representative in New York City, he had a hectic job keeping up in this turbulent industry. The change in software products meant going out to get new clients. Carlos's strength had always been repeat selling to existing accounts. Kaneesha, his sales manager, was concerned. Carlos had been one of her best salespersons for the past three years, but his numbers were down for two straight quarters, and he was obviously bewildered by the new challenge. Because Kaneesha knew this was a permanent strategy change on the part of the company, she realized that Carlos would have to develop the skills to sell to new customers or he wouldn't make it with the company. The problem was significant enough for Kaneesha to decide that one-to-one coaching was worth the effort.

The Time Factor

Depending on the significance of the work place problem, coaching can take up a considerable amount of your time and energy. If you consider that you must document and create a benchmark for the performance area, plan a coaching strategy, develop a timetable for improvement, gain the players' buy-in, plan and conduct feedback sessions, track progress, and in general be available, you can see why you must consider time before pursuing the coaching role.

Timing doesn't tell you if you should do the coaching (that's the significance factor's effect!); it tells you when. You want to have enough time to do it right. Of course, each coaching opportunity has a different degree of significance. Some problems will not take as much time and effort as others will. Consequently, the time factor has to be considered with each case. Generally, though, you don't want to plan intense coaching during a "crunch" time (either for you or your department), or when you will be away a significant portion of the time. It would be counterproductive to start a coaching effort you cannot finish. It's better to wait until you can devote the proper time and effort.

In the case of Kaneesha and Carlos, she knew she was going to be at a sales conference for a week in June, then she had vacation, as did Carlos. The company's fiscal year began July 1st, so she had to finalize her budget during the last two weeks of June. Kaneesha decided, therefore, that she'd have to wait a month, that beginning a coaching relationship would need to wait until after the July 4th weekend. In the meantime, she decided to gather the data necessary to better analyze Carlos's sales performance over the past six months.

The Coachability Factor

The final factor in assessing a potential coaching situation is the "coachability" factor. You are trying to gauge how approachable the employee is to coaching in general and to the performance area in particular. Does she recognize the performance problem? Is he open to change and improvement? What reaction has she had to coaching in the past? What style would work best with this individual—a hands-on approach or simply occasional coaching meetings? This factor helps you decide both your approach to the person and the degree of intensity you will bring to the coaching. You are wondering if this person is motivated to improve. You don't want to waste your time. Maybe it would be better to juggle responsibilities on the team and reassign this person's critical area to someone else. That is a legitimate option. Another option is trial-basis coaching. You can say, "We're going to try this out on a trial basis, and if it isn't working, we'll need to consider other alternatives, because this critical situation can't go on like this."

The coachability factor is the most subjective, the one where you sometimes have to go with your "gut" when making a decision. This factor is most often resolved by trial and error: "When in doubt, try it out." Give people a chance; they may surprise you, even when you have doubts. Just be very clear up front what it is you are looking for, and when, and then do all you can to support them in getting there.

Kaneesha and Carlos had worked together in the sales department for three years, when Kaneesha accepted the sales manager's job from a position outside the company. Carlos had recently moved over from marketing because he was skilled at building relationships with the company's customers. Kaneesha had observed a willingness on Carlos's part to grow with the position and to accept the many challenges that a fast-paced software sales environment brought. The two had a healthy professional relationship. Kaneesha had coached Carlos through a previous major shift in work when their company bought out a competitor and they needed to integrate the competitor's customers into their existing customer base. Based on this background and experience, Kaneesha decided that Carlos was favorable to coaching and would prefer a fairly intense day-to-day contact. This also confirmed her belief that July would be a better starting time for the coaching, because it would not serve Carlos well to get started and then be left hanging. Kaneesha also decided to tell him of her overall plan, to get his input, and also to let him know that he wasn't being left behind by her or the company.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Where in your work place are you going to apply what you learn in this course? To make this course more real, try to use the exhibits and "Think About It" sections with real-life people and situations from your current work place in mind. If you are not currently managing people, you may want to prepare yourself for a future role in that capacity by visualizing the circumstances you might encounter in doing so. However, many of you already have people and work place scenarios in mind. This is the time to write them down, using the three factors mentioned earlier (and summarized in Exhibit 1-2), so you can apply the rest of the course to those situations. Use Exhibit 1-3 for this exercise.



xhibit 1-2

Key Factors in Assessing a Possible Coaching Situation

The Significance Factor

Tells you whether to attempt the coaching. Is the work place problem in question one of significance to the team's mission? If so, pursue it; if not, simply minimize its effect.

The Time Factor

Tells you when to pursue the coaching opportunity. Once you have determined that the performance question is of enough significance, the question becomes "When can I schedule this to give it the time it needs to be done right?"

The Coachability Factor

Tells you how you are going to approach the staff member(s) about the coaching program. Some people are more amenable to coaching than others. This factor helps you determine the degree of intensity with which you will pursue the coaching opportunity, as well as telling you a little about what style you can adopt to best coach the staffer.

E**Exhibit 1-3****A Decision-Making Grid for Assessing Possible Coaching Situations**

Directions: Jot down some department or team performance areas about which you are presently concerned. For each performance area, write down your current assessment of (1) the significance of the performance issue in the department's overall productivity; (2) the time you think will be involved in coaching the person (or persons) to make a lasting performance improvement in the area under question; (3) the name (or names) of the person(s) involved; and (4) the coachability of each of the people involved in each performance area.

	FACTORS			
	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Person(s)</i>	<i>Coachability</i>
Performance Area 1				
Performance Area 2				
Performance Area 3				
Performance Area 4				
Performance Area 5				
Performance Area 6				

Caution is advisable at this point. Don't confuse coaching with personal counseling. Sometimes an employee is having personal problems that spill over into his work place performance. While it is important to express support and understanding, this is no place for coaching. Exhibit 1-4 lists conditions that require counseling, not coaching. In such instances, an employee should be directed to human resources, employee assistance programs, or an appropriate external resource that can help him or her with the specific problem. As a manager, you need to ensure that the problem doesn't impair her or him in the work place, or at least you need to minimize such impairment by shifting the employee's workload during the crisis.

E**xhibit 1–4****Some Conditions That Require Counseling, Not Coaching**

- Drug or alcohol problems
 - Problems with spouse, children, or other personal relationships
 - The effects of health problems
 - Mental illness
 - Financial problems
 - Overall stress
-
-

There will be times in coaching, however, when you will need to address aspects of an employee's personal life. For instance, say an employee has made it known that she is having marital difficulties. You then observe her starting arguments or refusing to cooperate on projects, all unusual behavior for her. While you can (and should) address the work place effects of this problem, don't attempt marital coaching. Instead, ask her if she feels that these problems arose as her marriage went into a crisis. In fact, she may bring that up. You can encourage counseling for her marriage and offer coaching for her work place behavior and attitude toward some in the department.

DEFINING TOP PERFORMANCE

Coaching is a means to an end, and that end is the employee's top performance on a consistent basis. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner call this *maximizing capacity* in their book, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It* (c. 1993). The idea is that people, like machinery, can be developed to the point where they are putting out all they can. Unlike machines, however, people also grow and develop new skills sets, or meet new challenges that bring out previously unknown strengths, so their maximum capacity is always shifting, ever growing.

A top performance in most work places is a combination of depth and breadth. Employees must have the depth to perform their core job functions with expertise. They must also develop a broader range of skills that can be performed with expertise. Each work place-in fact, each job-has its own balance between depth and breadth, often written into the job description. Of course, in many work places a person's job description changes quickly because of the need for flexibility and innovation in today's competitive and fast-paced global economy.

Part of the coach's job is to ensure that each employee-player is given an opportunity to maximize capacity in terms of both depth and breadth in his or her work. Any improvement plan would have to be customized to each person and situation, with the proper mix of breadth and depth. Some improvement plans may only be designed to focus on depth-developing clear expertise in core job areas. Others may be devoted entirely to breadth- giving opportunity

to add new skills, such as when offering an employee new projects or responsibility in new areas, or maybe when preparing someone for management.

The coach must make certain that the performance improvement expectations are clear, whether dealing with the depth or breadth areas or some combination of the two. Nothing will kill performance improvement like keeping employees ignorant of where they stand or what's expected of them. Such vagueness doesn't empower; it paralyzes.

For instance, consider the following two statements. Which is empowering and which is paralyzing?

You really need to get it together, Joe. You've got to get those sales calls numbers up. And you'd better do it soon. This department can't carry you forever, you know. Here are some ideas about how to increase your calls....

I know you have the capacity for improvement in this area, Joe. Let's shoot for a five-percent increase each month in the number of cold sales calls you make. Keep track of your progress; we'll look at it again in three months and see where we stand. Now let's talk about how we're going to improve by five percent each month....

Which statement is empowering? The second one is. The coach has defined the top performance for Joe at this particular time, taking into account Joe's circumstances. The level will probably be a higher standard in the future. Joe knows just what he must do to improve. The first statement appears as more of a threat. Contrary to the popular beliefs of some, threats do not motivate to action, at least not long-term action. They paralyze. Joe may become afraid to examine his performance for improvement areas because he does not know what is expected of him. Instead, he may try to hide areas that need improvement. The coach must always define the performance expectations in quantifiable terms, outlining exactly where the staffer is, and where he or she needs to be.

Performance improvement expectations can be put in the form of goals. To be effective, goals must meet the following five criteria: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-trackable. Some experts, like super salesman Zig Ziglar, call this the *SMART* way to self-improvement (made easier to remember by the acronym). Exhibit 1-5 offers a more detailed look at setting performance goals. Measuring top performances will be further discussed in Chapter 3.



Think About It . . .

Think of a current performance improvement area that concerns you, regarding either yourself or a staffer—something like, "being more efficient" or "improving overall productivity." On a sheet of paper, list the words *specific*, *measurable*, *attainable*, *relevant*, and *time-trackable*. Make the performance improvement area meet each of those five criteria. This will give you practice at making any work place goal a *SMART* one!

**Exhibit 1-5****SMART Performance Improvement Goals—Five Criteria***Specific*

Is the performance goal specific enough? For example, are you asking an employee to be more punctual? Or are you saying, "You need to be on time for staff meetings and customer appointments?" Be as specific as possible. It's easier for the staffer to accomplish, thus making her or him amenable to future performance improvements; it's easier for you to keep track of, too.

Measureable

Is the performance goal measureable? This means: Can you use numbers, percentages and ratios to track improvement? Are you saying, "Better get that error rate under control?" Or, rather, "Based on the training you just completed, why don't you shoot for a ten-percent decrease in errors this quarter?" When a performance goal is measureable, employees always know where they stand, and so do you.

Attainable

Is the performance goal attainable? This criterion keeps in mind the employee's capacity and the need to break up long-term improvements into short-term, manageable steps. It's easier to change a staffer's performance goals because she or he is meeting them too easily, than because she or he is missing them by too much.

Relevant

Is the performance goal sufficiently significant to the department's mission to warrant expending the resources to accomplish it? In other words: Will it matter in the long term? Or is your and the employee's combined effort better spent elsewhere?

Time-trackable

Is the performance goal time-trackable? When is it to be achieved? Has that been clearly conveyed to the employee? For example, have you said, "I'm expecting to see this improvement as soon as possible"? Or, rather, "This improvement needs to be accomplished in six months, by October 1st." A time-trackable goal is more helpful to the employee and to you.

WORK PLACE CONDITIONS THAT BLOCK TOP PERFORMANCE

The final section in this introductory chapter focuses on some top-performance barriers of which a coach needs to be aware to minimize their effects on the team. The coach may not be able to remove each barrier but should be able to minimize its effects.

Work Place Change

Most work places are filled with changes of all types. As the global marketplace becomes an even greater reality, we can expect this trend to continue. Some employees are energized by change, others are paralyzed by it, still

others have a mixed reaction, depending upon the almost-daily change involved. A coach needs to play several roles during a change effort:

1. To explain fully the change and its impact on the staff
2. To put the change in perspective with previous ones
3. To provide assurance about what hasn't changed
4. To motivate the team to rise to the challenge

What kinds of work place changes are barriers to better performances for some? Let's look at several categories.

Technological Changes

It's normal to expect everyone's performance to slip for a while when integrating a technological change in the work place. However, some staffers are so overwhelmed by the new technology that they experience a permanent loss of productivity. Some people feel that just when they get used to one technological advance, (e.g., a new software program), it is replaced by a yet newer one.

A Coach's Strategy: Provide extensive training in any new technology, including refresher courses for those having trouble keeping up. Also, reduce resistance to new technology by explaining in everyday, concrete terms what it will do for the organization and the department. For example, "This new voice mail system will reduce missed calls from customers, allowing us to serve them faster. We had been losing customers to the competition because of our slow responsiveness."

Organizational Changes

Many organizations are implementing new structures that will help them be more cost-effective while remaining competitive. These new strategies sometimes call for reconfigured matrixes, cross-training, downsizing, right-sizing, reengineering, and so on. Whatever terminology and strategy used, it results in tremendous upheaval for the coach's day-to-day staff.

A Coach's Strategy: Help the team members to be clear about what is changing and what isn't changing within the organization. Focus their anxiety (and thus their energy) on the things they can control, their individual performance. Let them know in what ways their job duties are being adjusted.

Marketplace and Career Changes

We live in a time where the career tracks are uncertain. The prospects of spending one's entire career, or even a major portion of it, with one company are slim. Because of technology we also have access to market information much sooner than ever before. That access gives us the chance to be more responsive, if we can move swiftly and wisely. This kind of marketplace, though, is not a welcome change to everyone. In fact, it wears all of us down a little bit more. Your team will be made up of people who have a broad range of reactions to the swift economic changes they are experiencing.

A Coach's Strategy: First, be careful not to make promises about the future, because staffers will hold you to them even if they can see clear reasons why you can't keep them. Focus their attention on taking greater responsibility for their contribution so they can do all they can to assure that the company will survive and thrive during tough times. Offer this as a challenge, not a threat.



Think About It . . .

Which of these changes is your company, and your department, feeling most? Jot down a few ideas about how to help your staff overcome these barriers to a better performance. Borrow from A Coach's Strategy if you need to. Complete this exercise before moving ahead in the chapter.

Attitude

"Attitude determines altitude" is a tried-and-true cliché. A positive mental attitude is one of the essential ingredients in gaining top performances from your team members, both individually and collectively. So often, however, a staffer has a negative outlook, and it's reflected in performance. It's hard to say if the poor attitude brought on the poor performance, or vice versa. Either way, you as a coach must create an environment where the employee can begin using attitude to help, instead of hurt, performance. This subject will be covered in more detail in Chapter 5. Suffice it to say here that the coach must be careful to document a negative attitude in quantifiable terms. You will only get denial if your evidence is put forth as a general statement like, "You have a bad attitude." Instead, you must be able to say, "Last week you shot down every idea in the brainstorming session we had" or "I overheard you berating a coworker for not doing something that wasn't even her responsibility." This holding up a mirror, so to speak, is a difficult but necessary first step in turning around a poor performer. An attitude problem is a certain barrier to bringing out the best in people. A negative attitude is also just as contagious as a positive one. A coach who helps change a player's attitude is a valued contributor to the success of any team.

Projecting a Poor Previous Experience

Finally, a barrier to a consistently good performance is erected when a person projects a poor previous experience onto the present situation. This often occurs when a department changes managers. If the previous manager did not get along well with a certain employee, the employee may assume the new manager is going to be warned by the old manager and that things won't change for the better. By doing that, the employee begins a self-fulfilling prophecy where, because of his or her attitude and behavior, the situation indeed does not change.

A good coach will offer to start the relationship off with a clean slate. Some employees who seem particularly stuck will need to hear this in a private session and in very clear terms. Normally, if you treat them as individuals, they will begin to treat you as one as well.



Think About It . . .

Do some of the people whom you coach have poor attitudes, or seem to be bringing a past poor experience with a manager into their relationship with you? Jot down your reflections on how you might sit down with each person and clear the air. Do this before proceeding to the Summary and Review Questions.

SUMMARY

Work place coaching is defined as "working directly with an employee to improve a specific job related skill or behavior, or even overall performance." It is not the same as mentoring; a mentor does not have to be one's boss, just a person further along in a career whom someone else wants to imitate. A coach should be the direct manager of the employee involved, because day-to-day contact is essential to performance improvement. Coaching is also not simply training. One receives training when she or he lacks certain skills or knowledge; coaching assumes the presence of the necessary skills and knowledge but assumes further that something is keeping the performer from consistently good work. Coaching also differs from traditional management in that motivation, persuasion, and challenges replace ordering and directing. Coaching allows more participation in decision-making and problem-solving than traditional management.

The three key factors in assessing whether coaching is appropriate in a given situation are: the significance of the performance problem to the mission of the department; the time factor-when to begin, given the normal ebb and flow of the department's work; and the coachability factor-what style and intensity will best suit the person or persons involved. Each of these has to be weighed, but particular emphasis is given to how significantly the performance problem is affecting the department's productivity.

The goal of coaching is to gain employees' top performance on a consistent basis. This top performance is a combination of their expertise at their core job functions (depth) and their success at expanding their skill base by taking on new areas and responsibilities (breadth). Each employee will have a different mix of depth and breadth in her or his current job. Whatever the mix, the coach must define and communicate the performance goals on the basis of the SMART criteria: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-trackable. Performance goals should be adjusted until they meet those five criteria.

Most work places have conditions that can become barriers to top performances. The coach must understand them; though possibly unable to remove them, he or she can make them manageable. One of these potential barriers is work place change, seen in technological change, organizational change, and market changes. The coach must help performers put these changes in perspective, give them as much information as is available on the changes, and motivate them to control what they can, their individual performance. Another potential barrier is the attitude of the performer. A change of attitude is a key component in a change in performance, either positive or negative. The coach can create an environment that helps performers change their attitude. A final barrier to top performances is a poor previous experience with a manager. Sometimes the employee projects that on the new manager. The best strategy is a straightforward talk between player and coach to start with a clean slate.