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# The Power of Coaching

*Success depends on the support of other people.  
The only hurdle between you and what you want  
is the support of others.*

– David Joseph Schwartz

**B**ecoming an outstanding coach requires that you help each individual on your team – yes, even the people who are tough to like – become successful. Whether you realize it or not, you have the power to be successful by helping others succeed!

Some managers are corrupted by their perceived power. You know them. They think that because they conduct performance reviews, go to management meetings, and work in a larger space, they will automatically be winners. That kind of egotistical power is not what we're talking about. The type of power we're referring to is the **positive power** to:

- Create a constructive, winning climate on your team
- Lead your team to improved performance by providing feedback and recognition
- Deal with people on the team who don't carry their load
- Set the pace for your team to be successful.

All of these involve coaching!

Some managers think that coaching is solely about addressing negative performance. And, to be sure, that is an important part. But the process of coaching involves more than that. It includes

*The process of coaching includes staying in touch with everyone on your team.*

staying in touch with everyone on your team – even your best performers – and providing them with the information they need to be even more successful. You see, every interaction with team members is a coaching occasion – an opportunity to create a positive, winning climate by

clarifying goals, prioritizing tasks, listening to their ideas, and providing recognition.

You want an idea of your team’s current climate? Look around. Are people smiling? Do they look you in the eyes? Is there evidence of any recent success – balloons, banners, trophies, new record posting, etc.? Any birthdays celebrated recently? How about the workspace? Are people proud to keep it clean, or is “stuff” lying all over the place? Look at the bulletin boards. Are they full of fresh news and recognition, or are they just places for OSHA-required postings?

One of the keys to creating a winning, positive climate is to spend time with your team. Start your day by roaming the halls, asking questions, and visiting with team members. It’s a good habit – and a great investment of your time and energy.

Coaching begins with creating an environment where people want to be part of a winning team. You have the power to make that happen!

# Super Stars, Middle Stars, and Falling Stars

*If you raise the bottom, the top also rises.*

– Jack Stack

**T**hinking that each member of your team will be a super star is probably unrealistic. Next best scenario: members of the team contributing at their individual maximum performance level.

That is what coaching is really all about.

In fact, the verb “to coach” comes from the root meaning “to bring a person from where they are to where they want to be.” Instead of merely dictating what he or she wants, an effective coach enables team members to accomplish *their* personal goals.

Most teams are composed of three performance groups. One is a group of outstanding performers – the super stars. That group may be ten percent – or, if you’re really lucky, maybe thirty percent – of your team. You probably would like a larger percentage of super stars, but often they are promoted (up and out) to additional responsibilities – which is the way it should be.

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About fifty percent of your team members are probably inconsistent performers. Some days they're super stars and some days they're not. A few of the people in this group may be new to the organization (and to your industry) and therefore may not have the experience to be outstanding performers ... yet. In fact, if you are a new manager, there's a good chance you're in this group, yourself. You have the talent and ability to be a super-star performer. You just don't have the experience ... yet.

There may also be people here who just don't have the motivation or desire to become super stars. We call all the people in this group "middle stars."

***Not only are the lower performers not doing their jobs, they're probably preventing the top performers from doing their jobs as well.***

Then, you have the remaining group – the "falling stars." This group is typically quite small, but the impact of its members' less-than-expected performance can be quite large. These are employees who consistently fail to carry their share of the load. In fact, not only are they not doing their jobs, they're probably preventing the top performers from doing *their* jobs as well.

Some teams will average 30% super stars ... 50% middle stars ... 20% falling stars. Others may be more like 20% ... 70% ... 10%. And every team will have some people with super-star behaviors in one area and middle-star behaviors in another.

Just recognize that most people will consistently fall into one of the three groups and that each group has special needs which will be addressed in this book. But they all have something in common.

### The universal need of all employees: consistency.

One thing the people in all three groups need is to work in an environment where they clearly understand what it takes for them to become consistent top performers. To create that environment, one of the leader's priorities should be to eliminate inconsistencies and contradictions within the team. Why? Because contradictions can absolutely paralyze a work group.

***One of the leader's priorities should be to eliminate inconsistencies and contradictions within the team.***

Most folks have trouble accepting differences between what people say and what they do. Yet, many teams (and organizations) find themselves dealing with these inconsistencies on a daily basis.

Contradictions in the workplace may take the form of written performance reviews that differ from previously received verbal feedback. Or, priorities that conflict with the organization's stated mission. Still another contradiction might be continually stating the importance of teamwork while, at the same time, implementing programs and incentives that actually pit team members against each other. Or, maybe claiming that people are your greatest asset and then eliminating employee training because "we just don't have the time." Any of those sound familiar?

Simply stated, for a positive, clearly understood, productive atmosphere to exist, your *walk* (actions) has to clearly match your

*talk* (expectations). Another way to look at it: Your video must be in sync with your audio.

Here is a simple test. On a sheet of paper, write the names of the people on your team whom you would place in the super star category. Do the same for the middle-star and falling-star groups.

Consider why you put each person in their particular group. What characteristics do the members of each group have in common? Is there a significant difference in the behavioral traits of the three groups?

Now go to your files and pull out your team's current performance reviews. Do the review scores reflect the groupings you've written on the paper? Have the super stars received the best performance reviews? Is there a noticeable difference between the three categories? If there is little difference in performance review scores of the groups, why should you expect a difference in their performance? Why have you mentally categorized them as you have?

Remember that everyone needs clarity and consistency from their manager. If your actions are out of sync with your words – if there are inconsistencies throughout the workplace – it will be difficult for you to effectively coach your super stars, middle stars, and falling stars.