



*In coaching your employees, you not only provide your employees with personalized, in-the-moment learning, but you also serve as a catalyst for improving the performance of your team. This teaching tool will help you recognize when and how you can apply a “coach approach”.*

## Establish Healthy Relationships



THE MESSENGER MATTERS AS MUCH AS THE MESSAGE

Your attempts to develop employees through coaching will have little impact if conducted in the context of an unhealthy relationship. If you are viewed as inconsistent, unfair, or if an employee is dissatisfied with you in general, your attempts to develop your employees will likely fall short. The first step in playing a constructive role in employee development is establishing healthy relationships with your direct reports.

## Ensure Projects Are Learning Experiences for Employees



- ➔ **MEET WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES AFTER A PROJECT’S LIFE CYCLE; DISCUSS CHALLENGES AND GUIDE YOUR EMPLOYEES AS THEY DISCOVER WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM.**
- ➔ **FEEDBACK IS A VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE; AFTER A PROJECT’S COMPLETION DISCUSS WITH YOUR DIRECT REPORTS THE POSITIVE, THE NEGATIVE, AND THE KEY LESSONS LEARNED.**

Most learning occurs on the job. Research indicates that peer networks and on-the-job experiences account for a larger share of employee learning than classroom training. This means that managers must look beyond their organizations’ training catalogues to develop their employees.

Assigning projects is one way to strengthen a developmental area. However, assigning projects geared to meet employees’ development objectives is not enough. In essence, experiences do not promote learning in the absence of reflection. By not communicating with your employee throughout the course of a project’s cycle to discuss and guide to resolution any obstacles to completion, you put the project at risk and pass up an opportunity to develop or strengthen your employee’s skills.

Once a project is completed, you should provide you employee with honest feedback, discussing what went right, what went wrong and what lessons were learned.



### To Think About Questions for Post-Project Discussions

A framework for this type of post-project, or “after action,” review can include variations on the following questions.

- ➔ **What were we trying to do?** Describe the objectives of this project and the goals the team hoped to accomplish.
- ➔ **What were the actual results?** Create a consensus around the results achieved.
- ➔ **What were the differences between the results we wanted, the results we achieved, and how did this gap occur?** Identify points during the project that caused the undesirable results.
- ➔ **What do we do next time?** Create a plan for a future similar project incorporating the lessons learned and what needs to be changed. This can also serve as a project plan for other teams engaged in similar projects.

By reinforcing these lessons, you are decreasing the chances that the same mistakes will be made on a future project, and you are ensuring that employees capture the lessons of the experience.

## Give Advice from Your Own Experience



- ➔ **YOUR EXPERIENCE CAN BENEFIT YOUR EMPLOYEES.**
- ➔ **BE OPEN TO LESSONS YOUR EMPLOYEES HAVE TO TEACH ABOUT PROCESSES OR PROJECTS.**

Good managers pass along the lessons of their own experiences to their employees. This type of advice can prove beneficial to employees, particularly if they are new to the organization. Some examples of advice include talking about a time you struggled, a similar project that you worked on, or a similar challenge that you faced. This advice should be delivered with some humility, as the goal is to be empathetic with the difficulties your employees may encounter.

It is equally important to listen to and learn from your employees, particularly as they may be more knowledgeable about certain aspects of a project.

## Help Apply New Skills or Knowledge



- ➔ **THE CHANCES THAT AN EMPLOYEE RETAINS NEW SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED DURING TRAINING INCREASES IF HE/SHE VIEWS THE TRAINING AS CRITICAL TO HIS/HER DEVELOPMENT.**
- ➔ **IF YOU DO NOT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES TO APPLY SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED DURING TRAINING, THEY WILL MOST LIKELY LOSE THEM.**

There is a difference between sitting through a course and actually learning. Employees need to know how or why particular training solutions – whether they are classroom or on the job – are relevant to their daily work. Employees who join their managers in analyzing their training needs, identifying the types of training best-suited to meet those needs, and creating performance goals are more likely to apply skills or knowledge they acquire in training to their everyday jobs.

**The key to ensuring that employees keep newly-acquired skills is to give employees opportunities to use them.** Unfortunately, most employees do not get those opportunities. By following up with your direct reports either through formal or informal feedback or coaching, you can ensure that the skills they acquire in training are applied and retained.

Ideally, employees should attend training immediately before they will need a skill: this provides a tangible need to learn the skill and means it will be applied and reinforced immediately. For example, having your employee participate in a class about customer service strategies right before he/she begins a project in this area increases the chances those new skills will be applied. Furthermore, by designating the acquisition of a particular skill as part of a development plan (rather than attendance at a training course), you are encouraging your employees to apply skills.

## Teach a New Skill or Procedure

TEACHING YOUR EMPLOYEES CAN HELP STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS  
AND FULFILL IMMEDIATE SKILL NEEDS.



Managers are often called upon to teach their employees new skills or procedures, either because the need is immediate, the skill is specific to a particular team, or because there is no other training solution available.

When teaching an employee, identify the goals you hope the lesson will achieve and create a standard to ensure the skill or knowledge was actually learned. For example, if an employee has to create an organizational report, you can teach the procedure, and then have the employee do it alone to assess whether the process was learned. This type of personal coaching, which can include tips, “how to” guidelines, or different methods of accomplishing the same end, can positively impact your relationship with your employees.

Specifically, coaching your employees demonstrates that you value their performance, that you are invested in their success, and that you are competent in the work in which your team engages.

Source: Learning and Development Roundtable research