

Leadership FAQs

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Missive 8

the
issue

How Do I Turn My Inmates Into A Winning Team?

by Ken Blanchard

In my last issue, I talked about values in an organization, and why those values are important to your front-line people – the “inmates” in your “asylum” that are really running the organization at the point of implementation. Don’t look at them as the “inmates” - they are the most important members of your team! Establishing a set of values for them is one of your most important tasks as a leader, but that doesn’t mean your job is finished! Now, you become a **performance coach**, and your job is to help your team win!

EVERYONE IS A WINNER

This is your goal as a leader. *But I’m amazed how many businesses act like they’re expecting a certain percentage of their people to lose when it comes to job performance!*

Maybe you’ve seen it, too – in performance review systems that require you to limit the number of high scores you can give to your team. Have you ever heard of anything as stupid as that? Nobody sets out to hire a certain percentage of losers – that’s ridiculous! No, we all want to hire winners, or potential winners. And what is a “potential” winner? *It’s someone who can win if you help them, coach them, work with them.* And it’s the “coaching” part of leadership that everyone forgets when they look at job performance.

BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

Most organizations have it all backwards. They spend the majority of their time on performance *evaluation*. I talk to businesses all the time that are so proud of their new performance review forms – trying to measure things like “creativity” or “willingness to take responsibility” or even “promotability” – stuff

that nobody even understands! If you start your coaching at this point, you’re putting the cart before the horse.

#1 – Start With Planning

The first step in good coaching is *performance planning*. This is where you set the goals and the direction. That’s where people start understanding the big picture of the organization, *and where they fit in*. It means answering questions like:

- ✓ **What are we doing?**
- ✓ **What are we trying to accomplish?**
- ✓ **Where does my job fit in?**
- ✓ **What are my goals?**

Now, the answers to these questions ultimately need to come from you, *the leader*. It doesn’t mean you don’t have your people participate, but if there’s disagreement with your people about goals – who wins? *The leader does, because you are representing the goals and vision of the organization.* After the goals are set, what is the next part?

#2 – Day-To-Day Coaching

This means doing whatever you can to help people *win*. This is turning the pyramid upside-down, and asking your people questions like:

- ✓ **What can I do to help?**
- ✓ **Is there anything you need?**
- ✓ **Do you have any problems?**
- ✓ **Are you facing any roadblocks?**

This is where you become a cheerleader. You make sure that people know what their job is, then you teach them the “right” answers. And when you see someone making a mistake, you don’t say, *“Well, I’ll get them in their performance review.”* You say, *“Wrong answer! What would be a better answer?”* If it’s a right answer, you say, *“Atta boy; Atta girl; that’s great!”*

POSITIVE INTERVENTION

Where we get into trouble in organizations is when we don’t make any interventions. We have people running around doing stuff that is completely against what we believe in, and nobody is saying anything about it! **That doesn’t work.** A good performance coach says, *“Here’s what we believe in; here’s what the goals are; here’s what we’re doing.”*

#3 – Performance Evaluation

Now you’re ready to do real performance evaluation. This takes place as you sit down with people and look at their work over time. Otherwise, we have organizations filled with people trying to protect the power and prestige of the hierarchy – *“If everyone did well, they would all want to be up there at the top!”* What do you think happens when we change that kind of thinking?

EVERYONE IS A WINNER

*If you treated all your people with the assumption they all had a chance to win, they would create new ideas you never heard of – they would solve problems, create new businesses, discover new opportunities, and impact your organization in ways that would benefit everyone, including you. **This is what it means to create an organization of soaring eagles!***

Until next time – **soar!**

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