

# Employer's Advantage

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*Coach Early and Often*

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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

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**Selecting the right person for the right job is the largest part of coaching.**

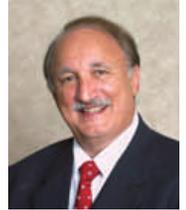
– Philip Crosby, businessman, author

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*

**To learn anything fast and effectively you have to see it, hear it, feel it.** – Tony Holloway, professor

## **BOOK REVIEW: Transforming a Culture through Coaching**

Watch coaches on the sidelines of a game. Collaborative coaches coax, urge, ask questions and draw diagrams. The team gathers around. Conversation is open and transparent.

Bosses differ in their approach. They direct, tell and make statements.

That we are more and more using the word "coaching" to describe what goes on inside today's progressive work environments is no accident. Leaders today specifically chose the word to describe the same kind of teamwork that occurs during a sporting event. New leaders envision their jobs as eliciting – in lieu of demanding – the best performance possible from the team.

In the third addition of **THE HEART OF COACHING: USING TRANSFORMATIONAL COACHING TO CREATE A HIGH-PERFORMANCE COACHING CULTURE**, author Thomas G. Crane describes the structure for creating the level of trust and support needed to work with the different generations that perform side-by-side in many of today's businesses.

He urges leaders to get out of the old-school "boss" mindset to adopt a broader, collaborative model, which he sees as a key to survival in our fast-changing economy.

Crane describes the differences between the boss and the coach this way:

- While the boss is pushing people for higher and better performance, the coach is asking questions of her team members to find out what they think needs to happen next.

- The coach invites creativity and fosters confidence, while the boss tells people what to do – no thinking required.
- While the boss focuses only on the bottom line, the coach is looking at both performance and results.
- The slogan of the boss might be "Never let them see you sweat." The coach is not afraid to sweat, or to show that he does not know all the answers; he asks questions designed to elicit the best information from the people doing the job.

**THE HEART OF COACHING** leads coaches and their teams to a common language, shared culture and people-oriented learning. The coaching is not just from coach to team members; it travels up, down and sideways, from manager to direct report and back, manager to manager, peer to peer – almost any direction you can think of.

The author is a consultant and speaker who helps leaders develop new workplace cultures by embracing coaching as a primary method of communication designed to enhance both individual and team effectiveness. He has worked for the last 18 years in small and large organizations.

### **ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**THE HEART OF COACHING: USING TRANSFORMATIONAL COACHING TO CREATE A HIGH-PERFORMANCE COACHING CULTURE**  
240 pages  
Publisher: F T A Press  
ISBN-13: 978-0966087437

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

**You get the best effort from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within.**

– Bob Nelson, author, motivational speaker

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 (800) 204-4075.

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**Coaching is a conversation, a dialogue, whereby the coach and the individual interact in a dynamic exchange to achieve goals, enhance performance and move the individual forward to greater success.**

– Zeus and Skiffington, authors, trainers