

Why Coaching and Development . . .

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Why Coaching and Development?

“The difference between transformation by accident and transformation by a system is like the difference between lightning and a lamp. Both give illumination, but one is dangerous and unreliable, while the other is relatively safe, directed, available.”*

Like the effects from a bolt of lightning, development left to chance is unreliable. Purposeful C&D—coaching and development—directs energy where you want it and powers systematic improvement in the competencies your organization needs.

For focused development to become a reality, leaders need to translate good intentions into action. Yet, according to a recent survey, many leaders admit that coaching is frequently a low priority in their organizations.**

- **Managers around here don't take the time for coaching.**
- **Coaching gets put on the back burner.**
- **There is too much emphasis on results to spend much time on development.**
- **We give lots of lip service to coaching, but no real commitment.**

THE ABILITY TO LEARN FASTER THAN YOUR COMPETITORS MAY BE THE ONLY SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

Arie De Geus

To close this breach, C&D requires an infusion of leadership and commitment throughout your organization. Coaching cannot be limited to human resources or training departments, external vendors, or even to the occasional leader with a real knack for helping people grow. The following realities make C&D an imperative for every leader in your organization:

Reality #1: Change is inevitable. Even the most successful organizations cannot rest on their laurels. They must continually remake themselves or risk falling from glory. IBM was Fortune magazine's most admired corporation for four years before plummeting into the bottom half of the ratings. After Merck claimed the leader's position on the list for seven years running, it rapidly lost its luster and fell from the top ten. Because today's excellence is no guarantee for tomorrow's success, leaders who bask in complacency are due for a rude awakening.

Reality #2: People must learn and adapt quickly. Your people's skills will become obsolete—in the same way technologies become outdated—if you rely solely on today's capabilities to lead your organization into the future. You cannot just hire talented people, teach them to do their jobs, and then leave them alone. To cope with the inevitability of changing work demands, you need a work force that can learn new skills and adapt quickly.



One way or another, most people figure out how to do their jobs. But development by default is too passive to achieve the standards of excellence and versatility that you must meet. Because the world refuses to wait for those who say “slow down while I gain more experience,” organizations are looking for better and faster ways to achieve breakthrough performance with their people. Experience and time alone are slow and inefficient teachers. You need to jump-start learning and make sure it runs full speed in the right direction.

Reality #3: Employees want to grow. Lifelong employment in the same job is becoming a career path found only in history books. Some experts estimate that the career of the average college graduate today will include at least eight jobs in four different industries. Many job changes will be voluntary, because of the growing desire to find personal growth and satisfaction in work. People who feel underutilized will leave. Unfortunately for you, the people who depart for greener pastures could be the very ones you want to keep. To prevent talented, motivated people from being recruited by a competitor with better opportunities, you need to invest in their continuous growth and satisfaction.

Reality #4: People are the real source of competitive advantage. Versatile people—those who learn better and faster than your competition—sustain your edge in the marketplace. Because your people are your most important assets, coaching is your investment vehicle for long-term payback. With new development, people become:

- **Competent:** Possessing the skills to fulfill the requirements of their current and emerging jobs.
- **Aligned:** Sharing a sense of purpose and common values that motivate them to work constructively and consistently toward organizational objectives.
- **Self-directed:** Demonstrating personal responsibility, leadership initiative, and sound independent judgment in their work.
- **Adaptable:** Having the ability and motivation to continuously learn and adapt as their roles and organizational needs change.

THE GREAT LEADERS OF TOMORROW WILL
BE THE ONES WHO UNDERSTAND HOW TO
GET EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE.

Sara Little Turnbull

*Ferguson (1980).

**Peterson, Uranowitz, & Hicks (1996).