

How to develop an effective employee coaching plan

Sports fans bear witness to the effectiveness of the coaching process every time they see their team come back from behind to secure a win. Despite all odds, the coach delivers a rallying speech and comeback strategy at halftime to motivate the team to give it their all. A good coach will also get to know each individual team member to set realistic long-term goals for them, as well as goals for the team at large — such as winning the championship.

Well, coaching your employees in the workplace isn't so different, and the results can be just as impressive as winning the Super Bowl.

In fact, **63%** of businesses that provide coaching sessions for employees reported more revenue and growth than those that did not. Besides providing an attractive ROI, employee coaching plans also improve the well-being of your team members. In a [survey](#) that polled Fortune 500 companies, successful coaching improved job quality and job satisfaction levels by 48% and 61%.

With a proper employee coaching program in place, your productivity will soar, and your employees will enjoy enhanced career development. In this guide, I'll go over how you can develop an employee coaching plan that follows all the existing best practices, including which coaching activities you should focus on the most.

What are employee coaching plans?

An employee coaching plan is a one-on-one action plan between a team member and a manager — wherein the manager is the coach, and the employee is the protégé.

The coaching plan involves setting goals to improve employee performance, namely by focusing on and refining their core competencies to perfection. An employee coaching plan can also involve learning new skills essential for obtaining a promotion to a higher position.

The coaching plan serves as a roadmap to achieve specific goals and milestones within a given timeframe.

An example would be a manager mentoring an employee on transitioning into a human resources role. The goal is to migrate the team member into an HR position within six months, which will include learning company policies, training on new software, and working on communication skills.

Constructive feedback is an essential part of an effective coaching plan, as it's a powerful coaching tool when used correctly. By working closely with an employee and providing honest, constructive feedback, you can help them achieve their true potential, which will benefit you, them, and the organization as a whole.

A typical coaching plan involves holding regular one-on-one sessions where you monitor the employee's progress toward their short-term and long-term goals. You can also provide feedback and conduct training exercises during these sessions.

While managers tend to use coaching plans to teach new skills and improve upon weaknesses, they're also very effective at enhancing an employee's existing talents. For instance, if one of your staff members shows a lot of promise with pitching your services to new clients, you can develop a dedicated coaching plan just to refine that talent.

Why do employee coaching plans matter?

If your company is humming along fine, you may wonder why you need to bother with employee coaching plans. After all, why invest valuable time and resources into coaching if your organization isn't in dire straits?

You should because coaching plans will **improve your productivity even further, allowing you to take your company to the next level**. A healthy coaching culture will also elicit a better work environment for everyone.

Your team will fire on all cylinders, and you'll be able to coach your top performers into your most vital roles.

The top benefits of employee coaching plans include the following:

- **They help you promote from within.** The secret to retaining your best employees is to encourage and help with their professional development. Instead of having to jump ship to pursue a role higher on the corporate ladder, you'll be able to hold onto your star talent by coaching them into a promotion.
- **They improve employee engagement.** An engaged workforce is productive and is **87%** less likely to leave you for the competition. If your employees aren't engaged, it will cost your company an additional \$3,400 for every \$10,000 you pay for their salaries. A coaching program is a perfect remedy for absenteeism and disengagement.
- **They build trust with your staff.** As a manager, it's essential for your employees to feel comfortable approaching you if they have a concern or question. If you coach each employee in one-on-one settings, they'll feel a lot more comfortable with sharing their questions, concerns, and ideas — which is what you want.
- **They make performance management a breeze.** Quarterly performance reviews don't do enough to manage employee performance — and that's because they're *too few and far between*. Engaging in regular coaching sessions is a far more effective way to monitor and bolster the performance of your employees.
- **They set a positive example for others.** Coaching plans elicit a culture of mentoring, learning, and understanding. As such, after coaching your employees for a while, it may motivate them to start encouraging and motivating other team members as well. This will have a compounding effect that improves the quality of your work environment for everyone.

If you want your organization to enjoy all these perks and then some, don't wait to implement an employee coaching plan.

How do you do that?

Let's find out.

What do you need to create a coaching plan?



Just like a recipe for a cooking dish, before building your employee coaching plan, you'll need a detailed list of ingredients. That way, you'll have all the tools you need to put your new plan into practice. Here are the fundamental elements of any winning employee coaching plan.

A proper mentor for each team member

First, it goes without saying that a coaching plan requires a coach or mentor for it to work. Yet, this is still a vital step to consider, as each employee will have different needs, skills, and requirements for their plan.

9 times out of 10, their immediate manager will be their coach. However, sometimes you may find that the employee needs a mentor that A) better understands their needs or B) has the unique & rare skillset they need to master to meet their goals.

For instance, let's say that you initiate a coaching plan for one of your web developers. Their goal is to move up into an engineering position, which requires a lot of technical expertise and know-how. While you manage web developers, they're part of a larger, more diverse team with varying skill sets. As a result, you aren't well-versed in programming languages or how to build apps.

In this scenario, it would be beneficial to **assign your most talented web engineer as their coach or mentor**. As their manager, you'll still be involved in the process, such as providing feedback and monitoring the employee's progress toward their goal. But when it comes to the actual training and coaching, it's best to leave that to the expert web engineer.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

You'll need to create an individual development plan for each employee you intend to coach. Every employee is different, so their IDPs should reflect that fact.

There are three components of an IDP:

- What the employee wants to achieve (ultimate goal).

- How they plan on getting there (milestones).
- A timeline for completion (time-sensitive).

Besides that, you should jot down a list of the employee's primary **strengths, natural talents,** and **weaknesses**. Also, consider any certifications they need to meet their short-term & long-term goals. For example, if you're coaching an employee to become a real estate agent, they'll need to get certified for that.

It's crucial to sort all these details out **before** you engage the employee in the coaching plan. That way, you'll have all your ducks in a row and can start the plan without any delays.

Session agendas

Coaching plans involve regular one-on-one coaching sessions, which need to have an airtight structure. After all, you don't want to waste the entire session engaging in small talk or discussing issues that aren't urgent or relevant.

To avoid wasting time, you should develop a session agenda template for your coaching plans. Once you have one, you'll be able to quickly throw together a session agenda for each employee you coach.

A session agenda template can look something like this:

- 2-minute intro discussing the challenges of the past week/month.
- 5-minute constructive feedback session.
- 10 minutes discussing upcoming milestones and how to achieve them.
- 5 minutes to answer any of their questions/respond to their feedback.

Using this formula, you'll be able to hold tight 12-minute coaching sessions that are highly productive. Of course, you can come up with your own template to more closely reflect the needs of your employees.

Clear accountability

An employee coaching plan won't mean much if there are no consequences involved in not following it. For a coaching plan to work, there has to be a system of transparent accountability in place. Your regular coaching sessions are a great way to achieve this, as long as you carry them out properly (see the template above).

The last thing you want to do is set up a coaching plan only to meet with your employee one time or not at all. If your team knows that you're going to check in on their progress, they're far more likely to stay on track & meet their short-term goals.

Implementing a coaching plan at your organization

Now that you've got a list of essential ingredients, here are the steps you need to take to make your employee coaching plans a reality.

Where do you start?

A great place to begin is by identifying the employee's talents.

Uncover the employee's natural strengths

Before you do anything with the employee, ask yourself, what do they do better than anyone else?

Are they assertive, technical, empathetic, or inspired?

Do they perform any role better than anyone else in your organization?

These types of questions will help you uncover the employee's natural talents. This is effective because it will help you determine the next steps for their coaching plan. In particular, you'll want to do what you can to cater to their strengths and talents while avoiding their weaknesses.

Many managers make the mistake of only focusing on weaknesses to improve with coaching plans. To them, it makes sense to improve their weak areas to create a more well-rounded employee. This can sometimes be flawed because, for many people, you can only slightly improve on a weakness. At best, their skills will improve from weak to mediocre.

Instead of making their weaknesses only a tad better, why not improve their natural strengths to make them even more valuable and productive?

All employees will have peaks and valleys, and it's better to **align employees' peaks to fill in the valleys of others**. For instance, if one employee is technical but lacks empathy, while the other is compassionate but less skilled, they'd make perfect partners.

Create short-term and long-term goals

Once you've honed the employee's strengths, it's time to start setting goals for them. The short-term goals will form the roadmap that leads them toward their ultimate goal.

In the case of the web developer from earlier, their long-term goal is to become a web engineer. Their short-term goals would consist of things like learning new programming languages, solving complex problems with apps, and obtaining any necessary certifications.

You'll also need to establish a timeline for them to achieve everything. It's imperative to be realistic here, as you don't want to cause unnecessary stress due to a timeline that's too short.

To hold the employee accountable, you'll need to hold regular coaching sessions, either weekly or bi-weekly.

Measure improvements and respond to feedback

Once you've got a timeline & coaching sessions in place, you're set up to cruise. However, you'll need to stay vigilant when monitoring their progress. Each week, ensure that they're on track to meet their deadline.

Also, you need to respond to the feedback your employees have about how the plan is going. Whenever they have questions or concerns, it's your job to listen with an open ear.

Final Takeaways: Employee coaching plans

Coaching your employees to help them meet crucial development goals will have lasting benefits for your organization as a whole. You'll see upturns in productivity, revenue, and employee well-being. Not only that, but

coaching plans are excellent ways to retain your top performers instead of losing them to the competition.