

How To Make Your Business Grow With LEAN Coaching

Podcast #28 Presented by Phyllis Mikolaitis of Sales Training Solutions

Disengaged employees are the #1 threat to your business. Research by Gallup shows that only 30% of employees are actively engaged in their work. 50% are not engaged and 20 % are actively disengaged. Your long-term success depends on highly engaged employees who are connected to the mission and purpose of their work. Scientific research shows that the essence of engagement is personal growth. Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Chicago have all done studies that show when employees use their highest strengths to meet new and higher challenges they are engaged, productive, and happy. It isn't difficult to find challenges to use their skills to think and continuously improve. They are everywhere in your workplace.

Today's podcast will help you work with your employees to identify their highest strengths and to coach them to grow and continuously improve their skills and thinking. It will help you build relationships and improve communication by asking the right questions and providing interactive and actionable feedback. It will also help you to develop a culture of inquiry rather than continuing a culture of do and tell. Coaching for continuous improvement in your people and processes will allow your company to not only achieve long-term survival but to flourish and grow.

Let's start with how coaching has a positive impact on both your top and bottom line

The Gallup Poll also found that to win customers and a greater share of the market place your company must first win the hearts and minds of your employees. The retention achieved through coaching and self-discovery provides a far greater return on investment than money spent on training classes or eLearning without reinforcement. The combination of classes, eLearning, and coaching provides the greatest return on investment. Leading learning, performance, and research consultant Will Thalheimer found that it is only through quality coaching and feedback that your employee can develop behaviors and achieve better results. Coaching helps him know when and how to apply new concepts or make adjustments that result in successful outcomes. The right questions in a coaching session give the employee the opportunity for self-discovery. Darren Hardy, success coach says, "Practicing bad habits only reinforces them." The most value added training and developmental programs include coaching by trainers, managers, or peer experts.

What's the S.C.O.R.E. (Scope, Consequences, Outcomes, Roles, Evaluation) of your coaching session?

SCORE is an acronym that will help you plan a successful coaching session. The S in SCORE stands for scope. First determine who you're planning to coach. Then prioritize what skill, task, or behavior you're going to focus on in the coaching session. It is best to

coach one-on-one but there are times when you may want to coach in small groups such as with new hires.

The C stands for consequences. What are the consequences of success or failure of the coaching session? Who controls those consequences?

Next, the O stands for Outcomes. What is the target outcome of the coaching session? How do you as the coach define success? Also, how does your employee being coached define success?

R represents roles and responsibilities. What is your responsibility as the coach? What is the responsibility of the person being coached? Does anyone else have a stake in the outcome?

The E stands for evaluation. Will the results of the coaching session be measured? How will the success or failure be measured? Who will do the measurement? And Will the coach also be evaluated and measured? Remember you are looking for step by step progress not giant leaps forward. You are also looking for increased trust and motivation to improve. You want engaged employees who are growing and making progress.

What things should you keep in mind as the coach? For example, remember the rule of ask don't tell. Also, remember not to be judgmental. Appreciate the power of silence. Silence may be uncomfortable, but it is necessary to get the employee to think and to make mental connection. Maintain eye contact and a listening posture. You'll find that the employee will then volunteer information on the topic or situation. He may also feel that you are listening and be willing to admit that he needs help or direction to resources.

I've put a template on our website under freebies for your planning your coaching sessions with sections for each part of the acronym.

Coaching sessions are not just for one person or for the underachiever.

You'll find that the average and higher performing people respond best to coaching sessions. To make your business soar, you will need to engage your whole team in long-term continuous improvement

Employees want to use their strengths to grow and to be recognized for their accomplishments. Successful managers delegate responsibility and coach employees when they are stuck, need to learn a new skill or grow to the next level. When you delegate tasks, or projects, and coach employees, they grow, become more productive. By giving them ownership and responsibility, you develop trust and the employee does not simply complete a task, she learns and grows. Employees who feel they are growing and can see the role they play in the company achieving its goals, are more loyal and they are engaged.

Building trust and providing interactive and actionable feedback helps you have successful coaching sessions.

Honoring the skills and accomplishments of the employee builds trust. You can coach for change as you provide feedback. Remember, you can't change people but you can help them want to grow and change. I'll cover how to give actionable and valuable feedback in a minute. But, I want to make a few points about building trust. There are four components to building trust: reliability, openness, acceptance, and congruence.

I'll discuss them one at a time; reliability means that you are dependable and deliver on your commitments, by doing what you say you're going to do. Openness is being the real you, completely transparent with nothing to hide and being vulnerable. It also means actively listening and showing interest in what others have to say.

The third component is acceptance. It's showing interest in others rather than self-interest. It means you honor and accept cultural and personal differences. And, finally, congruence is about walking the walk and talking the talk. It means you align your behaviors, words, and actions with your values and the company values. Trust is critical to your ability to build relationships and engage with the whole person.

Feedback with the right approach is also extremely valuable. While I was working at Xerox, I wanted to become a better trainer and manager, so I took an excellent class outside of the company on how to give meaningful and actionable feedback. It was one of the best investments I ever made. Let me share with you what I learned from the class.

The model to craft your conversation has just three easy parts: Situation, Behavior, and Consequence. Start by identifying the situation. Where in the activity or coaching dialogue did the behavior take place? When did the behavior take place? What else was going on at the time? If it was an interaction with another employee or a customer, then what was the other person doing or what did they say?

Next is behavior. Describe the behavior in non-judgmental terms. Do not voice a conclusion at this time. Just describe the behavior and any comments or dialogue by the employee.

Finally, describe how the behavior impacted the task, the other person, or the company. Remember that the employee cannot fix everything at once. So, focus on one or two behaviors that will bring have the greatest impact. I always ask the employee to tell me what they thought went well in the session first. If you discuss the items that need improvement first the employee will not hear the good comments. He will only focus on what went wrong or needs to be improved. I like to get at least three good things before I discuss any improvements. This ensures the good behaviors are reinforced.

During the feedback session, I used questions to guide the employee to the solution or to reach the point that they asked for assistance in learning a skill. Do not tell but ask and guide. Remember the goal is not for you to change the employee's behavior but for the employee to experience self-discovery and to want to change behavior or seek out information to learn a new skill.

Expect you'll get some feedback in return. This is a great opportunity to understand how employees really feel. Listen and ask clarifying questions. Don't justify your behavior. Remember everyone has a right to their own opinion. Being a good feedback recipient builds trust and promotes understanding.

Here are a few additional points in this area. Help the person you are coaching to articulate and clarify their personal goals and vision for the future. Help her see the alignment between her vision and goals and the company vision and goals. Finally, help her set short term goals that move her toward her personal vision. Success is achieved with step by step improvement not by giant leaps.

Before we end today, I want to give you some tips on how to avoid pitfalls and develop good coaching skills

One of the most common pitfalls is approaching every situation in the same way with the same series of questions. Every situation is unique. You have to be agile and vary the approach and the questions according to the situation and the person you are coaching.

Another common pitfall is not thinking through all the steps in a process and underestimating the complexity of the situation. Things are always more complicated than you initially think. Lean coaching expert John Shook says that there is not a perfect diagnostic system that gets all of things under control to make the final outcome work. Processes are still evolving. So, take time to think through all the steps and possible outcomes.

You and your employee want to set SMART goals for the coaching session and the final target goal. My George Washington University students can easily list the words in the acronym SMART for their goals, but they struggle to provide good examples. So, let me explain the acronym and provide some examples.

The S stands for specific. That means a clear and concise goal such as lose 15 pounds rather than just lose weight. Or a business goal might be to close 5 new accounts rather than get some new business.

The M stands for measurable. It sets milestones, so you can celebrate when you reach them and reevaluate when you miss the mark. If we continue with our examples, you would add which is 25% of my annual goal to the new account goal or lose 15 pounds and achieve a BMI of 28.

The A stands for achievable. I have observed many sales managers who think that making a larger more difficult number will make the employee work harder. However, there is a point at which the goal is not realistically feasible, and it becomes a demotivator. So, make sure it is achievable.

The R stands for relevant. Not all goals are worthwhile. It must be relevant to your life or your job. It must be worth your time and be beneficial. For business it must align with both the employee's goals and the company goals. Personally, it must align with your long-term vision and goals for your life.

Finally, the T stands for Time Referenced. What is the targeted time to achieve the goal?

So, our SMART goal could be stated as I want to close 5 new accounts which is 25% of my budget for the year by April 1, 2019.

Remember to maintain confidentiality about the things discussed in the coaching session. The employee may share some personal information that affects his performance and he will not want it shared with other employees regardless of level.

Spend more time listening than advising. Ask good questions that lead to self-discovery or resources for learning.

Make coaching a priority. There is no silver bullet for success. It takes a lot of small steps forward to reach the target goal. As the legendary coach John Wooden said, "You must establish a plan to develop excellence." Proper coaching helps each employee establish and execute a plan for excellence. You must provide coaching, feedback, and tools to support your team. Coaching is the most critical element in sustaining the positive impact of training.

Well, that wraps up our podcast for today. Thanks to my producer and audio engineer John Switzer, for his great work with me on today's podcast. Join me next time when I'll share more hints and tips. I appreciate your feedback so please send your questions, comments or topic suggestions to me at Phyllis@salestrainingolutions.com.

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Watch for our FREE mini-course on Lean coming soon. As I said, it's absolutely Free and filled with tools, tips, and resources to help you achieve success.