

Coach > Optimize > Retain



DEFINITION: A coaching approach to leadership focuses on helping an employee **find the sweet spot between their *own personal aspirations* and *the needs of the organization***. Effective coaches help workers discover and refine their strengths and address blind spots and weaknesses.

Why Coaching Is Important

Coaching promotes engagement and accountability. When employees are learning and growing, their day-to-day job responsibilities feel like a path forward and not a dead end.

ACTION PLAN: Show employees how their role aligns to the company mission.

- 1. Break the ice, have the conversation.** Explain your company's mission & purpose. Don't assume everyone knows.
- 2. Get to know employees at a deeper level than the resume.** What are their true skills & motivations? How are they uniquely able to contribute to the objectives of your organization? Connect the dots.
- 3. Clarify company goals and individual goals.** Make the goals concrete, trackable, and achievable.

How to Coach:

Build trust and watch what happens.

The Harvard Business Review analyzed data from more than 100,000 leaders to find that the #1 driver of success is the trust they inspire among their direct reports. When employees trust their leader, they are more likely to thrive. Not only does trust create psychological safety (think of the time we save when we're not paranoid, insecure, or "looking over our shoulder"), it also opens up a new frontier of possibilities (taking a calculated risk to achieve a worthwhile end is a lot easier when you trust that your leader "has your back").

ACTION PLAN: Build trust and watch what happens.

1. Reflect on what trust looks like in a work environment.

Who do you trust? Most likely, you trust leaders who are accountable (they don't play the blame game), dependable (they follow through), and dialed in (they know what's *actually* happening on the frontlines or the factory floor).

2. Get comfortable with "appropriate transparency."

Trustworthy people are candid and straightforward, but people leaders often struggle to feel they're being honest, as they're usually asked to withhold some of their behind-the-scenes knowledge. That's okay. You can earn trust by sharing what you're able to share and being transparent about what information you can't share and why.

Invest in career paths; give people a sense of momentum.

Career paths are more important than ever after a pandemic reset that upturned everyone's apple carts. In 2018, only 6% of employees worked primarily from home; in May 2020, more than a third were remote (*NCCI*). And who in 2018 could have imagined grocery and fast-food workers would be deemed essential to our economy in 2020? Wherever your workers fall on the spectrum of blue to white collar, rest assured their expectations of and hopes for what "work" can mean have changed. One thing they all want is momentum. No one is loyal to a dead-end job.

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DEFINITION: To optimize performance, leaders need to balance a **relentless drive to excellence**, without burning people out or micromanaging.

Why Optimizing Is Important

Leaders are responsible for the productivity of their teams. It's what managers are hired to do. And while the company most likely evaluates manager efficacy based on objective results and revenue goals, a lot of what it takes to inspire a team to give it their all is intuitive, as much art as science.

Optimizing performance is a balancing act. Effective leaders know how to model accountability without slipping into micromanagement. They know how to encourage and cheer employees without being a pushover. They lead by example and inspire others to go the extra mile.

Explain the “why behind the what.”

A common mistake first time managers make is assuming everyone’s on the same page. In a fast-paced work environment, it’s easy to glide on assumptions. The foundation of optimal performance, however, is a shared understanding of what success is—at the individual, team, and company levels. On top of that foundation is another layer of understanding: direct reports need to understand not only their manager’s expectations, but also what help and support their manager is able to give. First time managers can lay the groundwork for effective teamwork by explaining their leadership style and then following up to ensure direct reports are getting what they need to succeed.

ACTION PLAN: Explain the “why behind the what.”

- 1. Be transparent about your leadership style.** If you’re a hands-off manager, say so. If you’re more hands-on in the beginning, explain that your approach will be to work with them closely for the first few months and eventually back off and let them run with it. Setting expectations early avoids confusion down the road.
- 2. Ask for feedback and be flexible.** You may find that a hands-off approach works well with senior team members and that less experienced workers want more handholding.
- 3. Explain the purpose behind 1:1’s.** Ideally, you’re meeting one-on-one with each of your direct reports. Explain the “why” behind these check-ins. Your goal is to build a relationship, get to know each other, and learn how you can better support them. It’s not because you don’t trust them.

ACTION PLAN: Create a “fail forward” culture.

- 1. Document goals so you have a north star.** We've said this before, but it's worth saying again because it's so important to rally a team around objective, measurable results. Everything starts from here.
- 2. Learn from failure.** A missed goal is an opportunity for an effective leader to learn what's really going on in the frontlines of their business. Why was a goal missed? What roadblocks need to be removed? What process needs to be improved? What can be done differently next time?
- 3. Celebrate the wins.** When goals are met or exceeded, recognize the people who worked together to make it happen. Highlight what went right, just as intentionally as you'd diagnose what went wrong. Enshrine best practices by recognizing and rewarding success. (Learn more about the importance of recognition in the “Retain” section.)

Balance getting results with concern for employees' wellbeing.

The Harvard Business Review said it best: “Every employee, every workday, makes a decision: Are they only willing to do the minimum work necessary to keep their job? Or are they willing to put more of their energy and effort into their work?” Researchers gathered data on nearly 3,000 managers and found that those who “balanced getting results with relationships” inspired 62% of their direct reports to give extra effort (vs. only 20% among managers who erred on the side of getting results). Leaders who balance the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual create work environments in which most people want to go the extra mile.



DEFINITION: Leaders **inspire loyalty** by rewarding and incentivizing employees **in a holistic way** that makes them feel authentically valued.

Why Retention Is Important

Retaining employees is a long-term growth strategy. It helps maintain company culture, preserves institutional knowledge, and gives team members the chance to form healthy relationships and even friendships, all of which are good for the business.

Turnover is expensive. It can cost between 30% and 150% of an employee's salary to replace them (*Harrison HR*). And there are intangible costs. Turnover can be contagious, especially if the people who leave are well-liked. The key to building a turnover-resistant organization is an understanding of what motivates individuals and rewarding and incentivizing them in a variety of ways, not just monetarily.

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Create a culture of recognition.

When people feel appreciated for a job well done, it can transform their relationship to work. The opposite is also true: when people put in extra effort and no one notices, the message is: you don't matter. And yet Gallup found that nearly 85% of leaders say recognition is not a strategic priority. We think that's because leaders assume recognition is going to be expensive/time consuming. But it doesn't have to be. Give employees tools to recognize each other, and you'll create a self-sustaining culture of recognition.

The above information are excerpts from Paycor's HR Center of Excellence article about The 3 Leadership Behaviors that Drive Fierce Loyalty & Extreme Engagement