



Big Fish Coaching

Unleash your potential.

Business owners, are you unlocking your people's potential?

By

Dawn Harvey

As someone at the helm of a business, you need to be convinced that your management team is working to unlock the potential of your most valuable resource – your employees.

As a business coach I see results expected against ever increasing targets, in shorter timeframes and with fewer resources. The pressure to perform is huge. All too often I witness this leading to a 'negative' management style. An approach of demanding action, or an 'it's easier to do it myself,' philosophy can be adopted by people needing to achieve short term results.

This style of working often produces the desired outcome in the short term but how does this style of management impact on people in the longer term?

My experience shows employees managed in this way are less likely to be proactive on behalf of the business. Starved of opportunities to think for themselves, people may shrink from responsibility and internalise stress. Lack of empowerment is a major cause of stress and stress related illnesses are a major cause of absenteeism. Absenteeism costs business dearly.

The good news though, is this negative spiral of disempowerment can be reversed simply and effectively if subtle changes are made in interactions between managers and staff. The implementation of a coaching style of management has been shown to improve the performance of individuals, teams and whole organisations. A coaching style of management helps give rise to

motivated, empowered employees who maintain a clear focus on business priorities and goals.

So, if long term business results powered by proactive, motivated employees sound attractive, here are some simple steps that can lead to great results. First, take a top down approach. Implementing a coaching style of management effectively means starting at the top and taking a long hard look at how you interact with your senior team. Begin by creating an environment of open discussion about current levels of skills and performance with those closest to you. Explain that the lines of communication are open and ask questions, reflecting back what you see and hear without judgement. Endeavour to look below the surface. What is their body language telling you? What are you hearing from tone of voice as well as the words being used? Use questions that encourage an open discussion and hold back from dismissing views or emotions. The information from this discussion can form a learning loop. When the **experience** your people are having is understood, ask for their **reflection**. This is followed by the **conclusion** that can be generated and the **action** necessary to move this forward. This loop can be a track to set goals and action plans for performance improvement.

Requests for advice can be redirected into questions to facilitate working out their own solution. Encourage seemingly insurmountable problems to be broken down, simplified and dealt with separately. This approach stimulates ownership and accountability and larger issues no longer appear overwhelming.

It also helps to remember that experienced performers may know more than their manager. The job of the coach here is to be a catalyst or motivator empowering the individual to direct their talents onto business priorities.

Once performance goals are in place and actions decided upon, regular progress meetings must be scheduled. Reassurance that people are beginning to perform closer to the desired level is vital. This builds confidence and motivation and encourages a desire for increasingly improving results.

Step two of the process begins as senior managers absorb their own experience and benefits of a coaching style of management. Once their buy-in has been

achieved a similar process can be implemented with their teams, and the new way of working can begin to cascade down through the organisation. With a little perseverance, even entrenched management techniques can be updated. That most valuable asset, your employee's potential, can be released for the benefit of your business.

Dawn Harvey is the founder of Big Fish (U.K.) Ltd. based in South Derbyshire. The company provides business coaching, executive development and leadership training throughout the East Midlands. For more information about unlocking potential contact info@bigfishcoaching.co.uk or visit www.bigfishcoaching.co.uk