

When you invest in training and communicating your organization's vision, how do you ensure that profitable changes in the workplace are realized and sustained?

Coaching is being explored as the solution to increase accountability so that training and strategic planning initiatives lead to improved performance. This article is part 3 of four discussions on how to create an effective coaching program by:

- 1) identifying what great coaches do and providing guidelines to determine whether coaching would benefit your organization;
- 2) finding great coaches who can ensure that your people become skilled at inspiring accountability;
- 3) incorporating software to build an affordable coaching program that will generate sustained results; and**
- 4) overcoming the reluctance by employees to provide and to receive coaching.

Coaches work to minimize the effort required by employees to create profitable and sustained change. Therefore, software solutions are valuable only if they speed up the process coaches use to provide people with manageable amounts of information and if they create an ultra-fast method for employees to record progress. This increase in speed motivates employees to use the software solution, and helps coaches monitor improvement and plan follow-up sessions. The following text reviews features of software that reduce the amount of time coaches require to inspire employees to be accountable for improvement.

The New Coaching Software:

Recent innovations in using computers to display **knowledge maps** are revolutionizing the process of coaching. Knowledge maps are concepts that are recorded in a text box and linked to other concepts

in a specific sequence. Coaches are using software to create and display knowledge maps because the maps support the process of **identifying the root cause** of a less-than-desirable performance.

Only the more recent programs feature the ability to display huge knowledge maps in **manageable chunks**. Targeted knowledge maps make it easier for people to learn new skills because they can **see the steps by which an expert coach would analyze performance**. This allows the learner to better understand the overall plan for improvement and to break down the steps of a particular learning objective. Not only are corporate coaches using this new technology, but NASA is also exploring ways to use a similar tool--concept mapping--to capture, analyze, refine and transfer scientific knowledge.¹ Generally, more coaches are using knowledge maps because the more engaged employees become in

understanding the steps in creating change, the more inspired they are to create change.

Inspiration must be followed by perspiration. **Online journals** are being used to speed the follow-up coaching process that turns inspiration into sustained results. By having employees invest up to ten minutes per week recording their progress, **new skills are kept top of mind** and coaches have specific information that allows for more efficient and effective follow-up. Furthermore, the information in the e-journals can be integrated into annual performance reviews so that managers require less time to review the progress made by employees. Finally, e-journals are simple tools that require little to no customization so that they are affordable, and easy to implement.

Knowledge maps and e-journals are also being used to **increase the speed with which in-house managers can be trained** as effective coaches. Managers find that knowledge maps help them to quickly identify the information that will be most appropriate for upcoming coaching sessions. In addition, the maps continue to be valuable in speeding the process of analyzing performance and gaining agreement on the most appropriate learning objective. Furthermore, the knowledge maps help increase the consistency with which a message for change is delivered to a large number of employees. This enables an organization to rapidly create coordinated improvement. Finally, an e-journal is a tool that organizes information so that managers

can easily and quickly monitor improvement, provide feedback, and automate annual performance reviews.

Overall, technology can increase the speed with which coaching is delivered. This allows organizations to reduce external consulting fees and speed the process of training in-house coaches so that consulting fees can be eliminated.

Use the following questions when considering an investment in technology to support learning and coaching:

- 1) How does the technology support coaches in inspiring accountability? How does it make it easier for coaches to identify the root cause of performance?
- 2) Does the e-learning solution have a method for employees to record their on-the-job progress? (check this answer carefully in regards to speed and user friendliness)
- 3) Can the e-learning solution automate parts of the annual performance review process?
- 4) Can the e-learning easily be transferred to training in-house coaches so that ongoing consulting fees can be eliminated?
- 5) What partnerships does the e-learning company have with industry-proven training companies?

¹ Leake, D. and Canas, A. **Integrated Intelligent Support for Knowledge Capture, Refinement, and Sharing.**
<http://is.arc.nasa.gov/HCC/tasks/KnwShr.html>