

Directions

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Seizing Coachable Moments

... when time to coach is so limited

by Ellen C. Davis

You already know the key reasons to coach in your role as a manager:

- The most significant impact on leaders' development - after the job experience itself - is their manager.
- The leaders who report to you will model you - what you say and what you do greatly impact their behavior.

But sometimes it's hard to tell if the significant amount of time you invest in coaching really pays off. At the TMDC we encourage our participants to view almost every employee encounter as a "coachable moment" and to recognize that coaching really doesn't always have to involve a lot of preparation, engagement time in a closed conference room, heavy documentation, etc. Unplanned coaching minutes abound if you look out for them. For instance:

- Someone brings a question to you and asks for your direction. Instead, you respond with a simple, "What do you think?" And follow up with, "Let's take a moment and talk through this together." You chat for 5 minutes and they are back on their way - and so are you.
- Your team bogs down getting a decision made and you resist the temptation to just declare an answer. Instead, you facilitate them through a short debate of pros and cons and guide them toward a good - but efficient - group decision. You close this short process by reminding them of how you did it, and encouraging them to use a similar process the next time they seem stuck.
- An employee typically works long and hard on her projects and you know you can count on her to get things done. You take time to offer a personal word of "Thanks, I don't know how we could do it all without you" rather than just breathe a personal sigh of relief that this capable employee allows you to devote real time to the "squeaky wheels" who get so little done.

Coachable moments are your unplanned encounters and opportunities to ask an open-ended question, to express a compliment or a word of encouragement, to facilitate a small shift of emphasis. They are in front of you all day long, waiting for you to seize them. The more you do this, the less you may find that you have to devote to those formal coaching sessions.

Seize the Moment!