



## Coaching the Overzealous, Underwhelming and Class Clown

**Daily coaching is essential in developing your employees and forming a solid team. This means spending time each day proactively (initiated by you, the leader) through open ended questions, guidance and mentoring. Remember the 4 steps of coaching as you listen to these scenarios:**

1. Ask open ended questions
2. Acknowledge and/or compliment
3. Stretch and hold accountable
4. Always follow-up

This is the first of a two-part series demonstrating coaching techniques for different personality styles and in some cases challenging employees. This has become a frequent request from my clients, asking me to spend one on one time in person or by telephone helping employees work through challenging characteristics that affect the rest of the team.

**Zeek the Overzealous.** Zeek is always the first to raise his hand and answer any questions asked of the group. As well, he volunteers for any project and always demonstrates an eager, willing attitude. One would think this is terrific. Well for the most part it is. However in a team setting Zeek the overzealous in fact deters others from speaking up themselves. Those that are less assertive will sit back knowing that Zeek will do it for them. The coaching challenge becomes how to keep Zeek's enthusiasm and still encourage the remainder of your team to participate as well. In this case partnerships or joint projects are advisable where you couple Zeek with a less assertive individual. Also when coaching Zeek, ask him open ended questions on how the team can work to its highest and best use. Share with him that zealous approach often slows down other participation and giving him specific individual projects may be in the best interest of the overall group. Praise him for his contributions, but channel his enthusiasm so all members of your team participate. No wall flowers...please!

**Doris the Underwhelming.** You sometimes wonder what fires Doris up? She comes in on time, does exactly what is asked of her and nothing more. She leaves exactly at five. Doris gives you little difficulty however there is no enthusiasm or evidence that she



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wants to get ahead in anyway. Similar to Zeek this also acts like a deterrent to the rest of your team as it the weakest link of your team that sets the pace. Her complacent “one speed” approach to work can have others who wish to get ahead and excel wondering “why should they do extra when she does not?” When coaching an individual like this open ended questions are essential. The open ended approach creates a requirement on their part to give you an expansive answer. Questions such as “tell me what’s important to you in your job” or “share with me what your five year plan is with regards to this company”. Once you’ve heard the individual’s remarks, guiding her towards trying new initiatives helps her feel better and certainly the team members feel better about her too. Each team has their own culture and the culture is made of the different personalities and approaches that work within each team. The coach’s job is to help direct, incent and motivate each participant. The coach is similar to a conductor in an orchestra.

**Floyd the Class Clown.** And now, last but not least, our class clown! Everybody likes Floyd. He’s the first one to bring in jokes, weekend adventures to share, and liven up every meeting. However, he over uses this strength of humor and light hearted approach to a point that often a serious subject is not seen as one of importance. Coaching Floyd requires numerous open ended questions that both acknowledge his spirit and redirects his energy back towards the work at hand. Often a “Floyd” requires a direct approach and more specific guidance. As someone like Floyd thrives on attention frequent proactive and supportive coaching from the leader can keep him feeling appreciated and yet still develop his behavior towards one more appropriate and professional for a workplace. As a leader, you must lead!

I use these examples as we can often see these three styles as “good enough-let’s not rock the boat!” There are no secrets in the office environment. Everyone notices others’ behaviors. When a leader fails to address and effectively guide these behaviors it sends a very confusing message to other team members of just what is correct or appropriate.

Remember leaders, your team is a reflection of you and your leadership skills and style. Help them be their very best!

**Good luck and good coaching....**



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