

The ABC's of Coaching Peak Performers

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Nobody is born a peak performer. Just ask any professional athlete. They achieve excellence by being coached and by practicing. They never accept that they are "good enough." They strive to get better. To coach peak performance in a call center environment, the manager should remember some simple ABC's: have the right **A**ttitude, demonstrate the best **B**ehavior and make astute **C**omments.

Attitude:

The call center manager must have the right attitude towards coaching and continuous improvement. Formal and informal coaching has to become a priority. While the tasks of the job are important, excellence on-the-job comes from guidance. If you want people to perform differently, you must be willing to reach out and teach people how to do things differently. The attitude of everyone from the top down should be that in this organization, we all work at improving, and we need feedback from others to move us in the right direction.

Behavior:

The coach must emulate the behavior he or she would like to see. If you want reps to demonstrate they value their customer, reps must see you treating everyone in the organization, not just the customers on the phone, with sincerity, patience and kindness. They must hear you thanking them for their efforts and special feats. They must feel that no question is too small or unworthy of an answer. Reps learn how to value people through observation.

Reps also learn a lot about listening skills by paying attention to how you listen to them. If you avoid interrupting, if you acknowledge and clarify concerns when talking to your people, reps will have a strong model to follow when it comes time to dealing with challenging customers. Moreover, you cannot expect reps to be cheery, if they don't see you smiling and greeting them in a positive, upbeat manner. If they are in an environment where management seems warm and friendly, they can see first hand the best way to treat customers on the phone.

Content:

No rep wants to perform poorly. No one comes into work thinking that today they want to lose an account or offend a customer. People respond the way they do because they don't know how to do it differently or because they are in the wrong role. It is your responsibility as the manager to understand the uniqueness of the people in your call center, where their performance gaps are and how they can achieve the most success in your organization. It is only after understanding these things, that you should offer feedback.

In the book, *First Break All the Roles: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman point out that great managers don't try to fix weak talents. They focus on building upon the person's strengths and skills. Then, they provide coaching and developmental opportunities that help the person increase these skills even more. This is the approach most Olympic coaches utilize. It is the approach that **Impact Communications** also recommends.

Peak performance is critical to a call center organization. Managers can help their reps develop their innate talents by having the right attitude, demonstrating the best behavior and making astute comments. While these **ABC's** provide a simplified formula for coaching, they will remind you what your role needs to be in developing others.

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