



Motivate, Develop, and Lead Employees Through a Coaching Culture

As community corrections executives, we are the coaches of our teams. "Coach" is defined in several ways; however, it is primarily someone who teaches, motivates, leads, trains, mentors, prompts, and guides others to be and do their best.

To quote TV sensation and Coach Ted Lasso, "For me, success is not about the wins and losses. It's about helping these young fellas be the best versions of themselves on and off the field."



Encourage a Coaching Culture

A coaching culture empowers employees of all levels to communicate, learn, and excel together. To encourage and support a coaching culture, leaders should:

- Focus on employee interactions and relations first, transactions second
- Promote open communication
- Be ready to receive honest feedback and listen actively
- Invite and try out new ideas and proposals
- Set and celebrate collaborative goals and achievements, identify purpose
- Regularly “huddle” with the team to keep them informed, prepared, and motivated

Value of Coaching



Coaching is beneficial to everyone in the workplace because it can be reciprocated across all levels within the team. Additionally, coaching keeps the focus on employees and on building their skills so they are equipped to solve whatever problems or obstacles come their way.

Coached employees feel empowered, are more engaged, their confidence is reflected in their performance, and their commitment to the agency and organizational needs is greater—all of these factors improve morale and retention.



Ray Wahl

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"Give of yourself is the most important ingredient to a successful coaching experience. Coaching is a two-way street. The person being coached needs to give you the time and effort to create this "learning" environment, and the coach needs to spend the time necessary to make the experience successful."

- Ray Wahl

When I was asked to share some coaching tips, I decided to do a little research. I have often heard the terms mentor and coach used interchangeably. According to Annabelle Reitman and Sylvia Benatti, who wrote an article for the Association for Talent Development, mentoring is an informal association focused on building a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship for long-term career movement. Coaching is partnering with someone in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their potential. Using those definitions as a guide, most of my work with others is coaching.

I was lucky to have a number of coaches in my work career who allowed me to have meaningful conversations about what was going on in my career and the workplace. While I am not an expert in coaching, I have learned several tips from coaching my former staff, being a mentor/coach for the American Probation and Parole Association Leadership Institutes, and coaching community corrections leaders and staff as a consultant.

So, what makes a good coach? Here are some tips I hope are useful.

Spend time matching the coach and the person

Matching a coach and the person they are coaching must be done deliberately. Things like work experience, temperament, and the goals of the coaching experience are important to consider. I recommend the staff person complete a questionnaire about what they hope to achieve in their coaching experience.

So, let me state some of the obvious things. A coach needs to have credibility. If the person works in the juvenile justice arena and the coach has never worked in that area, that may be a big hurdle for a coach to overcome.

Another obvious thing is matching the person's goal. For instance, if they want to improve on having difficult conversations with their subordinates, and the coach is the kind of person who is "conflict adverse," it won't be a great match.

Lastly, the coach needs to be flexible about the match. Not all matches will "click," and when there is some agreement the match is not working, neither party should be made to feel it is their "fault."

Have a "loose" agenda

Of course, one of the first things established between the coach and the person being coached is how often to meet. Using technology does not detract from a successful coach/staff relationship, but it is nice to have a face-to-face meeting.

These meetings need a loose agenda, or they may evolve into talking about the weather or a sporting event. There is nothing wrong with that, but if that is all that is discussed, it could make the staff person feel like the meetings are not worthwhile.

At the conclusion of each meeting, the coach should summarize what was discussed and what will be discussed at the next meeting. This gives both parties a chance to prepare for the next meeting.

Let the person define the coaching experience.

Some coaches can be a bit too directive about what the coaching experience should be. The experience is not about what the coach thinks it should be but what the person being coached feels they need from the coach. How does the coach know what they need? Simply ask: "As a coach, how do you think I can assist you?"

It can also be helpful for the coach to be clear about their capabilities. If a coach is assigned a staff person for 18 months and the staff wants something to happen that might take much longer, the coach should discuss that. Here is an analogy to consider: When developing a case plan, you should never consider developing one without the input and involvement of the person for which the plan is intended. It should be the same with the coaching experience. Involvement in the process creates clarity and buy-in.

Measuring success

If goals are not established for a coaching experience, neither the person being coached nor the coach will know if the experience was successful. We must remember that the organization may establish goals for a coaching experience, which must be honored. However, if the organization has not established goals, it is important to establish them at the beginning of the coaching experience. In addition, the person may have goals in addition to the ones established by the organization.

There are tools that can be used to measure success. For instance, if an organization wants a coach to work on the results of a staff's 360 evaluation, the evaluation could be repeated after the coaching experience. A less formal method could be asking the staff person what they got from the coaching experience.

Give of yourself

Give of yourself is the most important ingredient to a successful coaching experience. Coaching is a two-way street. The person being coached needs to give you the time and effort to create this "learning" environment, and the coach needs to spend the time necessary to make the experience successful.

If the experience is defined as a "call me if you need me" scenario, it will not be a successful coaching experience. I also encourage coaches to "play to their strengths." If a coach is good at connecting staff with others in the field who may be helpful, use that strength as part of the coaching experience.

So, coaches, use your best Motivational Interviewing skills (thinks OARS). A boss once told me that I was a "master at stating the obvious." I hope I have not achieved that status by sharing these coaching tips.



While executives can and should participate in reciprocal coaching with their teams, they may also benefit from working directly with a certified coaching professional. Certified coaching professionals have completed required education and client hours focused on inspiring and guiding others to create a coaching culture and growth mindset. For executives, identifying priorities and selecting a

certified coaching professional will help build a coaching culture. Certified coaches can enhance an executive's leadership skills as well as improve an agency's ability to transform to align with priorities.

Word of mouth is a great way to find a certified coaching professional. There are also online directories that detail certified and accredited coaching professionals.

Related Reading:

[Forbes: A Strong Coaching Culture in the Workplace](#)

[Army University Press: Cultivating a Coaching Culture](#)

[Harvard Business Review: Leaders Need Professional Coaching Now More Than Ever](#)

Save the Dates

Empowering Leadership in Community Corrections

April 23, 2024 - 11:00 am ET

The Florida Department of Corrections, in partnership with the National Association of Probation Executives (NAPE), and the Florida Association of Community Corrections (FACC), is excited to present a 90-minute webinar on "Empowering Leadership in Community Corrections: Strategies for Success and Well-being."

Presenters:

- Greg Dillon, Director, Brazoria County, TX
- Justine Patterson, Regional Director, Florida Department of Corrections
- Jennifer Whipple, Circuit Administrator, Florida Department of Corrections

Assessing Fairly: Introduction to the National Guidelines for Post-Conviction Risk and Needs Assessments

May 2, 2024 - 2:00 pm ET

The Council of State Government's Justice Center is partnering with NAPE to present a webinar on new national guidelines for post-conviction risk and needs assessment. This 60-minute webinar will discuss the importance of ensuring fair and accurate assessments and how having a national standardized approach can reduce disparities and increase transparency. Resources and technical assistance will be shared, along with Massachusetts Probation Agency's involvement in the development and application of these standards.

Presenters:

- Kendra Carroll, MSCJ, CSG Justice Center
- David D'Amora, MS, LPC, CCFC, CSG Justice Center

- Brian Mirasolo, Director, Massachusetts Probation Services

Adult Supervision Fees: Results from a National Study

May 10, 2024 - 1:00 pm ET

The National Institute of Corrections, the University of Utah Criminal Justice Research Center, and NAPE collaborated on a nationwide study of the ways probation and parole agencies assess and use fees, agencies that do not assess fees, and how some agencies have transitioned away from fees. The results from this study will be shared, along with a discussion of what this means for executives.

Presenters from the Utah Criminal Justice Center, College of Social Work, University of Utah

- Megan Foster, MSW, Graduate Research Assistant and Doctoral Candidate
- Mariah Cowell Mercier, MSW, Graduate Research Assistant and Doctoral Candidate
- Emily Salisbury, PhD, Associate Professor, Director
- Christian Sarver, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, Associate Director

Watch your email inbox for more information and registration links.

We invite members to share information about NAPE with other community supervision executives to help expand our network and strengthen our opportunities, data, and expertise. Affordable annual NAPE membership options are available and can be purchased/renewed at napehome.org

- Individual (recurring discount available)
- Retired
- Organizational
- Corporate

NAPE is dedicated to enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness in the field of community corrections by creating a national network for executives, bringing about positive change in the field, and making available a pool of experts in community corrections management, program development, training, and research.

Learn more: napehome.org

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