

Angela Spaxman  
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## **The Results of Coaching Your Staff**

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A Coach Manager is a manager who uses coaching skills to motivate, inspire, develop and empower people in order to continuously improve the team's results.

Last month's article looked at symptoms that indicate coaching for managers and also key differences between traditional management methods and coaching methods. In this article we'll review the results some managers are finding as they start to coach their staff. We'll look at some real life examples so we can separate the theory from the practice.

I've been speaking to some managers about how they've been using coaching skills and what differences they notice in their management results. Two examples stand out. One from a man who first understood the concept of coaching about 6 months ago, and the other from a woman who has been coaching her staff intensively over the past two years. Let's briefly take a look at their experiences as they relate to three key benefits of coaching:

- Raising motivation and productivity
- Increasing trust and support
- Enjoyment and rewards to the coach

### **Raising motivation and productivity**

Over the past two years, Jennifer (not her real name), a manager with a major airline, has doubled the scope of her responsibilities and the workload of her department while increasing her team size from 2 to 3, adding only a low-skilled

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administrative helper. Despite the increase in workload, her department has been creating unprecedented results.

Jennifer attributes this success to the high levels of motivation of her staff. Why are they so highly motivated? It's not because of pay increments, promotion or training opportunities because these motivations are predictable, uncontrollable or rare. It must therefore be a result of Jennifer's management methods.

Jennifer has been consistently using key coaching skills and attitudes that she has developed over the past three years or more. In contrast to other managers in her organization, she makes the development of her people her main commitment. She has developed several strategies for guiding, encouraging and empowering people, not least of which are the strategies for managing her own feelings in the process. Jennifer's management methods strike me because as all coaches, she has learned that self-management plays a huge part in managing others. And she is very skillful in the way she encourages, rewards and challenges her people.

As one example of her methods, let's look at the way Jennifer motivates her staff by giving both responsibility and credit. She describes a situation where she cringed to watch her subordinate's shaky performance as he delivered a presentation to senior managers on behalf of her department. "This was a big letting go for me initially", she says. "I also had to accept a certain reduction in my own exposure to let him have the limelight even though I may have shaped the whole rationale behind the presentation." In coaching, the coachees are responsible for their own results. It sounds simple, but this is often one of the most difficult changes for managers to make.

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It is only logical, that when a manager is committed to and skilled at staff motivation and development, results will improve. But many managers hesitate to invest in their staff because it takes faith and there are many personal and professional obstacles to face along the way. Jennifer's example reminds us of the real rewards available to those who persevere along the path of coaching.

### **Increasing trust and support**

Nigel (not his real name) is a general manager in a manufacturing facility in China, not the first place you would think to find a Coach Manager. He learned about coaching through a company training program about six months ago and immediately began to implement what he had learned as best he could.

Prior to taking up coaching, Nigel felt his employees were lacking in initiative and were poor communicators. He felt frustrated about the slow pace of their development and their tendency to rely too much on him.

His first step towards implementing coaching was simply to explain how he wanted to begin working with them differently. He wanted to spend time with them on understanding their problems so that he could help them resolve them, rather than just fixing the problems himself. He said, " They are eager to learn, they understand the concept, they are also more relaxed and they seem to trust me more when they want to discuss problems or when they have questions. They know we need discussions to get better not to find out who was to blame and get punished."

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Nigel had to change his thinking about how to work with his people: "I know I have to invest time into showing them other ways how to operate and then I will also get better results in the longer run. And if mistakes happen I can better analyse what went wrong and why and how I should deal with it to avoid future problems like that." By increasing the level of trust and support in his team, he has created a strong foundation for continuing improvement.

### **Enjoyment and rewards**

Nigel says " The atmosphere between me and the managers is better, more relaxed, I am not so tense anymore." By sharing more responsibility with his subordinates, he feels less pressure and can enjoy his job more. No doubt his staff also enjoy the more open atmosphere.

Jennifer says that the way she treats her staff is based on her own personal values. Treating people with respect, sharing rewards and responsibilities clearly gives her a great deal of enjoyment and self-respect. She has created a virtuous cycle where the actions that bring her pleasure also improve her external results. And I'm sure it's no accident that Jennifer's employees state that she is the best boss they ever had. That must feel very fulfilling.

In summary, here are some of the benefits you might expect from coaching your staff:

If you're an experienced coach manager, you could expect to:

- Raise motivation and productivity

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- Create strong relationships
- Develop talent for long term high performance
- Gain personal rewards and fulfillment

If you and your staff are just learning about coaching, you could expect to:

- Reduce stress and pressure
- Build trust and support
- Develop capacity

What are the keys to making it happen?

- Believe in them
- Make development a priority
- Let them take responsibility and be accountable
- Give credit and praise
- Give constructive feedback and keep your expectations high

In future issues of the Manager as Coach News, we'll investigate in more detail how to implement these practices. Please tell us, what do you need to know in order to use these practices? We'd also love to hear of your experiences with coaching in the workplace.

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Angela Spaxman of Spaxman Ltd . works with business people, professionals and managers who want to be at their best and be completely themselves at work. Her clients could be accelerating their learning about management and leadership skills; inspiring, empowering and developing their team members or creating careers or businesses that suit them perfectly.

Angela has been coaching full time since 2000 and has 12 years of experience in the people-development field as a coach, corporate trainer and consultant. She is a graduate of Coach U, a Certified Practitioner of Neuro-linguistic Programming, the Founding President of the Hong Kong Coaching Community and a Lifetime Charter Member of the International Association of Coaches.

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