

performance excellence by building a leadership team across boundaries of geography, business, and function with a common vision and strategy.

5. Team building. Competitive racing is not a spectator sport. Every person on board has a vital role to play. All share in the work and in the rewards. Sailing requires a strong, cohesive, well-oiled team. Tactician, navigator, sail trimmer, and skipper have their respective roles and responsibilities: one concentrates on how wind shifts affect the boat; another supplies information about where they are in relation to the next mark; one watches for signs of wind and tries to identify its strength and direction; and the skipper serves as the integrator, coach, champion, and motivator.

Successful captains tap, orchestrate and utilize the talents of each crew member. Charters are clear. Roles do not overlap. Crewmembers know what is expected of them and of their teammates. They promote a stronger, more cohesive and more synergistic team, marked by shared responsibility, alignment of purpose, effective communication, and rapid response—the wellsprings of spirited performance.

6. New standards and strategies. To survive and succeed in the new environment, companies are setting new standards for productivity, quality, and service. Strategies are changing as leaders are revamping their cultures to reflect the new values, management styles, and ways of doing business.

World-class companies develop leaders who think strategically and globally, advocate needed change, support teamwork and employee growth, and deal constructively with ambiguity and complexity. They create the most energizing vision, soundest strategies, strongest management talent, and most empowering culture. They offer smart tools and guidance to enable people to understand the changes rippling about the world and to exploit them and profit by them.

In the end, it's all about the competitive edge—the commitment, the pursuit, the achievement. It's one thing to try when there's no risk of failure. But quite another—jumping the hurdles, sailing in choppy waters, or competing in the unforgiving world of business—to put it all on the line and challenge the impossible. LE

Michael Winston serves as Managing Director and Chief Leadership Officer of Countrywide Financial Corporation. He's responsible for Organization Integration, Succession Planning and Leadership Development. Visit www.countrywide.com.

ACTION: Gain a competitive edge.

Coaching

It's now imperative.



by Josh Bersin

WE STUDIED THE impact of various leadership and talent management processes to understand where organizations could focus their leadership development and management efforts to drive business results.

We find that the talent process that delivers the greatest impact is executive and management coaching. This scored higher than setting goals, aligning goals, building core competencies, and recruiting high performers.

What does this result mean? Consider the role of a coach. You can likely trace success in your career to two things: first, you had a series of developmental events that gave you experience, judgment, and insights; and second, you had a manager or coach who took a special interest in you and in your work, your career, and your personal development.

Great coaches have a unique ability to identify the skills in each player and align them toward the ultimate goal: winning games.

A coach is not necessarily a mentor or a manager. Coaches may know less about the subject matter than the people they are coaching. In fact, coaches often come from different disciplines or unrelated industries. Lou Gerstner, the man who turned around IBM, came from Nabisco. But Gerstner was a fantastic coach. He applied the disciplines and leadership that IBM needed.

Coaching is an important skill for any leader. Good coaches help people see the ultimate goal. They ask people questions they may not ask themselves. They gain a deep understanding of the challenges and solutions. Through their persistence, listening, and direction, they bring out the best in people, inspiring them to perform.

Four Common Traits

When I meet high-performing leaders, I observe four common traits:

1. They have a clear understanding

of where they are going. Good coaches know precisely where those they are coaching need to go, and help them get there through clarity of the vision.

2. They have a keen, refined sense of people's abilities. Good coaches know what each individual is capable of, and they put "the right people into the right jobs," or they change the jobs to reflect the strengths of the people.

3. They have an uncanny ability to take complex problems and break them down into step-by-step solutions. They know how to create the "winning plays." They watch the team perform, and when they identify brilliance they "write it into the playbook."

4. They develop people. By taking a tough but personal interest in their team, they inspire others to follow, improve themselves, and work hard for success.

How Effective Are You?

Every major leadership development company now offers executive coaching. Ultimately, coaching is a necessary skill for any leader.

How do you develop a coaching program and instill coaching as a leadership quality in all of your leaders? NASA found that its managers (mostly engineers and scientists) were not interacting well with employees. They could solve engineering

and technical problems, but struggled in dealing with strategy, planning, and personnel issues. The solution was an in-house coaching program, offered through a few senior employees who had skills in listening, coaching, and development. These coaches quickly became highly regarded. NASA now has a program to leverage these coaches.

As the coach, can you help the team win more games? Do you have a clear picture of how to win? Do you have the right people playing the right positions? Do you have a playbook? Are you exhibiting enough tough love? Do you drill your team and give them specific areas of improvement?

If not, you should reconsider your role as a leader: think "coach," not "manager." Think "building a winning game plan," not "managing people."

If so, you are likely already having high impact on the business. LE

Josh Bersin is CEO of Bersin & Associates. Visit www.bersin.com or call 203-270-7966.

ACTION: Improve your coaching competency.

Copyright of Leadership Excellence is the property of Executive Excellence Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.