

Welcome to the November 2004 edition of Bergeron Associates' newsletter. Do you want to enhance the performance of every employee? If so, then you will enjoy reading this month's newsletter. It outlines a practical approach for informal coaching resulting in heightened levels of employee performance.

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## HEIGHTEN EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH REAL TIME COACHING

By Carol Bergeron

It is nearly impossible these days to pick up a credible business journal without reading about the power of coaching. The performance of individual employees can be improved through on-going, real time coaching while emphasizing positive feedback. If you are not convinced then peruse the literature starting with the research done by the Corporate Leadership Council and others. Then talk with the most successful leaders you know. They will attest coaching works and assert that it is the primary domain of effective leaders.

Here is a refresher on how to coach and provide positive feedback that makes a difference. Envision these coaching behaviors as part of a circular continuum rather than a series of linear steps. In any coaching conversation, you will undoubtedly swing back and forth from one coaching behavior to another.



### 1. Catch employees doing the right thing

First hand observation is the most effective way to catch employees doing the right thing. It puts you in a position to recognize the specific behavior you want to reinforce and repeated by the employee. Second hand observation may heighten your awareness of what to watch for but be careful of using it instead of your own direct observations.

### 2. Ask questions to promote reflection

Purposeful questions get the informal coaching conversation going. Plus they help employees think about how their behavior impacts the performance of themselves and others. Start with broad open ended questions like "How do you think your presentation went?" then drill down to get more specific. "How receptive do you think the audience was to your proposal?", "Why do you think they reacted that way?" and "What would you repeat or do differently next time?"

### 3. Listen

Want to let an employee know s/he is important? The most powerful way to get that message across is to listen. Hallmarks of active listening include: paraphrasing what you think you heard, summarizing the emotions or feelings expressed or inferred by the employee, guiding the employee to look at a problem from a different angle and silence. Of course you will want to maintain good eye contact, avoid interrupting the employee, be present and genuinely interested, and resist the temptation of getting pre-occupied with how to respond.

### 4. Provide specific feedback

Give feedback in a way that is free of inferences. Stick to the facts and be specific. Base it on your first hand observation and avoid projecting inferences. For instance, rather than say "You ran a good project meeting today." say "You facilitated an effective project meeting. You had an agenda, stuck to it and the time allotted for the meeting and collaborated with the team when setting milestone dates. Keep up the good work."

**5. Set goals**

Behavior is tough to change without setting goals based on what improved performance looks like in the future. Use the SMART goal approach where S = specific, M = measurable, A = action oriented, R = realistic and T = time-bound. Use your questioning and listening skills that result in SMART goals jointly developed by you and the employee. Set the stage for follow up and regular check-ins.

**6. Monitor**

Observation is an important form of monitoring. Infuse other measurement techniques that make the most sense given the specific performance improvement targets. Following up is a characteristic of an effective leader. Walk the talk and confidently develop your employees one by one through informal coaching.

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## RESOURCES

**2004 & 2005 Schedule for Educational Workshops** at [www.bergeronassociates.com/calendar.htm](http://www.bergeronassociates.com/calendar.htm).

- Dynamic Coaching for High-Performance Organizations
- How to Develop a Talent Strategy: A Practical Approach to Building Competitive Advantage
- **NEW** How to Build a High Performance Organization - One by One

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## ABOUT BERGERON ASSOCIATES

Bergeron Associates helps organizations achieve their business goals by maximizing workforce effectiveness through the development and implementation of customized talent strategies and solutions.

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