

# Coaching Strategies

## ***Lack of Competence:***

**Step 1: Explain** in a clear and logical order how the skill is carried out. Here is where the supervisor or manager will have to attain the ability to explain what he or she does without thinking so that the worker can understand the skill application.

**Step 2: Demonstrate** the skill so that the worker can observe the behavior. When possible, the skill should be demonstrated in the field or via a role play.

If the worker appears to be confused at either the first or second step, check your perception by asking "observation questions" such as "You appear confused about what I've said (or demonstrated), am I right?" or "Tell me what seems to be confusing you about what I said (or demonstrated) just now?" Explaining and demonstrating can be combined wherever necessary.

**Step 3: Practice** of the skill by the worker to move along the developmental continuum. Immediate and repeated opportunities to practice newly learned skills are necessary.

**Step 4: Feedback** should be given by the supervisor or manager to highlight progress in acquiring skill components as well as demonstrations and suggestions for how to improve in weak areas. Remember that this needs to be balanced feedback, identifying where the person is doing well (positive evaluative feedback); and clearly identifying where the person can improve their performance (corrective feedback). If required, practice can lead back to feedback whenever necessary.

**Step 5: Transfer Implications and Application** should be discussed and planned between the supervisor and the worker. Supervisors provide opportunities for application of the skill in the field. Discussion of transfer implications include strengths, challenges, obstacles and strategies that effect the use of the skill on the job.

## ***Lack of Confidence:***

**Step 1:** Identify that a lack of confidence exists. You will know because the person will tell you verbally: "I'm not sure that I'll ever be able to do this well..."; or will exhibit non-verbal cues that indicate a lack of confidence: hesitation in voice and action, avoidance of eye contact and/or avoidance of responding to requests to demonstrate the needed skills.

Many times workers will hide their true feelings for fear of the consequences. A supervisor or manager should ask "observation questions" to be sure that this is a barrier to desired performance. The skill requires the skill of reaching for feelings. It involves asking the questions tentatively to allow the worker to agree or modify how they are feeling. For example: "I have a feeling you're not totally confident in your ability to do this well, am I right...?"

## Coaching Strategies (continued)

**Step 2:** Acknowledge the feelings and reassure the worker that these feelings are normal in these types of situations. If the supervisor or manager has a personal experience that is similar to what the worker is experiencing, the supervisor or manager should share it.

**Step 3:** If possible, challenge the worker's perception if the supervisor or manager can remind the worker of a similar experience where the worker learned the needed skill and achieved excellence in practice. Sometimes the worker feels that there will be significant negative consequences if they fail to execute the standard successfully. Reassure them, where possible, that you will be there to help them if they get into trouble.

**Step 4:** Offer concrete ways that you can help them to begin implementing the standard. Be sure to commit to only those things you are able and willing to do to support the person. If you are unavailable just once after you committed to be available, the worker will not trust you to follow through on your commitments in the future.

### ***Lack of Commitment:***

The key to coaching is helping someone discover or rediscover their motives and find the connections to the performance standards.

Support and encourage the worker to take responsibility for their own motivation. The worst way to support a worker who is not motivated is to give advice on how to get the work done. The worker will tend to react to advice with reasons why it can't be done, sometimes referred to as the "Yes, but game." The supervisor or manager offers advice, the worker says "Yes, but (fill in the blank)." Rather, the supervisor should ask "what," "when" and "how" questions, pushing the worker to give increasingly greater detail in his or her answers.

Here are examples of what, how and when questions:

- How is what you're doing now hurting (or helping) you...?
- What can you do about... (identified barriers)?
- How can you make it... (better)?
- What can you change... (in your approach)?
- How are you going to get it done...?
- What do you need to do... (differently)?
- What can you do...?
- When will you get it done...?

Never ask "why" questions. They simply give the worker an opportunity to give you an excuse for not meeting the required performance standard. Sometimes assertive talking skills might be needed by the supervisor or manager when the worker attempts to manipulate you to feel angry, frustrated, or guilty rather than staying focused on problem-solving to improve excellence in practice.