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How to be a guide on the side and lead your staff to success

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

MARGIE HAD ALWAYS TRIED TO BE PROACTIVE AND LEARN BEFORE DOING SOMETHING RATHER THAN ONLY LEARNING AFTER HER MISTAKES.

But, in her situation, this had become almost impossible. She was working with a doctor who, instead of being a guide on the side, was becoming quite skilled at being “Jack in the back.”

Proactive learning comes through coaching. Yes, you can teach a person through allowing them to make mistakes, but you also run the risk of damaging his or her self-esteem in the process.

Practice being the guide on the side in your office. Be a coach first and a disciplinarian second. Give your staff a fighting chance to actually do something well — or at least close to right the first time.

Be more effective

These tips will help you to help those you lead be more effective.

1. Train versus “tell and yell.”

Trainers certified by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) receive instruction titled “Tellin’ Ain’t Trainin’!” and it’s true. Telling someone what to do is not the same as training them how to do it.

The definition of training is the transfer of knowledge and skill. Thus, your first training begins with finding out what your staff already knows and what knowledge and skills are missing that you want them to have and act on.

The guide on the side spends time finding out what people know and then fills in the gaps by providing instructions, showing them how to do something, and observing as they do it themselves.

Keep in mind that everyone learns at different speeds, and just as tellin’ ain’t trainin’, directin’ and yellin’ ain’t coachin’!

2. Handle with care. The truth is that with any office staff you employ, you are entrusting someone you may not know very well with important and confidential records, and you may be tempted to micro-manage this persons’ every waking move and make sure they do every single thing right.

Much as you would handle those records with care, the same is true for the people you have trusted to work with them. Only micro-manage those who are brand new or those who seem to be having trouble. Once they’ve got it, do all you can to let



them do it on their own.

Too much micromanagement will teach them to rely on you and never take initiative — not exactly what you are going for, is it?

3. Avoid giving them their opinions. Don’t give them their opinions, ask for them. You might be surprised at what they say. After all, if they work every day with the very issues about which you have opinions, their opinions and ideas on how to improve on those issues might be more accurate than yours!

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4. Give them wings. If you stifle the initiative and freedom of those you work with to such an extent that it is much like removing their wings, then you are removing their ability to try new things, find new solutions, create smoother processes, and so forth.

More importantly, you might also kill their desire to keep trying and be an integral part of your business. Do you want high-initiative filled employees you occasionally have to rein in, or robots who only do as you say when you say it?

5. Be a good neighbor. Are you there for them, or are you in the way? Children will sometimes ask you a question; you give a great answer and think all is solved. But the child is not satisfied and seeks out a neighbor to provide a better answer.

When you discover the answer is exactly the same, but that the perception of this neighbor is one of greater credibility, you will have experienced what is common among employees.

It is good for you to be there, to be the guide on the side, yet to also realize that because these employees see you every day, your wisdom and credibility will be taken for granted from time to time. Be there when they need you, but also realize that you aren't the only resource in town.

Coaching and guidance can be art forms. They can also be taken to the extreme, which means you guide their every move. Be there when they need you and before they have a problem. Be the guide on the side and watch employees succeed, grow, and believe in your business. ☺



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her a highly sought after coach, consultant, speaker, and trainer in corporate America and the chiropractic industry. She can be reached at 866-382-0121 or through www.contagiouschiropractic.com or www.contagiouscomapnies.com.