

Employer's Advantage

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From Jim Sirbasku's Desk

Taking Lessons from the Teacher

We are well into the new school year, a good time to focus attention on and give gratitude to the educators of tomorrow's leaders. Teachers deserve admiration for regularly facing classrooms of pupils with vast differences and needs, and still managing to fill young minds with the knowledge that turns them into productive citizens and creative thinkers.

Some of today's pupils will eventually land at the doorsteps of industry and business, eager to perform. In the ideal scenario, some of the best employees will become high-performing CEOs and CFOs, executive directors, or hold other highly responsible positions of leadership. But for this ideal to occur, learning must be a lifetime pursuit and teaching, or development, must meet individual needs.

In too many organizations, this does not happen. Employee development programs are often like ordering from a menu that offers a single entrée, no substitutions permitted, and everyone has to like it. In development classes, this means that managers with different needs will join others both like and unlike them, to study the same things – customer service, perhaps, or team building, or leadership in general – whether they need these sessions or not. Organizers of such programs should glance into the room at mid-point and see how many pupils are engaged in the subject. If you see vacant stares, doodling and finger drumming, take it as a sign that

your development needs an infusion of relevance and reality.

The First Step

One of the most effective things a leader can do when developing employees is find out what they need. Asking, "In what area(s) do you need to grow?" is simple enough. But just because the question is easy does not mean the answer is at our fingertips. Everyone has blind spots, and all ambitious employees want to present themselves in the best possible light. For example, don't expect someone to tell you that she is good at everything except for establishing relationships. Many people just do not want to admit that a skill or two might be weak. Even those who know where they need to improve might not be able to articulate it clearly.

This is where an objective assessment can be a useful method of determining exactly what your employees need to develop into a great leader. Let's define an "objective assessment" as a measure of on-the-job behaviors or skills required to perform the job. A list of these skills could be quite long and include such things as displaying commitment, an ability to develop teams, skill in motivating team members, and the constant fly in the organizational ointment, effective delegation of duties to others.

Such a list can seem endless, but that does not mean it must intimidate. One of Profiles' assessments designed to develop managers looks at 18 important areas or skills sets. Even with its detailed examination, it takes only a short time to finish and can be completed online, in the privacy of the employee's home or office. Such assessments are scientifically designed to obtain responses that are honest and clear.

After the Assessment

If we were in a classroom, we'd ask for a show of hands in response to this next question, and we'd expect to see few fingers in the air: How many organizations actually DO something with assessments once the employee has completed them? Here's another question: Are the assessments designed for action?

(continued)

The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them. -George Bernard Shaw

We envision a classroom full of shoulders shrugging about now.

One of the mysteries common to many offices has to do with the Bermuda Triangle of amassed information. Self-studies, projects, reports and assessments gather dust on shelves or get lost in the bottom of a pile on a desk. People get busy with phone calls, day-to-day duties and out of town conferences, and then they go on vacation for a couple of weeks. Soon the valuable information about Jim or Sally's ability to communicate with team members is lost.

We believe truly helpful assessments come with easy-to-follow next steps. The same assessment described earlier comes with action reports, one for the employee who completed the assessment, and one for his or her supervisor or on-the-job coach. The manager's assessment is a self-study. Like any good diagnostic, it reveals which measurements the manager excels at, what the organization needs, and what the manager needs to work on.

The coach's assessment comes with a report on the employee, as well as exercises and activities for the coach to assign. Designed for employee growth, this report is like a tailored – it fits perfectly. If you knew something was missing on Sally's team but could not define what the ingredient was, this report will tell you. Perhaps the missing link is effective communication, or maybe Sally is not listening to team members as carefully as she should be. Whatever the case, the coach's report will say so – and the coach will know how to help Sally shore up these weaknesses in performance.

Life provides us with valuable educational milestones: moving from grade school into middle school, graduating from high school, finishing college and advanced degrees. But such milestones do not signify an end to learning. Each one puts us on a new path to something new. Just ask

*Jim Sirbasku, CEO
Profiles International*



10 Things Good Leaders Do (And How They Do Them)

QUIZ What does it really mean to be a good leader? There are certain things all good leaders do, such as communicating effectively, providing direction, instilling trust, etc. But what does that really mean on a day-to-day basis? Take this short quiz and try to match the 10 Things Good Leaders Do (left column) with their practical daily applications (right column). See if you know what it REALLY takes to be a good leader!

LEADERS DO:

- Listens to Others
- Process Information
- Communicate Effectively
- Instill Trust
- Provide Direction
- Delegate Responsibility
- Cultivate Individual Talents
- Motivate Successfully
- Build Personal Relationships
- Facilitate Team Success

HOW LEADERS DO IT:

- Keeps Promises
- Is a patient, helpful, effective coach
- Solicits ideas, suggestions and opinions from others
- Shows consideration for the feelings of others
- Identifies the core element of an issue
- Creates an atmosphere of team cooperation over competition
- Covers an issue effectively without overdoing it
- Keeps focus on big picture while implementing details
- Gives others authority to independently fulfill responsibilities
- Gives recognition to producers of high quality work

ANSWER KEY

Listens to Others / Solicits ideas, suggestions and opinions from others
Processes Information / Identifies the core element of an issue
Communicates Effectively / Covers an issue thoroughly without overdoing it
Instills Trust / Keeps promises
Provides Direction / Keeps focus on big picture while implementing details
Delegates Responsibility / Gives others authority to independently fulfill responsibilities
Cultivate Individual Talents / Is a patient, helpful, effective coach
Motivates Successfully / Gives recognition to producers of high quality work
Build Personal Relationships / Shows consideration for the feelings of others
Facilitates Team Success / Creates an atmosphere of team cooperation over competition

STRATEGIES FOR WINNING: Pass It On*

Delegate for Success

If there were a single zero-cost initiative, one that you could implement immediately, that would motivate your people, improve team morale, grow team skills appreciably, increase productivity and profit, reduce your stress level and free up your time, would you go for it?

There is such an initiative and, by the time you have finished reading this strategy, you will have a plan in place to implement it for yourself.

The secret is delegation.

Take out a pen and paper and follow these simple steps to quickly draw up a delegation plan, one that will allow you to maintain effective control of all your tasks while still delegating effectively.

Look at What You Can Delegate

Recurring or routine tasks are the obvious candidates for delegation. Draw up a list of all tasks you undertake on a regular basis. List them under three columns – Task Name, Time to Complete, and Special Skills. Mentally work through your week, hour by hour, day by day. If you need some reminders, pull out your planner or To Do lists and look for clues there. Or make a commitment to track yourself during the next week and record the tasks you undertake.

Then, review that list for suitability to delegation. Are there any tasks you used to do when you were in a more junior position? (If so, why isn't someone more junior doing them now?) Which of these tasks could be undertaken by absolutely anyone? Are there any tasks on the list that require special skills that are in greater abundance in your team than in you? All of these tasks are prospects for delegation. Now, draw a line through anything that is not a suitable candidate for delegation. Besides the obvious, these include personal tasks, (such as collecting your dry-cleaning), HR issues such as reviews or disciplinary matters, or management of crises that you are paid to handle. What's left are tasks that you can delegate.

Plan Your Delegation

Draw up a brief description of each delegatable task. List why you undertake it, how you and others have done it in the past, when it must begin, when it must be complete, and what the outcome must be upon successful completion. This last point is key – you must have clear goals for the task, goals that are defined in an absolutely unambiguous manner that will make them easily communicable. What specific results must the delegate achieve in completing the

task? You know you have a successful task description if a stranger could pick up your description and understand what is required.

Decide Whom to Delegate to

You can delegate to utilize an existing team member's skills more effectively, or in

order to develop new skills in a team member. Either match an individual's proven skills to the requirements of the task or match in terms of the particular skill growth that you want to see in any given team members.

The first thing your delegation candidates will ask (themselves) is "What's in it for me?" Identify why the task is important and how it contributes to the overall success of the group. People need to feel that what you ask them to do is truly meaningful. Then, determine what growth or development they will personally achieve from developing competence in completing this new task.

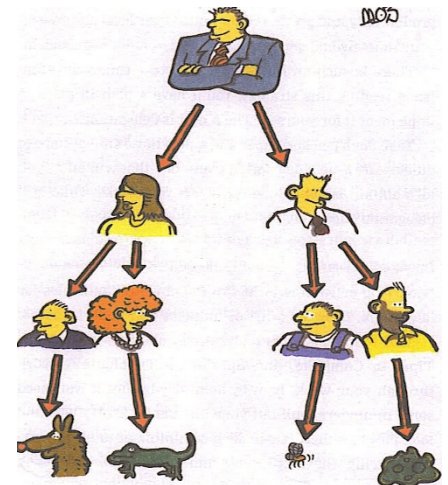
Well done! You now have a delegation plan that you can begin to implement immediately. To put it in motion, you will need to do the following:

Delegate Each Task

Don't do this in two minutes over coffee, or as you pass in the corridor. Accord the exercise the time necessary to explain the what, how, where, when and why of the task; what's in it for the team member who will take on the task; and how and when you will review progress and completion. Take time to sell the task and you'll motivate these individuals to successful completion. Demonstrate your confidence in the selected candidates, reassuring them that you will be there to provide support should the need arise. If the task is particularly challenging, provide the security of more frequent reviews, with clearly agreed-upon milestones of the progress expected. This is essential to providing you with confidence that you still have control of tasks you have delegated.

Pass Ownership

Accountability without power is de-motivating. Pass the new delegate the necessary authority to complete all aspects of the new task without coming back to you. Be clear, however, in setting the upper and



lower limits of this authority in a manner that leaves no room for misunderstandings.

Review the Delegation

When you delegate a task, you agree to specific review points. Be sure to undertake these reviews, providing advice and course correction as required. If there are problems, identify the root causes. Is it lack of confidence, lack of skills, or something else? Work with the delegate to see how you can jointly address the difficulty. Encourage the delegate to come to you not just with difficulties, but also with his or her own ideas on how to overcome them. Don't be tempted to review progress more regularly than you agreed to, or to encourage "reverse delegation," where the delegate is at your desk every five minutes asking what to do next.

Celebrate Success

When a delegated task is completed successfully, be sure to recognize the delegate's achievement. Provide

him or her with feedback and be sure that the success is known within the group.



Do it Again

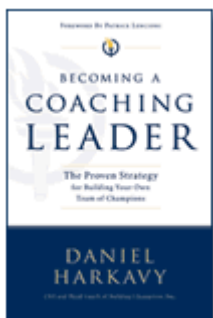
Every so often, go back and review all of the tasks you're undertaking with a view to passing on as many of those tasks as you can. If you are paid to manage, then manage – don't do.

You don't have to spend money to get greater productivity and profitability, or to improve motivation, reduce your stress level and free up your time. You just have to delegate. Pass it on.

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Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing. -Albert Schweitzer

BOOK REVIEW: Follow a Life Plan – Not Just Numbers



If we could use only three words to describe Daniel S. Harkavy's philosophy, they would be: Make a Plan

From his business, Building Champions, to his book, Becoming a Coaching Leader: The Proven Strategy for Building Your Own Team of Champions, Harkavy advocates planning your life – all

of it – the way you want it to be. He uses a "Core Four" platform to do so, which he describes as "the foundation of your coaching strategy" that will lead its followers to business success.

Building Champions' Core Four, explored in detail in Becoming a Coaching Leader, includes:

A life plan. Think of this as the first brick in your foundation. As Harkavy sees it, the life plan enables a person to determine what's important to him or her and then devise a plan to build it.

A business vision. This part of the core is how you see your future and start developing the strategy to create it.

A business plan. Brick by brick, this is what business builders use to support the vision and the life plan.

Priority management. This helps the entrepreneur make decisions that enhance business success while allowing him to have a life outside of work.

But Harkavy advocates more than just planning. He

wants readers of his book to think about who they are, why they exist, and why they do what they do every day. Numbers are important in business, he notes. But everything cannot be merely about numbers. There must be more to life and to business, or else we are doomed to lead lives of desperation. Besides, he notes, just studying the numbers does not lead to success.

After describing the different kinds of leaders (take the quiz to find out what kind of leader YOU are), Harkavy presents his philosophy in three parts. The first part of his book examines what a coach is. The second explores the four aspects of his Core Four, and this section makes up the bulk of the book. The final part looks at how this plan for work and life will change the leader and his or her organization.

The author is the self-described "head coach" of his Oregon-based Building Champions, where he employs a number of other coaches to help clients around the world plot their lives and dreams. His own career began in finance. Other coaches at Building Champions come from real estate, athletics, the mortgage industry, sales and insurance.

ABOUT THE BOOK

BECOMING A COACHING LEADER:
The Proven Strategy for Building Your Own Team of Champions

Author: Daniel S. Harkavy
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PRODUCT FOCUS: A Blackboard Exercise on SkillBuilder™

If we were writing the talking points for CheckPoint SkillBuilder™ on the blackboard at the start of this school year, we would begin with the eight management areas SkillBuilder™ looks at:



Adaptability	Personal development
Communication	Production
Development of others	Relationships
Leadership	Task Management

Next, we would study the memorable SkillBuilder slogan, also known as the KSS theory. (Not KISS, mind you, which is something else entirely). Our KSS stands for:



Keep Doing
Stop Doing
Start Doing

Once those lessons are firmly implanted in students' brains, we would move on to the 18 measurements that SkillBuilder takes – painlessly – and what happens after the measurements, which is when the really important work begins. Here are the measurement areas, also called skills sets:



Listening To Others	Facilitating Team Success
Processing Information	Working Efficiently
Communicating Effectively	Working Competently
Instilling Trust	Taking Action
Building Personal Relationships	Achieving Results
Delegating Responsibility	Cultivating Individual Talents
Adjusting To Circumstances	Motivating Successfully
Thinking Creatively	Displaying Commitment
Providing Direction	Seeking Improvement

Once you have these down – don't worry, you do not have to memorize them – we want to detail the two guides that come as a result of the SkillBuilder™ measurements. They are:

Personal Action Plan – This allows students to complete on-the-job activities and coaching sessions to generate their personal, tailored plan of action for developing in certain areas. This plan includes skill-building tips, skill-building activities and suggested supplemental activities. It also comes with methods for encouraging accountability and continuous improvement.

Customized Coaching Guide – This is the teacher/coach's lesson plan, and it guides the teacher on the best way to lead the student/manager through activities and exercises that ensure ongoing professional growth. When you are ready to start your own personal lesson on Checkpoint SkillBuilder™, call Profiles International at (254) 751-1644, where we are dedicated to continuing education and personal growth.

The human story does not always unfold like a mathematical calculation on the principle that two and two make four. Sometimes in life they make five or minus three; and sometimes the blackboard topples down in the middle of the sum and leaves the class in disorder and the pedagogue with a black eye.

-Winston Churchill

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