

# LICENSED TO SKILL®

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## Feeling the Pinch? leverage performance improvement internally

By Jennifer Long

Is your 2009 training budget in question? Like so many companies now staring down the barrel of budgeting for next year, you are most likely considering how you can possibly deliver on organizational development goals with the kind of money you're allocated. But isn't that how it always is? Why not seize the opportunity to focus on the core?

Times like these represent a leadership opportunity. Now is really the best time to re-establish the basics or build at the fundamental levels for the future.

### Make Coaching a Root Skill at Every Level

At the end of the day, there are really only two people responsible for your professional development: you and the person you report to. And if you're willing to learn and do the hard yards, then your manager should be the one to get and keep you engaged on the learning curve of performance improvement.

**Coaching, when done effectively, and authentically is the skill to drive change -- real change**, the kind where everything gets different -- you get different. Which means you behave differently, make decisions differently, view things differently, and you effectively impact your performance overall. If every manager, at every level were

actively involved in performance development of their employees, you'd see growth every year without any budget increase.

### Managers Who Coach Are The Muscle in Hard Times

If you're going to continue to deliver the necessary business results you can't take your foot off the gas. Performance has to be there. Your management team are the "go-to guys" on making sure that happens. Are they prepared? Look carefully at your coaching competency. As coaching has become a staple skill set, most organizations have one. The

questions now are: Is it used and viewed as a positive, developmental discipline? And is it consistently applied? How good are your managers at coaching others with the objective being improved performance in a short period of time?

Superior managers view coaching as an additional role they play. The approach in which they coach is distinct and different to the approach in which they manage. A coach is a change agent. Unlike a mentor, a coach always keeps his eye on the prize, the endgame is significant improvement in short time. To achieve this there are some standard conditions they must create.

### Condition 1: The employee must have the desire to change

The employee must have 100% ownership for improvement. The manager works with the employee to determine the change or improvement they would like to make. By identifying and describing what the current level of performance is against what the change looks and feels like and anticipated steps necessary to get there.

### Condition 2: The employee must know what to do and how to do it

The manager makes time to work with the employee to understand and apply the steps, skills or behaviors that are the target of the change or improvement. This is the core of a coaching competency -- the coaching session. The whole idea of a coaching session is not to discuss "how it's going" or to "make a plan" but to essentially work on, to implement, and more specifically to practice how to enact behaviors and apply skills in specific job-related situations as determined by the employee and mutually agreed by the manager. The result of a successful coaching session is immediate change in skill applications and behaviors. This change is gradual on a scale of novice to mastery, however, fundamental behavior change is immediate and noticeable. The degree of excellence in the actual application is



what accelerates over time and the coaching continues. **If you are not witnessing immediate changes in skill applications and behaviors, you are not coaching** -- you are having conversations about performance. Coaching involves practice.

When Tiger Woods is standing on the practice fairway, does he just talk to his coach about his game, what he should do or intends to do, or can get help doing? No! He hits the ball! Over and over again until he's got it down and he's substantially improved from what he's done previously. Coaching is about getting people out of their comfort zone and doing things they've never done before.

### Condition 3: Failure is permitted and expected

Unlike managing performance where results are expected, coaching is a safe environment where failure is both permitted and expected. A new skill or behavior is unfamiliar. It's awkward. We learn more quickly and more effectively when we are allowed to fall off the bike without ridicule or punishment before we get back on to try again. As learners, we must trust our teachers -- trust that our failures are part of our learning curve. We harness these failures and use them to accelerate our ability to apply or implement correctly and effectively. Manager coaches create a safe and

## ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE BOOT CAMP

Has your organization, business unit or department effectively linked sufficient communication, business strategy, individual accountability, priorities and deadlines in a way that is both accessible and meaningful.

If not, you are not alone. Many organizations do not have a comprehensive notion of their own performance accountability organized in a way that is usable and drives workflow.

If you and your management team, would like to change that, then this 3-Day Boot Camp is for you.

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supportive environment that give employees the confidence to go out into the public of the workplace and do things they've never done before.

### Condition 4: Frequency and increasing difficulty

You don't create permanent change in one session or one week or one month. You can however, create significant improvement in one business quarter if you are committed to working on that change in frequent intervals with accelerated challenges incorporated at each meeting.

This kind of format raises the risk and commitment levels of both the employee and the manager; creating tension and excitement when the challenges are met or exceeded. Superior manager coaches are effective at gearing improvement challenges to stretch the employee to realize personal and professional gains that are organizationally important and individually meaningful.

### Condition 4: Employees must be rewarded for changing

Absolutely! Achieving personal best should be celebrated. Improving achievement of specific goals, business unit objectives or monthly numbers by virtue of personal contribution demands

recognition. Manager coaches actively support recognition through the continuous feedback provided at each session. This provides employee reward through the direct effects on self-confidence, job satisfaction and self-actualization through personal change and improvement. It's important to note, that the reward and recognition is for the new behaviors and skills achieved -- not the results or business outcomes delivered. The focus of the improvement is to permanently leverage improvement through behavioral and skill driven changes -- the "how" of an outcome NOT the outcome itself. This is a critical difference.

## Big Benefits for No Money

Managers who capably coach their employees leverage greater results for the organization while creating more effective, long-term employees at the same time and for no money. The key is to create a consistent level of capability amongst the management team so they can fully realize the hidden resource that currently sits idle within the employees in your organization right now.

**If you'd like to get your management team to coach more effectively and consistently contact us now.**

**Build better managers - drive better business.**

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**For information on management coaching skills, please contact us at [info@managementpossible.com](mailto:info@managementpossible.com).**



It would be nice to live in a world where we didn't have to make tough choices concerning the workforce, but we don't. However, the market is so competitive that the firms with the better talent always win. - Dave Ulrich



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