Coaching for Improved Work Performance: A Management Reference Guide
The purpose of the face-to-face process, called coaching, is to redirect an employee’s behavior to solve a performance problem; to get the employee to start doing what he/she should be doing. The assumption here is that you have evaluated the working habits of the employee as well as the job requirements and your conclusion is that the employee could do a better job with the appropriate assistance.

When you are preparing to conduct a coaching meeting, consider the following:

1. Hold it in some private place so the conversation cannot be overheard
2. Take steps ahead of time to prevent interruptions, phone calls, etc.
3. Allow enough time for meaningful discussion
4. Remain calm
5. Have a specific description of the performance problem that is going to be discussed
6. Be prepared to substantiate logically the importance of the desirable performance
7. Determine in advance that it is the employee’s behavior that will affect the desired change in performance.
8. Decide ahead of time what minimum action you will accept as a result of this meeting, what the possible alternative solutions are, and when you expect performance to improve.

The coaching technique itself consists of five basic steps:

1. Agree that a problem exists
2. Discuss alternatives
3. Agree on action to solve problem
4. Follow-up
5. Recognize changes

**Step 1: Agree that a Problem Exists**

In the coaching process, the first step is to come to an agreement that a problem exists. This is the most critical step in the coaching process and usually involves half the total time spent in a coaching discussion.

It is here that most supervisors/managers fail in their efforts to eliminate performance problems. The reason is that they bypass this step. Supervisors/managers assume the employee knows a problem exists. A common cause of non-performance is that employees frequently are doing one thing, but they think they are doing something else. Also, they may know that they are doing something wrong, but they don’t know it’s a problem. There are only two reasons that convince an employee a problem exists:

1. If the employee perceives the results or outcome of what he/she is doing wrong or failing to do right. What is happening to everyone else because of the employee’s non-performance? An employee’s non-performance might interrupt service to someone who needs it; other employees perform their jobs because of late preparation; extra work might be required; additional cost might be incurred; customers might complain; and your supervisor might fault you.
2. If the employee perceives the consequence to himself/herself and there is no change. The employee must understand the consequence if he/she does not correct the performance. They may be placed on probation, demoted, or fired; they may not receive a raise, or even denied further assignments.
The practical results of using this coaching process are that 95 percent of non-performers will agree that there is a problem once they recognize the results of the thing they are doing wrong. Ninety-five percent of that remaining five percent will agree that there is a problem once they recognize the consequences, or what is going to happen to them if they don't stop it. People do not do self-destructive things on purpose. If they do them, they either don't know that the consequences will be self-destructive to them, or they don't believe that those consequences will happen to them.

Step 2: Discuss Alternatives

In this step, you and the employee identify as many alternative solutions as may be necessary to solve the problem. Because we are dealing with behavior, it is necessary to specify those changes in behavior that are needed to influence the outcome or result. The employee may not know what to do to solve the performance problem.

Many discussions about performance problems end when the employee says, “Okay, I will try harder,” and the supervisor responds with something like, “I am glad to hear that.” The supervisor believes the problem is solved. It is certainly nice that the employee will try harder, but what will he/she do differently so that when you see it you will know that he/she is trying harder?

Step 3: Agree on an Action Solution to Solve the Problem

The mutual discussion of possible alternatives is entirely separate from the selection of alternatives that will be acted upon. In Step 3, you will not only mutually agree on which alternatives will be acted upon, but will also specify when the action will take place. You want to identify WHAT will be done and WHEN it will be done.

You might get a commitment as to WHAT WILL BE DONE and WHEN as solutions to solve the problem. An appropriate closing response would be to thank the employee for agreeing to solve the problem, and to specify a time when you will meet again.

Step 4: Follow-up

One of the most common reasons supervisors/managers fail in their efforts to correct employee’s unsatisfactory performance is the lack of follow-up. The employee promises to change and will become overwhelmed by this subsequent action.

Sometimes the employee does change, initially, and because the supervisor does not follow up, there is no recognition of this change and, therefore, no reinforcement to support the change. The employee then returns to the inappropriate behavior. The supervisor/manager, taking a look at the scene three months later, assumes that no change has occurred.

Follow-up is simply the process of finding out whether the employee is doing what he/she is supposed to do. There are two basic reasons for follow-up.

1. If people are doing what they are supposed to, the supervisor/manager must recognize these achievements, and
2. If people are not doing what they are supposed to, the supervisor/manager needs to ask, “How can I help?”
Step 5: Recognize Positive Changes

The last step in the coaching process has the greatest potential to sustain improvements in performance: that step is to recognize any positive changes when they occur. The influence of your recognition of changes is of such major importance in the coaching process that it has been treated as a separate step.

The timeliness of recognition is of crucial importance. The sooner recognition occurs after the actual performance achievement, the greater its influence. The longer the lapse of time between the actual performance and the occurrence of recognition, the less influence it has on the employee. Keep in mind that going from failure to perfection in one jump does not happen.

Coaching an employee back to a satisfactory work performance before considering career opportunities is a must. Depending on what is influencing the unsatisfactory performance, the coaching process could be completed in as little as one session, or could involve several meetings to determine what the problem is and what steps are necessary to correct the situation.

Identifying Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Your Workplace in Its Early Stages

Your Viewpoint and Strategy

Ask yourself the following: How many people do you know who abuse drugs and alcohol? How many abuse these substances on their job? If you are like most people, you probably don't know too many. Yet, surveys of American workers, performed by universities, management organizations, and the National Institute of Drug Abuse, all indicate that one out of every ten workers is intoxicated at their job today. This should tell you that most substance abusers are effectively hiding their problems—from their employers, fellow employees, families, and even themselves. This article is intended to help you identify and help these people.

First, recognize that alcoholism and substance abuse are diseases that affect people from all walks of life. Ninety-five percent of all alcoholics are employed. Fifty percent have college degrees, 45% are professionals or managers, and 25% are salaried employees. Three professions with the highest rates of alcoholism are the clergy, physicians, and attorneys. Industries with the highest rates of alcoholism and substance abuse are railroads, construction, finance and securities, and hospitals. Most callers to the National Cocaine Emergency Hotline are executives, and thirty-five percent of these callers are middle managers.

Second, take these problems very seriously. Don't dismiss any unusual behavior related to alcohol or drugs. Alcoholism and substance abuse are the fourth leading cause of death in our country. Thirty-five out of thirty-six alcoholics never receive treatment. Thirty-four out of thirty-five alcoholics die from alcoholism. Alcohol and other substances are involved in 80% of all domestic violence, 80% of all fire deaths, 65% of all drownings, 60% of all homicides, and 47% of all traffic fatalities. The average cocaine addict spends about $1,500 a week on cocaine and steals about $8,000 annually from his or her employer. University and corporate studies show that 25% of a chemically dependent employee's salary is wasted. One major automaker discovered that 6.3% of its workforce was responsible for 28% of its health-care costs. All of these employees were chemically dependent.
It is not until the late stages of this disease that work performance will noticeably suffer. If you wait until the alcohol or drug abuser has a problem on the job, it will usually be either too late to correct, or so severe that dismissal is required. Often the problem is discovered after a costly mistake, a tragic accident, or a serious lawsuit. Thus, the best strategy for dealing with this problem is to become proactive instead of reactive. Be vigilant for any of the warning signs listed below and don’t ignore or make up alternative excuses. Learn how to prevent the disease and know how to identify the signs while it is in its early stages. Of course, no one sign is conclusive, but as an individual shows more of these signs, the likelihood increases that they are abusing alcohol and or drugs.

**Warning Signs**

**Work Records**

Many signs are available by looking at an individual's work record. In fact, it is possible to have a computer identify employees who match the following profile. When compared with their sober counterparts, substance abusers are late three times more often, request early dismissal and time-off 2.2 times more often, are absent, 8 days or more, 2.5 times more often, and are involved in on-job accidents 3.6 times more often. Substance abusers are five times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim and frequently use their health benefits to such an extent that their health-care costs are at least twice that of their sober colleagues. Be suspicious if someone is often late to work or if he doesn't return from lunch. Abusers are more likely to have frequent changes of position within an organization.

**Organizational Climate**

Other workers will frequently complain about an addicted employee's performance or behavior. Under the misguided belief that they are helping the abuser, some co-workers will help the abuser with his or her work in order to hide the intoxication from superiors. Morale will deteriorate among the abuser's co-workers. Gossip will grow and flourish. Cliques will form, particularly between the abusers vs. non-abusers. Objects will be missing, particularly if they are valuable, sellable, and portable.

**Work Quality**

One hallmark of alcohol or drug abuse is inconsistent work quality accompanied by lowered overall productivity. The abuser often takes needless risks to raise production after a period of low achievement. The frequency of mistakes increases and judgment errors of poor business decisions compound. In the face of lowered productivity, abusers frequently exaggerate their work accomplishments to their superiors and colleagues. They also handle machinery or important documents carelessly.

**Personal Appearance**

Keep an eye on appearance. The abuser may dress more casually or sloppily. One possible sign is the wearing of drug paraphernalia as ornaments. This allows the abuser to use drugs quickly and easily. Some drugs cause the eyes to become sensitive to light. Thus, be suspicious of someone who frequently wears sunglasses indoors. Those who utilize syringes will keep their scarred arms covered. Thus, be suspicious of individuals who appear to be excessive in protecting their arms from exposure.
Possessions

Be very suspicious if you find or discover drug paraphernalia in someone’s desk or locker. These paraphernalia include items such as pipes (especially with small bowls), rolling papers, strainers, or razor blades. Addicts frequently like to snort drugs through a tube. Don’t believe an excuse that these paraphernalia belong to someone else.

Social Behavior

The abuser generally shows a deteriorating ability to get along with others. He or she becomes either more hostile or withdrawn. A prime sign of abuse is the deliberate avoidance of supervisors, co-workers, or customers. This usually occurs when the abuser is intoxicated and does not want to be discovered. Peer groups will change. Abusers tend to associate with other known abusers. There is disregard for the safety of co-workers. The abuser avoids discussing problems or refuses to discuss them when confronted. He or she overreacts to criticism. Financial pressures and problems, such as garnishments, are frequently found, and the abuser often borrows funds from co-workers. The abuser will frequently complain about the family, and domestic problems will interfere with work. Divorce is frequently associated with abuse. Lying and stealing may occur. Charges for driving while intoxicated are also common.

Physical Symptoms

Symptoms of acute intoxication include staggering, poor coordination, irregular breathing, nausea, vomiting, profuse sweating, bloodshot eyes, flush skin, paralysis, or the smell of alcohol or marijuana (similar to burning rope but with a sweeter smell). Other physical symptoms include long periods without eating or sleeping, sleeping on the job, weight loss, frequent sniffing or scratching, and new scars. Those who inject cocaine will also show salmon-colored bruises with a centrally clear area, smallpox-like scars which are elevated, sloughing skin, and track marks.

Psychological Symptoms

Depression is quite common among alcohol and drug abusers. Life may seem empty and meaningless, and there is a decreased interest in leisure activities. This is replaced with a growing preoccupation with alcohol or drugs. A generally irresponsible and apathetic attitude develops, accompanied by a loss of principles and values. The abuser will feel alienated from others, and may also feel as if the world around him is not real. Mood swings often occur with the following cycles; every six hours with cocaine, every three days with alcohol, and every five days with marijuana. A "turned-off" attitude is shown toward any discussion of alcohol or drugs. The abuser may appear to be irritable, belligerent, show unreasonable resentment, or seem panicky and paranoid. Grandiose thinking, along with an excited, talkative state may also be present. Concentration problems and difficulty remembering events which occurred while intoxicated are usually present.

Additional considerations:

In order to identify and help an abuser appropriately, you should know the street names of drugs, and be able to recognize the various behaviors and characteristics of abuse. Do not confront an abuser when that individual is intoxicated, as this would be useless at best, and dangerous at worst. Also, do not send an intoxicated individual away from the workplace on his own. You could be liable if he injures someone else. Call the family or friends to take him
home, have a co-worker take him home, or send him home in a cab. Don't condone abnormal behavior, patronize, or accept getting drunk or high as normal. Also, do not take blame or make excuses for the person with an alcohol or drug problem. Alcohol and drug abuse is not caused by bad managers, bad workers, or bad work environments.

Do not offer an opinion that the abusing individual has a drug or alcohol problem or that he is addicted. You are not professionally qualified to make that diagnosis. Instead, calmly confront the abuser privately in your office or work area with documented evidence of his or her performance deficiencies, accompanied by concrete observations of any intoxicated behavior or signs. When confronting someone you suspect to be abusing drugs and/or alcohol, show concern and willingness to help, backed up by an ultimatum that he change or face clear actions and consequences.

The following is an example of an effective confrontation, "Joe, I want to share with you some observations which are concerning me, and which I hope we can resolve together. You have been late three times this week, three reports have been late, your hair is now uncombed, and your clothing is now dirty. You have been yelling at your co-workers, short with customers, avoiding your supervisor and you were observed to be staggering upon your return from lunch. I am concerned about these changes and would like you to address these matters immediately. If these problems do not change within ten days I will take disciplinary actions (or if you are a co-worker, "report my concerns to our superior" or union representative). If these problems are caused by some personal problems, then I strongly recommend that you consult a professional person for advice or help. If you like, I could provide you with a list of people to contact for help. Let's meet again in ten days to discuss any progress or plans for addressing these problems."

Feedback and follow-up are vital in stopping drug or alcohol abuse and in helping the abuser to recover. There must be open communication among all involved in the abuser's life. Responsibilities for managing and helping the abuser must be clearly defined and coordinated. Otherwise, the abuser will manipulate and take control of the situation. Individuals should be allowed and encouraged to have more responsibility for their recovery only after they have returned to normal functioning. Encourage participation in Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Lastly, do not assume that the situation is hopeless. Recovery is more likely with early detection and treatment. With proper treatment, about 75% of all alcoholics and 66% of all drug addicts will recover, and recovered alcoholics and drug addicts will usually become superior employees. Although it is trying, the emotional, social, and financial rewards for everyone involved are well worth the effort.
DISTRESSED EMPLOYEE RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Please check factors which apply to distressed employee and call Employee Relations if you are concerned.

Employee Name ___________________________ Date ___________ Department ___________________________

Supervisor or Manager Name ___________________________ Phone # ___________ Extension ___________

Behavioral Factors:

Deteriorating:
- □ Productivity
- □ Cooperation with others
- □ Energy and motivation
- □ Concentration & memory
- □ Problem-solving ability
- □ Decision-making ability
- □ Time management efficiency
- □ Ability to communicate
- □ Objectivity and logical thinking
- □ Interest in usually rewarding activities
- □ Confidence and self-esteem
- □ Personal hygiene and appearance

Increasing:
- □ Inflation of accomplishments
- □ Complaints from co-workers
- □ Absenteeism or lateness
- □ Confusion
- □ Mistakes
- □ Poor judgment
- □ Procrastination
- □ Recklessness or accidents
- □ Impatience, irritability or swearing
- □ Alcohol or drug abuse
- □ Worry about others
- □ Mood swings
- □ Physical complaints
- □ Angry outbursts or threats
- □ Social withdrawal

Biographical Factors:

General:
- □ Marital or relationship conflicts
- □ Divorced or never-married/single
- □ Loner with little support from others
- □ Disorganized approach to tasks
- □ Not involved in productive or pleasurable activities outside of work

Homicidal Factors:
- □ Withdrawn or loner
- □ Often blames others for disappointments
- □ Male
- □ 35+ years old
- □ White
- □ Weapons owner
- □ History of violence toward women, children and/or animals, including stalking
- □ Perceives that he will be laid-off or terminated
- □ Extensive history of interpersonal conflict
- □ Military service (particularly combat veteran)
- □ History of mental health problems
- □ Fascination with weapons or violence
- □ Holds extremist views, is involved in extremist causes/promotes extremist ideology
- □ Few interests outside of work
- □ Has made threats to harm others
- □ Has specific plan for harming others
- □ Previous history of violent behavior
Suicidal Factors:

☐ History of previous suicide attempt
☐ Male
☐ Previous attempt made within past 3 months
☐ Middle-aged
☐ Unskilled or semi-skilled work position
☐ Had recent life crisis
☐ Sees self as failure in occupational role
☐ Denies obvious signs of depression
☐ Never-married single or divorced and alone
☐ Had major financial setback
☐ Feels "all alone" without significant social relationships
☐ History of alcohol or drug abuse
☐ Failed in a love relationship within the past months
☐ Has intractable physical pain 6 to 12 months
☐ Has terminal illness
☐ Will menstruate within one week
☐ Urban dweller
☐ Gave birth within past 3 months
☐ Had family member who committed or attempted suicide
☐ Has made threats to harm self
☐ White
☐ Has specific plan for harming self
☐ Recently lost a loved one
☐ Had recent surgery
☐ Has serious health problems

Risk Factor Descriptions:
Please describe and give examples of any items which have been checked.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Risk Reduction Actions:
Please describe what actions have been or will be taken to reduce each risk factor which has been checked (i.e., Consult with Human Resources, Security, Employee Assistance Program, Progressive Discipline, Remedial Training, etc.).

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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Note: This checklist is designed to cover a variety of areas for determining the potential physical threat an employee may present to themselves or others. In order to prevent unwarranted alarm, no conclusions should be made about an employee or shared with the employee or co-workers by anyone who has not been specifically trained to assess such risks. PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR SUPERVISOR OR MANAGER THAT YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS FORM.