

Following Up

The point of a coaching session is to make something happen after the session: to instigate new growth in your employee's overall professional life. You can make the coaching real and help him stay on track by adopting these practices after every session.

RIGHT AFTER THE MEETING

WRITE THINGS DOWN. You won't remember everything you see, hear, and think about your employee's progress, so write it down in a dedicated place (such as the **Follow-Up Meeting Agenda**). Good notes will allow you to give more-meaningful feedback.

CHECK IN ON YOURSELF. After each session, ask yourself:

- What can I do to support this employee's development between now and our next coaching meeting?
- What did I learn from this meeting that I didn't know going in?
- What did the employee learn? What key messages were reinforced in the meeting?

ONGOING

These ongoing tasks will eventually become a routine part of your management practice, if they aren't already. Schedule time on the calendar to work on the tasks that are most difficult for you to remember or complete.

FOLLOW UP ON AGREEMENTS. Review your written agreements periodically (see **Coaching Plan**), and follow up on action items with your employee. If he has requested specific help from you, make sure you're getting him what he needs.

OBSERVE SIGNS OF GROWTH. To give meaningful feedback, you need to know what's going on. Make a deliberate effort to observe the kinds of interactions or tasks he has prioritized in your coaching sessions.

CHECK IN DIRECTLY. Institute an explicit open-door policy that encourages your employee to come to you with questions. Knowing he can seek help may motivate him to persevere when he feels stuck.

COMMUNICATE IMPACT. As you see an employee begin to change and grow, communicate the impact of his growth to him explicitly. Hearing it from you will increase his motivation (and give him no small satisfaction).

WATCH FOR CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP. Pay attention to the emotional dimension of your interactions. If you sense a worrisome shift, intervene early. Even if you can't do anything to help, he may appreciate your concern.

EVALUATE YOURSELF. Periodically assess your own performance as a coach by asking yourself these two questions:

Am I meeting the needs of this employee? Approach your role with a trial-and-error mentality, and show openness in making adjustments along the way. Periodically check in with your employee about what is working and what is not—but trust your judgment.

Am I holding up my end of the bargain? Coaching is a two-way street, so be honest with yourself about whether you're getting in the way of your employee's progress or sending mixed messages about your expectations. If it's in your power to make him more successful, give him that opportunity.