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As supervisors and managers learn to develop their coaching skills with employees, it challenges them to release old habits that just don't work. Telling people what to do and how to do it, over and over, will just fall upon deaf ears.

While people may respond short term to cajoling and directive behaviors from the boss, it usually isn't long until the undesirable behaviors re-emerge. It is time to stop this cycle. Otherwise, the interactions will continue to spiral downward, the productivity of both the manager and the employee will decline, and the relationship will be stressed to where the employee will quit or the manager will let him go.

The piece that is missing in most dialogues is getting the employee's involvement in his or her own solution. Until they do their own internal processing to find out what will work for them, you will continue just to be a "talking head" with little or no effectiveness.

Consider this more effective coaching approach, involving employee participation and buy-in to create the desired result:

1. State the problem. "Don, last week's proposal went out with errors and this cannot happen again."
2. State why it's a problem, simply and without lecturing. "When your work is not absolutely accurate, we stand to lose business and thousands of dollars in revenue."
3. Involve the employee in his own solution. This must be asked in a neutral, firm but supportive tone of voice. "What can you do going forward that will prevent inaccurate proposals from going out?" Give him time to let some ideas come to him.
4. If he seems to block, offer more time, but do not impose your ideas to satisfy your impatience. The power of this process is that it must come from the employee. If necessary, offer more time to get back to you. "Why don't you check in with me later today with a couple of solutions?"
5. The employee might come back with such ideas as, "Well, I could slow down and remember how important these are to the department." Or, "I guess that I could ask a co-worker to review it one last time before it goes out."
6. Get the generics down to the specifics. "Who would be the best person to partner with you to do that?"
7. Agree to the best solution that the employee offers, give positive acknowledgement, then ask for the commitment. "That idea sounds like it might work. When will you start having Trevor review your proposals before they go out?"
8. Finally, be supportive and do whatever you need to do to make this solution work. "Thanks, Don. I will let Trevor know that we talked and that you will be asking him to assist you with some of the more complicated proposals. This way, he will have a head's-up before you need him, and we all can feel confident that our best work is going out the door."

When you feel that you are ready for some positive results from your dialogues with employees, try this approach to involve them in reaching their own best solutions. This will put more accountability on them, and relieve a lot of unnecessary stress and frustration for you.

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