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Facilitating a High-Performance Culture Through Coaching



DISCUSSION PAPER:

FACILITATING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE THROUGH COACHING.

Many executives think that culture is a vague concept when it comes to organisational performance. It is not. Culture defines the attitudes, behaviours, habits, and disciplines for how things get done in your organisation. Ultimately culture determines success. And it starts with leadership. This discussion paper defines what a culture of coaching means and then suggests the high-level action steps required.

First, organisations with a culture of coaching have the following eight attributes:

- **Employees at all levels are open to receiving feedback, input, and advice.** In fact, they regularly request it from others. It is not easy to hear tough advice and feedback from others. Most leaders, managers, and employees don't do it well. While the guidelines for giving feedback are straightforward, many people get defensive and are closed to receiving feedback professionally. A culture of coaching starts with employees at all levels being open to advice and feedback because they see the value it brings. In other words, they are coachable.
- **Actively striving to improve.** Second, a culture of coaching is about mastery. Employees want to keep getting better. They keep raising the bar and demanding the best from themselves and each other. This trait requires an organisation with well-defined and appealing career paths and opportunities for growth and development.
- **Engage in active inquiry into problem causes and innovative solutions.** It is easy to have conversations about what's known. It is also easy to stubbornly stick to the same position about an issue so that the issue never gets resolved; for example, when customer complaints result in the frontline employee getting blamed, rather than investigating the systemic issue for the problem. Coaching is about having conversations about what's not known. It is about putting one's position aside and having a dialogue that challenges people to work together to create new ways of approaching problems; and balance relationships, results, and ego.
- **Use coaching along with other approaches to develop leaders to grow the organisation.** A culture of coaching is about developing new capabilities in employees. New leaders keep emerging to grow the organisation and also allow current leaders to continue to grow and develop in the most strategic ways possible.
- **Get important conversations going.** The book Good to Great by Jim Collins uses the metaphor of a flywheel to talk about one role of a leader. The leader's job is to ask crucial questions about what the organisation does best, its values, and its purpose. As the conversations build, so does momentum, the way a flywheel takes a while to turn but eventually becomes a powerful force. A culture of coaching encourages employees to ask and answer deep questions and work together to answer them while always leaving room for new insights and creative approaches.
- **Create the culture you want to have.** A culture of success through coaching is only one aspect of an organisation's high-performance culture, the same way that coaching is one skill that a manager should possess. Leadership still has to define the complete culture they want for the organisation. To understand the 'why' and the agreed behaviours they want to see in the organisation to help them get where they want to be.
- **Use coaching as a tool to help people get better and continuously improve the organisation.** Finally, in a culture of success through coaching, people coach each other to ongoing success. This can happen through formal coaching relationships with internal and external coaches, but most of the time it happens through ongoing dialogue with managers, colleagues, and employees. Everyone plays a coaching role.

Five action steps to create a high-performance culture:

1. Train senior leaders and managers to be effective coaches.
2. Reward people for modelling coaching behaviours, especially when they solve key issues or develop top talent through coaching.
3. Senior leaders need to model the coaching behaviour they expect to see in others.
4. Use coaching as a tool to create other aspects of the desired organisational culture.
5. Use both internal and external coaches as one of many tools to help people develop.

As with any kind of culture change, the obvious but hard truth is that senior leadership needs to make coaching a priority and a focus. Otherwise, none of the above action steps matter. Ask yourself, which action steps are you doing well and what do you need to improve on?

To discuss how we may assist your organisation develop a culture of success through Coaching contact: Warren Howard. Director Howardco Business + HR Solutions. www.howardco.com.au Mobile: 0417 594 760 Email: warren@howardco.com.au