



Connections – Try coaching, it really works

It is well acknowledged that employees, particularly those belonging to Generation X&Y, are seeking feedback on their performance on a regular basis and want their manager to 'say it straight'. Switched-on managers know that this is a critical factor in the retention of their top performers. Why then is this capability so elusive among today's business leaders? The difficulty many managers have providing feedback is a common theme emerging from many 360-degree feedback surveys. However, simply knowing something needs to change, although a good first step, is often not enough to change behaviour on its own. Managers may well understand that the need exists, but find it difficult to actually deliver.

The ability to be able to 'connect' with employees has never been more important with the looming shortage of younger workers associated with changing demographics. This is already being felt in the retail sector. The strong growth in consumer spending in recent years has fuelled commensurate growth in retail sales and the demand for retail employees at all levels. This, when combined with a dramatic slowing in the working age population, means that retailers will need to adopt innovative attraction strategies and even more innovative retention strategies. The good news is that these human resource challenges are rich sources of competitive advantage for employers who get the formula right.

We all know that line managers have a powerful impact on performance both good and bad. McKinsey's 'War For Talent' survey updated in 2000 revealed that of the 58% of senior and mid-level managers who reported that they have worked for an under performer, 86% stated that the cost of a bad boss "made me want to leave the company". A coaching leadership style has been proven to be most effective and will ensure that employees get the feedback they desperately crave. Sounds simple; but simple doesn't mean easy. Coaching should be theoretically driven and evidence-based and requires practice and then more practice. Developing a coaching leadership style makes so much good business sense in an environment where talent is becoming increasingly scarce.

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