

# SmartBrief

## Let your stars shine: Why your team needs a coach, not a manager



Joel Garfinkle · January 20, 2014 · Leadership · Inspiring Others



Managing and coaching are both necessary functions in the corporate world, but they have different purposes and outcomes.



Managing is largely task-oriented and focuses on activities like conducting staff meetings, delegating work assignments, organizing projects, [giving feedback](#), and training employees. Coaching, on the other hand, involves collaboration, motivation, skill development, facilitating relationships and developing people who can contribute to the company's mission and goals.

The secret to developing superstar employees lies in your ability to coach first and manage second. It does not mean sitting across a desk once a year to discuss "performance." Annual reviews don't provide quality feedback, seldom devote time to setting goals, and often are based largely on the recent past rather than the future.

The coaching model, by contrast, expects you to [regularly interact with your team](#), providing the [tools they need to grow](#), develop, stretch, and move ahead. It requires a lot more energy and time than does the traditional task-oriented management approach, but the results will pay off many times over with a staff that is motivated and committed.

If you find yourself spending too much time in manager mode and not enough time as a coach, here are three ways to shift your focus.

- Focus on getting from good to great
- Stay in real time
- Provide questions, not answers

**Focus on getting from good to great.** As a good coach, you can't just be content to [manage the talent you have](#). Instead, you must teach your players to be great. You do this by showing them the big picture. You share not only the company's goals but your personal goals for yourself and the team. You ask them where they see themselves in the picture you paint. You motivate by challenging them with new ideas and projects. You may not always be given the greatest players, but when you are a true coach, you'll always have a great team.

*What to do now: Create an opportunity this week to have a brainstorming session with your team about company and personal goals.*

**Stay in real time.** Good coaching occurs daily. Think of every interaction you have with your people as a potential coaching moment. This means [giving informal feedback](#) as you go. It's not enough to just say "good job" when someone scores a win. Find out what they did to get the win and build on that. For example, let's say Melanie just made a great client presentation. After the meeting (and in front of other team members if you can) ask her what she did to create such an effective presentation. Let her share her skills and ideas. This approach helps everyone think through how they achieve their results.

*What to do now: In your next staff meeting, use a recent "win" to coach people on improving their individual performance.*

**Provide questions, not answers.** Developing your people means making them thinking, not telling them what to do. Here are some good coaching questions to have on hand:

- How I can help you grow?
- Is there anything you don't understand?
- What tools do you need to move ahead?
- What do you want to do more or less of in your job?
- What abilities do you want to develop?
- What are you passionate about?
- What new roles and responsibilities do you want to take on?

*What to do now: Choose one of your employees who you feel has great potential and set up a one-on-one where you can ask questions and work together to create a growth strategy.*

UCLA's John Wooden was one of the greatest, most beloved coaches of all time. He understood the game, but more than that, he cared about his players. The best managers are coaches who are caring and focused. They share the responsibility for what their people are becoming. A true leader is both a manager and a coach. If you can do both, you'll create a winning team and a team of winners.

Or, as Wooden said, "A coach is someone who can give correction without causing resentment." That's real coaching!

Joel Garfinkle is the author of *"Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level."* As an [executive coach](#), Garfinkle has worked with Wells Fargo Bank, Cisco Systems, Oracle, Deloitte, Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Starbucks, Citibank and The Ritz-Carlton. [Subscribe](#) to his [Fulfillment@Work](#) newsletter (10,000+ subscribers), and you'll receive a free e-book, "41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!"