



COACHING
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COACHES NEED COACHING TOO!

Equip your coaches with the right tools.



ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY ADOBE STOCK

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EQUIP YOUR COACHES WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS.

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Coaching is the key to achieving a culture of continuous improvement through high-performing agents. This article focuses on the development of the individuals tasked with conducting frontline agent coaching in a contact center, regardless of title. Coaches must possess the right personality traits, coaching competencies, and knowledge to be at the top of their game. Great coaching also requires exposure to various models, styles, and perspectives.

A great example of coaching coaches is during pro football games. Teams have coaches in the skybox studying every play and every movement of their players and the opponent. Skybox coaches send information and recommendations to coaches down on the field to assist in making decisions to help adjust to the prevailing game conditions. Leadership

in contact centers should take a lesson from the skybox coaching example.

Frequently, high-performing agents receive promotions to coaching positions, often without training or ongoing development. It's like waving a magic wand over a high-performing agent and magically expecting them to deliver coaching. Common sense suggests that new and veteran coaches require continuous development to succeed.



WHY INVEST IN TRAINING AND COACHING YOUR COACHES?

Agent turnover is a top concern for a majority of contact centers. Based on SQM Group research, agent turnover averages 35-40%. SQM Group research indicated the cost of recruitment, onboarding, training, and productivity/quality ramp-up averages \$20k per agent. One-third of agent turnover occurs within the first 90 days of employment. The top reasons for early agent turnover include the wrong fit for the role, poor or no coaching, limited skill/career development, and employee emotional discontentment.

The payback of investing in developing coaches will result in a culture of high-performing agents through increased retention, greater engagement, and improved customer satisfaction.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DEVELOPING A COACHING-THE-COACH PROGRAM

- Get the right people in coaching roles. Just because an agent is a high performer does not automatically make them the right choice to be a coach. Start the recruitment process by seeking the right personality traits in a coach. A coach should be:
 - Non-judgmental
 - Curious
 - Trustworthy
 - Passionate about helping others with the heart of a teacher
 - Authentic
 - A good communicator
 - A team player

JUST BECAUSE AN AGENT IS A HIGH PERFORMER DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MAKE THEM THE RIGHT CHOICE TO BE A COACH.

- Personality traits are the baseline for a successful coach. There are specific competencies and business acumen a coach should possess. Below is a partial list of desired competencies and business acumen required of a contact center coach:
 - Understand and articulate the vision and mission
 - Understand and articulate the customer experience strategy
 - Understand and articulate how and why contact centers work
 - Ability to diagnose performance issues
 - Possess a deep knowledge of Workforce and Quality Management principles

- Ability to deliver praise as well as conduct developmental discussions
- Set expectations for agent improvement through well-thought-out action plans
- Understand and counsel agents on learning opportunities and career path options



- Choose or create a coaching model. One such model is C.L.E.A.R. A version of this model is Collaborate, Listen, Explore, Action, and Repeat. The model sets the tone for all coaching activities. A coaching model should:
 - Define clear goals, expectations, and outcomes
 - Identify what's in it for the coach, agent, and other interested constituents
 - Build trust to break down barriers and ensure success
- Build a coaching training program tailored to the organizational culture. However, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Initial training can come from a 3rd party blended with home-grown content that compliments the culture, requirements, and budget. Initial training should focus on competency development (see list of competencies above). Training should also include the following topics:
 - Time management
 - Identify and diagnose performance issues
 - Manage different interpersonal relationships
 - Build collaboration and teamwork
 - Conduct 1:1 coaching sessions

- How to avoid common mistakes in coaching
- Effective use of corporate systems and applications to deliver exceptional service
- Great coaching is a journey. Initial training is the starting point. Providing development sessions for coaches to hone their skills and knowledge ensures consistent results. Here are several ideas for the ongoing development of coaches:
 - Start a book club with a group of coaches. Select books such as: "The Speed of Trust" by Stephen Covey, "You Don't Need a Title" by Mark Sanborn, or choose a book on call center operations
 - If the coach is a direct report, attend a coaching session in real-time and provide feedback in a separate 1:1
 - If there is a separate Quality Assurance (QA) team, schedule periodic meetings for each coach with the QA manager or a QA analyst. If QA analysts deliver coaching, then reverse this process
 - Have coaches shadow their direct supervisor or another coach while they conduct a coaching session to share experiences
 - Visit other contact center operations for the sole purpose of sharing coaching techniques
 - Subscribe to industry publications
 - Participate in industry organizations that provide content centered around coaching and managing agents
 - Invite Quality Management and Workforce management partners to conduct product information sessions with the coaches

GREAT COACHING IS A JOURNEY.

- Have a “coaches” retreat off-site with plenty of refresher content
- Conduct a coaches group call monitoring calibration session periodically
- Conduct time management evaluations with coaches. Coaches should understand where they spend their time. According to McKinsey & Company research, in mature high-performing centers, coaches spend 50% or more of their 40-hour work week engaged in the actual coaching of agents

DEVELOPING MENTORS IS A GREAT WAY TO PROVIDE CAREER PATH OPPORTUNITIES.

CONSIDER INCLUDING TOP-PERFORMING AGENTS

When you think of coaches in a contact center, the job roles of manager, supervisor, team leader, and quality analyst come to mind. However, if the center utilizes top-performing agents to mentor new agents, these individuals are coaches too. Developing mentors is a great way to provide career path opportunities. Consider providing a coaching development program for these high-performing agents. Mentor programs ensure mentors are prepared to assist new agents. Well-trained mentors will help deliver emotional support

to new agents. They also will be better equipped to provide the proper organizational messaging to their peers. Mentors should be positive role models, especially to new agents in their first 90 days of employment.



A well-thought-out coaching development strategy, backed by a supportive coaching culture, will make a difference.



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