

A Coaching Manager's Guide to Effective Relationships



Intentionally co-design the relationship

As managers, we do not truly know what our direct reports need from us to be successful unless we ask them. Good coaching managers make the time and effort to create a safe space to talk with their direct reports about their relationship and the best ways to work together.

Value mutual respect and trust

Developing clear expectations and agreements with those we supervise helps to lay the foundation for a strong and effective relationship built on trust and mutual respect. For coaching managers who have intentionally committed to supporting the engagement, empowerment, and development of their direct reports, having a positive, authentic, and honest relationship is the key to their success. And, it is how they transform the power “over” that is inherent in a traditional supervisory relationship to power “with.”

Avoid making assumptions

We all bring underlying assumptions about ways of working based on our world view and past experiences. These assumptions play out in our relationships with our direct reports and vice versa. Without having explicit conversations, assumptions are left to individual interpretation, which can ultimately lead to unnecessary frustration, inefficiencies, and miscommunication. Differing needs, communication styles, and motivations can also drive unchecked assumptions between employee and manager.

Facilitate cornerstone conversations

A “cornerstone conversation” can begin at any time in the relationship. Ideally they are held on a regular basis and are separate from day-to-day business and project discussions. Regardless if you hold your first cornerstone conversation with someone you’ve been managing for a while or someone you just started managing, here are some framing questions you can use to develop your initial agreements and joint expectations:

- What do we need and expect from each other in our respective roles to be successful at our jobs?
- What do we see as our individual and collective strengths and areas of growth?
- How do we each prefer to receive both appreciative and developmental feedback?
- What is important for us to know about each other’s communication styles and preferences?
- What motivates us? What are we most passionate about?
- What is the best way to approach each other if we have a misunderstanding or disagreement?
- Anything else you think is important to discuss!

cor•ner•stone

“The cornerstone concept is derived from the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure.”

- Wikipedia