



Topic: “Coaching and Teambuilding”: Bruce Tulgan, Rainmaker Thinking

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Bruce’s talk began with the fact that his research shows the #1 determining factor for employee productivity, morale, and retention is the relationship an employee has with his/her immediate supervisor. And, increasingly, managing staff has become harder and harder. Bruce’s 40-minute talk covered the following areas: 1) Shifts in “Norms” for Employee Values; 2) Common Struggles Managers Face; and 3) Best Practices of Highly Effective Managers.

Shift in “Norms” for Employee Values

In the past, relationships between an employee and his/her company was a **long-term relationship**, where employees didn’t question authority, understood the importance of “paying dues,” and didn’t make demands on their employer. Managers were able to be more “hands-off” as a result.

Today, relationships have become **short-term transactional**, where employees are more concerned about “taking care of myself and my family,” unwilling to pay their dues, and unable to trust the company to meet their needs.

However, even with this shift, managers are expected to do more with less.

What this Shift Means, and Common Struggles Managers Face

Many managers are therefore “**stuck in the middle**,” feeling as though they have lost their power (i.e., “no one is afraid of me anymore”). Managers can no longer take a hands-off approach and assume that power and authority is automatic with today’s employees.

In many cases, today’s managers are promoted because they are “good at something,” but not necessarily good at managing staff. Today’s managers struggle to coach employees with a style assuring results.

Consequently, today’s managers are not engaged with their direct reports. Today’s managers struggle with managing expectations, monitoring and measuring performance, and coaching and teambuilding.

Best Practices of Highly Effective Managers

Today’s effective managers are comfortable with a coaching style that provides “Fast Feedback,” or feedback that is:

Frequent – applying a specific “frequency,” or type of communication style, tailored to each employee based on their specific needs and what “makes them tick”;

Accurate – choosing words carefully, the ability to set the issues on the table accurately (“Here’s what I know; Here’s how I know it; Here’s what I think about it; Here’s what I want you to do next”)

Specific – ensures that the direct report understands the specific next steps involved with the feedback, “Here’s what I want you to do next.”

Timely – provided on an ongoing basis – not “management by special occasion,” but coaching that is a regular part of your dialogue with your direct reports.

Bruce went on to provide six habits of effective, “Hands On Transactional” (HOT) Managers:

1. Effective managers are highly knowledgeable about the work of their direct reports, including the relevant details. They also understand what motivates their employees to produce this work.
2. Effective managers spend time with each of their direct reports either daily, every other day, or weekly, discussing this work in a “coaching conversation” – providing in an up-front manner clearly communicated expectations, goals and deadlines, in a manner specific to each direct report’s needs.
3. Effective managers keep notes of all conversations, documenting performance in order to track progress and create accountability.
4. Effective managers come down on performance issues “like a ton of bricks.” Bruce noted that all performance issues come down to lack of ability (has the employee been tasked with the wrong work?), skill (can the employee be trained to perform better?) or will (can you motivate this employee to perform better, or leverage what they may REALLY want in order to get them to perform better?).
5. Effective managers are able to remove persons from the team if they cannot improve their performance. Bruce went on to explain why this skill is particularly important:
 - a. Low performers get paid; continued low performance is a waste of company resources.
 - b. High performers hate to work with low performers, and may get frustrated and leave the company.
 - c. Low performers cause problems that high performers have to fix; refer back to item b.
 - d. Low performers, if allowed to remain in their job, send the signal to the rest of the company that low performance is acceptable.
6. Effective managers can be more generous with their team members, because they can do more for them *in exchange* for increased performance. This is the basis of the “transactional” manager – supporting an employee goes both ways.

“Hands On Transactional” Management Example

Bruce used the example of an employee demanding Thursdays off as an example of how to handle today’s employees within a “Hands On Transactional” approach. He stressed how important it is to respond to today’s employee demands **not** with a “My hands are tied” response.

Bruce commented that a “My hands are tied” response creates the impression that you aren’t willing to work with the employee on his/her request, and after this type of response, one of three things normally happen: 1) your direct report gets mad, and becomes an underperformer; 2) your direct report gives you an ultimatum on the request, and you are forced to terminate; or 3) your direct report leaves the company.

Instead, Bruce walked through a scenario by which the manager responds, “Okay, have a seat, that’s interesting. Let’s talk about that. Here’s what I would need from you in return.” He also

stressed that if you as a manager make the decision that your direct report is mature enough to handle expectations while taking Thursdays off, don't keep that decision a secret from the rest of your team. Ensure that the team understands that high performance can be rewarded in creative ways.

The Outcome of "HOT" Management

Bruce assured the group that if these best practices are followed, managers will 1) get better at managing today's employees, and become better coaches; and 2) create real accountability, which improves performance for your employees as well as the entire company.

Resource Materials Reviewed

Callers asked about useful materials or books for improving coaching skills and conducting performance reviews. These materials were discussed:

Back issues of the Rainmaker Thinking newsletter (free):

<http://www.rainmakerthinking.com/wttwback.htm>

Books of particular use (available on Amazon.com):

Successful Manager's Handbook : Development Suggestions for Today's Managers

by [Brian L. Davis](#) (Editor), [Susan H. Gebelein](#) (Editor), [Lowell W. Hellervik](#) (Editor), [James L. Sheard](#), [Carol J. Skube](#) "Successful leaders know that strategy is not stagnant..." ([more](#))

Effective Phrases for Performance Appraisals: A Guide to Successful Evaluations

by [James E. Neal](#)