

The Golden Key: How to Foster a Healthy and Productive Working Environment and Empower Your Employees with Employee Coaching

Miranda Rocca-Circelli

MDDE, BSc., BSc.

Edited by:

Marcel C. Faggioni

B.A. (Hons), M.I.R., CHRP, Q. Med.

Member of Law Society of Canada

Creating a highly energetic and healthy working environment is no easy feat for any organization of any size. Organizations have to face not only managing and prospering on their bottom line but many organizations have come to realize that they also have to funnel a great deal of energy into creating and fostering healthy interactions and opportunities to support the growth and sustainability of their employees as human capital. Having the ability to successfully manage the various and at times contradictory behaviours each employee expresses within their workplace can be onerous for even the most senior of managers. Regardless of the broad portfolio of leadership training a person has acquired, a certain skill set has become the “golden key” in creating and fostering healthy and thriving working environments.

People spend most of their waking days in a workplace setting. Assuming that a typical person sleeps 8 hours a night, most people come to work where they spend an approximate 50% of their waking hours during any given working day¹. With such a large percentage of a person’s day spent interacting with their employees, interacting with their work and interacting with the organization itself, if the experience is less than favourable, it can create for a long tiresome day for all those involved. Mostly, when

behaviours are expressed in the workplace they can have a great effect on the productivity of an organization and ultimately affect the bottom line results of that organization either positively or negatively, and these results are respectively based on the type of behaviours being expressed.

Emotional behaviours can make or break any working environment, and many organizations attempt to eradicate particular behaviours when they become seemingly less manageable. This usually creates a hostile work environment where some are subject to dismissal, while others are left with a feeling of disposability; this management style of behaviour does have a longstanding impact on all employees and the organization as a whole. In other circumstances, many employees are faced with taking much time off work because they cannot handle their current working circumstance and have no apparent solution in making it better. Many employees may feel there is no sense of support or that support is not accessible to them even if they were willing to find a solution in creating a healthy working environment and shift their behaviours.

The Golden Key to Fostering Healthy Working Environments

Many organizations continue to search for the “golden key” to motivate employees and ensure that they can become effectively efficient in their roles. Organizations are also beginning to realize the value of investing into human capital and applying new methodologies that are less traditional to help employees become happy at work and much more motivated to contribute to the growth of an organization.

So where does an organization place their focus in order to begin to create healthy and stimulating working environment?

Today there is a tremendous thirst by employees to experience various modalities of professional

growth and development. Employees are people, and they want to know that they matter; they want to know that they are cared about and have an integral role in the organization. Think about your business and your employees as any other relationship you would foster, where there should be an equal sharing of “giving and receiving”, this experience will tend to provide a mutually beneficial outcome. Professional development can help to quench this thirst, however, the type of professional development that employees are exposed to can drastically affect their behaviours and potentially affect how they shift their behaviours into ones that are consistent with the organizations mission and vision.

One of the most versatile and widely engaging professional development practices is providing employees and even employers with the opportunity to experience a greater sense of Self-Awareness. Self-Awareness can transpire when employees and employers work to create a higher sense of who they are and identify how they feel more readily. This particular training is commonly referred to as Emotional Intelligence (EI). Acquiring a higher EI is having the capability to recognize your own emotions and becoming competent in recognizing those in others. This is a skill that most individuals must learn, and is not innate in any way. Where there is much research being conducted in the area of Emotional Intelligence, research generally demonstrates that in becoming more self aware and by acquiring the ability to identify emotions more readily, people are able to deal with the various personalities and challenging situations that they encounter at work. When employees and employers take emotions into account, they tend to make better decisions, communicate more diplomatically and resolve issues faster regardless of who or what comes their way.²

What are some of the benefits of Emotional Intelligence training?

By applying EI in the workplace, employers can begin to observe a shift in their managing methodologies from managing employees to creating and empowering true leaders. One example is by empowering employees through EI training to become better equipped in making sound decisions in the workplace. Being emotionally intelligent means that you are in tune with the needs of others on your team and you are able to respond empathically to their needs, in doing so you provide a safe working space where everyone feels involved and included. Having a sense of emotional intelligence under your wing means you can de-stress yourself more readily because you have the tools to work through any stressful situation, resulting in a decrease in the occupational stress you may have been causing others.

True leaders are born out of the ability to become emotionally intelligent, because they know who they are and can readily identify their emotional connection to their world and to others. They have a sense of self-acceptance and are willing to assess themselves in order to find their higher self through a process of self-reflection. Personal well-being becomes the forefront of emotionally intelligent people because they can self-motivate and inspire others through their positive actions, even in the midst of chaos and in the face of workplace adversity. People who acquire Emotional Intelligence training are able to navigate particularly challenging circumstances while building rapport and assuming social responsibilities in a positive and nurturing manner. Ultimately, once one assumes the role of becoming emotionally intelligent, they create an environment that has meaning and purpose, giving people the opportunity to engage in a healthy environment that builds strong relationships amongst staff, reducing employee turnover rates and creates a thriving environment for all.

How Can An Employee Coach Assist In Creating Healthy Working Environments?

Professional and workplace coaches are skilled in creating and fostering a healthy space for employees and employers to reflect on themselves in a non-judgmental environment. An employee coach carries the role of one that at times can appear to be even peripheral from the internal workplace environment and whatever situation may be currently occurring within the organization, which is critical for people to feel safe when sharing their issues and in creating solutions.

An employee coach can use various modalities when working with an organization. Some organizations are more interested in the one-on-one coaching approach, which is beneficial because it enables employees to work through their issues and acquire the attention they need to do so without having others in their vicinity. It also enables employees to feel a sense of connection to the organization because the organization is willing to invest in them as human beings and invest in them to have the time to work through their issues. This is pivotal in fostering a healthy employer-employee relationship, because while many organizations could offer HR support, this unfortunately has become a slightly skewed approach where employees sometimes do not feel safe in disclosing sensitive content about their lives and in working through any apparent issues for fear of being let go by the organization.

In working with an employee coach who is external to the organization, an employee can feel much more comfortable and open to working through their issues. At times, the issues occurring in the workplace truly stem from other areas of an employee's personal life. In turn, these issues manifest themselves in the workplace largely due to the time spent at work. One-on-one coaching has a drastic impact on changing personal and professional behaviours, while it takes more time because of the nature of working with each employee and employer, it does bring in the highest level of change.

Other modalities for supporting employees through coaching practices can include the delivery of workshops that are tailored to the

needs of employees and employers. In most cases, delivering a Needs Assessment to gauge what areas of interest exists within an organization is the best approach in identifying gaps in skills and expertise and in creating content that is specific to addressing such areas. Workshops are then developed working with management teams based on the content acquired through the Needs Assessment. The result is a program that is tailored to the needs of employees which is then delivered, creating a meaningful experience for employees knowing that they helped shape the program, in which they are participating.

Overall, investing in your human capital by working with an employee coach can help to elevate your organizations performance and help to identify where there are gaps in skills sets and competencies in a safe and professional manner. The outcome of creating a highly effective and efficient working environment is that the entire organization as a whole will always benefit.

¹ <https://revisesociology.com/2016/08/16/percentage-life-work/>

² <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/why-you-need-emotional-intelligence-at-work-300412310.html>