## **“Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders Today”**

Let me ask you a question, why don’t people always progress the way we want them to? We give them training, we give them resources, we give them advice, and still, sometimes, the hardest working people don´t reach their maximum growth potential, and it doesn’t matter the context we are talking about. Whether it be technical development, supervisory capability, or leadership acumen, many just can’t seem to get over that hump….what is wrong with them. My answer is nothing. It´s not what they are doing right or wrong, it is the approach we, the leaders, are taking to develop our people.

My observation is that as leaders, we tend to tell people something and then throw people off the deep end and expect them to swim. Now I know what you’re saying, “but what else can I do? I have given them everything I can, and everything I think they need to be successful…” Well, my response is simple. They don’t need more “stuff” in their head, what they need is more of your TIME.

Don’t misunderstand me, I am not suggesting we give the individual an infinite amount of our time to help them develop. Instead I am offering that we, as leaders, need to spend more of our own time developing our people and teams through effective mentoring AND hands-on coaching.

Now, most organizations don’t typically discern the difference between mentorship and coaching, so let me start by explaining my definition of the two, and identifying the differences.

Let’s begin with MENTORING. Mentoring can be defined as a relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally. This relationship helps achieve success and motivates people to achieve their career goals.

While this definition is good enough for the purpose, when I translate it into layman’s terms, it is really just a conversation about goals, aspirations or any other topic where someone of experience offers a perspective or advice to a person with less experience. THIS IS AWESOME!! We all need the voice of a “Wise One” to help us make sound decisions, point us onto a different path, or confirm that we are doing the right things to be successful.

COACHING on the other hand is more than just timely advice. It still revolves around a relationship, but in a coaching relationship both parties are working together, consistently, towards the same goals. They develop action plans, they work together to actively develop the persons skills and achieve goals, they follow-up and discuss the results and what worked or didn’t work so that the next time they face that challenge they are better prepared.

The reality is that Mentoring is the first step of Coaching, but if we fail to tie these two important concepts together, we miss a real opportunity to affect permanent changes our people need to succeed.

Why not incorporate both concepts into your leadership approaches. There will certainly be times where a person just wants to know what you think. Nothing more, nothing less. BUT, as leaders, we have a responsibility to recognize when simple advice or guidance isn’t enough. Instead, consider using mentoring as a launching point for a full-blown coaching opportunity that includes long-term planning, execution, follow-through, and feedback…wash, rinse, repeat as many times as you can until the desired development level is achieved.

As leaders, we have a fundamental responsibility to develop and lead our teams. Why, because when they win, you win. When WE win, the company wins. When the company wins, our nation wins. If you add COACHING to your MENTORSHIP repertoire, not only will you help your individual team members succeed, but you can feel confident that you are leaving future generations the good hands of capable leaders.