

TOP FIVE TIPS for coaching and mentoring employees



Every job involves learning something new. For employees, having access to a coach or mentor can make the learning curve less intimidating. For workplace veterans, sharing knowledge and experience with colleagues is fulfilling. Coaching and mentoring are two different approaches, but each plays an

important role. Coaching focuses on tasks and skills, and aims for immediate performance gains. Mentoring considers the long-term, and fosters relationships that are a significant part of employee development. Here are five tips to help you get the most out of your coaching and mentoring efforts.

1. UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

Some people are visual learners who absorb information by reading or watching. Others are auditory learners, whose strength is listening. Another group is kinesthetic learners. They retain knowledge best when they can touch or manipulate objects. Be patient, flexible and observant. Get to know your employees and support them with tools that harmonize with their learning styles.

2. SET OBJECTIVES

Setting objectives for your coaching and mentoring efforts provides direction and focus, and enables you to measure progress. Objectives can be as straightforward as determining when or how a project will be completed. Alternately, they can be as broad as identifying levels of achievement or building strengths for future professional development. Tourism businesses have the advantage of working with industry-recognized standards, such as *emerit*. Setting objectives is easy because you are not starting from scratch.

3. GET ORGANIZED

Training groups of employees requires organization. Locations, times, set-up and instructors must be arranged in advance. Be just as organized with individual coaching and mentoring. Dedicate time to work one-on-one. Prepare topic outlines, checklists, lesson plans and learning contracts. Set an example of professionalism.

4. OFFER FEEDBACK AND REINFORCEMENT

In a workplace where roles and responsibilities are constantly changing, feedback is essential; however, surveys suggest that few employees receive enough feedback to do their jobs well. Feedback enables mistakes to be corrected before they become habits. It helps employees refine their skills and knowledge. Keep your message clear and positive. Provide sincere praise for good work. Recognize staff accomplishments. A formal rewards and recognition program shows that you value employees' contributions to the organization.

5. INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE YOUR COLLEAGUES

Being an inspiring role model gains employee respect, engagement and buy-in. In return, you receive fulfilment. Your positive actions will motivate others. There are many tools available to help instil confidence among staff. Coaches and mentors benefit from developing techniques to stimulate learning, nurture individual interests and goals, and encourage employees to be role models themselves.