



Ask Affy

Need advice? Ask Affy!

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Dear Affy,

I was reading your SwitchGear Insights blog and was very interested to see content around coaching. My question is specific to top performing agents - is there any value in coaching them?

Hope in Hamilton

A

The short answer is an emphatic yes! Research supports the assertion that equal time spent with top performers will give you a greater lift in results than the same time spent with lower performers. No big surprise here – we intuitively know that individuals who feel success have greater motivation to accelerate their own performance.

Knowing this, it would make sense that we spread our coaching energy with all levels of performance and not concentrate on the lower end of the performance scale. So why as coaches do we leave our top performers to fend for themselves with rationale that top performers need less coaching? One reason only: we don't have a way to continually provide value.

The best way for you as a coach to provide value is spend side-by-side coaching time with all agents and especially top performers in order to harvest best practices. Although this concept may not be new, it is one that in many organizations is either too administratively arduous or fizzles out because the best practice cannot be easily implemented by all agents. Further compounding these challenges is an unclear definition of what is and is not a best practice.

I offer up to you our definition of a best practice. It is a skill or technique that you can take from one person and give to two or more people to get the same successful outcome or result. If the originator is the only one who can achieve success with the practice – and the success cannot be replicated – then it is not a 'best practice'. Instead, it is what we call a 'tip'.

It is a very natural place for a coach to be the instigator and purveyor of best practices for a number of reasons. Firstly, when you do side-by-side coaching, you have insight into what

each agent is doing and have access to best practices. You can see and hear what the top performers are doing and are able to articulate their best practice into bite size steps for another agent to adopt. As a coach, that is how you add value to top performers as well as other agents. Give them praise and recognition of their best practice and show your agent how to implement this new practice. It keeps your coaching fresh and it offers something new for your keen agents to master.

Below is a guideline of questions that will help you determine if the technique or skill is indeed a best practice.

- Is this best practice easy to share? i.e. can it be broken into simple steps or are there too many variables?
- Does the top performer – from whom you gathered the best practice – use this frequently with the same outcome?
- Is the technique you identified really a best practice? i.e. can it be duplicated by other employees to produce the same results?
- Knowing that a best practice will produce a specific result, how can you measure the results?

Here are some suggestions that will ensure stickiness and sustainability of your best practices. Benchmark yourself and you will always come up on top.

- A best practice needs to solve something for the employee. There are no 'silver bullets'. Instead, there are hundreds of small, specific techniques, approaches and skills that collectively help an employee succeed. To be accepted, adopted, and implemented; a best practice or any coaching must actually SOLVE something for the employee and not just for the customer or the company.
- Like all aspects of coaching to improve performance, anything offered must be SPECIFIC. A general concept might get a congenial nod but if they don't know WHAT to say, WHEN to say it or HOW to say it then how can they make it repeatable?
- The best part: what you uncover already comes with proof that it works! You learn it in 'the laboratory' by studying what other top performers are doing. That means it comes with built-in credibility. You will find top performers that have drive and ambition to be the best in class are hungry for new ways to top their own performance.

So, I hope the above has illustrated how to leverage best practices in your organization. By using these simple but effective methods you can drive continuous improvement for all

levels of performance while keeping your top agents engaged. Best of luck and I wish you much success as you provide value to your agents and to your business!

Afshan Kinder

Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world". This resonates for me in the work I do and hopefully for the people I touch. Looking back at 20 years of running operations, there was always this excitement to initiate change, create innovative strategies, and build agile teams who can execute.

What has me jump out of bed in the morning (somewhere in the world!) is working with fast paced companies with complex problems to solve. Proudest moments? In the mid-1990's, we were voted Canada's #1 customer service centre at Sprint Canada at a time when we could barely catch our breath during double digit growth. Then more fun at ING DIRECT hitting Top Box customer satisfaction 6 years in a row. This Daniel Pink quote feels right on: "Meaningful achievement depends on lifting one's sights and pushing toward the horizon."

I live in Toronto, Canada with my husband, two children & two bossy cats.

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