Coaching and mentoring employees requires a continuous effort to make it a part of management practices. Use the tips in the following list to help incorporate coaching and mentoring techniques into your owner-employee relationships:

Delegate: Articulate the results you want to see, set parameters, determine what support the employee needs, and set times to conduct progress reviews along the way.

Give performance feedback: State what you observe, be specific and direct, show sincerity, and communicate face-to-face for both positive and negative performance efforts.

Motivate employee performance: Give timely recognition for a job well done and provide favorable assignments that challenge your staff and meet business needs at the same time.

Mentor employee growth: Pass on words of wisdom that guide behavior for success and ask employees for ideas to make improvements and solve problems.

Focus on employee performance: Collaboratively set goals with action plans that define the key steps for achieving the goals.

Set meaningful goals: Define the results that need to be achieved and how the goals will be measured.

Assess employee performance: Don’t wait for the annual review. Meet one-on-one with each staff person at least once per quarter to review performance; adjust plans accordingly to keep priorities current.

Aid career development: Collaboratively set plans that define how employees will prepare themselves – from training to work assignments – to grow in their skills and capabilities.

Deliver training: Give step-by-step instruction that involves your employee doing the skills or procedures in a hands-on way.

Reinforce good performance: Catch employees doing quality work and demonstrating positive behaviors with the same effort that you catch them when performance doesn’t go as well as needed.
Now that we have discussed the processes for successful employee coaching and mentoring, we’re moving on to using constructive feedback. This is valuable to both the employee and the company. If an employee does not understand what is expected of him/her, then what success with product or processes can be expected? You cannot assume that an employee understands if he has not been trained; this is a wonderful opportunity for the employee and the department manager/owner to get acquainted and learn of the skill base of a new employee. You cannot assume what is known if it has not been provided through verbal support and training.

**BUSINESS COACHING: USING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK vs. PRAISE AND CRITICISM**

By Marty Brounstein, Coaching and Mentoring

One of the responsibilities of business coaches is to give performance feedback to employees. Performance feedback can be given two ways: through constructive feedback and praise or through criticism. Be cautious.

**Constructive feedback** is information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observations. It comes in two varieties:

- **Positive feedback** is news or input to an employee about an effort well done.
- **Negative feedback** is news to an employee about an effort (or skill) that needs improvement. Negative feedback doesn’t mean a terrible performance, rather a performance in which the outcomes delivered should be better.

**Praise and criticism** are personal judgments about a performance effort or outcome. The information given is general and vague, focused on the person, and based on opinions or feelings.

The following examples help show the difference between constructive feedback (either positive or negative) and praise/criticism:

- **Praise**: You did a great job on that project. Good work. Thanks for your dedication and enthusiasm.

- **Positive feedback**: The contributions you made on this project were a big help. I noticed that the work you produced was thorough and accurate. Whenever I needed help in coordinating the team and managing the project schedule, you stepped in and covered for me and/or gave me assistance which kept the team and the project on schedule. When team members had questions, you were available to assist them. Thanks so much for your contributions in helping make this project a success.

- **Criticism**: You were not much help on this project and were really ineffective. I hope this isn’t the best you can do.

- **Negative feedback**: Here are the concerns I have regarding your assistance on this project. As I explained at the beginning of the project, your services were needed to help coordinate the project management in terms of keeping people focused on their assignments and on the schedule. For example, many of the team members came to me with questions about assignments and schedule issues often after they could not get answers from you. I noticed that you were working on your part of the project, but the interactions with others and about the overall project and its progress were not evident. When I asked you to cover for me at three of the meetings, each meeting ended after a brief time with no minutes or action items produced. Delays have occurred in the project and we’ll now require everyone’s attention to get back on track.
The two types of constructive feedback come across as far more objective, specific, and nonjudgmental than praise or criticism. Because constructive feedback is based on observations in specific terms about performance issues, it’s not a right or wrong.

Constructive feedback encourages a discussion with the person. As a result, you and your employee can learn more about the situation, and, if needed, set a positive course of action.

Moving on, we will discuss how to empower employees to be leaders. While all employees obviously do not have the skills to be a leader, some employees may have a “hidden talent” and be capable to moving up in your organization. How can you discover and empower the talented individuals?

9 WAYS TO EMPOWER EMPLOYEES TO BE LEADERS

By Heather R. Huhman/President of Come Recommended

It can be difficult to manage a team of people. Often, day-to-day tasks become priority and encouraging innovation and leadership can take a backseat. So, how can you empower your employees to become leaders? Check out what these experts had to say:

Management needs to listen and react to employee feedback: When it comes to leadership skills, employees need to know they are being heard and respected. Management should work hard to solicit employee feedback and work on the common problems and issues which arise. Employees who see their issues addressed will feel empowered to continue making suggestions. Soon, these employees will become leaders in the workplace because they know the organization values their contributions. (Josh Tolan, Spark Hire)

A proactive company culture drives employee initiative: CEOs and top executives should develop a proactive company culture to ensure employees stay motivated to take initiative. They can establish and drive this type of culture through leading by example. Employees should want to be leaders in their workplace because they truly believe in the visions and goals presented by the company culture and top management. (Nathan Parcells, InternMatch)

Empower them to think differently: While it is important to set clear goals and responsibilities, the key to having a successful business and engaged workforce is to empower all your employees to make decisions on their own. Make sure employees are comfortable and confident asking questions, bringing forward new ideas and even taking a different approach that may fail. Out of that failure will come knowledge and longer-term success. (Lynn Dixon, Hourly.com)

Clarity and trust: If management truly wants to empower employees to be leaders, they have to deploy two (often scarce) resources: clarity and trust. Clarity ensures that the employee’s well-intentioned efforts are aligned with management’s goals. Trust is the fuel on which new leaders run. Clarity without trust produces inaction. Trust without clarity produces wasted effort. (Adam Robinson, CEO of Hireology)

Empowering employees through strong workplace policies: The best practice for employee empowerment is to establish (and enforce) strong workplace policies. Strong workplace policies eliminate the need for micromanagement, and fosters employee empowerment organically. Workplace policies give employees the parameters they need to be creative, productive, successful and happy at work. (Clara Lippert Glenn, President/CEO, The Oxford Princeton Program)
Create a more inclusive environment: If you really want to empower employees to be leaders in the workplace, create a more inclusive environment for them. Employees who are encouraged to give their opinions – and believe their insights are valued by top management – will feel more comfortable taking charge. An inclusive workplace acts not only as a resource for management to help grow business, but also to promote employee growth as well. Everyone wins! (Shirley Engelmeier, CEO, InclusionInc)

(With caution)….give them the authority to fail: If an employee is not worried that failure will lead to firing, they will take risks. Risk takers, by definition, gain followers – when successful—and having followers is the definition of a leader. (Bruce Hurwitz, Hurwitz Strategic Staffing)

Create opportunities for employees to shine. While every company is pleased to have natural-born leaders, others may need a bit more prodding. Empower those employees by providing them with a bit more freedom to pursue their passions. Then, give them the opportunity to demonstrate their work to other employees. (Jason Pinto, director of marketing, CBG Benefits)

Master the game of people-centric balance: To inspire leaders in the workplace, top management needs to create an environment where success is a journey, not a destination, and that peoples’ best interests are considered. Included within that journey are challenges, ideas, and decisions that employees will inevitably face. Employees are most likely to emerge as leaders in these situations if top management leads with a sense of balance – giving challenges but offering support; accepting failure but holding individuals accountable for success; and trusting their people while expecting respect in return. (Russell Schramm, vice president of talent acquisition for the Americas, Philips)