

Lab Quality Confab ■ Atlanta, Georgia

**EFFECTIVE COACHING IN SUPPORT OF  
COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS:  
*BEST TECHNIQUES TO HELP LAB STAFF RECOGNIZE  
OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE, CONTRIBUTE MORE, AND  
ADVANCE BOTH THEIR CAREER AND THE LAB'S SUCCESS***

Steve Stone, Managing Director

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*Argent Global Services - Confidential*

# THE SET UP



# Background

## Competency Assessment

All lab personnel are required to be assessed for competency on their respective test systems

Confirms lab personnel can adequately perform laboratory duties

Done on an annual basis for each individual



# Competency Assessment

Competency Assessments typically rely on checklists to rate or confirm the employee's competency

**Method procedure:**

Reading of pertinent portions of the SOP

Yes	No	N/A	Comments

**Direct observation**

Safety policies followed		
Preparation of work area		
Work area neat and organized		
Follows policies, procedures and rules pertaining to assignment		
Preparation/handling of specimen		
Preparation/handling of reagents		
Preparation/handling of QC		
Preparation/handling of equipment and maintenance activities		



# Competency Assessment

- Competency is about Patient Safety
- Many will point out that Competency Assessments are not the same as Training or Performance Evaluations
- This is true, but why can't we leverage the assessment process to improve individual productivity?





# OPPORTUNITY



# Staff Satisfaction and Retention

- Staff recruitment and retention can be an issue for many labs
- Factors such as feedback, letting someone know how they are doing, clear expectations and participating in improvements are important
- *Employee development such as training, continuing education and mentoring can prove beneficial in retaining staff*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ASCP Wage Summary Report 2015



# Where is the Opportunity

## Key Challenges for the lab:

1. Improving employee satisfaction – retention and growth
2. Developing new/young staff
3. Developing Supervisors and Managers
4. Ensure staff is prepared to take on changes





# Solutions

- Labs should be looking for creative ways to address these challenges
- Other industries have utilized a staff development tool known as *Observations and Performance Coaching*
- Developed by Industrial Engineers to complement Operation Improvement and Labor Management initiatives





# PERFORMANCE COACHING



*A manager is a title, it does not guarantee success.  
Coaching is an action, not a title and actions will result  
in successes!* – Catherine Pulsifer

*The goal of coaching is the goal of good management:  
to make the most of an organization's valuable  
resources.* – Harvard Business Review



# Performance Coaching

- Performance Coaching is a formal and consistent way to provide feedback and hands-on training for associates
- It involves Supervisors and Managers observing individual associates during cycles of work, documenting performance and providing feedback
- Performance Coaching is working one-on-one with associates in a structured manner



# Why We Do It

## Two primary goals of Observation & Performance Coaching

1. Improve productivity, quality and safety on an individual level
2. Ensure associates are properly trained to be successful



# Additional Benefits

## **Additional benefits of Coaching include:**

- Improve communication between management and associates
- Improve awareness of low performers and where they need help
- Document individual training that associates are receiving from management
- Learn and share how good performers work (principles of Best Methods)



# How It's Done

- First, we Observe
- Then we Coach

- *Direct observation is a primary tool utilized for Competency Assessments*
- We want to leverage that experience for Performance Coaching



# Observations Tips

- When you begin an observation, always remind the associate of the purpose
- Ask them to work at a normal pace, no need to get nervous or rush
- Stay close enough to observe, but never get in the way. The associate should forget you are there





# How It's Done

- Observe an associate, uninterrupted, for at least 30 minutes or for complete work cycles
- Try not to interrupt associate. Wait until the end to provide feedback and coaching
- Only observe one associate at a time




# How It's Done



- Utilize a standardized coaching form
- Document observations and provide feedback and coaching at the end of the session
- Focus on constructive feedback and training, never disciplinary actions



# Sample Observation Form

 <b>Performance Coaching Form</b>		
Associate Name	_____	Date / Shift _____
Associate ID	_____	Function _____
Performed By	_____	Location _____
Primary Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled Coaching <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Based <input type="checkbox"/> Validation	
STATISTICS		
Units	_____	Start Time: _____ End Time: _____
PRODUCTIVITY		
Activity	Strengths	Opportunities
Setup/Organization		
Handling/Processes		
Travel/Motion		
Random		
PROCEDURES		
Pace		
Methods		
Housekeeping		
Quality		
Safety		
Signatures Associate: _____                      Observer: _____		
<small>APCF 4/24/2017 v1.0 Methods Only</small>		

Header

Statistics


Productivity

Procedures



# Header

- Use the header to capture general information such as employee name, date, function
- Statistics

		<b>Performance Coaching Form</b>	
Associate Name	_____	Date / Shift	_____
Associate ID	_____	Function	_____
Performed By	_____	Location	_____
Primary Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled Coaching <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Based <input type="checkbox"/> Validation		
<b>STATISTICS</b>			
Units	_____	Start Time:	_____
		End Time:	_____



# Productivity Section

<b>PRODUCTIVITY</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b>Setup/Organization</b>		
<b>Handling/Processes</b>		
<b>Travel/Motion</b>		
<b>Random</b>		



# Productivity

- This section is related to efficient work and productivity
- Think “Lean”, value added vs non-value added
- Capture coaching points to be shared with the associate
- Use the categories as guidelines
- Document Strengths and Opportunities



# Examples



- How is their set-up and organization?
- Do they have the proper supplies?
- Double handling, re-handling?
- How well do they plan their activities, e.g., performing maintenance or QC on multiple instruments?
- Efficient travel or motion, unnecessary trips?
- Batching?
- How cluttered is their work area?
- How often do they recheck their work?



# Procedures

- This section is for well-defined expectations related to the job

<i>PROCEDURES</i>
Pace
Methods/SOP
Quality
Safety
Housekeeping





# Procedures

- Comments related to how well the associate followed instructions or met standards
  - Pace
  - Methods/SOP
  - Quality
  - Safety
  - Housekeeping
- Not just checkboxes but relevant feedback that can help the associate



# Coaching

- After the observation is complete, you will coach the associate
- Definition: Coach \kōch\ : one who instructs or trains. A coach is also an expert who trains someone learning or improving a skill, esp. one related to performing



# Coaching and Feedback

- Use the completed observation form to coach and motivate the associate
- Review strengths and opportunities, these are key coaching points
- Make recommendations for improvement
- **ALWAYS** compliment the associate on well performed areas



# Tips for Success

- Never spy on an associates or conduct the observation from a distance
- Before starting an observation, go back and review the last session with that associate
- Capture feedback during the observation so the form is as complete as possible when the associate is done with the work
- Avoid interruptions during the observation
- Always keep the feedback positive and upbeat





# BEST METHODS



# Best Methods

Another outcome of observations is that it can facilitate the development of Best Methods

## Best Methods, aka Best Practices:

- *A systematic approach for performing work that results in maximum output with the least waste at the lowest possible cost*



# Best Methods

- Best Methods are different than SOPs, they should focus on value-add and efficiencies
- We develop Best Methods by learning from our best performers – *Learn and Share*
- Additionally, Best Methods are about the entire value-stream, e.g., work balancing





# COACHING PROGRAM





# Scheduling



- All associates should be observed
- Focus on new associates and low performers
- Higher performers will be less frequent
- At a minimum, coach during the Assessment process
- Up the schedule when there are changes – procedures or automation
- Hold supervisors accountable for coaching sessions



# Record Keeping

- Maintain records of the coaching sessions
- File or scan
- Some organizations create a database
- Treat this like training documentation



# Performance Goals

- Some labs are holding associates accountable to performance goals
- If you do, incorporate the goals into the coaching process
- Use the sessions to ensure the personnel understand how they are measured and how to be successful



# Develop a Plan for Your Lab

- Develop a plan that works well for your lab's goals
- Consider the type of lab, number of staff, level of staff
- Customize a Coaching Form
- Establish rules and expectations





# SUMMARY



# Summary

- Observation and Performance Coaching is a tool that will help with both employee and management development
- Will complement the Competency Assessment process
- Help improve employee satisfaction
- Drive efficiencies and productivity in the lab



**“It is not the strongest of the species that survive,  
nor the most intelligent, but the one most  
responsive to change”**

**“Intelligence is based on how efficient a species  
became at doing the things they need to survive”**

**- Charles Darwin**

**Thank You For Your Time!**





**END OF PRESENTATION**

