

Preface

As I wrote this book on coaching, I kept thinking about my Dad. He taught me how to hit a baseball, shoot a jump shot, bait and set a hook, cook stew in a campfire—stuff you can't get out of a book. He didn't teach me to love these things. That just happened.

His method was strictly hands on (mine) and hands off (his).

To teach me to hit, for example, he put the bat in my hands and pitched to me endlessly. Only now do I realize how tired he must have been and how much patience the practices required of him. He offered few suggestions. Mostly I remember his soft grunt of exertion as he threw and his joyful "Atta boy!" on the rare occasions when I connected.

His advice wasn't original. "Keep your eye on the ball," he'd say. Easy to say, but hard to do when you're a scared kid. He knew that: "It only takes one. Make him pitch to you. Pick one out."

I can summarize his advice on fishing in one compact sentence: "Keep the tip up." The rest I learned by watching and doing.

I remember one particular fishing trip, when I was perhaps eight. We were in a row boat on Lake Arrowhead, in the San Bernardino Mountains of southern California, just at dawn. The water was still and black. He had rigged my pole and let me bait up and cast and was getting his own pole ready when I felt the terrifying mystery of a fish, far down in the water,

bumping up against my bait.

“Wait,” he murmured, “Wait,” as the tip of the pole dipped once, twice, then a third time, almost taking the pole out of my hands.

“Now!” he said, and I set the hook, imitating his fierce, two-handed motion.

He made no move to take the pole from me. This was my fish to catch or to lose. “Keep the tip up,” he said calmly.

But his hands were shaking with excitement as he put the net into the water and waited for me to bring the fish, head up, into the opening.

Miraculously, he lifted my fish into the boat, the early sun glittering the scales. He deftly broke the fish’s neck so it wouldn’t suffer. Then he took out the tape measure.

“I make it thirteen and a quarter,” he said, holding my fish up, just as the nurse in the maternity ward might hold up a newborn.

I heard him tell the story in the village later that day, about how his kid caught this huge rainbow trout before he could even get his line in the water. I heard him tell that story for the rest of his life.

I’ve had lots of other coaches—in athletics, in school, and on the job. Some were good, some awful, a few great. My Dad was my first and best coach.

I don’t play baseball or basketball anymore, and I haven’t been fishing or camping lately. But I still try to apply what he taught me about patience and trust every day of my life.

In this book, you’ll learn how to apply good coaching methods in the workplace, helping employees achieve high performance by seeking commitment rather than control and results rather than somebody to blame.

As we describe the main functions of the coach in the workplace and examine the structure of an effective coaching session, we stress coaching on the run, where you’ll really do your best work. Two simple principles guide us: KYHO (keep your hands off) and PSA (positive, specific action).

We'll discuss the pitfalls to good coaching and help you understand the best ways to avoid them.

By studying worker motivations beyond the paycheck, you'll learn to challenge employees to achieve and learn. You'll also learn to communicate effectively, by giving clear instructions and by asking effective questions and hearing the answers.

You'll learn to use intrinsic, intangible reward—ownership, mastery, and growth—to spur peak performance while fostering independence and initiative.

The bonus principles described in Chapter 17 will help your coaching and all other aspects of your life—because coaching will become a vital part of your life and give you skills to apply outside the workplace as well.

You ready, coach? Let's get going.

I'd love to hear about your coaching experiences and will of course try to answer any questions you might have. Contact me at marshall.cook@ccmail.adp.wisc.edu or at mjc903@aol.com.

Acknowledgments

I have long been interested in coaching but didn't think to write a book about it until John Woods of CWL Publishing Enterprises approached me. He worked with me to develop the manuscript, and he along with Robert Magnan, also of CWL, edited and turned my manuscript into the book you now hold. I also want to thank you for picking me as a coach to help you learn about coaching.

Special Features

The idea behind the books in the Briefcase Series is to give you practical information written in a friendly person-to-person style. The chapters are short, deal with tactical issues, and include lots of examples. They also feature numerous boxes designed to give you different types of specific information. Here's a description of the boxes you'll find in this book.



These boxes do just what they say: give you tips and tactics for being a smart manager and coach.



These boxes provide warnings for where things could go wrong.



Here you'll find how-to hints to make your job as a coach easier.



Every subject has its special jargon and terms. These boxes provide definitions of these concepts.



Want to know how others have done it? Look for these boxes.



Here you'll find specific procedures you can follow to get results.



How can you make sure you won't make a mistake? You can't, but these boxes will give you practical advice on how to minimize the possibility.