Building Teams for Performance

Coaching and the Performance Planning, Reviewing, and Evaluating Process

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Chapter 1: Coaching – A Quintessential Leadership Must

Roy Williams - University of North Carolina Head Basketball Coach spends one-on-one time with a team member

This chapter discusses the quintessential leadership trait of coaching, which is vital to ensuring organizational success and health at all levels. It is essential to building quality teams that work in tandem to achieve - and often exceed - organizational goals, to developing and growing individual team members, and to the excellent health and continuing success of the entire organization.

Quintessential leaders are also quintessential coaches who have bigger world views than just profits (wins) and making sure everyone knows who is in charge. It is the opposite of micromanagement and has no vestiges of bullying. Bob Knight (Indiana University head basketball coach from 1971 to 2000) and Steve Jobs (Apple CEO from late 1970's to 1985 and 1997 to 2011) were not quintessential leaders nor were they coaches.

They were both micromanagers and bullies who achieved wealth, fame, and success, but who devastated, demoralized, and destroyed a lot of people on the way to their achievements. They were both feared, not respected, by their teams. Plenty of team members have denounced both of them once they were removed or removed themselves from their teams.

It's ironic that Jobs and Knight both are perceived as giants in their respected professions. Knight knows basketball inside and out. Jobs understood both computer technology and consumer demand better than anyone else in the field. But neither Knight nor Jobs knew how to lead. Their roads to success were bulldozed with force, and their capacity to disregard the casualties along the way is almost beyond belief.

It's interesting to watch Indiana University's basketball program now. After more than a decade of rebuilding, it appears that the university has found a coach who is also a quintessential leader. Apple's path forward under Tim Cook remains to be seen, but the consensus is that Cook is a team-builder who is already and will continue to dramatically change the organizational culture at Apple.

For good examples from the sports world of quintessential leader coaching - the elements that go into this translate perfectly into organizational models - I look no further than my home state of North Carolina.

Let me say at the outset that I am a University of North Carolina (UNC) Tarheels fan and as such, in terms of being a fan, have no use for the Duke University Blue Devils (my dad had degrees from Wake Forest and Duke and completed a certification program at North Carolina State, so you can imagine how lively our house was with ACC sports when I was growing up).

However, there are three quintessential leader coaches from both UNC and Duke that stand out as great examples of this leadership model: Dean Smith (UNC head basketball coach from 1961 to 1997), Mike Krzyzewski (Duke head basketball coach from 1980 to present), and Roy Williams (assistant coach to Dean Smith from 1978 to 1988 and UNC head basketball coach from 2003 to the present).

Their results consistently point to their qualities as quintessential leaders, even in rebuilding years and years where injuries leave them with average records on paper, but another step in the process of building the teams to beat the next year.

Coaching is a quintessential leadership trait that is highlighted by several distinct attributes, some of which I'll highlight in today's post, and will continue to present in future posts on this topic.

The *first attribute* is that a coach has a clear handle on the big picture, but does not assume or believe that he or she knows everything and can control every step of the process to make the big picture complete.

A coach recognizes that the big picture is made up of unique individual pieces that need to fit precisely and tightly together and that his or her job is to provide the environment and guidance for those individual pieces to come together.

This requires the coach to assess the existing capabilities of his or her team members, add new team members to fill any voids, then work individually and collectively with the team to build strengths and overcome weaknesses.

This takes a committed investment of time and effort on an individual and team level by the coach.

A *second attribute* of quintessential leader coaching is the ability to get complete buy-in to goals from team members.

This means that the coach empowers the team and its individual members to work toward goals using their capabilities and best judgment in the moment. Everything's not scripted, because the factor of things changing on a dime is factored into the equation.

Coaches then have the responsibility to shape the understanding, the development, and the education of the team and its individual members so that they can both act autonomously and within the framework of a well-defined high-level strategy.

Quintessential leadership coaching also has the *attribute* of wholehearted support for the team and its members.

This doesn't mean supporting bad decisions, wrong behavior, or flagrant violations of rules and policy.

But it does mean backing the team and its individual members up consistently and going to bat for them when they haven't done anything wrong.

It also means taking responsibility for failures - and quintessential leaders have failures just like everyone else on the planet; they are not perfect - at the macro-level and not blaming the team or individual members of the team.

A final attribute of quintessential leadership coaching is adaptability. Quintessential leader coaches understand that the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry and they are able to quickly adapt and help their team and its individual members quickly switch gears to meet the challenge of sudden changes.

Because quintessential leader coaches build goals in terms of frameworks instead of detailed minute-by-minute GANTT charts, flexibility is inherently built into the process of achieving goals.

So even if the goal changes, a framework can be quickly built to accommodate that change, while a goal driven by project management charts will just stop dead and it will take a long time to get the new chart and get any forward movement going toward the new goal.

And if an unexpected challenge presents itself in an existing goal, a quintessential leader coach has the flexibility to address and deal with that challenge on the spot with having to move heaven and earth, which goals driven by project management charts require.

I am not dissing project management per se. What I am dissing is letting a micromanagement project management chart drive all a team's processes. This leaves no room for development, growth, and empowerment for team members and the best and brightest will transfer, to use the basketball metaphor, as soon as they're able to another team where there is a quintessential leader coach.

Quintessential leader coaches are a rare commodity in both sports and organizations today. My hope is that these posts will be a small step in making that untrue in the future.

Chapter 2: Attitude is Everything

"The mind is its own place and in itself, can make a Heaven of Hell and a Hell of Heaven."
Paradise Lost, Book 1 - John Milton

The rest of the chapters in this book will be about the interactive relationships involved in teamwork, project management, and leadership.

They will analyze, in a building block fashion, the components and processes, and then will analyze what factors - and they can happen anywhere and, sometimes, everywhere in the relationships - determine success or failure in the big picture.

As initially tedious and uninteresting as this may seem, there are actually a lot of life lessons, physically and spiritually, to be gleaned from this discussion. This post will deal with the people-as-individuals component, both as team members and leaders.

But first, we must look at a brief overview of the big-picture and the responsibilities from a leadership standpoint.

In any organization, there are discrete business units (departments or divisions), and those business units have projects and goals they are expected to complete accurately, on-time, and within a budget.

Depending on the size of the organization, a business unit may have only a single team and single leader or it may have many teams and many leaders, each of which is working on just a part - that will be combined with those of the rests of the teams upon completion to form "the project" - of the business unit's projects.

A leader's function is to *macro-manage* his or her project or part of the project. Let me say that not all leaders are good managers and not all managers are good leaders. That is a sure way to hinder any team-based endeavor from the start, and it happens a lot of the time. However, some teams manage to coalesce and thrive in spite of poor management and/or leadership, and why that can happen is really the core of this post.

I will use my own method of leadership, which I've developed from my own experience - and frustration - with poor management and poor leadership, which has proven to be effective *most of the time*, as the model for how this process should work.

The first thing that a good leader recognizes is that you manage things - money and resources - and not people. People manage themselves.

A quintessential leader should provide an atmosphere that encourages investment, growth, and development, in which people learn to manage themselves in a way that meets or exceeds the core values and principles of the business unit (the leader sets the example; more often than not, in the 21st Century, organizations as a whole are the most abysmal examples of good core values and principles, so this leader stands out in strong contrast to a general environment of dishonesty, corruption, and bottom-line greed).

In other words, by the end of a project, team members should be co-owners and they should have demonstrable growth in both competency and value to the organization.

A quintessential leader is also responsible for providing the framework for the team and assigning tasks to each team member, making sure that the task and the person are suitably matched (another pitfall of poor management and poor leadership) to ensure the best result.

That means the leader has to actually know and understand his or her team members, know their strengths and weaknesses, and be willing to shake things up and move people and responsibilities around to maximize the productivity of the available skill set and also to avoid setting anyone up for failure (everyone will fail from time to time, and some people will fail all the time, but to not even have a chance to succeed is a leadership failure).

"That's the way we've always done it" is the one answer I will not accept as a reason for why something is being done a certain way, because that answer tells me that the job or function is being performed on archaic or non-existence data that may have made sense back in the day, but is totally useless now.

A quintessential leader shows what the end result should look like, but does not micro-manage the process and the team members every step of the way.

There is a saying that there are many ways to skin a cat (I don't even want to think about the context from which that saying came to be). But, using that phrase, a leader's job is to recognize and communicate acceptable guidelines and definitive outcomes, then let his or her team take the ball and run with it.

I've learned my way is not always the best way, the smartest way, the fastest way, or the most efficient way to do something, and I've actually learned a lot along the way from my teams. So, not only does this invest them, but it provides growth and development for everyone.

A quintessential leader guides, advises, steps in to help or intervene if the situation requires it, and provides feedback along the way. The feedback mechanism, which is the informal process of day-to-day interaction and involvement with each team member as well as the formal process of regularly-scheduled performance development reviews, will be discussed in the next post, along with the annual performance review.

But let's talk about people, the core component of teams and leaders. The driving force that determines how every person thinks, is, and interacts with everything else he or she comes into contact with is attitude/mindset/motivation, hereafter referred to simply as *mindset*.

When you strip away all the layers of complexity we humans are both designed with and develop, there are two basic mindsets that we approach life with. One is "have to." The other is "want to."

Although at times, we all switch between the two – there are routine "have-to's" that are associated with life that we may not necessarily want to do – each of us has a predominant mindset, because it's become how we relate.

And the success or failure of both teams and leaders is directly tied to these two mindsets.

The first thing that a mindset tells about a person is how they see themselves in relationship to everything else.

One of the key differences in these two mindsets is that a half-to will do something because it benefits him or her, while a wants-to will do something because it benefits everyone. So the have-to mindset is all about *me*, while the wants-to mindset is all about *us*.

Want-to's tend to thoroughly immerse themselves into whatever they're involved in. They go beyond what is spelled out and clarify and question until they understand the totality of what is required of them.

Want-to's are living, eating, breathing whatever they're involved in. They are totally invested. Want-to's will spend whatever time and effort is required to achieve a successful outcome. They usually delivered better-than-expected results.

Want-to's are in tune with the world around them. Because they think in terms of "us," want-to's will, without prompting or threatening, do something simply because it needs to be done or because someone needs help.

Want-to's are background people who don't demand or want attention and the spotlight on them. They need affirmation in a personal and quiet way that they are on the right track or that their contributions are helping everyone, but they prefer attention-wise to fly below the radar.

Want-to's see and understand the big picture. They understand that what they do is a key element in how well the whole turns out, and they also understand that helping others when they're able is also a key element in the final outcome.

Want-to's understand that "we all stand together or fall together." A want-to's mantra is "what can I do?" They, interestingly, are also interested in fairness, but from a completely different angle than a have-to. Want-to's address fairness head-on when they see others being treated unfairly. King David, the patriarch Abraham, and Christ come to mind when I think of want-to's.

Have-to's are letter-of-the-law. Their involvement in any part of life tends to be superficial. Have-to's never see the big picture. They are the proverbial tree-instead-of-forest seers.

Have-to's are good actors, and will usually talk a good game, but they never deliver the results. They will do exactly what is spelled out and no more.

Have-to's are attention junkies. If something isn't about them, they will find a way to twist it around to make it about them.

Have-to's are clock-watchers, never giving more than the absolute minimum required in time and effort. They will not volunteer to help anyone else and tend to be disdainful and condescending in their relationships.

The only time have-to's will take on anything outside of their codified scope is if they believe they will gain something in return. And even then, the first thing a have-to will say is "that's not my job." This is a half-to mantra.

Have-to's are not invested in anything but themselves and their entire lives revolve strictly around themselves. They do not build and apply knowledge and carry it with them through life.

Have-to's are never wrong. If something goes wrong, it's always someone else's fault.

Have'to's, additionally, spend an inordinate amount of time with the issue of *fairness* - specifically to or toward them. "You're not being fair" is the favorite phrase have-to's have about fairness. They also talk a lot about their *rights*. The Pharisees, as a group, as well as Judas, are good examples of a have-to mindset.

So what happens when both of these mindsets exist on a team? How do they interact with each other and with the team leader? How do they respond to performance development and performance reviews? How does this affect the outcome of projects? We'll examine that in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: A Chain is Only as Strong as Its Weakest Link

In the last chapter, I ended with the following questions.

So what happens when both of these mindsets ("have-to's" and "want-to's") exist on a team? How do they interact with each other and with the team leader? How do they respond to performance development and performance reviews? How does this affect the outcome of projects?

This chapter will answer the first two questions. The next chapter will answer the last two questions.

In every project there are two major components that really matter all the way through. One is, obviously, project design, development, management, and completion.

But the second, which is actually more important - after all, this team or some variation of it will be working on future project development, management, and completion - is that of people development, oversight, and enhancement.

At the end of any project, the people that worked on the team in that project should emerge with more maturity, more skills, and more value.

The ultimate goal of a quintessential leader should be to develop quintessential leaders and there are a set of processes that parallel the completion of a project from inception to finished product that make this possible.

So what about the team?

It is the rare case when a leader gets to hand-pick (read: hire) and form his or her entire team from scratch. That would be ideal, but it just doesn't happen.

Instead, leaders form teams from what they have to work with, which is a mixture of legacy employees (read: they already work there and the leader just inherited them) and the occasional new hire here and there.

New hires are generally not going to be complicating factors for the team or the project because they have been selected based on very specific criteria that indicates they will add value to the team and the project.

Legacy employees are generally where a leader will have issues not only in terms of teaming-building and project-management, but also in performance development and performance reviews.

When new leaders come in, the first project is the trial period for both the leader and the team.

Everyone is sizing up everyone and there is generally a series of tests that both the leader and the legacy employees will put each other through to see what they've all got.

That's the nature of most human relationships and is to be expected.

When leaders fail, they fail because they don't anticipate this coming at them nor do they do the same by getting to know their team members by individually and collectively engaging, listening, watching, and assigning tasks that show strengths and weaknesses.

The reality is that as a leader you cannot get buy-in nor can you do quality performance development and performance reviews unless you do this first.

Ever had a performance review from someone who speaks to you maybe twice a year and that's just to grunt "Hi?" And the performance review is negative?

It's happened once to me. I refused to sign it because the person doing it had no clue even what my job was, and the review didn't even describe any of my job functions.

I suspected at the time that he'd put the wrong name on the review because he had no clue who was working for him and really didn't care, but had the same formulaic method of "grading" that my college biology teacher did – X number of people got "Exceeds," X number of people got "Meets," and everyone else got "Fails to Meet."

He got really angry that I wouldn't sign it and started on the "you have to sign it" mantra. To which, because I was a bit less tactful than I am now, I replied "the only thing I have to do is pay taxes and die." And I walked out.

Nothing ever happened the rest of the time I was with that company (another month), but I went home that night and started a new job search.

Ironically, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the company, who did know who I was and knew what my job was, came to me when I turned in my resignation letter and said "I'm really sorry you're leaving. You're a real asset to this company."

My response was "Really? I guess you didn't see my performance review." He said he hadn't and asked me about it. I explained what had happened and he was genuinely surprised and asked "why didn't you come to me?"

I told him that nothing had been done in the intervening month so I figured that he was on board with the review and this was just the way the executive management at the company operated.

I could tell it really bothered him when I said that, but I hope that he learned the bigger lesson of the experience.

And that is you have to be involved, no matter what level you are in the company or business unit, with your team and your projects day-in and day-out and in a tangible, coaching role.

You can't check out and assume everything's going to go well and you can't smother everybody and assume everything's going to go well. There's a balance and a right way.

One of the first things an involved leader will find out is which of the team members are want-to's and which are have-to's. It's obvious right from the start.

It's up to the leader to initiate the conversations that begin this unveiling process.

I always start with one-on-one meetings with each of my direct reports and ask the same big-picture questions:

1. What's the mission?
2. What are you responsible for in the mission?
3. What do you see as things that are working well in completing the mission? Why?
4. What things aren't working well in completing the mission? Why?
5. What things are missing that would help better complete the mission?
6. What ideas do you have for making the whole process work better?
7. Are there things that you like to do or would like to do within the mission that you have not had the opportunity to do?

I use this for a two-fold purpose. I always take a job knowing that I won't be there forever, so part of my purpose is to immediately start looking for potential successors - someone who can take the vision, the changes, the improvements and continue them and improve them when I leave.

It is always better to pass the mantle on to someone who has participated in a successful team/mission transition to ensure continuity of what works than to bring someone in from the outside who starts all over again. Time and again, I hear from want-to legacy employees that lack of continuity in leadership style and skills is a key morale buster.

And the second purpose is to identify my have-to's and want-to's, because they handle this initial conversation totally differently. In fact, their approaches from the outset are totally different.

Want-to's are thoughtful and usually surprised that anyone is asking for their input especially on the big-picture level.

But they usually have a lot of insight and good ideas about how to improve things that aren't working and what needs to be added for the things that are missing.

They tend to present a balanced and objective picture, but they don't hesitate to give you the full picture, warts and all, in general terms, never finger-pointing or name-calling.

They're invested. These conversations are give-and-take and quite enlightening. Listening to them is vital to gain a real understanding of what you've walked into.

Have-to's do one of two things. Both are equally annoying, but again, it's important to really listen, using judicious comments to ensure that they know you're the one in charge and not them.

Have-to's seldom have any kind of insightful or expansive knowledge of the big picture. They simply don't care.

They are also snitches. Their "analyses" are always full of finger-pointing, blaming, and name-calling.

The first kind of have-to you'll encounter is the flatterer. They reek of insincerity when they walk in the door.

Instead of answering the questions, they'll regale you with stories of how awful everyone before you was and how they were never recognized for their talent and ability, but they've heard "great" things about you, so they know you'll be able to see how valuable they are and that they deserve more money and responsibility.

Seriously. They do this in the very first face-to-face meeting.

The second kind of have-to you'll encounter is the complainer. Their hostility is the first thing you notice when they walk in the door.

They don't answer the questions either, but they spend the entire meeting time complaining about their lives, their team members, their workload, and the fact that nobody has ever appreciated them and they don't expect you to either.

Seriously. They also do this in the very first face-to-face meeting.

The next step is to see how this group of people works together with you and each other as a team on a project.

This is vital because it will reveal where the problems and obstacles are going to be every time this group of people has to work with you and the rest of the team members.

It is also instructive, from a leadership standpoint, in identifying and working to eliminate the weakest links in the chain.

In a group setting, with all the team members present, you, as the team leader define a small, easily-accomplished project that requires everyone to work together to complete it.

You define the scope (parameters), milestones (project steps), and outcome (what the end result should look like).

You assign concrete tasks to each team member (based on their strengths and skills) and then remind them that your function is that of a coach, which means that you will not hold their hands every step of the way, but are available if they hit something they can't handle (lack of experience, lack of authority, lack of needed resources) to help them find a solution so they can continue, and that you expect them to use their minds and their talents to complete the project.

I also, in this same discussion, tell my team members not to come to me with problems or issues unless they also have suggestions for a solution.

Body language tells the story at this juncture.

Everyone is usually surprised, because in American companies, this approach is novel and unexpected. You can see in the want-to's the initial surprise turn to thought and anticipation as they realize they are being given an opportunity to prove what they're made of.

The have-to's are a different story.

The flatterers give lip-service to what a great idea it is, but they immediately start trying to get you to tell them every detail of how you would do it and they try to engage you from the get-go in hand-holding.

When their attempts fail, you can see the panic and defeat on their faces (but they will keep coming back and trying to lure you into hand-holding, using different angles, the rest of the way through the project).

The complainers start complaining about everything, and generally there is some mention of fairness at this point.

But when they leave the room, they've already made the decision that they are going to do what they want to, whether it's related or not, and they don't care what you need, the rest of the team needs, or, in fact about the project itself.

And there's an essential truth that lies within this scenario, and it's one of the things that everyone tends to overlook or minimize (I've seen this in both corporate organizations and, more curiously, in religious organizations).

If everyone on the team is not on the same page - in complete agreement - with the team leader, then they are never going to be able to work together on the team.

There has to be a buy-in from everyone at the outset. If there isn't, every team and every project will be riddled with interpersonal problems that will lead to the failure to build a team and the failure to complete projects efficiently, accurately, and on time.

Performance development plans are designed as a tool to help rectify some of these problems along the way. Want-to’s thrive and grow with these.

On rare occasions, a have-to will actually become a want-to (usually because initially there is some benefit to him or her, but as the changes take place, the focus changes to the benefit of everyone), and as a team leader, that’s an incredible thing to see and experience.

But for the most part, have-to’s and performance development plans are an oil-and-water mixture that never ends up producing much more than a lot of headaches, conflicts, and, in most cases, elimination from the team (termination).

Annual performance reviews should be just that.

Most companies use these to explain to employees what the criteria for their jobs are, what the parameters of successful job performance are, and then evaluate them on these things in the next breath.

This does no one any good because the employees don’t know what they’re being evaluated on until this meeting nor do they have a chance to work on it before this meeting (you can’t fix what you don’t know is broken).

So, in the next chapter, I’ll talk about these two valuable tools, how to use them correctly (not as a hammer, but as an avenue for growth and change), and how effective they are with want-to’s and have-to’s.

Chapter 4: The Choice to Grow

"The strongest principle of growth lies in the human choice."
George Eliot

In the last chapter, I referred to two essential tools every leader should use to "grow" every team member, including him or herself: the performance development plan and the annual performance review.

This chapter will discuss what these tools are, what their purposes and outcomes should be, the requirements of fully and successfully utilizing them, and their effectiveness with have-to's and want-to's.

A performance development plan is an essential part of the team-building/project-management process. What this tool does is provide a framework for building on established strengths and implementing tangible and obtainable steps for improving areas of weakness.

The scope is all-encompassing: interpersonal skills, communication skills, work-related skills, and personal skills.

Its title, though, must be the focus:

- Performance - The action or process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task, or function, with special attention to the word "process," because this is an on-going process
- Development - This implies at set starting point with the goal of moving forward in one or multiple areas
- Plan - A concrete and well-laid-out set of steps to achieve these goals

A performance development plan assumes that changes need to be made for the benefit of the individual, the team, the project(s), the department, the business unit, the corporation, and ultimately the planet.

How often do any of us think in terms of our individual impacts on the the big picture (e.g., the planet)?

And, yet, to really grow that's exactly how we need to think, because the reality is that every choice, every decision that you and I as individuals make affects others on a much larger scale than most of us ever think about.

If we understood our individual accountability and responsibility in the spheres of influence in our immediate lives and how those intersect with other spheres of influence and so on, I think we would be more careful, more thoughtful, more deliberate about what we do and say and are.

A well-done performance development plan is a step toward that conscious care, thought, and deliberation because it focuses the individual's attention on the big picture and how that individual fits into it and how he or she can improve to add value at every level from personal to global.

Performance development plans should be formulated interactively with full participation and input from both the assessor (the leader) and the person being assessed (the team member). This gets buy-in from both parties.

What I always do is hand a blank form to each of my team members and ask them to assess themselves as to what their strengths and weaknesses are, what they do well and what they need to improve or change, and what development goals they want to accomplish.

I explain to them that I will be completing the same form for each of them, and then when we have our first meeting to get the plan in motion, we'll review both assessments as part of the planning session.

The reactions to this always surprises me, even though it's the way that makes sense since I can't possibly know enough about anyone to do a performance development plan by myself nor can I understand where anyone sees him or herself in the context of a formalized process.

I have to have the other person's input so that we - not just I - but *we* can develop the plan together. This invests the team member in the process and gives them accountability and responsibility for ensuring that the goals, which he or she have jointly formulated with me, are met.

But the reactions and the subsequent input from each team member reveals stark differences between the have-to's and the want-to's.

Want-to's have a hard time understanding that someone is asking for and wants their input and initially they shy away from this part of the process.

But in the meeting where the performance development plan is formulated and a review schedule established, want-to's consistently rate themselves lower than I do in all areas of the plan, are well-attuned to and honest about the areas where they need improvement, and their goals tend to be modest, concrete and achievable.

One want-to in the journey of my career stands out when I think about performance development plans and how necessary they are and how powerful the results can be.

She was a little Italian lady, old enough to be just about every team member's, including me, mother.

She was a legacy employee who'd been working for that organization for a long time and had been retained and reclassified when a huge technology shift was made into a technical classification she was not trained for.

In every team meeting with that particular business unit, at some point she'd say "I'm not technical," as both an apology and defense. It drove me crazy every time she said it, but I couldn't quite put my finger on why.

But I watched her work and realized, with a little time, that she had her finger on the pulse of the business unit and took personal responsibility for making sure the administrative resources that were needed for the business unit's success were always available.

None of the "technical" team members did that. And I realized that she saved the business unit manager and me a lot of grief by just taking care of all these little details in an organized and seamless way. I realized she didn't need to be "technical!"

When we sat down to formulate her performance development plan in my office, I got up from my desk (where I sat for these with the "technical" people, who by and large had egos to spare, so it was a subtle way of conveying that when it was all said and done, I made the final decisions about what would and would not happen) and went over to sit in the chair beside her.

I purposefully did this so that she would feel at ease and so that she knew I was on her side and this was a partnership between her and me.

Her relief was almost palpable. In a give-and-take fashion, we went through her self-assessment and my assessment.

She, as I expected, gave herself much lower ratings in just about every area (ours agreed, predictably, in the technical skills area) than I did. But we talked about each area as we went through them, and I pointed out tangible things that she did to ensure the business unit ran smoothly and was able to draw a picture of her value and contribution to the team that she was not able to see before.

She made the "I'm not technical" statement at some point, and I told her that phrase needed to die right there that day in my office.

I explained that every time she said it, she devalued herself to the other team members and it created a vicious cycle of her feeling inadequate and the other team members seeing her as inadequate, when in fact, if she hadn't been doing the things she had been doing, none of the other team members would be able to do their jobs.

I told her I didn't need another "technical" person, but I did need a resource manager, and she was my pick.

We did a performance development plan based on these responsibilities, which she had already independently taken on, and we addressed the technical deficiencies with a plan for her to take basic software classes that were offered at no charge by the organization.

I asked her to pick a class from each quarter's schedule and I'd ensure that she had the time to go and we'd use her completion scores to assess how well she was meeting that performance development goal.

I had a changed team member from that day forward. She was aware of her value and contribution to the team and she took her performance development goals seriously and went above and beyond to improve in every area.

I never heard her utter the dreaded phrase again. And after completing and doing well in several software classes, which she enjoyed to her surprise, she was able to contribute to the team technically as well.

It was a beautiful thing to be a part of as I watched the transformation and, quite frankly, of all the diverse responsibilities I've had in leadership and project management in my career, this area, when successful, brought me a real sense of satisfaction and accomplishment because I saw the power of a performance development partnership when both parties committed to participating in and working together to complete our goals (her goals were my goals as well, so I had a responsibility to make sure she had what she needed from me to make those goals a reality).

With have-to's, you can almost see their chests swell with swagger and the exaggerated sense of self they have when given this opportunity. They grab the form out of your hands with eagerness and stop listening at the point it's in their hands.

And in the meeting where the performance development plan is formulated and a review schedule established, have-to's consistently rate themselves higher than I do in all areas of the plan, have no areas of deficiency, and their goals are nebulous, unrealistic and unattainable.

From the same business unit, my most memorable have-to took his copy of the performance development plan with a smirk and said "this will be easy."

Ironically, I liked this team member as a person, just not as a team member. He had a good personality and he was intelligent. But he had a flagrant disregard for rules and authority (mine included and when I finally had to come down hard on him because reason, logic and gentleness wasn't working, I came down very hard and gave him no choice but to be terminated or resign and he resigned, never understanding what he'd done wrong) and he had one of the most inflated egos I've ever encountered.

In our sit-down meeting to review his and my input, he predictably rated himself higher in most areas (we agreed on the technical skills part of the plan) than I did. He had no deficiencies listed and his one goal was “to have your job.”

I purposely did this performance development plan differently than the one with my newly-titled resource manager because I already knew this team member was a have-to.

He was a flatterer, but like all flatterers, I’d already seen him bypass the rules, the business unit manager, and me and do what he wanted to do.

So in his planning session, which was not interactive – have-to’s don’t partner and they don’t invest, I asked him to give me his input.

Behind my desk – he was sitting across from me – I listened and made notes to counterpoint some of his statements while he talked. And talked.

Near the end, he gave me unsolicited performance development plans for just about every other team member and the business unit manager. He, surprisingly, had the good sense not to offer one for me.

When he finished and I gave him my input for his performance development plan, highlighted his deficiencies and areas that needed improvement by taking his statements and showing, by example, where they were not true, and outlined the goals that I expected him to accomplish (having my job was not one of them) by the time we got to the annual performance review, reiterating that we would be reviewing, as I did with all team members, the performance development plan to chart progress at the end of each quarter to chart progress, make adjustments, and ensure that we were on the right path.

While I listened quietly while he talked, he interrupted me continually while I talked, arguing with every example I gave for my assessment and improvement plan and arguing about the goals. I reminded him several times that I didn’t interrupt him while he was talking, and I expected the same professionalism from him while I was talking.

He kept interrupting and arguing until I finally stood up, leaned over my desk, looked him straight in the eye and said in a firm voice “I will not ask you to be quiet again. You need to shut up and listen.”

And it took him aback so he did, but it bothered me that it took that kind of directness and force to get through to him.

Those same behaviors were what he came to projects and the team with and although more slowly than I wanted, we continued to make progress on the project plans and team-building, I spent an inordinate amount of time dealing with issues both on the projects and among the team members that centered around his behavior.

He was a constant disruption and obstacle to meaningful progress in both project completion and team-building efforts.

And any leader will tell you that the more energy you have to expend on this kind of person and behavior, the more exhausting the overall work becomes.

But a performance development plan is on on-going process. There must be regular and in-depth and quality assessments, input, reviews, and course corrections during the execution to ensure that the goals are being met.

I usually met quarterly with most team members, but I had some, that because of where we started the process and how much we had to accomplish to meet the goals of that year, that I met with monthly, bi-weekly, and, in one case, weekly.

The bottom line is that it’s not a one-time shot and frequent review and feedback and change is part of the process for a performance development plan to be effective and successful.

The annual performance review is a review of how the performance development plan was executed.

The things discussed in this review should be known (neither participant should be surprised by anything discussed here if the performance development plan was executed properly), in-process, and either noted as complete or progress toward completion noted.

This is also the meeting where the next blank performance development plan should be given to team members to be completed and the new cycle of performance development meetings scheduled because things will be left over from the previous development plan and new things will need to be added.

Done correctly and with diligence and commitment by everyone involved - both the leader and the team member have a responsibility - this on-going process, which admittedly takes a lot of time, but in this leader’s opinion is worth every bit of it, even with the wrench of the have-to’s (because there are many and good lessons to be learned there as well) thrown in, has the power to make positive and lasting changes for individuals, teams, departments, business units, corporations, countries, and the world.

But, in the big picture, it’s always important to remember that no matter how good these tools are and how effectively they’re used, they are still humanly-devised instruments used by imperfect humans and so the outcomes, though good if done well, are nothing compared to the eventual outcome we await from the perfect Leader who has the perfect performance development plan, the perfect methodology to execute it, and the absolute and perfect transformation as a result that the whole universe needs.