



Life After Promotion

***Using Science-Trained Coaches to
Boost Your Career***

By Jerry Fletcher and Jerry Straks

Coaches lacking a science background often do not recognize that the challenges they perceive with science staff are aspects of the very strengths that make them good at science.

© Copyright High Performance Dynamics and Petra Consulting and Coaching, Inc. 2006



**In Memoriam
Jerry Lee Fletcher
1941 - 2007**

Esteemed colleague, respected coach, good friend.



Contact: ScienceCoach@PetraCACI.com
or 510-789-8936
www.PetraCACI.com

Life After Promotion

Using Science-Trained Coaches to Boost Your Career and Develop Your Staff

Introduction

Statistics and your own experience show that most scientists and engineers take on responsibilities for supervising staff at some point in their career, often within the first ten years. This could range from supervising a few technical support staff to managing a department—or even more. If you or your direct reports want to add management and leadership skills to your repertoire, you owe it to yourselves to consider using the services of a science-trained coach.

Of course you can take workshops and training to learn the skills. Unfortunately, that is not always the most productive use of your time to learn what you need to learn. Many trainers will tell you that only 10% of the content of a workshop or training course actually migrates into an attendee's practice and becomes habit. However, they will also often agree that when the skills development involves professional coaching, that number approaches 90%.

Your time is valuable. What could you do with the extra time if you did not have to spend as much time fighting battles, putting out relationship fires, or getting what you need from management, staff, and peers? Learning some additional proven, effective leadership and relationship skills can reduce your stress, improve your effectiveness, and expand your career opportunities. And if you are responsible for the development of staff members, starting them on the path of learning those skills now can make sure they are ready when opportunity knocks.

Many scientists and engineers have achieved these benefits for themselves through professional coaching. You may already know several.

Typical Issues Encountered by Science Staff Who Have Never Used Coaching

The bumps, roadblocks, and dysfunctions of R&D work are many and differ from one situation to the next. Some of the problems which we often see include:

- Complaints about difficult personalities and personality conflicts
- Perpetual battles with the business side of the house
- Teams that don't jell
- Work that is behind timelines due to problems that aren't obvious
- Managers who know they lack the training and experience to manage science staff

Statistics and your own experience show that most scientists and engineers take on responsibilities for supervising staff at some point in their career, often within the first ten years.

- Managers who do NOT know they lack the training and experience to manage science staff
- Problems balancing scientific rigor with business demands
- Uncomfortable tension between loyalty to the profession (publishing papers and participating in standards groups) over loyalty to the company

Each of these challenges can be addressed through our unique coaching program for scientists and science staff.

Why Coaching Can Work for Scientists

Coaching involves hiring a specially trained and certified professional whose role is to help you find the awareness and/or skill gap between what you want to do and what you are actually doing—and then to fill that gap and help you convert what you know how to do into regular practice. This is done through objective observation and frank but considerate feedback. If additional knowledge is needed, it is provided. If accountability is useful, it is provided. Encouragement and support in achieving your goals is always given. To calibrate, consider that this description describes leadership and business skill coaching as readily as it describes sports coaching that an Olympic athlete would hire or golf coaching that Tiger Woods would hire. Instead of trying to integrate new skills over months or years, coaches provide trained observation, feedback and guidance that supercharges your learning curve to create new habits.

After the coach and client build the critically necessary rapport and trust, coaching is an excellent vehicle for change for science staff (scientists, engineers, and other technical staff, including R&D managers and executives). The coaching process is quite congruent with science staff values and preferences. For example:

Coaching keeps the responsibility for change and improvement on the people involved.

The coach does not intervene but helps the client learn how to be more effective. Scientists and science staff generally find this to be a powerful route to the changes they seek--after they trust the coach. They are used to being in charge of themselves and are typically open to improvements that they help design.

Coaching helps the client see new possibilities in areas of challenge.

Coaching works within the client's frames of reference, values and priorities, enhancing the client's awareness of sources of friction. Coaching leverages the client's own wisdom in finding new options, new perspectives, and new behaviors. Science staff often find it exhilarating to resolve previously intractable interpersonal challenges through enhanced standard practices and habits.

Coaching provides the encouragement, support and accountability science staff need over an extended period to build new habits.

Science staff generally have such ferocious curiosity and intense focus that all else is easily forgotten or ignored. Coaches are specially trained to utilize the latest research about the brain to help science staff adopt new habits by building on the neural pathways that already exist. Coaches supply the patience, persistence, encouragement and support that science staff need and expect to set realistic goals for change. While changing habits is rarely a fast process, for science staff the changes are generally longer-lasting than for the general population.

Simply put, most coaches are woefully unprepared to meet the challenges of coaching science staff.

The key is to find professional coaches with science or engineering training and experience.

Coaching helps leverage science staff strengths on their own behalf.

Innovation in science usually comes from putting what one already knows together in new ways. Science staff already know a lot and usually don't need a "consultant" to teach them how to do their jobs better. Coaches help people discover new ways of putting together the knowledge they already have for greater leverage.

Coaching provides a safe, supportive environment in which science staff can come to intellectual terms with new values and soft skills while they work through the frustrations that accompany initial attempts.

Most scientists and engineers move into some form of management at some point in their careers. Coaching can help prepare those that do or those that want to make such a move expand their career horizons. Developing the needed interpersonal skills, business orientation, and practices of good leaders as a result of professional coaching can give them more career options, increase their effectiveness, and enhance their job satisfaction. Coaches know how to pace this learning for optimum success, all while providing the encouragement, support and accountability needed for sustainable success.

Unfortunately, not all coaches have what it takes to provide the kinds of objective observation and feedback science staff need because they do not know enough about science and engineering to know what they are seeing. Simply put, most coaches are woefully unprepared to meet the challenges of coaching science staff. They tend to come from the softer sciences – psychology, social work, education, and a variety of other professions – rather than the hard sciences. They find it difficult to establish the level of acceptance and trust that is essential for effective coaching of science staff. They do not recognize that the challenges they perceive with science staff are aspects of the very strengths that make them good at science. They then mistakenly try to blunt those strengths rather than build upon them.

The key is to find professional coaches with science or engineering training and experience.

Why Science-Trained Coaches Succeed

Science staff's willingness and ability to search through what they already know in order to create behavioral innovation requires a belief that there will be an "equity of exchange" with the coach. You have a right to believe you will receive equivalent or greater value from the coach than you are expected to give in the conversation. This requires that you can perceive the coach as credible and having something to offer.

Though coaches are not providing the answers, it helps if the scientist or engineer knows that the coach has a background in science or engineering. If they have "been there, done that," science staff can more easily accept their suggestions or questions and explore their own rich database of knowledge and find the new innovations they want and need. Science-trained coaches are able to establish the needed rapport and trust difficult for non-science-trained coaches to develop.

* * *

Now imagine that there is available to you a group of excellent, qualified coaches who are also scientifically trained or very experienced in working with science staff. To them, all of the above factors would be delightful challenges and opportunities,

instead of threats. With them, science staff can build the crucial trust that will allow the science staff to make the changes they want and need to make.

We are such a group

Put simply, we *like* scientists and science staff. In our backgrounds we have science degrees, engineering backgrounds, years of experience working in scientific and engineering teams, and years of successfully coaching science staff. We have “been there, done that.” We find your interpersonal challenges interesting and ones we typically have struggled with ourselves. We are instantly recognized as “one of you.” We speak your language and understand the culture of science work. We are smart enough to be unintimidated by scientific argument. We hold our own in the face of tough interrogation. We know how to improve scientists' interpersonal skills and improve their productivity in organizations without “messing with their heads”—all while preserving their strengths.

However, there aren't many of us. We have scoured the ranks of certified coaches looking for those with scientific training or experience and have assembled the best of them. As we have discovered, you cannot find them using normal search processes. We have made the task easy for you because we have already assembled a team of the best science-trained and experienced, certified coaches we can find.

Creating a Culture of Sustained Scientific Contribution

The purpose of our coaching program is to build on the strengths of your science staff, improving the functioning of individual science staff and enhancing the contribution of R&D to the overall success of your company.

Creating a culture that supports scientists and engineers and sustains scientific contributions at the highest level can be quite a daunting and difficult task in the face of business and competitive pressures. Coaching of individuals and teams has been shown to have significant impact on individual and team productivity, including creation of a culture of sustained productivity. Coaching can create the sustained science staff productivity a science-based company needs for long-term success—and for retaining their best and brightest because of a positive work environment and credible career growth paths.

Benefits of Scientists Coaching Scientists

Bringing our unique coaching program to you and your science staff will provide:

- Improved results desired by you and your scientists or engineers
- Reduced science staff conflict within teams and with the rest of the organization
- Increased teamwork and information sharing
- Higher morale among science staff
- More productive dialogue between science staff and marketing
- Improved retention of your best and brightest science staff
- Better science staff working relationships with their staff, their superiors, their colleagues, and the rest of the company
- Enhanced effectiveness of science staff in management and leadership positions

The purpose of our coaching program is to build on your strengths and those of your science staff....

- Increased career options for science staff

In these days of fast-paced markets and stiff competition, your coaching program for science staff can become an important source for your **competitive advantage**, the key ingredient for profitability, stability and longevity for a company, all of which can provide an ideal environment for science staff to work.

If you have been looking for effective and credible staff development for your science staff, you need look no further.

We are the **solution** to your problem. Please contact us for more information and a free assessment of the applicability of our science staff coaching solutions to the challenges you face.

*Coaching of
individuals and
teams has been
shown to have
significant
impact on
individual and
team
productivity...*